



Speech by

**Mr N. ROBERTS**

**MEMBER FOR NUDGEES**

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Hansard 5 August 1998

#### ADDRESS IN REPLY

**Mr ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (5.01 p.m.): It is a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak in the Address in Reply debate. Firstly, I convey my thanks to the Governor for an excellent Speech. In common with other members on this side of the House, I look forward to the implementation of that program in the coming term of the Labor Government. I also pass on my congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on your election to that very high and important office. I also congratulate the member for Woodridge on being appointed as the Chairman of Committees.

I take this opportunity to thank the electors of Nudgee for once again placing their trust in me. I consider it to be a privilege to be elected to this Parliament. I come here with a simple philosophy, that is, that I am here to do a job, to work hard on behalf of my constituents and to secure their fair share of Government services and facilities. I also believe that it is important to place on record my sincere thanks to the many people who assisted me throughout my campaign. In particular, I thank my campaign director, Kim Flessner, and other campaign workers Jan Flessner, Reg and Lisa Neil, Peter and Anne Marks and Ken and Lesley Vaughan, who are sometimes unkindly referred to by people within my district as the Nudgee Mafia. They are a very loyal and strong group working for me, and I appreciate the efforts that they put in on my behalf. I would like to mention several other individuals. It is always difficult to do this, because there are many people who deserve credit. I would like to make particular mention of, and give thanks to, people such as Ron Cahill, Les Wakefield, Marie Ryan, Stan Dick and Joe Dunne, who put in a tireless effort on my behalf day after day, early morning after early morning, doing the essential things that were required during the campaign. My thanks also go to numerous other individuals, many of whom—during this campaign—were non-party members who came forward to assist in the campaign, not just to help me but to help secure the election of a Labor Government. I thank them sincerely. I also thank my family, particularly my wife Jenny, my children Bridget and Fiona, and my mother and father, Roger and Louise, for their continuing support. Finally, and just as importantly, I place on record my sincere appreciation to Judi, my electorate officer, and Andrew, my research officer, for the tremendous support and assistance that they have given me over the past term.

As I have said, I do take seriously my role as an elected member. I believe that we are here to do a job on behalf of our constituents and that we should put a great deal of effort into performing that role. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in debate on important issues. This is a great opportunity for individuals to express a point of view about issues of importance not only to their electorates but to the State and, indeed, the nation. This is a great forum. All members should at times reflect on the tremendous privilege that it is for them to be able to stand in this place and express those points of view on behalf of their constituents.

Since being elected, I have taken a particular interest in one major issue, that is, National Competition Policy. I am not going to make too many comments about that today because I have made numerous speeches about that issue and will continue to do so. In my view, National Competition Policy is the most significant economic reform ever implemented in our nation's history. I have spoken in the past of my disappointment that it did not attract very much comment in this Parliament nor, I believe, very much comment in other Parliaments prior to being implemented.

Often one will see in the media that any criticism of National Competition Policy is belittled; people are accused of having their heads in the sand and not being up with the times in terms of economic theory. However, I think it is fair to say that the debate on the economic issue of whether the free market should prevail or whether Government intervention is appropriate has been one which has been waged between political parties and individuals for 100 years. I am not yet convinced that that battle has been lost, although I think that those who support free market economics certainly have a leg up with the implementation of National Competition Policy. I know that many members on this side of the Chamber and a few members on the other side of the Chamber have been outspoken on this issue. I assure the House that I will continue to argue that Government intervention in the economy is legitimate and should be pursued where it is appropriate. I will continue to argue that way and will not accept that in all cases the free market is the most efficient way to deliver the goods and services required in our communities.

Before I move on to some local issues, I want to raise another matter on which I gave a speech in this place in October last year. I refer to the issue of aggressive driving on our roads. I do not think that there would be one member of this House who has not been on one of our highways or streets and who has not had an aggressive ratbag—I think that is the only way to describe them—tailgating that member in order to pressure him or her to drive faster or to move over to allow the other vehicle to pass. In my view, tailgating is probably one of the more dangerous practices on our roads and one which does require a legislative response.

Last year, the New South Wales Parliament—and it was a Labor Government—did bite the bullet in relation to this matter and, as I understand it, three new offences have been created: menacing driving, driving with intent to menace and predatory driving. I believe that this Parliament should be looking at laws which tackle that very serious and dangerous practice on our roads. It has been going on for too long. People should not be threatened or intimidated simply because they are in a vehicle on a road. People do not have the right to use a vehicle as a weapon or as a means of intimidation when they are on the roads. So we need to examine the laws that have been passed in New South Wales to see whether they are appropriate to be implemented in Queensland. That is a matter that I will be taking up with the new Minister for Transport.

In terms of some local issues, I want to raise a range of matters, some of which I raised in this place during the last term. I will not get an opportunity to mention them all. However, in the early days of a new Government I think it is important to state that the issues on which I made representations to the coalition Government on behalf of my electorate essentially have not changed; they still exist, and I have a duty to continue to represent my constituents' interests on those matters. I will continue to do that and will take up the issues with the new Ministers. It does not matter to me whether it is a Labor Minister or a coalition Minister; the issues still require my attention, and I will continue to represent people in that regard.

I will turn to some of the more important of the many issues that I could raise in relation to my electorate. The first relates to the Toombul Police Beat. The Police Beat shopfronts were a good initiative of previous Governments. I am quite certain that the Toombul Police Beat initiative was undertaken under a previous Labor Government. We placed shopfronts within shopping centres where large numbers of people congregated. I fully support their placement in those areas. However, I believe that there is an opportunity to expand the effectiveness of those Police Beats. With respect to the Toombul Police Beat, currently those officers patrol the shopping complex and the car park. I raised in a question on notice to the previous Minister before the election and also in this place that the activities out of that station should be extended to neighbouring suburbs.

Earlier the member for Greenslopes pointed out that whether police officers are on foot or on pushbike, community policing is important. It is important that police officers are in the community, face to face with the public. That opportunity presents itself in Police Beat stations such as Toombul. It would require simply an administrative decision within the Police Service to have those officers go beyond the boundaries of the shopping centre, to have them extend out into the community, to have them talking to people in their frontyards and to shopkeepers, and to have them dropping into the local school and local kindergarten, if required, to talk about issues of concern to local people.

The coalition's pre-election Budget allocated money for the purchase of land to relocate both the Nundah Fire Station in my electorate and the Hamilton Fire Station in the neighbouring electorate of Clayfield to a new facility at Hendra. I have raised some concerns about that proposal with the current Minister. I am presently talking to her about alternative proposals. I do not want to canvass those in any particular detail at this stage, except to say that although I think there is some justification for expenditure on a new station, I believe there is also some justification for looking at other means of utilising the facility that is currently occupied by officers at the Nundah Fire Station. I have spoken to the Minister about the important issue of ensuring that there is adequate and full consultation with the local community before any final decision is made.

Another issue that I have taken up with the previous Minister and will pursue with the new Minister is that of car parking at the Northgate Railway Station. That is a longstanding issue. Residents in the Northgate area have been inconvenienced to a significant degree by the spill over of excessive cars from that car park into neighbouring streets. In its pre-election Budget, the coalition Government allocated some money towards that project. I welcome that. However, at this stage, Queensland Rail seems intent on placing that facility on the residential side of the station, which will serve only to exacerbate the already existing traffic problems. I have taken a consistent line publicly and also with Queensland Rail that any expansion of the parking facilities at Northgate should be on the eastern non-residential side of the station in among an existing commercial and industrial area. Once again, that is an issue that I will be taking up with the new Minister.

The Banyo Police Station is another longstanding issue in my electorate. Banyo Police Station was one of those stations that was downgraded under the clustering system that was introduced by a Labor Government some years ago. Whereas I believe that there are some benefits to the clustering system, one of the detriments is that some stations can lose a core of officers who work locally within the community. The Banyo Police Station was such a station. A single officer is assigned to that station Monday to Friday between the hours of 8.15 and 3.45. They have 15 minutes travelling time to the Boondall division. The difficulty is that, on any day that one visits the station, one can see a different face. I make no criticism of the individual officers concerned, but in terms of a continuity of policing within a district, I believe it is important to have at least one full-time officer assigned to a station. I have taken that case strongly to the previous Minister. I had a sympathetic hearing, but no decision was made in my favour. I will be taking that matter up with the new Minister. My claim for the Banyo station is that it is ideally suited to become a full community Police Beat. There are about 3,500 homes that it could service in a very neatly defined geographical area. I hope that some improvements can be made to the services operating out of that station under this new Government.

One of the other key issues in the Banyo/Nudgee community is for the provision of community hall facilities and, in particular, for the local high school. Banyo State High School was once one of the larger high schools within the Brisbane district, having over 1,000 students. Due to changes in the age of the population, the numbers dropped significantly since that time. However, about two or three years ago the numbers began to rise steadily. I am confident that the Banyo State High School will grow in numbers—not to the same size as it was in the late sixties and seventies—to be quite a healthy high school. That school is in need of a hall facility for everyday activities that some schools take for granted. For instance, when Banyo needs to hold its presentation night, it goes to a neighbouring school's hall. When our local primary schools want to hold their plays or musicals, they go to school halls in neighbouring communities. That is an issue that is of importance to that community. I will continue to pursue it. I have been working with a local community group under the chair of Mr Stephen Pryor, who is a very active and committed local resident. We are hopeful of identifying ways and means by which a school hall facility and also an appropriate community hall facility could be provided for that district. Hopefully, the fruits of our labour will be rewarded in the not-too-distant future.

The Geebung level crossing is another issue of significance in the electorate. Recently the Brisbane City Council undertook major improvements to the Geebung shopping centre. I believe they have done a good job. However, there is some concern about the impact that traffic lights have had on the flow of traffic through that community. The traffic lights have certainly made both the level crossing and the shopping centre safer; however, the delays for people crossing at the level crossing on Newman Road have increased significantly. A few weeks ago, I was reading a local history book written by a local author, Kath Ballard. The provision of an overpass over the Geebung level crossing has probably been discussed for the last 40-odd years, yet we still do not have one there. I raised a proposal with the previous Minister and intend to continue to raise it on behalf of the residents of Geebung that the provision of an appropriate overpass at that level crossing should be given a high priority by Queensland Rail. The most obvious solution is to provide an overpass joining Robinson Road East and Robinson Road West. I have put that proposal in writing to the previous Minister. I believe that would have the support of the majority of people in the community.

The Boondall wetlands are an important feature of my electorate. It is an environmental reserve of international significance. The Brisbane City Council needs to be congratulated for its efforts in preserving that piece of land. An issue with respect to those wetlands is whether they should be extended. A parcel of land to the west of the Gateway Motorway runs adjacent to the existing reserve of the Boondall wetlands. For some time, some local people have been arguing for that piece of land to be added to the Boondall wetlands reserve. Again, I have indicated publicly my support for that proposal. It is my belief that we have an opportunity to extend a reserve that is of international significance in terms of its unique character and that we should be taking that opportunity. I have advised the Brisbane City Council of my support for calls for the western extension to be added to the Boondall wetlands. I hope that that issue is able to be resolved favourably in the not-too-distant future.

Finally, I refer to the community of Zillmere, which deserves and is in need of significant levels of Government support. Already, I have made written submissions to the new Ministers in relation to the needs of that area. I feel strongly about this area of my electorate. It has been ignored by successive Governments of all persuasions for too long. The community has significant levels of social disadvantage and deserves our support. In that regard, I will be taking a range of issues relating to that community to the Government during its term.

The Zillmere State School is deserving of specific support. Last year, the coalition implemented a grounds-care policy. I acknowledge that that policy was developed under the previous Labor Government. However, when it was implemented the school lost its full-time groundsman. I took up that issue very strongly with the then Minister Quinn. To his credit and to the credit of the coalition Government, they revised the grounds-care policy, which provided improvements. I thank them for that.

**Mr Veivers:** What about the tartan track? You never mentioned the track.

**Mr ROBERTS:** With respect to the grounds-care support at Zillmere, it is in need of additional support and it is a matter that I will be taking up with the Minister. I will take the interjection relating to the tartan track at Nudgee College. It is an excellent facility. I am very pleased to acknowledge the support given to that track by the previous Minister, the member for Southport. In fact, I have challenged him to a 100-metre sprint down the main track, which I hope he will take up when the track is formally opened. It is a great facility for the north side. The schools and communities on the north side will receive a tremendous benefit from the \$500,000 that the State Government put into that facility.

Time expired.

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