



Speech by

TREVOR STRONG

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard 22 March 2001

FIRST SPEECH

Mr STRONG (Burnett—ALP) (3.20 p.m.): It is with pleasure that I second the motion moved by my colleague the member for Broadwater for the adoption of the Address in Reply.

I stand here fully prepared to make my maiden speech to the 50th Queensland Parliament, but before I launch into that speech I would like to say on a personal note that my standing here is the realisation of a dream of mine that would not have been realised without the help and dedication of an awful lot of people, whom I will thank more formally. However, I must acknowledge that this is probably one of the most important times of my life.

I am very aware of the level of responsibility that has been entrusted to me and also am very aware that, by being elected as the 21st member for Burnett, I am carrying on a lifetime tradition of Burnett's position and contribution to the Queensland legislative processes.

The human history of our region goes back many thousands of years with the Taribalang Bunda and Wakka Wakka tribes, and also the Gurang, Butchulla and Gooreng Gooreng peoples. Our Christian heritage and our Westminster system began when the Queensland town of 1770 was first located by Captain Cook, who set foot on land in that location on Wednesday, 23 May 1770, after first seeing the place in which he wanted to anchor the previous day. His observations concluded that this was a fine place with a cautious native population and many unique flora and fauna species he had not seen before. The observations he made that day would not be too different from observations made today. The area still has a cautious native population who have concerns for the future of their environs.

Burnett was one of the 16 electorates that together comprised the first Queensland Legislative Assembly. The first member for Burnett was one Charles Robert Haly in 1860—90 years after Cook's discovery. Drawing upon records of his maiden speech I note that he appears to be an environmentalist. The report refers to his new forum advocating 'usage of the land'. *Hansard* reports him saying that 'agriculture would never thrive in this colony unless it was carried on on a large scale'. He said they must irrigate and have steam ploughs, and plough deep.

He was a visionary, to the point of similarity with the prophecies of George Orwell perhaps. His vision was of the necessity for water preservation, agriculture on a large scale and the commitment required to 'make it work'. I find myself 140 years later, 230 years after Cook's discovery, still faced with similar problems that the 49 previous parliaments have been either unable or unwilling to solve. We need commitment to 'make it work'.

This leads me to talk about the Burnett electorate as it is today. This will serve to reinforce my commitment to the electorate and my commitment to 'make it work'. Commitment is required to carry forward the projects started thus far, with an emphasis on water quality, water conservation and the associated infrastructure needed, as the honourable member for Burnett in that first Queensland assembly alluded to. We have to treat these projects with a degree of sincerity and serious application, and a 'moving forward' attitude must be upheld at all times. Water is a major opportunity in my electorate—an opportunity I would like to see through to the end. I would like to be part of the team that is seen to be 'making it work'.

The Burnett electorate has undergone many boundary changes over the past 140 years, resulting in the electorate having more of a coastal strip. But the geography has not altered in many

eons. Speaking with second and third generation farmers about the climatic changes we are experiencing reinforces to me the need for investment in major infrastructure for the long-term health of my electorate.

Infrastructure is all important in moving anything forward, be it a product, an idea or a project. Job creation is no different. Infrastructure for long-term job creation would include extra teachers and improved educational facilities, spanning smaller rural schools to major city establishments, consisting of high schools, TAFE colleges and universities. Our needs and demands are therefore very expansive, as they should be, and difficult to meet. However, these educational concerns, backed up with the ever-strengthening momentum of the Beattie government's Smart State agenda, will be given one of the highest priorities in my first term.

People movement within a fast-growing and increasingly populated area with an older than average population is another major opportunity that will be addressed during my term. My electorate would benefit from improved road funding, particularly in the rural areas, as well as from the grasping of benefits afforded by our modern means, with our expansion of air travel, fast train travel and marine facilities. All of these provide an ideal opportunity to enable this community to 'make it work', particularly when it is a matter of public information that our community is not solely reliant upon primary industries. To quote Claude Wharton in his maiden speech of 1960 in the 36th Parliament—

I am concerned about the drift of population from the country to the cities. I believe that it has taken place partly because incomes from primary industries compare very unfavourably with those from other sources. It is disturbing to see a person who has built up an asset over the years in a country area sell out and invest the proceeds in hire purchase, for example. People should be encouraged at this stage to reinvest their money in country areas. It is all very well to pour money into Queen Street; but although we appreciate the value of Queen Street, we must not be entirely dependent upon it.

It is not that I totally concur with many points made by the former National Party member. However, what the honourable Mr Wharton mentioned in his maiden speech in 1960 is still pertinent today. Therefore I, as the most recently elected member for Burnett, have well-founded and grave concerns that these issues remain at the forefront of the Beattie government strategy.

Tourism is the leading growth industry in our area and has been identified as an industry to carry us forward. Moving forward into tourism growth is reliant upon the preservation, maintenance and improvement of our unique environmental base. My election was in response to an overwhelming expression of public opinion based on widely held concerns including lifestyle, clean beaches, preservation of marine habitats, flora and fauna, and preservation of a unique and individual portion of Queensland's beautiful coastline, linked with all the attributes that go collectively to create a lifestyle that is both affordable and desirable. When we successfully preserve this base we will be on the path to 'making it work'.

To the congregated honourable members of the 50th Queensland Parliament I say that I am a dedicated family man living in the electorate that I have been asked to represent. I am therefore very aware of many of the concerns, worries and opportunities that exist. I am deeply passionate about the area in which I reside and I am determined that together we will 'make it work'. I am not of habit a demonstrable man, but I have, as I hope I have expressed, a deep passion to see that my electorate, and more importantly my constituents, benefit from my first term as an honourable member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

Honourable members: I thank you for your time, patience and attention. I would like to formally thank my wife, Tracey, my relatives, my friends and my supporters—such as Ray and Bev Dilger of the Childers branch of the ALP, Frank and Ria Foschi, and Patricia Walshe of the Moore Park branch of the ALP—not to mention those who voted for me and gave me this opportunity to responsibly represent them and who are relying upon me to carry out, to the best of my ability, all their aspirations for the future which, coupled with my own aspirations, should enable us as a team to 'make it work'.
