



Speech by

**Mr J. HEGARTY**

**MEMBER FOR REDLANDS**

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Hansard 3 March 1999

**ADDRESS IN REPLY**

**Mr HEGARTY** (Redlands—NPA) (3.35 p.m.): It gives me pleasure to speak to the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply. I take this opportunity to reaffirm my allegiance and that of the people in my electorate of Redlands to Her Majesty the Queen and pass on my best wishes to her representative in Queensland, His Excellency the Governor, Major General Arnison.

I wish also to record my gratitude, albeit belatedly after the State election in June last year, to the people of my electorate for the confidence they have placed in me to represent them again in this House for a further term. Naturally, I continue to work hard for their benefit and interests, as I have done in the past.

The recent State election was a rather unusual one and also produced some interesting results. Putting that to one side, I acknowledge that the democratic process was carried out, and whoever is elected to this House represents the people in the electorate for which they stood.

I acknowledge the people in my electorate who assisted me in the State election campaign, particularly my campaign manager, Ken Smith, and his committee, who assisted me greatly in achieving my re-election. I wish to acknowledge my electorate officers Glenys Head and Elizabeth Hickey who provide invaluable support to me and my constituents. I wish also to acknowledge the support of my family—my wife, Joan, and my children, Tanya and Jason—for their assistance and support. It goes without saying that the partners of all members of this House play a fairly prominent role. To a large extent, their life revolves around the activities that we as members have to perform as part of our daily lives.

Historically, the electorate of Redlands has been a farming area. However, people familiar with the area would know that in recent times it is becoming urbanised very rapidly. Last year, the Redland Shire Council altered its strategic plan, enabling further farmlands to be developed into residential development. That is a sad thing for most people in the area, the farmers in particular. Some of them have not been able to maintain the income levels they would have liked due to competition from larger holdings further west and in the north of the State, which produce crops more cheaply because of their larger scale.

Fortunately, although we have seen the loss of some very good agricultural land in the Redlands, we have been able to retain a fairly large tract of bushland, which incorporates much of the southern part of the Redland Shire, which is in my electorate. It has been retained in its present form with the assistance of the current strategic plan and the State planning policy that was put in place by the former Goss Government and reaffirmed by the former Borbidge Government. That will provide some protection for that environmental area. It will create a buffer from residential development and provide a refuge for the flora and fauna inhabiting it.

Over the past two and a half years, the coalition Government of which I was proud to be a member made significant achievements of benefit to my electorate. It would be remiss of me not to mention a couple, not all of which are in my electorate but which service my electorate. Recently, I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the Redland Hospital, a \$47m project which increased the hospital's capacity from a 40-bed to a 144-bed hospital. It is providing a much-needed facility for Redlands residents. That hospital will provide a lot of services that previously people had to travel to the PA or the RBH to receive. Residents in the southern part of the shire do not have ready access to the rail network. Although the bus network is improving, people had to undertake a long journey to the

city—that is especially arduous for the frail and elderly—to receive outpatient treatment at a hospital, for example, medication and supervision.

The hospital will also be expanding, owing to negotiations that were commenced under the previous Government but have just been finalised with the Sisters of Mercy. A private hospital is now going to be co-located at the Redland Hospital. It will again provide extra beds. The services will be able to be utilised by the public hospital and eventually, I understand, the private hospital will revert to public ownership in, I think, 30 years' time. So that is a great benefit for the State in its provision of medical services.

The police station and courthouse at Cleveland was also an initiative of the coalition Government. It was funded in 1996. Whilst it was only just completed in recent months and opened only last month, it will again provide a service for the Redland Shire, which incorporates my electorate. The courthouse is complementary to the police station, as I expect will be the trend in future developments of that type, which ensures a safe and secure passage of prisoners from the watch-house to the courthouse via an underground tunnel. The police station itself is a much larger and more work-conducive premises than the old one was, the old one being an historic building that was added on to, with a temporary building added on to that. It has actually been said that some officers could not work inside during their shift because of the lack of space. That is a fairly critical situation, I think all members would agree, when we recognise the very hard and essential job that police officers in this State carry out.

I turn now to the southern Moreton Bay islands, which are incorporated in my electorate. A planning study was initially instigated by the former Goss Government and was carried on by the Borbidge Government in conjunction with the Redland Shire Council, which funded a study looking at the long-term potential development of those islands. For those members who are unfamiliar with that area, I point out that the islands are in the Moreton Bay Marine Park, a significant area bordering south-east Queensland which provides a lot of pleasure, not to mention a fair amount of economic wealth by way of marine produce not only for our own local consumption but also for export.

The history of the islands goes back to the early seventies when they were developed as Crown land and subsequently handed over to the Redland Shire Council for their administration. Unfortunately, as was common at the time I guess throughout Queensland and perhaps throughout Australia, the development requirements were not as stringent or as encompassing as they are today. As a result, those islands do not enjoy the facilities and infrastructure that is required today.

The Redland Shire Council has now adopted the recommendations that came from that study, which concluded last year. Some interest has been shown by the Federal Government in assisting to protect the marine environment in Moreton Bay. It is now being put to the Minister that he should accept the report and the recommendations and provide some funding for the council. The Federal Government has indicated its willingness to provide some financial assistance conditional upon the State Government taking the lead in that regard.

I have written to the Minister, the Honourable Terry Mackenroth, and I am pleased to report that I have received a reply just today. Whilst it does not guarantee his financial support, at least it acknowledges that his department is still working through the issue. I take the view from that reply that the Minister is looking at it favourably. I would like to put on record that, while the study was being undertaken, the previous Borbidge/Sheldon Government gave a qualified indication of its financial support, depending on the outcome of the study. We now need some relatively quick response so that both the local council and the Federal Government can make budgetary provisions in their forthcoming Budgets to enable some of that infrastructure, land acquisition or whatever is required to be implemented.

The other issue allied with the Moreton Bay Marine Park, which I again will highlight to the Minister for Primary Industries, is the proposal to minimise the amount of fishing that has taken place there, especially by amateur fishermen. We realise that a lot of commercial fishermen depend on this resource for a living. Under the previous Government there was an initiative whereby we offered to buy back a number of licences to minimise the impact of that particular industry on a limited and, I guess, finite resource. The amateur fishermen are also having a fairly large impact on the fish resources of the bay.

Whilst we have to recognise that fishing is an activity that many people enjoy by way of recreation with perhaps a little bit of provision for their own consumption, the cumulative effect of that, of course, has almost as much effect as large-scale fishing. I understand that there are proposals to have a bucket limit or a weight limit per boat to try to minimise that. I think that most people in this House would realise that the average family can consume only so much in a certain space of time without having to give the produce to friends and neighbours or, in the end, just throwing it out if it cannot be consumed. I think that most reasonable amateur fishermen would accept that, yes, they can

fish, but they have a responsibility to take only what could be regarded as a reasonable quantity for personal consumption.

It has, however, been brought to my attention on a couple of occasions that there are certain elements in society who, whilst not actually being categorised as commercial fishermen and not having a licence to be one, operate in a semi-commercial way. In order to meet the requirement as to catch quantity, they are doing what the larger ocean-going fishing nations do, that is, having a mother ship arrangement. They will go out and fish til they reach their maximum allowable quantity. Then they will pass that amount on to a mother boat, thereby achieving compliance. With a fast speedboat, there would be a chance of them not being detected by the Fisheries inspectors. We have to look at that. If we are going to regulate the vast majority, there has to be sufficient policing of the recalcitrants who are not prepared to play by the rules and who diminish the resource which is there for the benefit of everyone.

There is a problem arising in my electorate in relation to law and order. Responsibility for the southern Moreton Bay islands, which used to come within the jurisdiction of the water police operating from Redland Bay, has been transferred recently to the Cleveland Police Station. Whilst the officers there do an excellent job, it would be no surprise to members to learn that, in common with the rest of the State, they are fairly pressed owing to limited manpower. In fact, it has been highlighted by both the previous Borbidge/Sheldon Government and the previous Goss Government that the Wynnum Police District, which covers the Cleveland Police Division, has the lowest police to population ratio in the State. Of course, this was brought up on both sides as a reason for increasing police numbers.

I am sorry to say that the present manning levels in both the Cleveland and Redland Bay stations have actually been reduced because of transfers and people filling in in acting positions at other stations. That is causing an enormous problem in my electorate and, as I said before, particularly the southern Moreton Bay islands. I ask the Minister to have the water police at Redland Bay instructed to resume responsibility for those southern Moreton Bay islands. The travelling time between Redland Bay and the islands is about 10 or 12 minutes, whereas from Cleveland it is approximately 20 minutes. That 8 or 10 minutes' response time can be quite critical in a number of cases.

The people on the islands feel fairly isolated. I think all members here would understand that if people who live on the mainland feel threatened or intimidated and they do not want a confrontation, they can easily move away. They can get in their cars and get away from the situation if it is in a residential location. People living on an island cannot do that. Everyone knows where everyone else is. For that reason, the people there require and are entitled to the degree of security and peace of mind that I think we would all expect in living our day-to-day lives.

In conclusion, I restate my thanks to the people of my electorate for supporting me at last year's State election and again assure them of my very best intention to work hard in their interests to make the electorate of Redlands a better place to live.

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