



Speech by

CHRISTINE SMITH

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Hansard 10 September 2003

BUSHLAND, BURLEIGH ELECTORATE

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (11.12 p.m.): A piece of remnant bushland in the Burleigh electorate is currently the subject of much debate. This 5.7 hectare piece of land is owned by Queensland Health and is presently zoned for a hospital. However, to those residents whose properties abut the land it is seen as valuable open space. Since the purchase of the Robina Hospital, Queensland Health has no further need for this land and a decision on its future is yet to be made. The local residents have clearly stated that they believe the land must be preserved in its present state for future generations. I must admit that I agree with the residents. Not content to sit back and wait, a group of locals formed a committee and began a campaign to save the bushland. I met with representatives of the group on a number of occasions, offered resources to print flyers to advertise a public meeting and attended that meeting to speak with the residents.

When community cabinet met in Burleigh last March, I facilitated a meeting between this group and the Minister for Health and the Minister for Environment. They were able to put the case directly to the ministers, and the feedback was very positive. The group also collected more than 6,000 signatures on a petition, which I was happy to table in the parliament. To Queensland Health, however, this land has a commercial valuation of approximately \$5 million. Should this land be disposed of on the open market it would mean a financial windfall for Health on the Gold Coast. In order to achieve an outcome acceptable to both the residents and Queensland Health, I have over the past nine months put forward to the state government, the Gold Coast City Council and the residents a number of suggestions. The government has looked at negotiating a land swap with the Gold Coast City Council or offering the council first option to purchase the land at a discounted price. A green space levy is paid by all Gold Coast City Council ratepayers, and I called on the council to use funds collected by this levy to purchase the land. The local councillor, however, stated that it was not a significant enough piece of bushland, that there were other areas of land considered to be more environmentally sensitive and the levy was to be used in those areas.

For more than nine months I have sought to find a solution. I have had many discussions with both the Health Minister and the Premier and have found them willing to explore all avenues. In that time many others have attempted to gain political mileage out of this situation. There have been wild claims and absurd comments about how they could save the bushland. Instead of making promises I may not be able to keep and giving people false hope, tonight I want to assure the residents that I will continue to pursue this issue until a satisfactory outcome is achieved. I urge all those involved to put politics aside and work together. I will not give up until the land is secured in its present form for future generations.