



Speech by

Chris Bombolas

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Hansard Wednesday, 11 October 2006

MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr BOMBOLAS (Chatsworth—ALP) (2.47 pm): It is with great pleasure that I second the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply, moved by my esteemed colleague the member for Ashgrove. I congratulate Kate initially on her election and subsequently on her first speech, which she has just delivered with plenty of passion before us all here in the 52nd Parliament.

After spending a quarter of a century in the media, with almost 21 of those years in sport at Channel 9 Brisbane, I appreciate what teamwork is all about. That is why early on in my maiden address to parliament I would like to pay tribute to those who were part of 'Team Bombolas'—a subbranch of 'Team Beattie'—on 9 September 2006. It is no secret that their blood, sweat and tears were the backbone of my success on election day. To all the troops who played a part, big or small, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. From branch members at Carina-Carindale and Tingalpa-Belmont, to the campaign committee, to the enthusiastic volunteers who handed out how-to-vote cards, to the office workers, to those who offered advice and encouragement, to those who made sandwiches and to the passionate personnel who staffed street mobiles displaying the 'Bomber' brand, I am truly indebted to their loyalty and dedication.

Of course, there are a number of people who I would like to acknowledge personally. To my campaign organiser, Daniel Pollard, thanks mate. He took leave from his full-time job and young family to help get a rookie across the line, working long hours through illness and often sacrificing family time. To Sharon Humphries, your commitment was total and you, too, worked tirelessly. To my campaign director, Peter Lovegrove, thanks for keeping the team together, especially during tense times. Peter was another who gave up family time and worked feverishly for the cause.

Special mention must go to a close friend of mine, Bernie Courtney. From the times we spent playing test match cricket in the Courtneys' backyard at Wynnum, to the games of league at the vacant block next to the local clinic, to our touch footy days for 'Ubiquity', to our academic pursuits at the Queensland Institute of Technology—of course, now QUT—through births, deaths and marriages, Bernie and his wife, Gina, have been there for me. Thanks to both of them. When I asked Bernie to help out in the office during the election campaign, he did what most great mates do: he rolled up his sleeves and jumped on board. Another person who was quick to volunteer and did a great job was Wayne Holmes. He and his mother, Eunice, have red and white eyes—not Swans' or Dragons' colours, but the Labor Party's colours. They, like many others, are the heart and soul of the ALP, and I am blessed to have them in Chatsworth.

My journey into politics has just begun. As a 'newbie' I have been fortunate to be surrounded and guided by people who have become not just colleagues but also dear friends. Firstly, to the member for Mansfield, Phil Reeves: thanks for all your help and support. I reckon I have burdened Phil with more questions than have been asked during question time in 51 previous parliaments. To the member for Mount Gravatt, Judy Spence, and the member for Rockhampton, Rob Schwarten: thank you for your words of encouragement and advice. That coffee on our back deck has changed my life forever.

To the Premier and member for Brisbane Central, Peter Beattie: thanks for having the belief in me and acting on the early media rumours, which ironically turned out to be correct, that I was in fact leaving Channel 9. To the Deputy Premier and member for South Brisbane, Anna Bligh: you, too, have become a

wonderful ally, and I look forward to working with you for at least the next three years. By the way, your son Joe was an invaluable asset during our campaign in Chatsworth, even though he easily upstaged me by doorknocking twice as fast as yours truly. To Joe, thanks mate. The carton I promised you should I win is on its way.

To the member for Bulimba, Pat Purcell: thank you for your unquestioned support. Pat and I literally spilt blood for the cause—one day sacrificing some doorknocking time to give blood at the Red Cross mobile office which was parked at the Belmont Shopping Village. I think it might have just been an excuse by Pat to get out of doorknocking! In neighbouring electorates, Pat and I not only share boundaries but also a passion for this great state. Although, Pat, I still have not yet got any jars of that world renowned relish of yours in my office!

Another electoral neighbour who has extended the hand of friendship is Lytton's Paul Lucas. And with you being the Minister for Transport, Paul, I am sure we will be spending plenty of time working on roads, bridges and other vital infrastructure needed here in Queensland. To Michael Choi, the member for Capalaba: your help, especially with the Asian community, is much appreciated.

From a party perspective, big thanks go to the ALP in Queensland, especially state secretary Milton Dick. From day 1, Milton and his team were right behind me. To my party organiser, Chris Forrester: your sacrifice, support, encouragement, advice and dry humour have been and will continue to be invaluable. To the federal member for Griffith, Kevin Rudd: I am indebted to you for not only the support and advice you have given and hopefully will continue to provide but also the election day deeds when you stood beside me in the trenches at Belmont State School greeting voters as they headed toward the ballot boxes.

And while bouquets are being handed out, a huge vote of thanks must go to two Chatsworth icons: Clem Jones and Terry Mackenroth. As a former Lord Mayor of Brisbane and a huge supporter of the area, Clem Jones is a wonderful ally—never afraid to speak his mind, ready to offer advice and a champion for our community. These are qualities which can be attributed to Terry Mackenroth as well. But Terry also made himself available for a spot on my campaign committee, introduced to me many local sporting and community groups and took me under his wing, without pressure or prejudice. For almost three decades—or 27 years and eight months, as Terry once subtly reminded me—the former deputy premier represented Chatsworth doggedly and fought hard for the area. There is no way I or anybody can fill Terry's shoes, for he has set a high standard to follow, but my aim is to give that crossbar a real nudge.

Though this is a very special day when I pledge to serve the people of Queensland, it is tinged with a touch of sadness. I must announce the end of commercial associations which brought me to this point in my life. To my previous employer, the Nine Network: thanks for a fabulous ride. And I would like to wish Lee Anderson and my former colleagues all the best in the future. To Terri Zupp and the Zupps Group of Companies: you guys have been fantastic supporters of mine and it has been a pleasure to be associated with your company. To Peter Brewer and the Professionals Real Estate Group: your support for the National Breast Cancer Foundation is outstanding, and I am proud to have helped you guys along the way. To Don Jackson from Castlemaine Perkins, makers of that great Queensland icon Fourx: thanks a million and I hope you guys to continue to back sport here in the Sunshine State. The Bank of Queensland, especially Elsewerth Ephraums and his team at the Private Bank, and Daryl Agnew and the crew at PPS Hairwear have also been generous towards the many good causes such as Surf Life Saving Queensland, the National Breast Cancer Foundation, Diabetes Queensland and Kim Walters Choices, which I have helped raise much-needed funds for.

Now to my new career and passion for representing the people of Chatsworth. It is indeed a privilege and an honour to have been chosen as the representative of the area and to take a seat in the 52nd Parliament of Queensland. It is a position of responsibility and trust, and I vow to respect the power and opportunity which I have been afforded. My promise, and indeed my duty now, is to give Chatsworth a strong voice in government.

While I have lived in Carina for only six years, I am a 'southside boy' through and through. During my early years, the family lived at Cannon Hill before moving to Carindale when I was a teenager. From there I never really ventured too far—stints at Capalaba and Eight Mile Plains before settling in Carina. It is an area well and truly worth fighting for and a place where I feel safe in bringing up a young family.

Speaking of my family, if I may I indulge, I would love to give the House a brief history of the Bombolas family. Mum and Dad came to Australia in the 1950s as young migrant workers looking for better opportunities and a new life, as many others had done before and have since done. Perhaps that is why the Labor ideology has always appealed to me. My father was born in a tiny village in Greece; Mum was born not far from Hamburg in Germany. They met in a migrant hostel in Scone in the Hunter Valley, fell in love and got married. Soon after, they owned a milk bar in Newcastle, where I and later my brother, Jim, were born. Both a little homesick, my parents decided to move the whole family to Greece in the mid sixties. After 12 months of doing it tough there, they opted to give Germany a go. Again, life was not easy and decent employment was difficult to find. So it was back to the land of opportunity, where ultimately they

settled in Brisbane in 1970. We lived in Cannon Hill, where I attended Cannon Hill State School and played Rugby League for the Cannon Hill Stars.

From there, we moved to Carindale, where Dad still lives in his two-storey brick castle today. Unfortunately, Mum passed away in July last year after a brave battle with cancer, but I know that she is looking down on me today making sure that my tie is straight, that my hair is right and that I do not forget anybody in my speech, because that is what she used to do when I worked in the media. I thank Con and Gisela for the boundless love, the support, the guidance, the strong Christian upbringing and the morals they instilled. They were big on family values and, despite a rapidly changing world, we are doing our best to carry on that tradition. My folks were small business people. They owned a snack bar, a fruit shop and a place called Balmoral Seafoods—a fish and chip shop across the road from the old Balmoral Hotel—and they treated their employees with respect. I joined the Labor Party because it is the only party that can be relied upon to ensure that working people get fair and safe workplaces and conditions to earn a living.

In an electorate with a broad range of socioeconomic groups and people of many different ethnic backgrounds, I will battle hard for the young and the old and all those in between. In fact, whoever needs a hand I pledge to do my best to help. I want to encourage and assist people in the pursuit of their dreams. Nurturing ambition is a must. The strong economy and record low unemployment under the Beattie government make up the ideal environment in which people can strive to do better for themselves and their families. The run-off from this type of success is immense.

We want our slice of it in Chatsworth, so I will be doing my best to ensure that the state government continues to provide a positive environment. On that note, I promise to work hard with ministers, government contractors and locals to ensure that projects in the area go as smoothly as possible. I will be keeping a close eye on the Gateway duplication, the Gateway upgrade, the proposed busway, transport issues, future developments in the area, the building of police and ambulance stations in the electorate, the maintenance of bushland and green space areas, funding for local schools, public housing, care for the elderly or any other issue, be it positive or prickly, which affects my constituents.

To the schools, P&Cs, community groups, businesses, large or small, sporting groups and clubs, churches, let us all work together. If the power of one is great, then the power of many is far greater. In the lead-up to the election the Beattie team made many promises. Now it is time to deliver, especially on the water and health fronts. As elected MPs, it is our civic duty to serve the people of Queensland and as a member of the Beattie government it is my role to ensure that we deliver. A revamped and overhauled health system is a must, and already there are signs our \$9.7 billion, five-year Health Action Plan is being put in place. Unfortunately, there are no miracle cures here, so change is not going to happen overnight but it is underway.

However, for at least one family in my area, a miracle is needed. Many of you may recall the horrible motor vehicle accident on the corner of Old Cleveland Road and Creek Road on Tuesday, 4 July 2006. Apprentice builder Matthew Zemek was travelling home from work that afternoon when he was involved in a collision with a bus. The 21-year-old sustained multiple fractures and severe and extensive brain injury. Instead of celebrating the end of TAFE and the beginning of his carpentry career, Matthew was in the neurological ward of the Princess Alexandra Hospital constantly fighting for his life. Matthew's parents are concerned about their son's posthospital treatment and so am I. This is an incredibly stressful period for the Zemek family, and we as members of parliament owe it to young people like Matt, who require supported accommodation, to make sure that appropriate community facilities are available to them.

My other personal crusade will be in the fight against childhood obesity. For one who has struggled with his weight for most of his life, I know just how hard the battle of the bulge is. I can certainly tell you that it is not over in my case. My goal is to encourage kids, with the help of their parents, to eat sensibly and to become more active, whether it is through school programs, sporting clubs or community activities. I would like to see our children give up some computer time or TV time and spend it being more active. Perhaps we could revisit the days of backyard test matches, where kids pretended to be Rugby League legends like Wally Lewis or Darren Lockyer, or cricket heroes like Matt Hayden or Glenn McGrath. In this regard it is not about winning or losing, it is about taking part, about being active and living healthier, thus avoiding medical complications like diabetes and heart problems down the track.

Our kids are our future. They are the most precious commodities we have, so we need to look after them in as many ways as possible. Finally, to my fiancée, who is in the gallery this afternoon with my son Mitchell, thank you for walking through my sliding door and not running off into the sunset. You have been in my life for just on four wonderful years, and I have every intention of seeing out our unofficial contract of 50 years. Thanks for toughing it out in those early days. Thanks for constantly being there for me, and thanks for understanding, especially during the demanding times like a seemingly endless election campaign. Marney, you are my rock, and my three children are my lucky charms. To the kids, Anna, Kosta and recent addition Mitchell, who is the one making the noise upstairs, you mean the world to me and I love you all. To Anna and Kosta, both of whom attend Mansfield High, thanks for your help especially during the election campaign. During my time at Nine, you guys had to share dad with the Broncos, the

Lions, the Bulls, Queensland Roar, the Firebirds and many other sporting teams and events. Now it is just 30,000 constituents in Chatsworth. Also thanks—I think—for being typical teenagers and keeping Marney and I in touch with the real young person's world.

Lastly, with your permission, Mr Speaker, can I express to the House and the 88 other members in this time-honoured and tradition-laden chamber that I am proud to be just the fifth member elected to the seat of Chatsworth, which was created in 1959 and includes the eastern suburbs of Carina, Carindale, Carina Heights, Belmont, Camp Hill, Capalaba West, Chandler, Tingalpa, Manly West, Gumdale, Ransome and Wakerley. To the 30,000-plus residents in my electorate, let us work together to get the best deal for our area. I do not know how long I will be an elected member—three years minimum, I guess, because that is out of my hands. But as in the election campaign I make no outrageous promises; just a pledge to work and fight hard for Chatsworth in and out of parliament. I truly believe I can make a difference. That is why I am here today. I love this great state of ours and the area I represent. My duty and goal is to make sure both of them get even better.