



Speech by

Peter Lawlor

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

Hansard Thursday, 12 October 2006

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr LAWLOR (Southport—ALP) (8.27 pm): Firstly, I congratulate Mr Speaker on his election to the important office of Speaker of this House.

Many times over the past 5½ years I have spoken of the economic and social pressures on people living in Southport. I spoke of their concern with the cost of living generally, the cost and difficulty of accessing health care, the need for their children to get a good education, the importance of training, job security and the creation of new jobs, the effectiveness of community policing, the protection of our environment and the lack of public housing. These concerns still exercise the minds of Southport residents which is not surprising given the rapid growth of the area. Since I spoke in the last address-in-reply debate those concerns have been exacerbated by rising petrol prices, rising interest rates and concerns about job security due to the federal government's industrial relations legislation.

Again, I thank the people of Southport for choosing me to represent them in this parliament for a further three years. Despite vocal and sometimes unfair opposition from several groups who claim to be concerned about environmental issues, the primary and two-party preferred vote decreased by only 0.8 per cent. I offer commiserations to my opponents, Bob Bennett and Ms Brandon. Having been beaten three times before being successful in 2001, I know just how they feel.

As with previous elections, this was not a victory for me but for the branch members, family, staff, community members and groups who worked so hard for success. Again, I extend my particular thanks to my daughters, Ali and Jane, for their moral support and phone calls from London and Dublin respectively at all times of the day and night with advice and encouragement. My son, Phillip, and his girlfriend, Paula, also worked hard to keep my spirits up and to ensure my re-election, with many hours spent arranging direct mail, handing out how-to-vote cards and generally doing whatever was necessary.

Thanks also to my dad, Jim, my brothers Brian and Gerard, and staff members Sharyn Masters and Kane Perkinson, who worked so effectively under, at times, stressful conditions. Thanks to my campaign manager, Terry Callaghan, branch members, particularly Don Townsend, and also the many friends especially Jeff and Judy Brown and John and Meg Coonan, who always come up from Canberra to work on election day and also to help me celebrate the next day. They are not actually party members but they know how to party. Lindsay Jones was my party organiser. However, he is more than just an organiser. He is a good friend and, importantly, he was one of the few people who considered Southport was winnable for the ALP as far back as 1992.

Mr Schwarten: And he's with you!

Mr LAWLOR: Are you with me?

Mr Schwarten: He's with you.

Mr LAWLOR: He is with me. In many ways this was the most disappointing election campaign that I have been involved in, and it has left a fairly bitter taste in my mouth. It was disappointing from the point of view of the outright lies told about the Labor government and particularly in respect of the proposed Spit development—lies that were not, I hasten to add, attributable to my main opponent, Bob Bennett.

However, of course, he would have certainly been the beneficiary if they had been believed. Fortunately the people of Southport have a fair bit of common sense and good judgement—also in Broadwater I might add—and they ignored the lies and exaggerations.

We had one National Party candidate saying that it was the Labor Party policy to allow high-rise development on The Spit—a complete invention. The Save our Spit Alliance told anyone who cared to listen that if the cruise ship terminal went ahead surfers would be prevented from paddling to South Stradbroke, and people would be unable to walk their dogs on The Spit—all complete rubbish—and this despite the numerous statements by me, Peta-Kaye Croft, the Premier and the Deputy Premier that if the project did not stack up from an environmental, economic and engineering point of view then it would not go ahead. But how do you please these people? Even when the Deputy Premier, the responsible minister, announced on 18 August that the proposal for a cruise ship terminal had been scrapped because according to the draft findings of the environmental impact study the project did not stack up, they still were not happy. They saw the announcement as part of a conspiracy. When the elections are over, they said, the cruise ship terminal will be back on the agenda.

I was told many months ago that the Save our Spit organisation was nothing more than a front organisation for the National Party, effectively a branch office. I did not believe that and I met with their representatives. I showed them courtesy and respect, and I relayed their concerns to the government, as did Peta-Kaye Croft. What did we get in return for this from this hypocritical organisation and its treacherous supporters and supporting organisations such as Gecko, the Main Beach Progress Association, the Nerang Community Association, the Surfriders Foundation and many more? On election day they assisted the National Party by handing out their how-to-vote cards and supplying them with material and advising voters not to vote Labor. They abused me and some of my booth workers, and at most booths they had people yelling and screaming and wailing like banshees to save The Spit. In one case at Broadwater they had megaphones saying, 'Save our Spit: vote National'. These bad-mannered supporters of these organisations squandered any credibility they had as environmental defenders by supporting a party that has an appalling environmental record—

Mr Gibson interjected.

Mr LAWLOR: Where are you from?

Mr Gibson: Gympie.

Mr LAWLOR: I think you got in the gene pool when the lifeguard wasn't looking.

Mr GIBSON: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Direct your reflections through the chair.

Mr LAWLOR: They supported a party that opposed tree clearing and wild rivers legislation—

Mr GIBSON: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I take offence at that remark and I request that it be withdrawn.

Mr LAWLOR: I will withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member has withdrawn.

Mr LAWLOR: Organisations such as Gecko are now trying to distance themselves from the Save our Spit Alliance and supporting the National Party, but what did they say prior to the election? Nothing. There was absolute silence. They were happy to let the campaign roll along in the hope that a National Party representative would be elected in Southport—and, indeed, a Liberal Party representative in Broadwater. Now they want to congratulate me on my election. What a bunch of hypocrites! The Save our Spit Alliance invited Mr Springborg and Mr Seeney to a rally on The Spit shortly before the election and allowed Mr Springborg's statement that 'the Nationals have protected The Spit from development for 40 years' to go unchallenged. They lapped up the lies. They—including supporters in organisations such as Gecko—were too gutless to point out that the Nationals allowed development of The Spit, beginning with Sea World in about 1965, and then presided over many other developments such as the Sheraton, Marina Mirage, Mariners Cove and Sea World Nara. Mr Springborg himself was a member of a coalition government which approved a horizon tank on The Spit. That is the tank they use for making movies like *Titanic* and so on. This would have looked like an oil refinery, and this is the party that the Save our Spit organisation, Gecko, chose to support. This is truly one of the most shameful episodes in politics on the Gold Coast.

Managing the economy effectively, delivering on the Health Action Plan and securing water during the worst drought in 100 years have been the main priorities of the Beattie government. With unemployment at a 30-year low of 4.5 per cent and the Queensland economy outperforming the Australian economy for the 10th year in a row, Southport residents can feel confident, as can the rest of the state, with the Beattie government and be assured that the economy is in safe hands.

On the local scene we have seen the commencement of the first stage of the Frank Street widening including the duplication of the Loders Creek bridge at a cost of \$20 million. Certainly the member for Broadwater has played a significant part in that project. We have seen commencement of the upgrade of Smith Street with transit lanes, including the replacement of the roundabout at High Street with traffic signals. That is going to cost about \$11 million. We have seen the construction of a new police station at Southport at a cost of \$5.7 million—a police station that the local councillor said would never eventuate. All but one asbestos roof in schools at Southport have been replaced. The establishment of a neighbourhood police beat by purchase of a property at Arundel has been commenced.

The \$9.7 billion Health Action Plan is the Beattie government's plan to tackle problems in the health system head-on. The plan has already started delivering more doctors, nurses and allied health personnel and more hospital beds including at our local Gold Coast Hospital. By 2016 the Gold Coast is expected to have a population of 640,000 people plus a significant tourist and transient population. The demand for health services will also be led by a large ageing population in the south-east region. This re-elected Beattie government will almost double the number of hospital beds on the Gold Coast. The commitment to provide 1,114 beds—there are presently 611—will cost about \$1.46 billion, and this includes the 750-bed Gold Coast university hospital that will be built on the Griffith University campus, which will be operating by the end of 2012. The plan is to add new beds every year to the Gold Coast hospitals until at least 2012.

Other current and planned improvements to existing health facilities on the Gold Coast include the emergency department of the Gold Coast Hospital being upgraded at a cost of \$2.3 million. The Robina Hospital is receiving a new emergency department at a cost of \$40.11 million. The upgrade of the Robina Hospital includes an intensive care unit which will provide closer access to intensive care for residents at the southern end of the Gold Coast. An additional 32-bed medical ward has opened at Robina Hospital. Six doctors and the equivalent of 20 full-time nurses have been recruited to treat additional patients. The third floor administration area at the Gold Coast Hospital later this year will be transformed into a new ward for approximately 30 beds.

Renal services are being provided at Robina in a \$4.7 million project and enhanced at the Gold Coast Hospital with a \$1.1 million building. The Gold Coast Hospital is also expanding its bed numbers through the refurbishment of existing space and investment of \$3.2 million. This will provide a 20-bed cardiac ward. The Queensland government has also commissioned Griffith University to provide additional dental services for eligible patients at its School of Dentistry clinic, Southport. Queensland Health will pay Griffith University on a fee-for-service basis. It is estimated that funding for the School of Dentistry service will be \$800,000 in 2006-07, rising to approximately \$1.9 million in 2009-10. In addition, the Queensland government is spending \$60 million to fund 235 additional medical student places at Griffith University over five years.

The Beattie Labor government is also working to ensure that Queensland has water for the future. Some of these initiatives include the WaterWise rebates to help households save water, two new dams for south-east Queensland, increasing the capacity of the Hinze Dam and a water recycling pipeline for industrial use.

I would like to congratulate all members but particularly the new members of this parliament. It is also appropriate at this time that we remember several good friends who did not make it back. I refer particularly to Chris Cummins and Liddy Clark.