



Speech by

Mr M. VEIVERS

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Hansard 2 March 1999

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr VEIVERS (Southport—NPA) (5.28 p.m.): Firstly, I pledge my allegiance to Her Majesty, through His Excellency the Governor, Peter Arnison. Let me say straightaway that I want to thank the people in the electorate of Southport for the confidence that they once again have placed in me for my fifth term.

Mr Foley interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: I want to tell the Honourable Attorney that I know and he knows that mine is a 54% to 57% Labor electorate. You blokes have been trying to win it for the——

Mr Mickel: We will get it next time.

Mr VEIVERS: I think I will be old and gummy by the time they nail me, but still I take no chances and try not to take any prisoners. It is a wonderful electorate. It is a working man's electorate. It is a pleasure to represent the people there.

Mr Roberts: It's like Nudgee.

Mr VEIVERS: Yes, it is just like Nudgee. Of course, every now and the there is a good Minister in Government—even when you are in Opposition—who gives you something, like that terrific track at Nudgee. It is not turf; it is synthetic. It is going well, is it? I am told that the birds fly into it occasionally; is that correct?

Mr Roberts: No, that is not correct.

Mr VEIVERS: That is good. Thank God for that, because that would be another minus. I am glad to hear the member for Nudgee say that.

I must thank my hardworking volunteers, who continue to support me all through the year every year. I thank my electorate council chairman, Graham Cash. He is a good bloke with lots of worries. He seems to put up with me. We get on just fine. I get a few lectures from him from time to time. They are pretty strong lectures at times; however, we get by. I also thank the secretary of my electorate council, Garth Keppie, who is a really switched-on man about town. He is really into the overseas tourism business. He is doing very well with his college, which teaches Japanese and Chinese languages.

I thank my campaign manager, Mrs Fay Hinze, and her band of willing workers for always coming along and doing the right thing. She has supported and run the campaigns for me on the last three occasions. That is probably one of the reasons I am reasonably successful. It has nothing to do with me; it has everything to do with Fay Hinze. No matter which side of the political fence one is on, one must recognise that she is a very knowledgeable woman. She has been through the school of hard knocks. She has guided me through my campaign so that we dodged a few pitfalls, even though the Labor candidate had other ideas.

I thank John Dixon. He did and still does a fine job. I think I would be remiss if I did not thank my electorate secretary, Barbara Talty. I think all members realise that when we are out of the office—whether one is a Minister or just a member of Parliament—our electorate secretaries are us when we are not there. If they make a boo-boo, say the wrong thing or give a wrong explanation or advice, the member has to wear it. An electorate secretary is most important. I have a beauty in Ms Talty. She works above and beyond the call of duty. She does a great job. I mention Henry Lack, who

has been with me now for 10 years off and on, mostly off. It is pretty hard to keep up with Henry. He is one of those characters that one runs into in life.

I am glad that a Liberal colleague is in the House. I thank the Liberal Party for its support and for telling, in advertisements, that I was also their candidate for the seat of Southport. My thanks go to Geoff Johnson, the president of the Liberal Party on the Gold Coast, for his magnificent support and that of the Liberal Party. As members know, in three-cornered contests we used to be belting each other around a little bit. The Liberal Party has got behind me. I have to say that I was the first candidate to have the National Party logo in one corner and the Liberal Party blue logo in the other corner. I hope I carried the banner for the Liberal Party in the manner to which they were accustomed and in the manner they wished I would carry it.

I thank the former president, John Mason, who started that trend. We have worked pretty closely together down there. In the presence of all members I have to say that it has not always been rosy between the National Party and the Liberal Party. I remember Russ Hinze getting elected on Labor preferences when a fellow called Bruce Bishop was running. It is good to see that I have been able to settle things down and receive the support of all people from our side. There is not any doubt that we need it.

Finally, but not least, I want to say many thanks to my wife, Betty, and my son, David, who have taken the brunt of the telephone calls at home when I am not home. They, particularly my son, have had to put up with the jibes relating to my work when I was Minister for Sport and Emergency Services. Our families really are important to us. They take some nasty calls. They are not the member but, because of loyalty, the family—if my wife is not there, it is my son—has to take the call. Because they know it is so important, they take the calls, whether they are bad, good or indifferent. On many occasions, they have had to put up with what I will describe as a lot of rot. It is not always pleasant for families. I think everyone in this House knows what I am talking about.

While gloom and doom still abounds, with many people continuing to worry about the ramifications of the Asian economic meltdown, I can report with confidence that things are definitely looking bright in my electorate of Southport in particular and on the Gold Coast in general. Not everywhere is sweet, but in the area of Southport, during the last 27 months when my coalition Government was in power, we achieved things that were only pipedreams in the time before we came to office. Hopefully this momentum will continue, despite the efforts of those who would attempt to sabotage it. I am not saying that those people sit on the opposite side of the House. However, there are some people who just do not want it to happen; they want it to happen somewhere else. Our list of achievements is an impressive one.

The reasons for our success include the cooperation of the local government, in this case the Gold Coast City Council and Mayor Gary Baildon and Ray Stevens, the former mayor, and my local councillor, Dawn Crichlow, who is very friendly—and I am friendly with Dawn. There is no doubt that I will look all members in the eye and say that I am definitely not going to get her offside, because I have seen a few people try to take the sting out of her and I have not seen anyone get the better of her. I am not going to try. She loves Southport and thinks it is the best thing since sliced bread. So do I. We are a team. She is the pretty one and I am the ugly one, and we get on just fine. We have also had the cooperation of the council officers, all of whom work tirelessly toward our goals. Thanks to that spirit of cooperation, we have managed to put in place a number of world-standard sporting facilities that have already returned huge dividends to Southport, the Gold Coast and, indeed, to Queensland and Australia.

Mr Mickel interjected.

Mr VEIVERS: It is that good. The member for Logan is getting a \$70m milk factory in his electorate, but we have other facilities on the Gold Coast.

I remember when I was the Minister for Sport. I flew off to encourage the Olympics teams to come to Queensland. Boy, didn't I cop a bucket from members opposite! "This is another jaunt," they said. I have never worked so hard. As a result, at the last count, 17 of the major Olympic nations are coming to pre-train here in Queensland. According to Labor's figures, to the economy of Queensland that will be worth something in the vicinity of \$80m to \$100m. Those are not my figures; those are the figures that the Premier is now using. He is the bloke who said that I would not get anyone, that it was hopeless and that I was going on a jaunt that was an absolute waste of time. A press release put out on his behalf stated that all the ticketing and so on would be done somewhere in Sydney. I do not know whether it was Campbelltown or somewhere around there. The press release said that they would all be put through the wringer down there and given their identification there and that no-one would be coming to Queensland. That was not the best press release that had ever been put out. I do not know if the current Premier had a lot to do with it, but it was not really too successful and it was not very truthful. I was able to come back and say, not two to the Valley, but "Have a look at this; these are the achievements."

I know that members opposite will have a look at the report. I think it would be worth while if they went back into the archives and looked at the report that I did on my trip over there and who I saw. At the time, I did not tell members opposite that I was the only foreign politician to be invited to address the United States Olympic Committee and the United States Olympic Congress. I did not tell very many people about that, but that is where the success started and it has continued since then. The American track and field team will be training in the member's electorate. They will bring money into the electorate—they will be staying there—and the member is going to get all the benefits. I told him that I helped him to get re-elected at the last election by putting that track in his electorate. When the 2000 Olympics come, the member will be out there shaking hands with all of these flyers and athletes. It will probably help him get elected again.

Mr Mickel: The Baywatch girls, too.

Mr VEIVERS: I will get to that. These facilities that I want to talk about have become magnets for many of these overseas teams who have committed themselves, as I have said, to making the Gold Coast their training base in the lead-up to the Sydney 2000 Olympics. We have to remember that it is only a 38-minute flight from Brisbane to Sydney. Hopefully, those teams will be organised so that they take that flight, then take a bus to the Olympics. Let us face it: tourists can do the same. They can stay up here—in the best State in Australia—where it is a bit cheaper and away from the hustle and bustle, and they can fly down to the Olympics. I think we all agree that they can do that. Let us hope that they do it.

As the Minister for Sport in the previous coalition Government, it is with some justifiable pride that I can see the tangible evidence of the hard work and cooperation that we have had from everybody. We now have a magnificent, world-standard athletics track at the Gold Coast campus of the Griffith University. I know that we also put one in at Nudgee, and one at the university at St Lucia. All of those tracks are magnificent. They are working. When the coalition came to power, when one crossed the Brisbane River the next tartan track was in Townsville. That was not good, but successive Governments all ignored sport.

Mr Reynolds: The Townsville one has been there for 15 years.

Mr VEIVERS: I know it has. I am saying that it was there but we needed more. That is simply it in a nutshell. As I have said already, these tracks will be used by a great number of competitors in the lead-up to the Games. However, our youth and our athletes will be using these tracks over the years to come.

The facility at the Gold Coast was a great example of cooperation between the then coalition Government, the city council and the Griffith University Students Guild. While talking about the university students' guild, I could get into the debate about what is happening with student unions throughout Australia. Quite frankly, I am going to say that I am one who cannot see why we should be abolishing them. I think that they do a great job. That is my view, and a few members on this side of the House think the same thing. I want to make special mention of the guild's chief executive officer on the Gold Coast, Teena Morrow. In common with the ones in Rockhampton and in north Queensland, the members of that guild do a great job. They have worked tirelessly to bring that track and other buildings to the university. That Gold Coast campus is just growing—like the many others around, including the one at Logan—like a mushroom. I think that these youngsters get in there and do a great job. I just hope that the present thinking in Canberra changes. I have been told the reason why they want to abolish those unions. However, quite frankly, looking at it with an open mind, I cannot see any justification for their argument.

Long after the Sydney Olympics are but a memory these tracks, particularly the one on the Gold Coast, will continue to be used by other local budding athletes and, hopefully, future gold medallists. I must mention also that the coalition put in an Olympic-standard hockey field at Hunt Park. That is another facility that is a monument to the former coalition Government, to the council and, I suppose, to me as the then Minister for Sport. I must say that I am hoping that we will be able to put another track on the Gold Coast, because we are getting tremendous use out of the present one. Although the Gold Coast is the sixth-largest city in Australia, we did not have a track down there and the youngsters in that area used to have to travel to Brisbane or to Toowoomba. Although there is a track in north Queensland, such tracks were as scarce as hen's teeth. I hope that one day shortly we will be able to have a second track there so that the youngsters from the major schools—all of them—get a chance to play their sport, because it is a growing sport that most youngsters are interested in. It is a world-standard field and it has already attracted competitors from far and wide, bringing with it the sort of financial benefits that this kind of sporting activity generates.

Although it is outside my electorate—and I know that the member for Nerang, Mr Connor, will not mind me mentioning it—the Nerang cycling track is yet another facility that was upgraded as a result of work carried out by the council and the Department of Sport when I was the responsible Minister. The current Minister for Sport could not attend its opening, so Merri Rose went along and opened it. I have to say that I was invited along but I was not mentioned at the opening—not by the Minister, anyhow.

Anyway, one gets over these things. There is nothing more ex than an ex-Minister. One gets to learn these things very quickly in life.

Mr Mickel: Don't get maudlin; you were doing well.

Mr VEIVERS: No, I was just mentioning it. I ask the Honourable Matt Foley whether that is right. He is like flour: he has been through the mill. However, like Lazarus, he has resurrected himself. He has come back bigger and better, although I do not fancy the ties that he wears!

Mr Mickel: I would have put you on the front bench, Mick.

Mr VEIVERS: Let us not get nasty. Let us get back to my electorate. The swimming pool will be going in at Southport, and it will have a diving tower. It is well on its way to becoming another Olympic standard venue that will be used for pre-training, and it will have the tower. They were not going to put in the tower. However, when the pool is completed, it will be appreciated not only by competitive swimmers but also by the public at large.

From a business perspective, Southport is on track to reinforce its position as the central business district of the Gold Coast. It is coming back! The revamping of the Southport Mall at the eastern end of Nerang Street has opened up new opportunities. Business people and developers are viewing this area in a new light. I can tell members that the response has been very positive indeed.

During the coalition's term of Government, the new law courts were constructed and associated facilities were upgraded and then completed. They were needed desperately and gave that part of Southport where they are located a badly needed upgrading both aesthetically and in the provision of services.

The social clubs in the Southport area have played their part in providing vastly improved facilities for the local people through their charter of ploughing profits back into the community. The Southport RSL is one example. It has also grown like a mushroom.

Mr Sullivan: You have helped generate some profits, too, haven't you?

Mr VEIVERS: Absolutely, and I can tell honourable members that I have not taken any off the top, either. I am pleased to do that, because that is what we are all here for: we are here to serve the people who elect us and make things happen so that our areas are a better place in which to live.

The Southport Sharks Australian Football Club, under the capable stewardship of Mr Paul Wyatt, is another club that has grown. It is really a magnificent facility. Quite frankly, I can say here and now that one day it will probably host a major Australian Rules—and I am talking about the AFL—team in the competition. That is a little way down the track, but that club would be capable of doing just that. It is in an ideal situation and location to do just that. Let us not forget the Southport Workers Club, of which I am a member. It is in the throes of an expansion program that will provide another first-class entertainment and recreation venue for the local community. All of those places put on good, cheap meals. The entertainment is not cheap; it is really brilliant. There are performances from first-class acts—in fact, world-class acts—but people are not charged—

Mr Mickel: Jobs for Australians, that's what it's all about.

Mr VEIVERS: I agree with the member on that. It is creating jobs for Australia. It is also giving an opportunity—

Time expired.
