



Speech by

DESLEY SCOTT

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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FIRST SPEECH

Mrs DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge—ALP) (2.49 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate you and ask you to convey my congratulations to Mr Speaker on your election to your high offices. I look around this House and observe great diversity in age, gender, experience and background. I cannot help but consider this to be a very healthy outcome for the parliament of Queensland. We are all here with a desire to see our state prosper and enhance the opportunities available to our citizens to work and enjoy ready access to all the services which we as a government would consider desirable.

I stand here with a very deep sense of responsibility, having been asked to serve the people of the Woodridge electorate in such a capacity as this. I have over the past 16 years enjoyed my role as support to the member, and find this opportunity to play a more significant part in my community a great challenge.

We live in a time of rapid change, and there are many people to whom these changes are a cause of bewilderment. With change comes challenges. Many have seen new technology or corporate restructure destroy their jobs. But along with the challenges there are opportunities. Many parents watch their youngsters develop skills which leave them far behind. Those skills can be the basis of new job opportunities.

I represent a wonderful electorate with many contrasts. I have over the years made many friendships there. Although much of my time has been spent tethered to a desk, nonetheless I have shared in the sorrows, challenges and joys of many of my constituents. Some have become familiar voices on the phone, yet I may never have met them face to face. I now look forward to the opportunity to be out meeting people in their homes, working actively with community organisations, schools and departments and hoping that we as a community can continue building a bright future for our next generation. I wish to thank the people of Woodridge, which now encompasses, wholly or in part, the areas of Slacks Creek, Woodridge, Kingston, Logan Central, Marsden and Crestmead.

Although the lead-in to this election was difficult and many constituents in my electorate expressed their sorrow at the loss of their new young member, Mike Kaiser, they still placed their trust in our government. I believe much of this trust was directed toward our Premier, Peter Beattie, who gave the voters in Woodridge the strong belief that he and his government had their best interests at heart. I thank the Premier for having faith in my ability to take on such a challenging task.

To find myself a candidate just five weeks from a general election presented an almost mind-numbing challenge. I was so very fortunate to have the support of my family, local members in my branches, many regular constituents and friends. My campaign team accomplished in just a few short weeks what would under normal circumstances take many months. I received a great deal of advice and practical assistance from Milton Dick, Craig Emerson, Stewart Dalley, Michael Eborn, Don Wilkie, Bill Burton and my campaign director, Steve Lane.

To my campaign office staff, Marilyn Murphy, Gladys Revelo and Kerry and Julie Wishart, along with their helpers: you took over the reins effortlessly and allowed me to get on with the campaigning. Colleen Callaghan and Julie Wishart took gentle care of our elderly residents who required an electoral visitor vote. To our pre-poll and polling booth workers, scrutineers, caterers and an army of branch members and supporters who carried out many tasks large and small: I thank each one of you. You kept the ship afloat, and my small team of advisers who met most mornings made sure the ship stayed

on course, heading in the right direction. I am indeed very grateful to each one of you. My thanks also to Sandy Boyd, who has taken on the task of electorate officer. She brings a wealth of experience with her and an empathy which is so important in such a role.

At this time I would like to pause to pay special tribute to Barry Dodson, who passed away on 8 March. Barry and his wife, We-Woon, have been dear friends for many years, and it was Barry who came out to the railway station early in the morning to hand out election material and took me to meet friends who enjoyed political debate. He was a walking encyclopedia of humour, and we will miss his friendly, cheeky grin and his sharp wit.

To my husband, Lee, and sons Glenn, Darren and Neil, along with my lovely daughter-in-law, Kym: you have all given so much moral support and encouragement. Without your love and support I would not have accepted this role.

My parents, Keith and Caroline Plumb, who are in the gallery today, raised my brother David and me in the fair city of Toowoomba. My dad owned a radio and small appliance sales and service centre. TV was added many years later. For close to 40 years my dad served his customers with honesty and went way beyond the call of duty. When it came time for him to retire, he literally had to leave town. His customers were never going to leave him.

Our home was always filled with friends, laughter and music. Mum is a great cook, and hospitality was synonymous with my family. This week my parents celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary, and I thank them for raising us to believe in the importance of caring for others, placing people before material possessions, reaching out a hand to help someone in need and to value honesty, integrity, loyalty and hard work. To them I owe so much.

My electorate lies within Logan City, right in the hub of the vibrant south-east corner of our state. It is well-placed, straddling our major highways linking Brisbane to the Gold Coast and the motorway to Ipswich and beyond. However, in many ways Logan City has struggled to define its own identity, often feeling squeezed between our more established and recognised neighbours of Brisbane and the Gold Coast. Logan City does not have a town centre as such. Rather, it has a series of shopping centre hubs and then the city administrative centre, which lies within my electorate. It is here that many state government regional offices have been located. These departments have served the region well. However, many of them have outgrown their office space and struggle to meet the increasing demands upon their staff.

Although there are many constituents in my area with high needs, I can report today that there are many positive signs for the future, and my continued plea will be for more participation. The areas of Woodridge and Kingston have been most fortunate to be included in this government's Urban and Community Renewal Programs. Our Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing, Robert Swarten, has driven this program with a great deal of enthusiasm, and I am glad to see him continue in that portfolio. I highly commend this government for the vision and the funding which makes this possible, because it not only accomplishes a great deal with the renewal projects but, more importantly, empowers our community to take responsibility and to seek greater involvement in the future. The great strength of community renewal is that it is not merely community consultation, it is the government ceding real decision-making power to the local community. It is about trusting local communities to know what is best for them.

My predecessor, Mike Kaiser, was largely responsible for ensuring that we had in place community reference groups which worked through the process of first identifying the problems and then sought practical solutions. Projects which are in various stages of implementation include the Gunya Meta Centre, a meeting place for our indigenous community which will provide recreational and sporting facilities, a workshop area, communal space and a community development worker. Our Aboriginal youth desperately need to discover their rich cultural heritage and feel proud of who they are. Other projects include the employment of a sport and recreational officer, a pilot tenancy support program and juvenile justice management, which will bring together a number of departments and agencies to work for the common goal of reducing youth crime, improving relationships and increasing school retention rates.

Poor transport has long been identified as one of the great challenges. Logan has never had an east/west bus service, with the Pacific Highway acting as a giant barrier. Through community renewal, this problem is about to be rectified. A service will soon commence, linking Browns Plains via Woodridge to Springwood. We trust this service will attract regular commuters and will give greater employment opportunities throughout the city.

Another innovative transport project will involve three 22-seater community buses traversing several suburban circuits to take residents to our shopping centres and other venues. Other projects which have been in evidence are major street plantings of trees and gardens, the beautification of many parks and, through the urban renewal process, the upgrade of many of our department dwellings. Many residents have expressed their delight in their new home improvements, and opportunities for purchase have been taken up by a number of families. A further benefit gained from

the housing upgrades has been the work provided under the Community Jobs Plan for young men from BoysTown-LinkUp who have been involved in the construction of new fencing.

I wish to mention two other renewal projects. Firstly, Neighbourhood Watch—the Logan project—has greatly increased the participation level in our Neighbourhood Watch groups, and the benefits are not only the decrease in crime and the benefit of a regular forum where residents and police officers are able to exchange information, but also the additional community participation—neighbours reaching out to give a helping hand.

Before I address other issues, I wish to mention the Station Road project, which will see funding in the order of \$1.7m from state government, Logan City Council and Queensland Transport. This has been a long-awaited project and will see the revitalisation of the Woodridge Railway Station precinct. My electorate, with its many hundreds of public housing dwellings, is both a saviour to some—the wait time for a three-bedroom house is just several months—and a huge challenge to our government, which must provide services to meet the needs of residents.

Many agencies and community groups have developed in the region to support the disabled, the abused, the aged, the young, the lonely and many of our diverse cultural groups. Volunteering is alive and well in Logan. Many of our long-time residents have given years of service to their community, and I highly commend them in this the Year of the Volunteer. They are the real heroes of our society. We see them at work in our hospital, the SES, ambulance committee, our community centres, Meals on Wheels, various ethnic support groups, scouting and guiding associations, church welfare groups, cultural and arts groups, sporting organisations, parents and citizens groups and, as previously mentioned, Neighbourhood Watch and our community renewal reference groups. Indeed, there are many in my electorate who give many hundreds of hours to their community every year. I salute them.

Given the high density of public housing, one unfortunate by-product seems to be high unemployment. Although a certain percentage of residents may be on disability or age pensions, there are many who are either unemployed or underemployed. The casualisation of our work force has made it difficult for families or individuals to cope with the uncertainty and unpredictability of income. Many of those looking for work have little experience and qualifications, and many unskilled positions have now entirely disappeared. I believe the Premier's mantra of jobs, jobs, jobs must also be mine.

I recognise that our local council is establishing a business incubation program. And just last week I visited the state development office in Springwood. This office is very focused towards assisting both new and existing businesses and has a very keen and dedicated staff with a high level of practical business skills. I was interested to hear of their business enterprise unit at the Woodridge State High School, where their 17 students last year learned to set up a company, run a business, manufacture items and set up sales outlets, and they turned in a profit. These students will have gained wonderful practical knowledge and will have a head start in the workplace. Principal Helen Jamieson is enthusiastic about the future, with the school soon to undergo a massive school renewal program, and this business enterprise focus will be greatly expanded.

I would like to mention the amazing success of programs run by BoysTown-LinkUp under the leadership of Mr John Perry. Essentially an organisation set up to work with young offenders aged between 17 and 25, following the successful completion of work under the Community Jobs Plan many young men are now in full-time employment.

Since my recent election I have been able to visit many of my schools, and I believe they are taking up the challenge to ensure that our youngsters leave school prepared to play an active role in our community. Our primary schools are achieving encouraging results in their literacy programs. I have witnessed bright, happy children in classrooms staffed by very dedicated teachers, with our principals showing a great deal of enthusiasm and hope for the future. I find our high schools running very diverse and innovative programs and focusing on preparing their students to meet a very demanding world.

At Kingston College, they have taken a section of the high school for community access learning. There, students who have dropped out of school early are able to upgrade their results. There are also adult education classes in many fields. That centre has been possible due to the vision of Morag Richardson and the principal, Margaret McLean. I commend what they are accomplishing there with a minimum of resources and staff. Similarly, Woodridge and Mabel Park State High Schools are both encouraging greater student retention rates by their practical approach and well-directed courses. Mabel Park State High School, with principal Roslyn Parkes, has a group of drama students preparing to travel to Greece in 2002 where, under the direction of drama teacher Alex Shemansky, they will perform the Greek classic Medea. A documentary film is planned for this epic journey. Our schools are giving our children wonderful opportunities.

I am pleased to be able to report to this House that the level of crime in my electorate is on the decrease. Yes, we still have a good way to go. However, due to policing at the grassroots level and the high degree of community involvement, we are seeing an improvement. I commend the high level of community interest shown by our police, particularly Senior Sergeant Mike Pearson, the officer in

charge at Logan Central, and district officer Superintendent Alex Erwin and Senior Sergeant Stephen Pyne, the officer in charge at Browns Plains.

In conclusion, it is my desire to encourage greater participation by my constituents in the many worthwhile programs available in my electorate. Although Logan is a relatively young city, many of its residents have lived there for 20 to 25 years and are proud of their area. There is a great sense of community, and many of these residents play a very active role in the organisations that make up the network of support there. We need to encourage new businesses into the area and to make sure that existing businesses are able to grow and prosper.

Our schools are inspiring but always in need of additional resources. The areas of Crestmead and Marsden, which have been included in the Woodridge electorate in the redistribution, require much support and the establishment of more community facilities. I have a passion to see greater emphasis placed on parenting and family support programs. Too many of our families are transient and finding life a battle. We need to offer them a hand up, not a handout. It would please me greatly to see members of our community who are doing okay reaching out to others who are struggling and offering them friendship and support. I wish to see a caring society where everyone is given a fair go. I pledge myself to serve my constituents well and to do all in my power to bring about improvements which will enhance living in the electorate of Woodridge.
