



Speech by

GEOFF WILSON

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Hansard 3 April 2001

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr WILSON (Ferry Grove—ALP) (6.13 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, would you convey my sincere congratulations to the Speaker on his elevation for this second term to the position of Speaker of this House?

Two years and eight months ago I stood in this place and made my first speech. I spoke of the disillusionment of many workers with the Labor Party and with some of its policies in previous years. I also spoke about the economic and social pressures on people living in the electorate of Ferry Grove as with other areas of Queensland. They were justifiably concerned then, as they are now, with the cost of living; the cost of, and access to, health care; the need for their kids to get a good education; the importance of training, job security and the creation of new jobs; the effectiveness of community policing and the protection of our natural environment.

I concluded my first speech by saying that it would be a privilege to represent workers and their families in the electorate of Ferry Grove if elected. Make no mistake about it, it certainly has been. It has also been a privilege to represent the unemployed, the sick, the disabled, our precious senior citizens, struggling small businesses and many, many others in the electorate of Ferry Grove.

When first elected, the view I took was that in my first term I would be, in a sense, an apprentice—and I was delighted to adopt that symbol and that concept—and that I was on probation until the next election. At that election, just concluded, the electorate would give me and the Beattie Labor government its first across-the-board performance appraisal. I am pleased to be able to return to this place and to stand here today after Queenslanders have responded so positively and emphatically in support of the Beattie Labor government's three years of hard, honest work and in respect of the direction that we have set down for the future of Queensland. It is a great privilege not only to be elected for the first time but to be re-elected as the member for Ferry Grove. I consider it to be an office of great honour to fulfil.

My two jobs as I see it in the past three years have been to be an effective representative of local needs and concerns and to be a strong voice in the Beattie Labor team. The key state priorities have also been key local priorities: jobs, education, policing, health and the environment—and, of course, there are many others—secondly, that there be strong, stable government on policies that take Queensland in the right direction; and, thirdly, that there be honest, open and accountable government electorally most importantly and also through the public sector. It is the foundations of these three areas that underpin the policies of the second Beattie Labor government.

Prior to this last election I distributed the sixth edition of the electorate newspaper that I have been distributing over the last three years. In that edition I said that since my election in 1998 my priorities have been working with people to build and develop stronger local communities, because it seems to me that all of the issues that we deal with revolve around and intersect with the core concept of building stronger local communities and, within them, stronger families. Most of my efforts have been directed at a local level as follows: improving education facilities and learning opportunities for young people; helping local employment networks and promoting access to apprenticeships and traineeships; supporting continued provision of health facilities at Keperra Hospital; participating in crime prevention activities, such as Crime Stoppers and neighbourhood watch and supporting the Arana Hills District PCYC; addressing traffic pressures through the upgrade of Samford Road and supporting the new CityTrans public transport initiative and the upgrade of Ferry Grove Railway Station; and maximising the

public benefit of the regional forest agreement for the users of Brisbane Forest Park. This has involved me working closely with local community and sporting organisations, school communities and small businesses as well as individual residents.

My approach has been to get out and talk with as many groups and individuals as possible. This has included doorknocking most weeks when parliament is not sitting; setting up my mobile electorate office in local shopping centres on Saturday mornings; writing to new residents; organising morning teas; and attending functions, meetings and events of local community organisations. My vision for the next three years is to build on these foundations, to continue my consultative and inclusive approach, to remain focused on what is important for families and our local community and to continue as a strong voice in government—in a Labor government—on behalf of local people.

What is coming up in this term? I pledge that I will continue my support for the \$700,000 Secondary School Renewal Funding Program for Mitchelton State High School; the Samford Road upgrade stage 1 construction, which is targeted for 2002-03; the major refurbishment of significant amounts of local public housing stock; the construction of the Samford bound passing lane on Samford Road, which is also targeted for 2002-03; the construction of a bus set-down and pick-up bay at Mitchelton State High School, which is targeted for the middle of this year; the construction of the Ferny Grove multipurpose sports centre, assisted by a \$270,000 state Department of Sport funding grant; the finalisation of a planning and construction timetable for a new multi-level car park at the Ferny Grove Railway Station, among many others; and ongoing improvements for local community services and facilities.

I also have a number of key priorities. They include lobbying my colleagues in cabinet for fast-tracking the upgrade of Samford Road with the intersection of Arbor Street, which experiences significant traffic difficulties morning and night. I also intend promoting maximum community participation and involvement in the proposed roads survey to be conducted by the Department of Main Roads for the north-western suburbs of Brisbane. I will continue to lobby for improved bus services for the Arana Hills and Ferny Hills areas.

In the policing area, as we know, the Beattie government has pledged to increase by 1,000 the number of police in Queensland. I will be lobbying for a fair share of that increase to improve the already increased police to population ratio in my electorate. On the youth support side, I will continue to lobby for recurrent funding of the Piccabeen Community Centre at Mitchelton to employ a community development worker. Another high priority will be seeking funding for the employment of a local youth services network coordinator to work closely with local schools and sporting organisations. There are many issues and much work still to be done.

I intend to vigorously pursue a number of other issues, as I have over the previous three years. A number of schools are experiencing significant increases in class enrolments, which puts pressures on classroom facilities, and I cite Patrick's Road State School and Ferny Grove State School as examples. There is also a need for funding support to address structural difficulties at Patrick's Road State School producing water leakage and drainage problems. Grovely State School is also in need of continued assistance for the external painting of many of its buildings. Mitchelton Meals on Wheels is in great need of \$50,000 in funding to undertake rebuilding and alteration works in the Mitchelton Senior Citizens Club so it can comply with health regulations that control its operations. Samford State School is grappling with funding difficulties with its school hall, car parking and bus bay requirements. I will continue lobbying for assistance for that.

The electricity supply in the Samford Valley has been a problematic issue in the last 12 to 18 months, with some significant improvements by Energex. We will continue to work for those improvements, particularly for the benefit of many home based small businesses in that area. I especially mention the work of the North West Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Association, NWAICA, which is based at Keperra, which does work for the 900 or so Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander community members in the area.

I must pause at this juncture to acknowledge all of those kind, generous and supportive people who came forward in support of my campaign in the last election. Many of those people are the people who have been active in support of my three-year incumbency in the position as the member for Ferny Grove. A parliamentary term of effective representation and a successful election campaign is only possible through a strong team effort by people such as these. Many people throughout the community, both inside the Labor Party and outside, especially amongst the 160 or so community organisations in the area, have worked in a vast range of different ways for my successful re-election, and I thank them sincerely. Most importantly of all, I thank my wife, Jan, and my three children, Hilary, Miles and Lewis. You are a very patient and understanding family. I am delighted to see how interested you are in learning the realities of political life in Queensland.

I also thank my electorate officer, Bruce Kimball, who is my right and left hand, and the team of office volunteers. I particularly want to thank Eileen Wood, my campaign director, who is well known to many longstanding members of the Labor Party in the north-western suburbs. I thank the Ferny Grove

Electorate Executive Committee, my campaign committee, the four Labor Party branches and all my branch members in my electorate, and everyone else who helped in any way. I consider it a great privilege to represent all of the people in Ferny Grove. Significantly, the emphatic support by the people of Queensland for the Beattie government in the recent election is a tremendous sign of hope and inspiration for the future. Many of the traditional Labor voters who have been so disillusioned in the past have returned to the Labor fold, and we welcome them. Many others who voted Labor for the first time have made a highly significant statement by doing so: they want stable government and they want a positive and enthusiastic pursuit of policies. They want policies that meet the real needs and aspirations of people from all walks of life. They want an approach to government which is so well exemplified by our Premier, Peter Beattie, which engages the community and sidelines the traditional political point scoring and muckraking. They want local members like all of the 26 new members elected for the Labor side at this election who are actively involved in the problems, difficulties and achievements of local communities—members who are visible, accessible and consultative.

Lower and middle-income people, especially those on fixed incomes and the unemployed, are doing it very tough at present in Queensland and throughout Australia. An issue that has become a theme through many of the speeches made by government members today is the critical issue of job security and the fact that when it is absent it undermines the security, income, accommodation, lifestyle and future prospects of every person. It also affects the families of people who have jobs without a long-term future. Related to that is access to new jobs, training and good education. These things are central to the Beattie Labor government's platform. Without these, there are enormous pressures on individuals and families, however the family is defined, with long-term social consequences. It is the job of government—and the Beattie Labor government has declared that it is its job—to make a difference for people like these, to make a difference for the better, so that they are able to look with some confidence to the future, are able to plan for the future and nurture their families and local communities. It is with great pleasure that I am able to conclude my first speech in the second term of the Beattie Labor government. I commend the Governor's speech to the House and to the consideration of the government.
