



Speech by

Mark McArdle

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

Hansard Wednesday, 14 March 2007

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (12.06 pm): Today it gives me great pleasure to give my address-in-reply speech. I commence by congratulating the Speaker on his appointment, members of the parliament who have been re-elected and particularly new members who have for the first occasion come into the House, irrespective of which party they belong to.

Not all that long ago the honour of being a member of parliament was described to me in the following terms: every three years the parliament opens its doors and the people of Queensland elect no more than 89 members to act and represent them for the next three years. There are no more than 89 members and, once the election occurs, the doors close and those men and women so selected are charged with the obligation of enacting legislation and ensuring the good governance of the state. The legislation that we pass in this House impacts upon every Queenslanders, sometimes on a daily basis. As such, the responsibility lies with us to ensure that such legislation is of the highest calibre and furthers the quality of all those who live in this state.

Without doubt, the current government has the confidence of the people of Queensland and was elected to govern this state for a period of three years. That places upon it a responsibility not just to deal with the problems of today but also to act in a manner that reduces the risks of problems arising in years to come. Therefore, it is incumbent upon any government that its planning take into account not just the next three years but, arguably, the next 20 to 40 years and to put in train a vision for growth accompanied by the obvious safeguards to protect the environment, our quality of life and that of future generations.

As the title suggests, the opposition has the right to question, hold accountable and, where required, ridicule the actions or inactions of any government. By the same token, the opposition has an obligation to be effective and to offer an alternative government. By definition, this means that it must provide not merely a reactive approach but a proactive attitude to the concerns that we face on a daily basis.

If an opposition fails to do this, it is failing in its primary responsibility. To repeat the actions and thinking processes of yesterday is to doom oneself to failure. The past can be of value, provided its experiences are evaluated, but it is the present and the future that must dictate actions. So it is with politics.

On many occasions in this House it has been said that the life of a politician is difficult. Their lives are subject to a level of scrutiny that is above that of almost any other person in business. Their family lives can be, to say the least, chaotic. Therefore, it is important for the public to understand and accept that parliamentarians are entitled to the normal courtesies that are allotted to other people in society, including time with their family and recreation.

In much the same way, the media plays a very important role in the life of a politician. Politicians both crave its attention and object to its intrusion. While accepting that the modern parliamentarian is open to intense scrutiny and, on many occasions, criticism and that this is the life that we have chosen, one must wonder whether the media understands the pressures associated with such a lifestyle. In particular, it

can be exceedingly difficult for family members, who often feel the pain more acutely than we do as we accept it as part of our daily lives.

For me, it is an honour to be elected the member of Caloundra which, along with much of Queensland, is entering a phase of growth and expansion. Whilst population figures, housing numbers and business growth are often referred to—and it is well and good to know what these figures are—I firmly believe that the overriding consideration needs to be how we coalesce to form a society in which we wish to live over the next 10, 15, or 20 years. It is without doubt the type of society that we allow to develop that will mark the success or otherwise of that growth and development that we are going to experience. A reliance on roof and population numbers alone is a false yardstick to determine whether we have developed a society that we will be proud to hand to our children and grandchildren.

Caloundra faces growth problems similar to those experienced by many other areas of the Sunshine Coast. Recently, the local growth management strategy document was launched in Caloundra. That document envisages growth across the city in the next 20 to 40 years. Whereas years ago planning for five to 10 years was considered appropriate, that approach is now of no value in our rapidly changing society. Caloundra, which was the first city to have the document approved by the state government, faces significant challenges in the future. But they are positive hurdles and they are problems that we would have rather than being concerned about whether we can be sustainable. Caloundra, however, needs additional resources and capital to build infrastructure and the many other necessities that are required to cater for the future. There are many hurdles to overcome. There is a necessity to develop a regional planning document across the coast so that the whole of the coast grows as a single economic unit.

As with most growing regional areas, funding is needed to ensure that Caloundra meets the needs and requirements of its residents. Of particular importance is the protection and security of our environment. We must remember that the reason many people travel to the coast to either reside or holiday is the atmosphere associated with living in or near a seaside area. This will be critical in the years to come as the population pressures continue to grow and, with that growth, there is an increasing demand for infrastructure of all types to be maintained and increased. But we must always remember the fragility of our environment.

The development and ultimate layout of Caloundra Downs south of Caloundra Road—an area of some 3,000 hectares—will lead to an additional population of between 50,000 to 100,000 people over the next 40-plus years. This enormous area and the potential that it has for Caloundra cannot be overestimated. Careful planning to ensure that the area grows at a rate commensurate with the needs and expectations of the citizens is equally important. Enormous challenges lie within that development—challenges that will tax the patience of the residents, the technology available and the will and perseverance that is required to ensure that that development occurs.

In relation to the needs of Caloundra, I would like to point out the necessity to retain the Queensland Air Museum, which is situated just outside the CBA of Caloundra city itself. As I have said in the past, the air museum is a collection of aircraft dating back to the 1930s—both military and civil—that has been gathered and repaired by citizens of Caloundra who have mainly an RAF or an RAAF background. The site sits on two hectares. The collection has historical importance not just for Caloundra but for the whole of Queensland. If the area on which the museum is located passes into the Caloundra Downs complex, the concern is that the museum's collection will be broken up and the aircraft and other memorabilia will not be sustained on the coast, nor in Queensland. In fact, it could be sold interstate. That would be an enormous loss for the whole of the Sunshine Coast and, indeed, the state.

At the moment, the development of the new Kawana Hospital is a real issue. How will that hospital impact upon the Caloundra Hospital? What will be the long-term services and needs that are going to be provided by that hospital to the people of Caloundra in the years to come? I acknowledge that Kawana is only a short distance from Caloundra Hospital. However, the health minister needs to make a very clear statement as to his intention in regard to the Caloundra Hospital—not just in the immediate future, but in the next five, 15, 10, or 20-odd years.

In addition, the issue of water on the Sunshine Coast is exceptionally difficult. We on the Sunshine Coast understand clearly the necessity to assist those people who are in need of water, that is, in Brisbane and elsewhere. However, we want to control our own water supply. At the same time, we will not allow any person to go without water or the use of water for any realistic need. There is a very strong call upon the residents of the Sunshine Coast to rally to ensure that the control of the water supply on the Sunshine Coast remains with the residents of the Sunshine Coast. In that regard, I join in with the calls from the local councils.

Another issue relates to public transport and, in particular, the question of CAMCOS. Of course, CAMCOS is the rail corridor that will be a public transport corridor from Landsborough, Beerwah, Caloundra and up into Maroochydore. This transport corridor is sorely needed. Congestion on the roads on the Sunshine Coast is significant. What used to be a matter of a five- or a 10-minute drive between Caloundra and Maroochydore not all that long ago has now turned into an arduous 30-minute haul across

the Nicklin Way. Caloundra Road will be upgraded and opened by the end of 2008. In addition, the multimodal corridor linking Caloundra to Maroochydore will open at the same time. For that I thank the government.

Can I say that this is one of the best times to be alive—not just in Caloundra but in the whole of Queensland. The changes and the excitement brought by the expectation of that change are enormous. In my opinion, Queenslanders now have the skills and, hopefully, we have the maturity and the understanding to set the blueprint for the future. However, we will be driven by pressures over which we have very little control. With the number of people coming into south-east Queensland each week—between 1,200 and 1,500—change is happening at an unprecedented rate.

Change of all types is occurring across all boundaries. One only has to consider the children who are now at school. In my opinion, those schoolchildren in a very short time will be living in the first truly global world. Many of us in this House will have two or three jobs during our careers, but in the not-too-distant future—in the next generation—children will have at least five, 15, and maybe even more careers before they retire. It is also expected that these children will readily travel the world for employment in greater numbers than ever before. The speed with which technology connects one person to another, not just in the same street but in different continents, places them at the apex of a revolution in lifestyle.

Last year, the *Australian* newspaper published a series of booklets titled *2026—a vision for the nation's future*, which looked at a range of questions, including advances in technology and what our society will look like in 20 years time. It is interesting to read these documents and compare how Australian cities will evolve. Perhaps the most intriguing document deals with advances in technology. It states—

The centuries of accidental discovery are over. These days, the ubiquity of information and the sophistication of research means that most progress is deliberate and relatively fast. The pace of change, like the quality of our lives, can only increase.

These advances are said to include smart clothes, which contain wireless biosensors monitoring vital signs and, in regard to children, alerting parents in the case of an emergency and telling them about allergies or viruses. Biosensors are already used in medicine to develop a 'lab on a chip' that checks for cardiac arrest by testing blood chemistry. One day a 'specialist on a chip' might be implanted in the body detecting diseases from cancer to the common cold long before the patient is aware of the symptoms and dispensing medicine directly into the bloodstream.

While today's robots are programmed, tomorrow's robots will think for themselves. Although robots are now used in factories, power plants, laboratories, warehouses and surgical theatres, they will soon be found in homes vacuuming, mowing and chatting at cocktail parties. They will be able to listen and speak and obtain energy from eating sugar and have increasingly complex facial expressions, dexterity and strength.

One day it is even predicted that we may be able to regenerate damage to body parts in our own bodies eliminating the need for transplant surgery. Biologists are currently studying the zebrafish, which is able to regenerate its retina, heart and spine. One day scientists may be able to alter a small number of genes to allow people to access the embryonic ability to grow their own organs. These changes, if they occur, and others will be the greatest leap forward man has ever known. The only risk will be mankind himself. Whatever good we can do may equally be undone by our own stupidities, and it is perhaps the risk of self-elimination that raises itself as the greatest challenge for us in the years to come.

I quickly turn to the people who assisted me during my 2006 campaign. First of all I would like to acknowledge my wife, Judy, for her invaluable support and help that she has given to me and also our children, Samantha and Joshua, who have helped not just on the day but throughout with advice and being able to talk to them about the issues I have faced.

I would also like to particularly mention Mrs Lesley Godwin. Lesley has been with me for a number of years now both in the office and as a campaign manager before that. Lesley retired last Friday from active work and is now enjoying some quiet time with her family and her own interests. We all have people who actually make our office run. The members are only there, I suspect, on a part-time basis. It is the people behind the counter who take the telephone calls and deal with the issues when we are not there that make or break a politician. Lesley Godwin is one of those people. She is an absolute gem. She is an absolute goldmine, and I am certain that we each have one of those in our office.

Lesley will be sorely missed by the people of Caloundra and by me. Without uplifting Lesley beyond expectation, I would also like to thank Mo Barnes, who also works in my office with Lesley and has helped me throughout the campaign and also to deal with the day-to-day issues across Caloundra. I want to thank Ken Hinds, Frank and Pam Gower, Norm and Gloria Stevenson and Colin and Joan Butterworth to name but a few. I apologise to those I have missed but did not intend to. I do thank all those who were able to assist me over the last three years and during the campaign as well.

I would like to turn quickly to the role of the Attorney-General. I know the Attorney is in the House today. I am not in any way, shape or form indicating that the Attorney is not doing his role or that any former Attorney has not undertaken their role adequately. I am simply saying that everybody has an expectation

or desire as to how they see the role developing. That does not diminish somebody else. But everyone as individuals certainly should express how they see the role.

The position of Attorney-General, as we know, is unique amongst cabinet members. The holder of that position is charged as a first law officer of the state and secondly holds the position of a cabinet member. The dual role provides the holder with unique opportunities and, in my opinion, significant challenges and expectations. There is a strong need for any Attorney-General—and I do not care what colour they are—to be critically aware of the role they play in those two positions. I acknowledge that it can be and would be exceptionally difficult at certain times for any Attorney-General to fulfil both of those roles. That is an issue that each Attorney has to deal with.

However, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice role, in my opinion, is one of the most important roles in the state. The Attorney certainly needs to head debate on many issues that impact across the legal field and also the public on a daily basis—such things include double jeopardy, the appointment of judges and magistrates, the question of majority verdicts, the question of what will be the future role of the DPP in our criminal justice system, a review of the Bail Act, the role of society in sentencing, the functions of the Crime and Misconduct Commission, together with many other areas.

I see the role of the Attorney-General as being very pivotal in any democratic society. I have an opinion that that role requires the Attorney to lead the debate. Leading the debate does not mean the Attorney has to follow what other dictates impose upon him or suggest to him should or should not occur. But it is a role that is important and does carry with it significant weight throughout our community. As I said before, it need not be that the Attorney has to change the law to deal with an issue, but it is important that debate on these topics be commenced. The Attorney-General is uniquely positioned and the role should be to take the lead in the debate in these areas.

I conclude as I started. I congratulate all members of the House. I think we may have our battles in the House in regard to what we believe and do not believe, and that is part of being a parliamentarian. That is part of being what we are. We each have a right and obligation to battle for what we believe is right, and we take the fight up to the other party. That is part of the issue of being a parliamentarian. At the core, however, I do not believe that there is one member in this House who does not believe that they are working for the community. I think if we hold that at the core of what we do we cannot go too far wrong. Let us have the battle here. Let us have it in the media. But, at the end of the day, let us continue to understand that our role is to establish good governance laws et cetera for the state.