



Speech by

## PETA-KAYE CROFT

MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

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Hansard 29 April 2004

### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

**Mrs CROFT** (Broadwater—ALP) (5.36 p.m.): It certainly is great to be back. Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask that you pass on to Mr Speaker my congratulations on his re-election to such high office—an office to which he adds great dignity and wisdom. I am certainly looking forward to fulfilling the role of temporary chair, sharing the responsibility with seven other members. I have no doubt that we will work together to ensure the proper administration of the parliament.

When I was first elected in 2001 I was acutely aware that for many Broadwater residents it was the first time they had voted for Labor. I was determined to represent and deliver on issues for all of the residents in my electorate. In Broadwater everyone and every issue, no matter how big or small, is important to me.

To the residents of the Broadwater electorate I say thank you. Thank you for bestowing upon me the greatest of honours—that of trust and confidence in my ability to represent you in this wonderful place. Representing one of the most dynamic, diverse and rapidly developing electorates in the state is a privilege and an honour.

It is also a privilege to be one of the 24 women members of this Labor government team. The support of those around me in this House, the residents of my electorate and those I work with is a true indication that, no matter what age one is, as long as one is determined to work hard results and good outcomes can be achieved. I encourage all young people to develop their knowledge and understanding of politics, but even more importantly to recognise that their contribution in the workplace, the community and other arenas is critically important and highly valued.

The opportunity to serve the residents of the Broadwater electorate is a responsibility I am honoured to have been elected to bear. No election campaign is possible without the support of many people, and I wish to take this opportunity to thank them. Firstly to my mum, Elaine, my dad, Owen, and my husband, Adam: thank you for always being so understanding during the times when I am so busy. To my closest friends: thank you for your constant support and encouragement. I apologise for my notable absences at gatherings in recent times.

I wish to thank Cynthia Pugh and Tim Shipstone, who were my electorate officers during the last term. Tim has now taken up a post at Minister Cummins's office, and I wish him well. Tim was a valuable staff member and campaign manager and will be greatly missed. Incidentally, I give hearty congratulations to Tim and Lois on the recent arrival of Charlotte Grace, who by now is making herself well heard at the Shipstone household.

My campaign team was unrelenting, hardworking, dedicated and great to work with. I say a huge thankyou to Terry Wood, Luke Edwards and Matt Rocks for the knowledge and experience they brought to the Broadwater campaign. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank Rod Welford and the member for Gaven, Robert Poole, for their constant support.

To the members of the ALP Broadwater branch, I thank them not only for their great campaign work for this election but also for their ongoing support and assistance provided to me since day one. To all the volunteers who helped on the campaign and on election day, I certainly could not have done it without you. Your time and effort was an invaluable contribution. I welcome to my office Charles and Luke. I look forward to working with them both and to delivering a responsive, helpful and efficient service to the residents of Broadwater.

I wish to congratulate the Premier. The Premier carried out a positive campaign that highlighted key initiatives to continue to place Queensland as the Smart State—key initiatives that will improve the lives of all Queenslanders. In the last term, the Beattie government demonstrated its ability to respond to the responsibilities of government with innovative and effective initiatives. It is this government's leadership, progressive reform and commitment to effectively addressing the tough issues which I believe has returned a Beattie Labor government to office for the 51st Parliament. The Beattie government has moved swiftly to implement our agenda of reform outlined by Her Excellency and during the campaign. We have already seen the passing of a bill to end broadscale land clearing. We have in this state one of the fastest rates of biodiversity loss in the world. We see thousands of hectares being clear-felled for marginal agricultural production. I congratulate the government on taking this initiative.

Over the next three years the government will implement a \$468 million package of initiatives to improve the state's health services that will include our commitment of treating up to 18,000 extra elective surgery patients and continuing our efforts to reduce waiting lists. Also, 1,500 new graduate nurses will be employed throughout the state. As part of this significant upgrading of nursing positions across the state, the Beattie government will fund 97 new nurses over the next three years at the Robina Hospital to work in the new emergency department, coronary care and intensive care unit facility. The total cost is more than \$16 million. The Beattie government will also establish a \$7 million cardiac catheter service at Gold Coast Hospital, which will also become the teaching hospital for the new Griffith University Medical and Dental School.

Health is a major issue on the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast is Australia's sixth largest city and Queensland's second largest. I can assure members that the Beattie government and every single one of our six Gold Coast members know that. We also know that we have a shared responsibility to dig deep in terms of our own time and effort to help the Gold Coast continue to grow and prosper. The Gold Coast is changing, and the major issues for the Gold Coast remain, in my view, health and the need for transport infrastructure to keep pace with the growth.

In the area of health, we are well funded on the Gold Coast, although we can always do better in terms of funding and services, and I know from discussions with my fellow MPs that we will continue to collectively lobby for more. However, we will be watching closely the impact of the federal government's effective dismantling of Medicare, which is forcing more patients away from their GPs and into our public hospital emergency sections. After discussions with a number of locally based GPs, I am also aware that finding a GP in the local area is becoming increasingly difficult. For many reasons, including retirement, there are few GPs working in our area. Despite the cries of GPs who are overworked and residents who are forced to wait, in some cases two weeks to see a GP, the federal government is refusing to class the Runaway Bay district as an area of workplace shortage. I will not let the federal government think that the Broadwater residents will let this issue disappear quietly. I am currently conducting an 'Is your GP extinct?' petition calling on the federal Minister for Health to acknowledge this dire problem and for the incentives offered to areas of workplace shortage be considered for the Gold Coast.

Oral health is a major issue on the northern Gold Coast. In fact, oral health has been shown to be a major issue impacting upon the general health of individuals, particularly the elderly. It is an astounding indictment upon health funding by a federal government that refuses to include dental health funding as part of Medicare. It has been of particular benefit that the previous Health Minister, in response to some very vocal lobbying by me and other Labor Gold Coast members last year, announced a significant increase in dental health funding for this financial year. This will be of enormous benefit to the Runaway Bay Dental Clinic. The Gold Coast health service district will receive an extra \$474,855 in funding, which will be used to provide 1,820 additional visits for those who have been waiting the longest for public oral health care services. To enable additional visits to be provided, the Gold Coast health service district will use the allocation to recruit new staff, fund overtime and outsourcing. Eligible clients are pensioners and health care cardholders who access the free service.

Last year, Queenslanders made over one million visits to our clinics. This year, an extra 17,250 visits will be provided for through the adult service as part of the Beattie government's record funding to dental health in the 2003-04 state budget. With the extra \$5 million allocated, Queensland's total oral health budget this year is \$120 million. That, by the way, is more funding than New South Wales, which has nearly twice our population. It is not good enough that we must continue to lobby the federal government for health care reform so that states such as Queensland can adequately fund health services.

The government has committed to a \$577 million investment to ensure the continuing development of the great city of the Gold Coast. Bus transport initiatives will be part of this funding. The previous Gold Coast City Council lamented the dearth of funding provided to the Gold Coast city. It compared funding provided to Surfside Buslines with that received by the Brisbane City Council. The Gold Coast City Council demanded the same per capita subsidy as that provided to Brisbane. Yes, bus

services do need funding on the Gold Coast. I lobby for and support any additional funding that can be provided. However, the Gold Coast City Council misrepresents the basis for funding and funding received. The Gold Coast City Council needs to tell residents the whole story. Funding for the Brisbane City Council and the Gold Coast is based upon the level of service provided and the number of passengers carried. It is not based upon per capita issues.

There are a number of funding elements under the contracts held by each operator, including accessible bus funding, interest subsidy, reimbursement of concession and discount fares, base level of funding and school transport funding. The Brisbane City Council operates about four times as many service kilometres as Surfside Buslines and carries 3.5 times as many passengers. This is the reason the level of subsidy per capita may appear to be somewhat higher. In addition, the Brisbane City Council contributes about \$30 million each year for bus services. The Gold Coast City Council makes no contribution to bus services to the Gold Coast, yet every day continues to approve urban development that stretches the level of bus services that can be physically and financially provided by the private operator. Notwithstanding this, the Beattie government will provide \$6.84 million a year towards urban bus services on the Gold Coast. A further \$1.5 million over three years was recently announced by the Premier for a new service linking Griffith University with Ashmore, Benowa, Bundall and Broadbeach. I will continue to work with my Gold Coast colleagues to bring to the attention of relevant ministers in the House issues facing the Gold Coast city.

I turn now to the Broadwater electorate. Lined by the Broadwater in the east, the Coomera River in the north and the Coombabah wetlands in the west, this electorate is sprinkled with some well-known and not so well-known fishing spots, foreshore parklands, canal estates and a high level of water access for boaties and water activity lovers. Many of the long-time senior residents residing in Broadwater often mention to me that they wonder why it took so long for the rest of the world to discover that the northern end of the Gold Coast offers a lifestyle and community that is just so attractive. Small business is an important component of this electorate, and as a member of the Gold Coast North Chamber of Commerce I am keen to support small businesses as much as I can.

As is the case with many issues, funding is the key to finding a solution and to the delivery of improved services. I am pleased that significant funding has been allocated to a variety of projects in the Broadwater electorate over the past three years. This funding includes \$240,000 to plan and restore Coombabah State High School's home economics block; \$570,000 for a new Gold Coast Water Police boat; the funding of five new ambulance officers at Runaway Bay station; and \$280,000 to build a new child health centre at Labrador. Several organisations providing support to senior residents also received additional funding, such as the Paradise Point Meals on Wheels, Labrador Memorial Senior Citizens and Moncrieff U3A.

Bringing the community together and keeping residents informed is another aspect of my job to which I am dedicated. In 2001 I hosted an event called the Emergency Services Day in the Park. I initially coordinated the one-off event to showcase the skill and dedication of state and volunteer emergency service workers to interested residents. The event also provided an opportunity for residents to ask questions directly to representatives from each organisation. Now every year in September at Paradise Point Park state and volunteer emergency service organisations converge for an action-packed day of displays and public relations. Almost 3,000 local residents visit the park to show their support for these dedicated workers. Each and every representative of our emergency service organisations have been fantastic to work with in organising this event, and I cannot let this opportunity pass without thanking them for the work that they do.

Other events that I have hosted around my electorate have included the now infamous seniors morning teas where invited residents are treated to a variety of guest speakers from the departments of Fair Trading, Seniors and the Public Trustee. It is also a great opportunity for locals to make some new friends. On Queensland Day in the Broadwater electorate, we honour our own by acknowledging the quiet achievers in our community—those who go out of their way to help out in a volunteer capacity for various organisations. This day is very special with recipients bringing family and friends to share the accolades. Nomination forms for this year's awards have already been made available in my office, with the closing date being 14 May and with the presentation of the awards taking place on Sunday, 6 June, at the Paradise Point Community Hall.

In 2002 the Runaway Bay RSL sub-branch was established. From originally meeting at the Runaway Bay Junior Leagues Club premises, the club has gone from strength to strength, increasing its membership from 40 to over 120 this year. The development of this RSL club has added a new dimension in the community, with Anzac Day memorial services now being held at the cenotaph near the Runaway Bay Library.

The Broadwater electorate is no longer regarded as the sleepy hollow of the Gold Coast. There is something always happening in every corner of this beautiful electorate. Suburbs such as Labrador, Biggera Waters and Paradise Point are hot spots for redevelopment, with many old homes making way for duplexes and apartment buildings. Hope Island continues to attract the interest of many as existing

resorts announce further land releases and developers see the potential of developing in a location that is only 40 minutes from Brisbane and 15 minutes from the Broadwater. Of course, this change brings many new challenges and issues that I am determined to continue to highlight to this House.

As I talk with residents, the matter of development is always a topical issue. Regardless of where one lives in the Broadwater electorate, there is a development of some type proposed or taking place. It is well understood that, although the council approves development applications, it is important for all levels of government to be aware of the implications of that growth, such as increased traffic capacity, increased demand on essential services such as water supply and usage, and the impact that construction can have on residents in nearby dwellings. The new Office of Urban Management, to be headed by the Deputy Premier, is an election commitment developed to bring together all the work being done across government departments, agencies and local government to ensure a more coordinated approach to planning for growth and development in regions, particularly the south-east. I understand that the office will work with councils, the development industry and the community to finalise planning schemes that reflect a much-needed balance of flexible, modern and environmentally friendly planning.

I am passionate about social and environmental issues and will work in the next three years to promote a clean and green approach to balanced urban planning where the community is No. 1 and profits are maintained but relegated to second place. As vacant land becomes increasingly scarce along the coastal strip and older dwellings are bulldozed to make way for the new, the issue facing many on the Gold Coast is the frightening lack of affordable housing. In many instances that have been brought to my attention, residents—some pensioners, some families, some young people—are living in rental accommodation on short-term leases, paying way above what they can afford and living in after-housing poverty. Finding a suitable rental property is becoming harder and harder. For many people on fixed incomes, such as pensioners and single parents, the inevitable situation of looking for alternative accommodation is stressful and depressing.

I find inexplicable the Commonwealth government's arrogant and naive response to these people's plight, and that is that housing is a state matter and that the rental assistance scheme is its answer to making this problem go away. I stand here today to give the Gold Coast federal members of parliament a wake-up call. The rental assistance scheme is not helping Gold Coast residents manage paying rent. This disturbing situation is putting increased pressure on the public housing demands with an increase in the number of bond loan applications made to the department. I have spoken with the Minister for Housing about this matter and I will continue to pursue it at all levels, including council level. The Gold Coast City Council needs to open its eyes if it thinks that this problem is just a matter for the state. Homelessness is a matter for all governments.

Roads in the Broadwater electorate have been and will continue to be one of my major focuses. I am pleased that work has started on the Broad Street-Marine Parade intersection lights as I agree with residents that the lack of foresight regarding Frank Street has been poor. However, it was this government that put it on the agenda, bringing forward funding allocations of \$1.2 million. This project includes the removal of existing pedestrian lights, making way for a new four-way fully signalised intersection complete with designated right-turning lanes and four-way pedestrian accesses. Furthermore, the Central Street and Loders Creek intersections are also to be upgraded as part of further commitments to improving traffic flow and safety on Frank Street.

The Oxley Drive project has also started. Wide consultation occurred last year for this projected \$11 million road duplication. So far the project has demonstrated what can be achieved by working with stakeholder groups and parties. As the duplication will use the section of the Pine Ridge Conservation Park acquired by Main Roads nearly 10 years ago, the project officers identified the interest and sensitivity of the local community towards the reserve. Over the past year two green corps groups have been working in this section of the park to collect seeds of native plants to propagate and transplant suitable vegetation in the remaining area of the park. Extensive consultation has taken place prior to the project starting, including numerous meetings with the Coombabah Primary School P&C, local resident associations and nearby nursing homes. I know that the residents are pleased that the government is going ahead with this project and that despite expected changed traffic conditions and inconvenience during the construction phase, any problems will be solved by working with residents, keeping them informed and working with the department.

It is a sad fact that as development and growth takes place before our very eyes the open space—the green that remained for so long—is stripped. Some members may recall the song by Joni Mitchell—for younger members I refer to the Counting Crows' song—*Big Yellow Taxi*. As the song goes—

You don't know what you've got till it's gone.

Such scenarios are becoming increasingly the case on the Gold Coast. Keeping open space for now and for future generations is essential. Wave Break Island, Jabiru Island, South Stradbroke Island and the Pine Ridge Conservation Park are just some of the areas in the Broadwater electorate that I am

committed to maintaining and keeping for the benefit of the whole community. It was the member for Southport, Peter Lawlor, who joined protesters and no doubt led the crowds against development along the Broadwater back in the 1970s. I admire and appreciate those efforts to protect and preserve the Gold Coast's broadwater and foreshores.

I would like to take this opportunity to let the community of the Broadwater know that my commitment to the electorate remains and that I will persist in using every ounce of energy and every waking moment to deliver honest, caring and committed representation.