



Speech by

JOHN MICKEL, MLA STATE MEMBER FOR LOGAN

Hansard 8 November 2000

Hansard 22 March 2001

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (4.09 p.m.): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to congratulate both you and the Speaker on your re-election, and I also want to pass on my personal best wishes to the member for Lytton, who I know is listening intently in his room. I have known him for many years and he will be a great asset to the ministry. I also want to congratulate the member for Toowoomba South on his elevation to what is the hardest job in politics, Leader of the Opposition.

Yesterday, His Excellency outlined a series of initiatives that will benefit my electorate of Logan. At this time I wish to thank also my campaign committee, community members who supported my campaign and, above all, I thank the community of Logan West and North Beaudesert for their endorsement of the Premier and of me. So on their behalf, I wish to bring to the attention of the government a number of local concerns.

Educational opportunities for people in Logan are the keys to better jobs, better wages and a better quality of life. It is essential that the schools in my electorate, all of which have large enrolments, have infrastructure to adequately accommodate those students. I want to deal firstly with the Crestmead State School, which is in the electorate of Woodridge but for all purposes relates to the electorate of Logan in much the same way that St Frances College in Crestmead relates to the electorates of Woodridge and Waterford. This area is undergoing a surge in enrolments and the housing estates in the area will put pressure on this school. It needs modern temporary classrooms, and I hope the department will act on this.

Also, a special education unit is urgently required for Browns Plains State High School. As more students are assessed with learning disabilities or other disabilities, there is a need to accommodate these pupils in adequate circumstances. The current situation at the school is in urgent need of improvement. I urge the minister to ensure that something is done as a matter of urgency, both for the pupils at that school and for their parents, who have enough to contend with without having to contend with inadequate facilities at the school.

I also want placed on the capital works agenda the need for a replacement of the junior toilet block at the Park Ridge State School. The block is antiquated, unable to be accessed by students with disabilities and, not to put too fine a point on it, frankly, is on the nose.

I also want the Education Department to bring forward the replacement of the additional classrooms at the Greenbank State School. I understand that the number of enrolments at the school means that a music block is required now as are those additional classrooms which were to be replaced after the school had a tragic fire, I believe, in late 1999.

I am also pleased to inform the House that the community's quest for additional training facilities in Logan West is about to be met. I understand that negotiations are almost complete for land acquisition for the Browns Plains campus of the Logan Institute of TAFE. This adds to the flexi-learning centre at Hillcrest and the hospitality training courses currently on offer at the Greenbank RSL. This new facility at Browns Plains means that people in southern Brisbane, Logan West and North Beaudesert can access training locally. This is something for which we have been crying out for many years, and we are on the cusp of receiving it from the Beattie government.

I also intend to hold further discussions with AMH at Dinmore with respect to training opportunities for secondary and post-secondary students for long-term placements in the meat processing industry. When people use the Logan Motorway or Johnson Road, this facility is less than half an hour away from Logan West, and it is a prime example of students at the high schools at Browns Plains and Park Ridge being able to access jobs in that meat processing industry.

I also want to commend the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiatives in Logan West, where long-term unemployed people have significantly improved community infrastructure as a direct result of that scheme. The Regents Park Soccer Club, the Regents Park Baseball Club, the Yugumbir State School, St Bernardines Catholic School and Regents Park State School have all been assisted as a direct result of that scheme.

I also want to commend the work carried out by BoysTown Link-Up based at Kingston, who supplied students to carry out extensive work improvements at the Browns Plains State School. As I said, these were wonderful initiatives put up by the community. The materials were supplied by the community and the wages and salaries were paid for by the state government under the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program. I am pleased to see that the Beattie government has decided to extend this program further. That will be a welcome initiative in the Logan area.

I also want to commend one aspect only of the work for the dole program currently on offer in the Logan West area. I have reservations about aspects of work for the dole, but in this particular instance people get training as a direct result of the work for the dole program. That relates to the Phantast program in Logan West, which is a group dedicated to cleaning up that eyesore that we know as graffiti along the Mount Lindsay Highway in Logan West. That group has done a marvellous job there and it has received widespread community acclaim for the work that it has carried out.

Whilst these jobs programs are the safety net to help people, it is the creation of private sector jobs that provides the real social welfare benefit for unemployed people. I commend the state government and the Logan City Council for the initiative they have shown in attracting Qantas Snap Fresh to the suburb of Crestmead and to the Crestmead industrial estate. That builds on the success of attracting other significant food industries to the area. Already we have been able to attract National Foods, and as a direct result of that we have attracted a number of subsidiary companies that are providing further job prospects for people in that area.

I agree with the assessments made by people that the Logan-Yatala area should be a centre for food processing and food activity. It is a corridor with first-class road networks, but it has also given that road network a natural food distribution centre. Already we have Coles Myer operating in the electorate of Algester and also Davids operating now in the electorate of Waterford, which used to come within the boundaries of the electorate of Woodridge. The importance of food processing and the food industry is simply this: food processing generates the highest level of employment, exports, turnover and investment in Queensland manufacturing. Food processing dominates the Queensland manufacturing sector, with 29 per cent of turnover. Also, 820 food processing establishments in Queensland employ around 34,300 people and account for \$8.9 billion worth of turnover.

I am also pleased that our strong law and order stance in Logan West is being responded to. We do need a greater police presence, and the extensions to the Browns Plains Police Station currently under way will result in this. As a direct result of that approximately \$900,000 worth of extensions, the Juvenile Aid Bureau will now be located in Logan West. Part of that is currently located in Logan Central in the Woodridge electorate. As a person who represents the second youngest electorate in Queensland, I think that there are youth problems that we need to address. One of those aspects is the policing of that youth.

There are a number of other policing issues about which I have spoken with local officers and their new assistant commissioner. Many suburbs have experienced problems with hooners who speed through suburbs or engage in tyre burnouts or drive vehicles that for all intents and purposes are unsafe or have loud, noisy mufflers. They are a constant annoyance to suburbs and to the residents who live in them. It is unacceptable behaviour in which many are disadvantaged by the few culprits. The Browns Plains police recently undertook a major operation at Crestmead to take action against illegal motor vehicle activity. It has had a huge success. I want to thank the officers and the volunteers in policing who participated in that exercise. It is an ongoing issue, but I am pleased by the positive response shown by the police to date.

I also want to mention illegal trail bike activity, which is so annoying to residents in certain parts of my electorate. I commend an initiative being undertaken in cooperation with the police by the Logan City Council. They are going to engage in a joint exercise to try to address part of this problem. The Logan City Council is responsible for the activities of people in public parks and has the power to fine those people. I understand there is an issue in relation to resourcing the correct riding gear for officers. I hope this can be resolved quickly so that those officers can get out there and get after those people who are engaged in illegal trail bike activity. By 'illegal' I mean kids who want to ride up and down the street without helmets.

The time for warnings is over. It is time those people were fined, because they are not wearing helmets and because they have no business being on residential streets. I am on the side of the residents who want action taken against those people.

While on the subject of roads, I mention to the parliament issues relating to the Mount Lindesay Highway. Through the minister, I thank the regional directors of Main Roads, Eddie Peters and Keith Dippelsman, on the positive approach they have taken so far to help local residents with a number of concerns. I also express my thanks to Ross Blinco, an engineer for Main Roads who looks after the traffic signalling in the Logan West area.

As a direct result of the efforts of those officers, the service road near St Bernadine's school has been made much safer. I know that is a concern to many members on their way through the Logan electorate to places like Kooralbyn. Officers have also worked with the Park Ridge State School and the Park Ridge State High School community to make the Park Ridge Road-Crest Road intersection safer for families, especially those families who are picking up their children immediately after school. Officers have been asked to see if the Green Road-Vansittart Road intersection can be cleared more quickly by changing the lighting phase. I am also pleased with the progress that has been reported to me on the proposed Granger Road-Stoney Camp Road intersection. This area is dangerous and plans are in hand to improve it. I also want to ensure there are no unnecessary delays in the Middle Road-Green Road component of the Mount Lindesay Highway upgrade.

For some time now we have been attempting to secure from Logan Central an office of the Department of Families in Logan West. I am pleased to announce to the House today that the new minister has announced that that will become a reality. The previous minister was very sympathetic to it and actions were under way as a result of her efforts. As a result, we are now going to have a Department of Families office in Logan West in the future.

In the few minutes left to me, I want to advance the case for further electoral reform in Queensland. It is long overdue that we have a four-year term for state government. If honourable members doubt this, I point out to them that the state government in Queensland will be required to undertake the next state election on or prior to the time of the next local government election. Even though we were elected a year after local government members were elected, we are required to face an election a matter of months before local government members have to face their next election. In an attempt to save money, I am prepared to consider holding a state election on the same date as local government elections. That would bring everything into alignment. It would also save money in relation to the cost of elections.

Another aspect of reform that this parliament should face up to relates to how-to-vote cards. The optional preferential voting system has largely negated the need for people to stand outside polling booths handing out how-to-vote cards. It is time the law was changed to allow how-to-vote cards to be displayed in each voting cubicle at each polling booth. This does not seek to ban how-to-vote cards. If people want to stand outside polling booths and hand out how-to-vote cards while they are on display inside, that is their business. However, people walking through the gates at polling booths are saying in increasing numbers that they do not want a how-to-vote card. It is a phenomenon in not only Labor electorates but also conservative electorates. It is time we addressed it.

I advance my argument for this proposition by stating the fact that for ages people have been saying to us that they regard how-to-vote cards as a waste of money. In Logan in this election I had first-hand experience of it. Out of the many polling booths, there were three polling booths which were triple polling booths and three others which were joint polling booths. That meant that for voters who turned up to vote at those polling booths there were a whole tribe of booth workers standing there with their how-to-vote cards. Many people received pieces of paper, most of which were useless to them. It is time this fantasy land stuff was put to an end. It is time to get with it and display how-to-vote cards in cubicles in each polling booth. That is why a change is needed.

The other change I ask the parliament to think about relates to electioneering in shopping centres. In Europe, country Queensland and regional centres the town square used to be the centre of community activity. Every three years or so the town square was also the gathering point for political activity and political debate. These days, shopping centres have become the gathering point. They have become the focus of community activity. Yet, the tin-pot Caesars who are the centre managers in some cases have failed to recognise this. I thought the exclusion of the former Leader of the Opposition, the former member for Surfers Paradise, by a puffed up centre manager in Townsville was going too far. A similar incident occurred in a shopping centre in my electorate. I want to see an all-party committee—perhaps the Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee—examine this together with the Property Council representing centre managers to see if we can come up with a proper code of conduct when an election has been called for the admission of candidates into shopping centres.

I fail to see how a dedicated corner set aside for that purpose every three years—or, as I have just argued, every four years—where people can meet the candidates is an imposition on that shopping

centre. I will tell the House of the excuse the fool who excluded me offered as his explanation. He said, 'What if the Liberals wanted to be here?' Given the fact that there was no Liberal candidate running against me, I was not terribly worried. The purpose of an election is to put up a choice. So what if the Liberal candidate wanted to be there! That is the point. The point is that the people should be able to meet their candidates. If shopping centres are the places where people go, that is where we should be allowed to be to meet the people. People already feel alienated from the political process, yet some shopping centre managers only want to encourage that alienation. The Premier wants the parliament to go to the regions. We already have community cabinets, yet the people who manage the places where people gather want to exclude candidates and thereby alienate the political process.

People increasingly want to be part of the political process. They want their point of view listened to and, most importantly, they want it acted upon. Part of that listening process is to be available to people. To do that, we need access. I hope this proposal is taken up by that committee. I will be writing to it suggesting that it is high time we looked at that as a legitimate activity. As I said, it can be engaged in with the Property Council and centre managers. We can have consultation right across the state in case there is some glitch that is not immediately obvious to me. One of those issues may well be insurance in case somebody trips over a sign or something. I do not believe those things are insurmountable. In fact, they are all the more reason to have an all-party parliamentary committee look at this proposal.

After listening to the contributions made by the member for Broadwater and the member for Burnett this afternoon, I can only say that this is going to be an historic 50th Parliament. I have enormous regard for the honourable gentleman who is going to follow me, the member for Cunningham. When I was in Toowoomba for the agricultural and industrial show, the honourable gentleman who is to follow me was a model of bipartisanship. He was very proud of his district. I wish him, in advance of congratulating him after his speech, all the very best in this new parliament. I know he will make a great contribution.
