



Speech by

BARBARA STONE

MEMBER FOR SPRINGWOOD

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FIRST SPEECH

Ms STONE (Springwood—ALP) (12.36 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge that this parliament meets today on the traditional lands of the Jagera and Turrubul people. I also extend my warmest congratulations to you and the Speaker on your election to the high offices that you hold. I am confident that you will both serve with integrity.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to the members of Queensland's government and particularly to the Premier of this state on a monumental election victory. The large mandate given to this Labor government signifies the trust Queenslanders have placed in the leadership of Peter Beattie and the Australian Labor Party. To Her Majesty's opposition, I extend my congratulations and invite you to follow the example set by the Premier, that is, the practice of engagement, inclusion, access and, above all, the development of positive policies. There is no place in this 50th Parliament for negativity, from which the people of Queensland would be the only losers. I extend the invitation for you to contribute to the government's programs and not create an environment that tarnishes this parliament.

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the people of the Springwood electorate for electing me to represent them in parliament. Their confidence will not be misplaced, as I will work hard to listen and respond to their concerns. It is a great honour to be elected as their voice in government. I am strongly committed to putting Springwood first and ensuring that our local issues are at the forefront of government decision making and policy development.

My first memories of Springwood are as a child. Driving back home to the southern suburbs from the Gold Coast every weekend, I would see the signs, 'If you lived in Springwood you would be home in 15 minutes', 'If you lived in Springwood you would be home in 10 minutes', and 'If you lived in Springwood you would be home in 5 minutes.' My response every weekend was, 'I wish we lived in Springwood.' I do not think I surprised any members of my family when I bought a block of land in Springwood in 1980.

In 1987, two major events happened in my life: one, I built my home on that block of land at Springwood; and two, I was selected to be an Australia Post pavilion attendant at World Expo 88. After Expo I worked in many post offices in Logan City and the southern suburbs of Brisbane.

The Springwood electorate lies in Logan City. It includes the suburbs of Rochedale South, Springwood, Priestdale, Daisy Hill, Slacks Creek, Shailer Park, Loganholme, Cornubia and Logandale Estate. It is also home to some unique bushland, such as the Daisy Hill State Forest and the Springwood Environmental Park. It has two major shopping precincts, Loganholme and Springwood. These major shopping centres, along with smaller suburban centres, house a variety of small businesses—businesses that employ locals and are the backbone of the local community. The electorate is predominantly residential. People have settled on the outskirts of Brisbane to take advantage of fine state and private schools, large allotments offering a family environment, unique bushland and an affordable lifestyle.

My vision for the electorate over the next three years is not radical or earth shattering, it is quite simply to make sure the people of Springwood have top billing as the Beattie Labor government rolls out its election commitments. For me, putting Queensland first will always mean putting Springwood first. As well as the bush, it is the outer suburbs such as those of the Springwood electorate that are

having basic services and resources slashed at the hands of a mean-spirited federal government. A fine example of this is the federal government's socioeconomic status funding scheme that strips much-needed funding from Queensland schools and places at risk a fair and well-resourced education system for our children.

Against the slash and burn mentality of the current federal government, it is refreshing to see strong leadership in the provision of funding by the Beattie government, ensuring the right of any child to access a world-class education. Since coming to office in 1998, this has been consistently demonstrated by the Beattie government, nowhere more so than in my electorate of Springwood. This government has delivered an extra \$875,000 for Chatswood Hills State School, Kimberley Park State School and Springwood State High School. That money has been used by the schools to improve facilities, including covered walkways, guttering, painting and other general maintenance.

A school nurse has been employed at Shailer Park and Springwood State High Schools to provide confidential counselling and support for students. That is a Labor government initiative that comes at a time when students and the community are struggling to deal with youth suicide, youth mental health and eating disorders.

I look forward to working with the government to address the needs of an ever-changing society through the development of responsible education policies such as 2010 and New Basics. Those policies aim to have our kids adapt to new economies and new technologies and to achieve cohesive social communities that address the need to maintain a sustainable environment.

The people of Springwood want not only a good education curriculum and enhanced learning environments for their children but also a safe and caring community. I will work hard to establish more Neighbourhood Watch groups in the electorate. Through the involvement of the Logan Police Community Consultative Committee, as a community we can continue to tackle crime.

I note with anticipation the creation of the Springwood south-east busway interchange proposed for the second half of 2001. This will improve public transport opportunities for the people of Springwood, and will also drastically reduce the travelling time into the city. The construction of the Springwood interchange will provide employment directly and indirectly through the increase of travellers to the Springwood business area. As part of the Springwood interchange a new ramp for motor vehicle access will also be constructed, providing direct access to the business district.

This 50th Parliament heralds a new era of participatory democracy. Through the initiatives of the Beattie government, all members of parliament will be better placed to provide the Athenian ideal. Social capital theories that fill public policy discourse around the world are in practice here in Queensland. Community cabinets, regional community consultative forums, taking parliament outside Brisbane and better resources for local members are the building blocks of social capital.

The Beattie government has risen to the challenges posed by the most decentralised of Australian states. Queenslanders, who for years were allowed to feel remote from government, are now seeing themselves connected to their government. Government is no longer remote.

Springwood was one of the first communities to experience a Beattie government's community cabinet. I will be encouraging the Premier to bring cabinet to Springwood again this term. Those opportunities are fundamental to bridging the divide between constituents and their representatives. I am confident that this grassroots consultation will continue to flourish over the term of this government.

The most important role I have is to listen. Throughout the campaign I had the pleasure of meeting many people in the electorate whilst doorknocking, attending meetings and at my mobile offices. Together with flexible office hours, I will continue those activities to ensure that I actively listen to and strongly represent the needs of the people of Springwood.

Prior to the election of the Beattie government in 1998, the electors of Springwood were suffering under the burden of increasing unemployment. They were suffering because the then government was unwilling to reach out a hand to help them gain the dignity of employment. It is only as a result of Peter Beattie's passion for creating jobs for Queenslanders that the rates of unemployment have dropped significantly in my electorate. That result would not be possible had we not had a Premier and a government focused on reducing unemployment every single day of the first term. That will be a priority in the second term. I am proud to be part of a government that will deliver on jobs for the people of Springwood.

The government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program has been highly successful. This program is providing apprenticeships, traineeships and other job opportunities for the people of Springwood. Its success is due largely to the enthusiasm of local businesses. Over the next three years I will continue to work with them in the electorate to ensure that they are kept informed of the assistance available to them to employ additional trainees and apprentices.

The Community Jobs Plan is another excellent initiative that has a direct effect on the people of Springwood. A sum of \$172,550 is being spent on Springwood people who will perform paid work

carrying out improvements at local schools. At the same time as they help school communities, participants will be helping themselves. They will learn new skills that will improve their chances of finding continuing employment. Springwood State High School, Springwood Road State School, Springwood Central State School, Kimberley Park State School and Shailer Park State School will all benefit from these projects.

The Community Jobs Plan is currently under way at Springwood State High School and is now in its second week. The plan employs long-term unemployed people or those who are at risk of becoming long-term unemployed. Springwood State High School will be gaining landscaping and some building work, while the participants of the project will be developing their numeracy, literacy and on-the-job skills. The end result of the plan is that the people undertaking the project will gain experience and skills that will give them an added incentive to search and gain employment. I will work hard to ensure further job opportunities such as this are created for the people of Springwood.

In total, 227 local unemployed people have been given the opportunity to work and obtain training in the Springwood area. Grants of this type have totalled \$688,245 since the initiative started in 1998. That is another successful outcome from the Beattie government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle. Compare those outcomes with the federal government's Work for the Dole scheme, where participants are not paid or given the same level of training as trainees under the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program. As a result, only 27 per cent of Work for the Dole participants obtained employment compared with 46 per cent of trainees under State Government initiatives.

This government will introduce other strategies to provide jobs for people over the age of 45. Their knowledge and skills are being wasted and we as a community are not gaining the benefit of their talent. The mature workers' wage subsidy and the Mature Age Job Ready Program form the basis for the Beattie government to address unemployment for mature-age workers. The wage subsidy provides a great incentive to employers who need experienced workers.

The Mature Age Job Ready Program will assist long-term unemployed mature-age workers to develop their job search skills and information technology skills in order to compete within today's labour market.

The Logan Institute of TAFE, Springwood Campus, plays a critical role in the development of vocational education and training. This is vital for the future of our community. I look forward to working with the director, Carol Elliot, in enhancing the role of TAFE in my electorate.

I grew up in the southern suburbs of Brisbane and attended public primary schools and a public secondary school. After grade 12 I entered the workforce. I joined Australia Post. While working for Australia Post I decided to study. I completed an Associate Diploma of Business Management at the Mount Gravatt TAFE College. This made me hungry for more study. I went on to complete a Bachelor of Business at the Queensland University of Technology, Gardens Point campus, while working full time. I know how hard part-time study is, but I also know how rewarding it can be. I am staunchly committed to ensuring people get the opportunities to study at various levels and at various times throughout their lives, that is, a commitment to life-long learning.

I am proud to be a member of a party where women now represent 40 per cent of our caucus. The Labor Party has come a long way in a short time, encouraging women to participate in the party and political life. This did not happen by accident. It is a result of the Labor Party, over the last decade, actively identifying, recruiting and encouraging women to participate. It is also the result of the hard work done by many outstanding women in Emily's List.

This Labor government will address what successive governments throughout history have neglected, that is, the issue of wage equity between men and women. Thirty-two years ago a decision was made to grant equal pay to all Australians. Thirty-two years on women in the workforce are still fighting for equal pay. Some Queensland women are earning 11 per cent to 17 per cent less than men doing the same work. Every day I hear from women how there have been large improvements in the workplace. However, there are some industries that are still not getting the message. I look forward to being part of a government that will tackle this issue and will deliver improved wages to Queensland women. To my female colleagues I say congratulations and to my male colleagues I say I look forward to working with you as an equal.

In this the Year of the Volunteer it would be remiss of me not to mention the wonderful volunteers and organisations in Springwood. The Buddha's Light International Association is a shining example of volunteer achievement. They are a gentle group of volunteers who promote peace, harmony and an inclusive society. Like the Daisy Hill-Loganholme Lions club, of which I am a member, they support many charities and individuals in the community through donations of money, resources and services. I acknowledge the Lions Club members in the public gallery today.

The Logan East Neighbourhood Centre has been operational for over seven years through the efforts of volunteers. It provides an effective support and referral service to the eastern suburbs of Logan City. The Springwood electorate has many sporting organisations which, through the mighty

efforts of volunteers, are developing our future sporting legends. It is also important to recognise the vital contribution that parents and citizens groups make to the schools of Queensland.

As I look around the chamber, I see a parliament that reflects society: females, males, electorate officers, lawyers, farmers, teachers, the mature, the young—

Mr Purcell: Labourers.

Ms STONE:—labourers and a variety of nationalities. This can be described only as healthy for the development of policies for such a diverse state as Queensland.

It is an honour to be a member of the 50th Parliament. It is especially humbling to sit in the House among many people who have provided me with inspiration and courage. To my mentor, the Honourable Judy Spence, I say: thanks for your guidance, encouragement and, most of all, your friendship. To my friend of over 20 years, the Deputy Premier, the Honourable Terry Mackenroth, I say: it is an honour and a privilege to sit alongside you in this parliament. When I met you I do not think either of us would have imagined that we would be in the positions we now hold.

Throughout my teenage years I was always interested in politics. It was then that I knew that I wanted to join the Australian Labor Party. As luck would have it, the guest speaker at my grade 12 speech night was the member for Chatsworth, Terry Mackenroth. At the age of 16 I introduced myself to him and asked to join the Australian Labor Party, and I have been a member ever since. I love the Australian Labor Party and I am proud to be a member.

One cannot be in the party for 23 years without having many people to thank. I would like to mention a few: the Mackenroth family; the Beierer family; the Birthisel family; former Lord Mayor Bryan Walsh; Claire Moore; Ron Monaghan; Milton Dick; the Carina Heights and Belmont, Mount Gravatt, Macgregor-Robertson and Springwood Central ALP branches; and my union, the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union. To Kris Hanna, the South Australian state member for Mitchell, I say: thankyou for your ongoing support and advice.

To Emily's List members: I thank you all for your commitment and support. In particular, I would like to thank the Honourable Joan Kirner for knowing exactly the right time to call. Her motivational chats were the best medicine in stressful times.

It takes many devoted and committed people to organise a successful campaign. My thanks go to my campaign team: Les Skelton, David Brennan, Jenny Sams, Laurie Percy, Terry Gobert, Paul Inches and Assistant State Secretary Linda Holliday. To Les and David, with whom I spent so many late nights and early mornings, I say: thanks for your support and hard work and for putting up with some of my most uncharitable moments. To my campaign organiser, Mark Ward, I say: thankyou, Mark, for your belief in and commitment to me and also to the campaign. I say thankyou to all the union members, branch members and family and friends who gave up so much of their time to become intimate with the hills, letterboxes and doors of the electorate.

To my electorate officers, Jenny Roberts and Michael White, I say: I can assure you that, as a former electorate officer, I know that the next three years will be challenging but also very rewarding. I look forward to building a great team that can make a difference. To all supporters of the campaign team, I say: thankyou.

Finally, I acknowledge my family, some of whom are in the public gallery today: my nana, Gwen; my mother, Gloria; Uncle Keith; Colin Llew; Barbara; Chiloh; and Liam. They have given me a great deal of love, support and encouragement throughout the campaign. I have always known the love of an extended family. Regardless of how many letters there were to fold and envelope, nana always had a sandwich, a cold drink and piece of cake waiting for us on our return.

During the campaign we were all complaining about having no time to do things like washing and ironing. I overheard a conversation. It went something like this: supporter 1 said, 'I need to go home to do my washing.' Supporter 2 said, 'Just give it to Barbara's mother. It goes out all rolled up in a plastic bag and comes back washed and ironed on pretty little hangers.' Needless to say, I thank my mother for doing my washing.

I dedicate this speech to my nephew Steven Stone. Steven, I do not know where you are, but I hope one day we can read this speech together.

In conclusion, to the people of Springwood I say that I look forward to working with all of you so that together we can put Springwood first. In the tradition of the new members, I would like to conclude with my theme song—

I am woman, hear me roar.
