



Speech by

Mr BRUCE LAMING

MEMBER FOR MOOLOOLAH

Hansard 2 March 1999

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr LAMING (Mooloolah—LP) (4.07 p.m.): Just as I did in 1995, I take this opportunity to reflect on some of the matters raised in my own maiden speech of 1992. I believe this is a valuable lesson in reflection of ideals expressed, achievements or continuing efforts. I do of course acknowledge the role of our Governor, His Excellency Major General Arnison, AO. I would get universal agreement in this House, I am sure, as to the dignified yet friendly way that he, accompanied so often by Mrs Arnison, goes about his duties. There is something about the role of Governors and Governors-General which will be extremely difficult to replicate if and when we as Australians or Queenslanders make substantial changes to our respective constitutions. I do not make that observation as an arch conservative resistant to change but as a realist.

It would be remiss of me not to take the opportunity that the Address in Reply affords me to thank a few special people that either assisted in my re-election or made my work more effective. I thank my wife, Estelle; my campaign director, Hunter Ploetz; my campaign committee; my electorate officer, Lyn Parker; and our new assistant, Ainsley Hall. The fact that their importance goes without saying does not mean that it ought not indeed be said.

In 1992 I referred to the then dream of the Sunshine Coast having its own university. Of course, that dream is now a reality and a tremendous asset to the coast. I appreciated the opportunity to make a contribution when the Bill to change the campus's name and status was debated last year.

I spoke six years ago about another vision, that of a rail line from the Sunshine Coast to Brisbane. The previous coalition Government had progressed this to the planning stage, and I call on the Minister for Main Roads to continue the consultation process thoroughly so that the community is a part of that process. Whether it is light rail, heavy rail or dedicated busway will depend on a number of factors, and I trust that no options are ruled out.

In the meantime, the six-laning of the busiest section of the Bruce Highway between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast is becoming urgent. This crucial work does not appear in the National Highways section of the latest Roads Implementation Program. I urge the Minister to follow this up with the Federal Minister.

Naturally, in my first contribution I made particular mention of the toll on the Sunshine Motorway, and on behalf of coast residents I would like to say, "Thank goodness." Thanks to the former coalition Government, the toll is now gone. I also welcome the assurance from the Minister for Main Roads during the Estimates debates that the Government does not intend to reintroduce those tolls. So popular has the motorway now become—operating as it always should have, as a freeway—that it, too, is in need of four-laning in its central section.

I note from the recent Roads Implementation Program document that the bulk of this work is scheduled for the period 2000-2003. I contend that this work should be brought forward to no later than the year 2000. I urge the Minister to reconsider this upgrade program and disregard any consideration of its former status as a toll road as impacting on the program's timing. In conjunction with this work, it is becoming vital that the intersection of Buderim-Mooloolaba Road with the motorway must be addressed. This complex, staggered intersection is causing considerable traffic congestion which is not

confined to peak traffic periods. I ask the Minister to request his officers to report on a solution to this problem.

Similarly, one of the tightest sections of traffic on the Sunshine Coast is the Nicklin Way between Currimundi and the Mooloolah River, particularly that section north of Point Cartwright Drive. The proposed Kawana arterial will provide an alternative north-south route between Caloundra and Mooloolaba as well as a western link via the Sunshine Motorway to the Bruce Highway. The bulk of this work is scheduled for the period beyond the year 2003. I call on the Minister to use every effort available to bring this work forward as much as possible consistent with the works program of Kawana Estates. With the growth rate being experienced on the Sunshine Coast, I do not believe that the Nicklin Way can cope alone for the next four years, even taking into account the upgrading that is currently under consideration.

Naturally, I made particular mention of unemployment in my maiden speech six years ago and have done so on a number of occasions since. I will come back to that topic a little later. Another project I signalled in 1992 was the emerging need for a police station at Buderim. Well, the need is still there and growing, and I have called on—and will continue to call on—the Minister for Police to give consideration to this need. I will come back to policing in the north coast region, too, a little later.

It is not just that I represent an electorate with higher than average unemployment that I am personally passionate about jobs, but I suppose that fact does constantly remind me of how the whole community suffers from institutionalised unemployment and underemployment. It is not just jobs. I personally believe that every member of our community who is able to make a commitment and a contribution to their community should be given the opportunity and, indeed, be expected to do so. I reflect back to my first speech again, when I said—

"If one examines the functions of our existing parliamentary committees, important as they may be to parliamentary theorists, one would have to wonder whether by the turn of the century, ordinary Queenslanders would have been better served by this Parliament with the establishment of an employment committee."

The end of the century is now less than two years away, and I have not changed my mind. I would, of course, prefer that half a million jobs could be found in private enterprise. If that is not going to occur quickly, Governments must look elsewhere in the short term.

It is, of course, a personal view about which I remain somewhat sanguine, but we do have a structural problem of government in Australia which is one of the greatest obstacles to some of the possible answers to unemployment. I refer, of course, to the fact that it is the Federal Government that has the responsibility for welfare, including unemployment benefits, and the States that are responsible for most of the country's Public Service delivery.

Current moves by the Commonwealth are encouraging, and I believe that we are now moving in the right direction with work-for-dole programs expanding into new areas rather than just pointless make-work schemes. One such area is a program providing for Sunshine Coast courtesy officers. This program gives young unemployed people an opportunity to gain skills and experience in the tourism industry on the coast. In the course of their training, they will be promoting local business and attractions. The sponsors of this program are CADET—the Caloundra Agency for Development, Employment and Training. There are, of course, other programs, such as the Business Incubator being proposed by the Sunshine Coast Area Consultative Committee. Such a centre would include office and light industrial uses and would also assist suitable home-based businesses that conform to local council regulations.

This is an emerging business opportunity. I will continue to seek Government assistance for this initiative. I commend the efforts on this project so far by Ros Hourigan, Earl Covington, David Hopper, Linda Maxwell and other members of the Sunshine Coast Area Consultative Committee. I call on the Minister for Employment to recognise the business and job creation role of such projects.

I said earlier that I would come back to the question of policing. Although my initial interest in police numbers was sparked by an apparent shortage in and around my own electorate, my approach to the problem was anything but parochial. Let me say that Queensland, by national comparisons, was let down by the former Goss Labor Government. I supported and commend the work done by the former coalition Minister, the member for Crows Nest, who inherited the run-down situation. His work in lifting police numbers right across the State is on the public record.

But then there was the method of distribution throughout the regions. The police staffing allocation model was set up supposedly to take the politics out of this task. After considerable research, I was able to identify that the north coast and the Gold Coast/Logan regions were very much disadvantaged by some of the factors in the model. I believe that the basis for the model should be revised. In the meantime, the north coast was just starting to benefit from the coalition's increased recruitment and civilianisation. I call on the current Minister to continue the good work of his predecessor.

I was disappointed to learn that the Sunshine Coast district was not listed amongst the latest recipient districts receiving what are known as retreads. I will be watching closely to ensure that the Sunshine Coast does not slip back to its former disadvantaged position. Let me say quite clearly that I intend to monitor closely the continued flow of officers to the north coast region to ensure that the process of redress continues under the new Government. I believe that it is essential to get those extra police officers required to mount foot and car patrols in problem areas, particularly at night and on weekends.

There are a number of other areas throughout Queensland, I am sure, that are having similar problems with congregations of mainly young people at night. It is important that we do not categorise all young people into this troublesome group. It is a small minority, but their antisocial activities are causing concern in many of our communities. As much as I am continuing to call for more police and reactive police attention to unlawful activities, we as legislators have a wider responsibility. It is difficult to address all of the contributing factors, such as dysfunctional families, alcohol and drug abuse and youth unemployment. Yet with something approaching 40% of youth on the Sunshine Coast unemployed, that is obviously a good place to start.

This is a national disgrace, and it is unacceptable. Of course, there are other proactive measures that are being taken to address youth problems. I cite as an example the great change in Schoolies Week on the Sunshine Coast. By providing non-harmful activities for our young visitors, Schoolies Week has become something to which coast traders now look forward. I give credit to David Curd of Community Solutions for his contribution to this outcome. Perhaps we can transplant this successful formula to the next age group. I would like to think that we could.

The contribution of the Sunshine Coast Community Police Partnership was just starting to become evident when I was advised that the Minister for Police was intending to drop the program. I wrote to the Minister, and take this opportunity to acknowledge this extension of funding to the CPP, but request that he assess each CPP on its level of local support and give Julia Knight of the Sunshine Coast CPP the funding and support to continue their work—a little extra time to present a case for its retention. I believe it could provide an example to others as to how they can be run successfully. If the consideration is purely budgetary, perhaps there is some unused funding that can be transferred from regions where CPPs have terminated.

I have already referred to the Sunshine Coast University from an academic perspective, but I would now like to mention another challenge. The university was successful in its bid for funding of \$1.4m to construct a ten-lane synthetic surface athletics track last year. I acknowledge the support of the former coalition Minister, the member for Southport, and that of the Maroochy Shire Council, which contributed \$100,000. Unfortunately, an unforeseen problem with base soil type arose, which has required additional expenditure to ensure that the track surface meets the exacting international standards. I made representations to the new Minister for Sport and hoped that he would recognise the need to ensure that the track is constructed on the right foundations. I have been advised that this bid for further assistance was not successful. That is disappointing. I will be continuing my efforts to ensure that we do achieve a first-class track with all the necessary facilities to go with it as soon as possible. To this end, I have written to both Caloundra City Council and Noosa Shire Council in a bid to gain their support for this truly regional facility.

I have mainly addressed issues today that were of interest or concern to me when I first entered this place. If I am fortunate enough to be re-elected in the year 2000 or 2001, I would like to revisit some of these important issues at that time and be able to report that many of them have indeed been successfully addressed.
