



Speech by

Ted Sorensen

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

Hansard Wednesday, 22 April 2009

MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr SORENSEN (Hervey Bay—LNP) (6.10 pm): It certainly is an honour to be here today as the elected member for the state seat of Hervey Bay. I feel both humbled and honoured to have been chosen by the constituents of Hervey Bay to represent them in the Queensland parliament. I acknowledge the presence here today of my wife, Jenny, who has provided me with tremendous support during the lead-up to my election here and during my political career as a councillor. I would also like to thank our children, Julie, Paul, Joanne, Angela, Craig and Donna, and all our grandchildren. It is an emotional day for me. It is fantastic to be here. It is fantastic to represent the community that I was brought up in.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Hervey Bay for their support and encouragement during my 14 years in local government. I also acknowledge the Butchalla people, the traditional custodians of the land on which the city of Hervey Bay is situated. It was a great pleasure to have Les Muchan, a representative of the Butchalla people, as my guest here yesterday. Les was a councillor on the Hervey Bay City Council. I was very proud to have him as a councillor. He worked as hard as or even harder than some of the other councillors. It was great to have an Indigenous representative on our council.

Having grown up in Hervey Bay, I certainly have a lot of people to thank. I thank my foster-parents, Tom and Dora Taylor, for looking after me. I grew up on a property where we did not have electricity or running water. All we had in those days was an old battery operated radio. The battery used to go flat occasionally and we would have to get it charged up at the local service station. The only thing I got to listen to was the local news. I listened to a lot of political statements on the radio. My different experiences made me realise how important it is to have water on a property. Later on I enjoyed watching Jim Killen and Fred Daley debating issues on the television. I always thought they were very good entertainers. I relate things back to those two politicians.

I went to Bingham Road school, which was a one-teacher school. It was closed down and then we were bussed to the school at Torquay. Bus transport in those days was nothing like bus transport today. There were some comical things that happened. They used to cart the pigs up to the sale yards in the bus and then clean it out before the afternoon when we went home. The smell was still there in the afternoon. I learnt a lot from those days.

There are other people that I should thank. One is Jeff Keen, who talked me into getting into council in the first place. He said, 'We need someone with your background on the council to go and represent us.' In 1994 I put my name up to be a representative on the Hervey Bay City Council and I was elected. There were some councillors who helped me along in those days. Barbara Crowle was one of the most helpful councillors. Councillors Kathleen Nioa and Derek Struik were great supporters.

The next election I won was 1997. I was Deputy Mayor of the Hervey Bay City Council for the three years from 1997 to 2000. I ran for mayor in the 2000 election and was elected mayor. I remained the mayor of Hervey Bay until 2008. It was during the latter part of my period as mayor that I became very disillusioned by the lack of recognition that Hervey Bay appeared to be receiving from the state government and the lack of funding and the lack of infrastructure that came our way.

During my term as councillor and as mayor I took great interest in the projects that occurred during this time of dynamic growth in Hervey Bay. I took a keen interest in water infrastructure. I would like to thank Tim Waldron for his many years of support and knowledge. He was fantastic to have on board.

Raising Lenthalls Dam was one of the most difficult things I have ever dealt with. It took us around 12 years, 50-something reports and even a report into the black-breasted button-quail, which somebody thought they had found tracks of. We persisted over a long period and we finally secured the water supply for Hervey Bay. After that we actually built the water treatment plant which provides some of the best treated water in Queensland at this point in time. We looked to the future with the sewage treatment plant at Nikenbah currently under construction.

Over the years we did a lot in terms of leakage control and demand management and pressure control. The difficulties we had with some government departments in terms of trying to get this introduced was absolutely unbelievable. Nobody wanted to know us, but we persisted.

The other area we looked at was stormwater harvesting. We used water out of the lakes in Hervey Bay for different purposes. We built retention bases and used that water for irrigation purposes. Noble Lakes was one of the best examples of a developer using stormwater to irrigate lawns. They actually built a lake around the resort and used that water to irrigate. They directed all the stormwater into the lake. We can do a lot in terms of water for our state. We have to make sure that we look after every litre of water that we have. It is a precious commodity and it should be used sparingly. I would like to thank Fred Kleinschmidt, the mayor of Hervey Bay in the early 1990s, for introducing the effluent re-use scheme. This scheme provided water to cane fields, golf links, sporting grounds and so on.

Another interest I had in council was aviation, and especially the upgrade of the airport to take jet aircraft. In July 2005 we had the opening of that airport which saw jet aircraft fly from Sydney to Hervey Bay. This increased tourism to the area enormously. I do not believe people realise the importance of having such good facilities in their town. The airport provides for the evacuation of medical patients. In Hervey Bay we have four to five flying doctor services to Brisbane every day. That is a large number. One of the things I learnt after the airport upgrade relates to the issue of connecting families. I did not realise this at the time. The number of pensioners and children wanting to go back and forwards to see family in Brisbane accounts for 30 per cent of passenger numbers.

It was great to have Jetstar and Virgin come on board to deliver those services. Hervey Bay also has an aviation industry and Seabird Aviation has developed a surveillance aircraft, and I believe the government should look at that surveillance aircraft. Don Adams spent many years designing that aircraft, which has cameras on board for surveillance. I believe that we should be looking after Queensland industries by supporting the aviation industry in the Wide Bay area. There are another two operators building aircraft, and I guess that they are about the only ones left in Australia today that are actually building aircraft. I believe that governments of all descriptions should get behind the aviation industry.

Another issue which is very important to every community is the community halls, especially in smaller communities. I have always supported and will continue to support community halls, especially the new hall that we are trying to build in Hervey Bay and I hope that we can manage to get the funding for that hall. With regard to foreshore upgrades, one of the most emotional times that I have ever had as a councillor was when we tried to do something to save some houses. A lady whose husband was dying of cancer had an issue with her house and the foreshore, but nobody would let me do anything about pushing the sand up to save the house. When the dingo fence was constructed on Fraser Island, they dozed down a midden heap. They also went through sand dunes, cut into the sides of hills where the gradient was too steep and went through tea-tree swamp areas—that is, areas of significance—yet we were not allowed to save this house from beach erosion. Another area that we should always try to maintain is boat ramps in order to provide facilities for the boating community.

I have always held the Hervey Bay community at heart and am a member of various organisations and help out many other organisations. I am a member of the Rotary Club of Hervey Bay Sunrise, a member of the building committee of Meals on Wheels, a member of the Hervey Bay RSL, a member of the Hervey Bay Boat Club, a member of the Hervey Bay Chamber of Commerce and also the chairman of the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal. I want to thank Russell and Jackie Morgan for helping me and offering me the job when I gave up being the mayor. It was a great experience to come to Brisbane and go to Moonyah to see the people who are there. Everybody and every politician should go through that facility to see what can be done. It was a great experience for me to be able to do that.

I also support the chaplaincies in the schools, especially Owen Blackwell who has been the chaplain for nearly 20 years at the Hervey Bay State High School. He has helped many children over the years to get back on the right track and also helped them through other areas of life. We should never, ever forget the volunteers in the SES and the rural fire brigades who spend a lot of time out there helping the community. We should never forget those people, and I do not believe that they are sufficiently funded for the work that they do, especially the SES.

The electorate of Hervey Bay covers the central and eastern parts of the former Hervey Bay council area and includes the suburbs of Booral, Dundowran Beach, Eli Waters, Kawungan, Pialba, Point Vernon, River Heads, Scarness, Torquay, Urangan, Urraween, Wondunna and Fraser Island. After council amalgamation in 2008, Hervey Bay is now in the Fraser Coast Regional Council area. According to my research, Hervey Bay was named after Augustus John Hervey, the third Earl of Bristol. The bay was originally named Hervey's Bay by Captain Cook in the admiralty copy of his journal when he passed by there on 21 May 1770 after naval officer the Hon. Augustus Hervey, who was a British admiral and a politician.

The region's industry includes pineapple farming, cattle, sugar cane, fishing and logging and coalmining in earlier times. A large jetty was constructed at Urangan in 1917. A large part still remains and is used by the fishermen nowadays and is great for tourism. The jetty was used for exporting, including coal. It carried rail traffic with a line connecting to Maryborough and beyond. The beaches are very popular with locals and Maryborough residents during their holidays and continue to be a very popular area. Tourism has become a mainstay industry in Hervey Bay, particularly during the whale season. Humpback whales visit the pristine waters of Hervey Bay during the annual migration from July to November. We also have the World Heritage listed Fraser Island, which attracts many tourists. I offer my condolences to the families of the backpackers who died on Fraser Island recently in an accident.

There are many people that I should thank. Most of all, I want to thank John Howard and Peter Costello for leaving Australia in such good shape. We are one of the lucky countries in this whole global recession because of the management of those two people. I want to thank all of my campaign team who worked with me to get me here. I thank my campaign director Geoff Godfrey, whose maturity and counselling have been invaluable not only in this campaign but the previous ones with the council. I thank my campaign manager and treasurer Michael Nyenhuis, who guided the logistics and the all-important dollar. I want to thank all members of the campaign team from the campaign captains, booth helpers, corflute team to the office support. I want to thank Steve Dixon and especially John Rutherford. A special thanks also goes to Norma Hannatt and her committed and dedicated team standing at polling booths during prepolling. I also want to thank Bruce McIver, Gary Spence, Lawrence Springborg and Mark McArdle for bringing the LNP together. That was one of the best things and one of the most emotional days I have ever experienced. When they pulled the walls apart, women of both parties were actually crying. It was a great day. I was glad to be there and I hope that we can honour those people by being a good government in the future.

Last but certainly not least, I want to thank my ever-supporting wife Jenny, who has been next to my side all the way through, for her strength, together with the support of my step-daughter Julie, who has been there for both of us. I also want to thank Wayne and Dale Fehlhaber and John Waite. To the people of Hervey Bay, again thank you for entrusting me to represent you in our fine democratic institution of the Queensland parliament. I will work hard to represent and protect our lifestyle for future generations and endeavour to see that Hervey Bay gets its fair share. I look forward to a constructive term in parliament and working with my parliamentary colleagues for a better Queensland.