



Speech by

Wayne Wendt

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

Hansard Thursday, 12 October 2006

MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr WENDT (Ipswich West—ALP) (8.09 pm): I rise for the first time in this House and, in so doing, I pay a special tribute to the voters of the electorate of Ipswich West who have chosen me to represent them in this place for the next three years. Madam Deputy Speaker, I begin by asking you to pass on my congratulations to the Speaker on his election to the chair of this House. I also take this opportunity to offer my congratulations to the government on its re-election. In addition, I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this place where we now stand.

Although my journey in this place has just begun, I look forward to serving my time as a member of the 52nd Queensland Parliament and the fourth Beattie Labor government following such a resounding and historic result. I also think that at this time it would be appropriate for me to recognise the efforts of the government's senior ministerial team and the outstanding contributions of Mr Milton Dick, Terry Wood and their workers during the recent campaign period.

I take this opportunity of a maiden speech seriously and I recognise its fine traditions. As a result, I will endeavour to be constructive, positive but certainly not provocative. With this in mind, I must say that I am extremely humbled and proud to have been chosen by the electors of the Ipswich region to represent them in this place. It should be recognised that such a large mandate surely signifies the trust that the Queensland people have placed in the Beattie government to continue delivering democracy, honesty and fair play to all Queenslanders.

I would also like to go on record as stating that I firmly believe that the election of 28 women within this chamber, 23 of whom are members of the Labor Party, represents a significant contribution to making this parliament more representative. I believe that the large number of women representatives in this government will help to strengthen Labor's foundation principles that dictate that the greatest attention should be devoted to those with the greatest need.

I am sure that everyone in this House will attest to the fact that you do not get here by yourself and, as such, when addressing this House for the first time I would like to put on record my appreciation to certain individuals who have contributed significantly to my election as a member of this parliament. I should state up-front that I do not intend to mention all of those who contributed, because there is no doubt that I would inadvertently forget someone and, as a result, my oversight might be construed as not appreciating their great efforts. Rather, I will take this opportunity to mention my admiration for the tight-knit team of family, friends and party members who believed in and supported me during the recent campaign.

In the first place, I must go on record as expressing my love and deep appreciation for the one who above all others believed that I was the right one to step up to this plate on this occasion. I speak of my wife, Dianne, who never doubted my abilities or credentials, even when on occasions I held grave doubts about myself. This woman managed to support me during a difficult election period while overseeing a large and successful postal vote and pre-poll campaign and at the same time ensuring that our house ran smoothly, that the animals were fed, that the children still got to school on time, that they attended all of their sporting events and, last but not least, that to their dismay their homework was done on time. I know that many of us here can appreciate that in the majority of cases our partners have made sacrifices and put

their lives on hold to support our endeavours to be in this place. It is for that reason that I give a special thankyou to all the spouses and partners of the members here today, for without their support I would imagine that the Queensland parliament would not run as efficiently or effectively as it does.

In their own ways, my two children, Katie and Michael, have also proved towers of strength to me in recent times. When things did not seem to be going well or I had a particularly difficult day, they would quickly bring me back to the realisation that there were more important things to be considered than an election, such as my son asking me, 'Dad, do you think the Broncos are gone for the season?' following that disastrous semifinal result against St George, or my 13-year-old daughter asking me, 'Dad, does this dress look all right to wear to the St Eddie's school dance on Friday night?' Of course, I did not think it was, but I had no choice other than to say, 'It looks great, darling.' In their own way, my children provided me with that sanity and certainty that was so important, because I knew that to them it did not matter whether or not I won the election, because whatever happened, they would still be there because I was their dad.

As my surname would suggest, I am of German ancestry—like many in this chamber. A recent review into the family tree has revealed that I am a descendant of two German brothers who travelled to this country over 100 years ago and settled to the west of Ipswich. These immigrants would, too, become farmers and only survive due to their belief in their new country and their will to see democracy strengthen and grow. Townships such as Marburg, Lowood, Glamorganvale and Rosewood soon became thriving communities built on hard work and a strong work ethic. Although farming was the main industry, the region soon developed to become the hub of the expanding rail, coal and wool industries. It is for this reason that I want to give a special mention to these industries, which provided much of the support for this state in its early days.

I was also fortunate to have spent many years working in the railways at the Ipswich Railway Workshops. I look back fondly on those days. In addition, many of my family have also worked in the coal and wool industries. As such, it saddens me somewhat to learn that the last coal operations in the Ipswich area are soon to close. In view of that, it therefore probably comes as no surprise that this proud tradition of hard work was also instilled into me by my parents, Earl and Pat. Like most parents I am sure, these two people have been the foundation of my family and, in so doing, have taught my sisters and I that the only way to achieve anything is through sheer hard bloody work. They have never asked for a handout and are fiercely supportive of my family. They supported me immensely during the campaign period and I know that they are proud of my achievements. Their selfless actions and unreserved love are great models of what parents should be. If I can achieve half in my lifetime of what they have achieved, then I will be happy. I also need to make special mention of the other members of my immediate family: my two sisters, Michelle and Shannon, and their husbands, Robert and James. These people provided their support during the campaign and without it things would have been much more difficult.

The campaign team that supported me through the recent election period also deserves a special mention. As members will know, my campaign director was that well-known Ipswich Labor identity and recent life member, Mr John Staines. John and his wife, Marlene, are what we on this side call true believers. They are living examples of what the Labor party is all about. However, I also need to acknowledge the many other party members who went above and beyond what might be called reasonable to support and encourage me in my campaign. Without their advice, guidance, support and, in some cases, sacrifice, the outcome might well have been very different.

I began this speech by mentioning my appreciation of those voters who elected me for the first time to this parliament. What makes this particularly special is the fact that for a large number of them this was the first time that they had ever voted Labor. Their actions resulted in an increased margin for the seat, which I feel deserves great acknowledgement, and, consequently, I feel particularly charged with a deep responsibility to justify their belief in my ability to achieve results for the Ipswich West electorate. However, we need to ensure that we put our new-found position into perspective. I must say that the very first constituent who walked through my door on that first Monday morning was a dear old elderly lady who I led into the office and offered a chair. This sweet old lady sat opposite me and then proceeded to stick her finger across the desk and say, 'I didn't vote for you but I want you to fix this, this and this.' She rattled off a list of about six things that she was interested in. I suppose I have used this example because, even though I was taken aback, I knew that it was my job to do my best to try to resolve this lady's problems. Who knows? In three years time she may decide to vote for me.

I would now like to take the opportunity to set out some of the things that I will endeavour to work on during my time in this House. Having had an extensive competitive and social background in sports and recreational activities, I have been disturbed to discover that, according to the National Health Survey conducted in February 2006, approximately 62 per cent of men and 45 per cent of women are reported as being overweight or obese. We all recognise that obesity is now a major health issue in Queensland and, as such, it was wonderful to see the Premier bring together a range of experts and stakeholders earlier in the year to identify new ways in which to promote and achieve healthier and more active lifestyles. I intend to work more closely with the minister and the Department of Local Government, Planning and Sport, who are playing a leading role, along with other Queensland government agencies, to combat obesity and

develop policies and programs that will help more Queenslanders to achieve and maintain an active and healthy lifestyle.

Because our children are our future, I believe that the current programs that the department has in place that are aimed at getting more children and young people physically active are essential. They are designed to provide practical and easy-to-use resources and education programs for parents, carers, schools and clubs. The encouragement they provide to children and young people will help them to change and improve their lifestyle patterns for the future. I am also aware that a cross-government initiative by a number of departments is currently promoting the message that a healthy weight in children and young people can be achieved through good nutrition and regular physical activity.

I would also like to work more closely with my local authorities to improve the quality and quantity of public open spaces, recreation and play areas. In addition, I hope I can assist with providing additional funding for community sport and active recreation facilities and programs as well as to support leading-edge programs such as the Just Walk It program, which is aimed at getting more older Queenslanders active.

On the issue of public housing, I must say that I think all Queenslanders should be extremely grateful for the fact that in recent years the Beattie government's housing department has been under the diligent and compassionate stewardship of Minister Robert Schwarten. Through his department, Mr Schwarten has supported the delivery of community and local government managed housing through statewide funding initiatives and regional infrastructure over a number of years to not-for-profit organisations, churches and local governments throughout Queensland. Recently, I have had a number of firsthand opportunities to inspect the public housing provided within the Ipswich region. I must say that the tenants to whom I have spoken are extremely grateful and conscious of what this government is doing for them.

I am aware that in the past the Ipswich region has been a beneficiary of the minister's efforts to assist those in the community who through no fault of their own find themselves in difficult situations. As such I take this opportunity to express my appreciation and my desire to continue to work with the minister and his department for the betterment of my constituents.

As pointed out previously, I am a proud resident of the Ipswich region. As all members would be aware, this region is quickly becoming one of the major success stories not only in Queensland but also across Australia. Approximately 1,500 people are arriving in the Smart State each week, and many of them are choosing to relocate into the western corridor and beyond. This investment in domestic, commercial and industrial property across the region is phenomenal, from the Springfield development through to the recent opening of the Rosewood Heights estate.

Although the forward planning of the Beattie government has resulted in many opportunities for the Ipswich region, it would be remiss of me not to mention the outstanding contribution of the Ipswich City Council. I consider that the current Ipswich City Council deserves an enormous pat on the back from the whole region. Led by their enthusiastic mayor, Councillor Paul Pisasale, this team has achieved results which are putting Ipswich on the map not only nationally but also internationally. Councillors Victor Attwood, Cheryl Bromage, Andrew Antonioli, Charlie Pisasale, Paul Tully and David Pahlke have shown what a dedicated and hardworking group of people can achieve if they work together for the betterment of their constituents.

I would not be forgiven within my electorate if I did not also take this opportunity to mention the notorious Ipswich Motorway. Although this road is widely acknowledged as one of the most dangerous and congested in Australia, this need not be the case. I know that our state Minister for Transport and Main Roads has lobbied long and hard to obtain the necessary funding and support from the federal government over a long period. Although some funding has been committed it is widely regarded that the only way the road can be fixed is via a total upgrade from Ipswich to Brisbane. This will necessarily involve the widening of the road to a minimum of six lanes and the addition of appropriate service roads. If during the next three years I am able to assist in facilitating this project, I know that many residents of my electorate will be eternally grateful.

I am aware of many exciting developments within my electorate of Ipswich West, not least of which is the Workshops Rail Museum at North Ipswich. This award-winning museum is a credit to the initiative of the Beattie government, and I look forward to being involved in the many future developments on this site. I recently had the opportunity to tour the museum, which is not only an inspirational acknowledgement of the history of rail in Queensland but also a wonderfully interactive educational resource for all young people. This allows them to have fun while at the same time take in some of the amazing achievements of our rail pioneers. I know this is a very popular venue for school students, and I would thoroughly recommend it to any adults wanting to appreciate the history of the rail experience. In fact, I would like to go on record and invite all members from this place and their families to the museum should they get the opportunity.

As many members would be aware, there is huge potential for the future in Ipswich West in terms of employment opportunities. The Riverlink development that is currently being undertaken by the Leda Group, and situated adjacent to the Ipswich CBD and not far from the Workshops Rail Museum, is scheduled to open in 2007. This facility will be a critical job generator for residents within my electorate, and I look forward to seeing this centre operating as a bustling hub of community activity, bringing new life to the city centre in conjunction with the River Heart project currently being undertaken through joint funding from the state government and the Ipswich City Council.

Another example of the Smart State's ability to attract leading-edge technology exists at the Amberley Air Force Base. This base is located within my electorate, and it is anticipated that a number of major additional aircraft and military units will be relocated there over the next five to seven years. The proposed Amberley Aerospace Park, to be located on 170 hectares of land adjacent to the RAAF base, will see some of Queensland's most high-tech firms moving into the precinct in the near future. This will create a host of new opportunities for commercial firms with experience in aircraft, engine and avionics maintenance, repair, modification and manufacture, as well as hardware and software engineering specialists.

A number of firms including Boeing, Raytheon, Qantas and Tasman Aviation Enterprises are currently involved in the outsourcing of F111 contracts on the base, and there is the potential that further maintenance contracts will be outsourced to the aerospace industry. This will mean that the aerospace park could increase the number of workers from the current 3,500 to more than 8,500 over the next decade. Projects such as the new air-to-air refuelling fleet will be coming to Amberley in 2009, and the F35 Joint Strike Fighters will be coming on line in 2010 to replace the F111s already stationed there.

As everyone knows, Ipswich is famous for its many historical homes and buildings including the heritage listed courthouse on the corner of East and Roderick streets in Ipswich. While many of these buildings have great charm and appeal, this is not necessarily what we would be looking for in a police precinct. The old courthouse building is no longer used for judicial purposes, but it was with great joy that I learned it had been announced in the recent budget that money has been allocated for a new Ipswich courthouse precinct. This building will incorporate a new police station, watchhouse and courthouse on the former TAFE site in Ellenborough Street, Ipswich. While not located in my electorate, this new precinct will service the needs of the whole Ipswich region and will be an opportunity for the police and judicial officers to work in very close proximity to each other and, as such, in a much safer and more efficient manner.

To conclude, I am sure that it would come as no surprise to many of you here that I would also like to acknowledge the previous member for Ipswich West, Mr Don Livingstone. Don played a key role in convincing me that I could be a compassionate and effective advocate for the people and that I could play a pivotal role in ensuring that the residents of Ipswich West continued to receive the highest level of representation within this government. Without Don's assistance I would not have been able to meet a large number of constituents and familiarise myself with many of the issues that are of importance to people within the electorate.

Don has given me many pieces of advice which I am sure many members here can attest to. However, the one that I think particularly all new members should be aware of is: if the opposition doesn't get you, the cholesterol will. I know that Don and his wife, Cheryl, are preparing for a long and happy retirement surrounded by their loving family, and I feel that if I can contribute to this parliament in the same way that Don has then I will be judged well.

I take this opportunity to recognise a few of the people who have supported my family and me in recent times. These include Robert Schwarten, my electoral neighbour Rachel Nolan, Pat Purcell, Tim Mulherin and a good mate of mine, Chris Cummins, who is not with us this time. Finally, my electorate officers, Bev and Denise, deserve all the praise I can give them. I do not know what I would do without them, but I thank them for their advice, courtesy and understanding. I know from the looks on their faces sometimes that it must not be easy trying to train a new member.

I am aware that I am indeed fortunate to have been chosen as a new member of parliament just a couple of weeks ago. However, I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise the fact that there were 18 other new members elected to this chamber at the same time. Over the last couple of weeks I have indeed been fortunate to chat and joke with all of these people, and I feel that I can report that every member of the class of 2006 is charged with energy and pride, and has a passion to make their electorates proud of their achievements. I trust that the camaraderie and goodwill that I have experienced with these members will indeed flow into this chamber and allow all of us to perform our duties in a robust but compassionate manner for years to come.