




Speech By
Rob Molhoek

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (4.25 pm): I rise to speak in response to the Governor's opening speech for the opening of this 56th Parliament. In common with my other colleagues I would like to take this opportunity to welcome and congratulate all new members to the House. I was perhaps a little more enthusiastic about those on my side of the House. Nonetheless, I acknowledge the hard work and effort of all who have joined the ranks here for the first time and I congratulate them.

I want to add my thanks and acknowledgement to our former leader, Tim Nicholls, and wife, Mary, and family, who sacrificed so much in the last campaign and worked so tirelessly towards what we had hoped would be an LNP victory. Nonetheless, we are here; there are 39 of us. We can be proud of our efforts across the state under very difficult circumstances. Thank you, Tim. I also want to recognise and congratulate our leader, Deb Frecklington, and deputy leader, Tim Mander, on their re-election and their subsequent appointment as our leadership team. The team on this side of the House are diverse and have broad experience, unlike many of those on the other side of the House who come from very strong Labor union backgrounds. It is that experience on our side of the House that I believe puts us in great stead to be a strong opposition and to take up the challenge on so many day-to-day issues. I also want to congratulate the member for Mulgrave on his elevation to the office of Speaker.

Most importantly, I want to thank the people of Southport for my re-election. As I have said on many occasions in the House, Southport is where I was born, where I grew up and where I have raised my family. For me it is an incredible honour and incredibly humbling to today be the member for Southport. Sadly, with the boundary changes, my electorate office will be moving—I believe next year. I am a little bit sentimental about Chirn Park because back in the seventies my mother had the fish and chip shop across the road from my current office. Chirn Park has long been a very special part of my life and that of my family. Nonetheless, I am looking forward to moving at some point into what is now known as the official CBD of the Gold Coast—CBD Southport.

All of us here know elections are hard work and none of us arrive here without significant support from our families, friends and members of the party. I want to start by thanking my family, who have stood by me in every election since I first ran for council in 2004. I am particularly grateful to my four sons, David, Timothy, Matthew and Andrew, who have rallied at each election—sometimes enthusiastically and sometimes not so enthusiastically—to lend a hand. Now they are all grown men and I am immensely proud of each of them who, in spite of some interesting and sometimes prolonged gap years and a few false starts, are making their own way in life.

Since my very first election campaign my eldest son, David, has graduated as a rural health specialist and is now a doctor in Emerald. He is married and has become a dad. We are very blessed to have welcomed Maddy into our family as our beautiful daughter-in-law as well as our first grandchild, Zoe. My second son, Tim, and his girlfriend, Sarah, are about to move into their first home in Burleigh Waters. Since the last election Tim has graduated as an engineer and is working for Multiplex. Matt, my third son, who we never thought was going to complete his engineering degree, has also just graduated after completing a thesis on—of all things—concrete block retaining walls. It was a fairly challenging

exercise to write some 6,000 words about that. Nonetheless, he got there and I am incredibly proud that he, too, will graduate. My fourth son, Andrew, is still working out what is next. He will be off for the mandatory gap year next year. After a year of playing in bands like Syrup, Go On; the Cherry Pickers; Skank Salad; and Nudist Blog, who knows what Andrew's future holds, but I am sure it will be all right.

I also want to thank the rest of my family, particularly my partner, Lucy, who helped out through the campaign cleaning graffiti off banners, helping out on roadsides, handing out how-to-vote cards and providing incredible hospitality to all of the volunteers; my older brother John, who came out with me almost every day in the month before the campaign; my sister Connie; my nephew Peter, who helped with the pre-poll; my niece Lynda and her husband, Cliff; and my adopted aunt and uncle Liisa and Ken Stanley, who have been tremendous supporters over many years.

I want to thank my campaign team, the many members and volunteers from the Southport LNP SEC, the Southport Bowls Club and the broader community. In particular, I want to thank campaign team members: Ken Magoffin, Chris Mamouzelos, Reg Williams, James Kennett, Roger Emmerson, Fran Ward, Jan McMaster and David and Tania Lister. I want to acknowledge my electorate office staff: Sam Hawthorne and her husband, Nathan, and Leanne Reynolds and her husband, Pat, who also helped out during the campaign at various times.

Some of my best volunteers are Judy and Hamish McBean, who are very new to the world of politics but they stood out there on pre-poll every day for two weeks at the Southport Bowls Club. I am grateful to them and Howard Edwards, and of course Bruce and Muriel Duncan, who have been there for every single election that I have run in the state parliament. No campaign would be complete without a few good old mates: Geoff Smith, Steve Lutz, Allan Godbee, Paul Jaffar, Mark Westcott, Simon Brook, Peter Yeomanns, Rob Ffrench, Gerald Brennan and Shane Watson, just to name a few of my mates who turned out at various times to help out on weekends.

I want to reflect very briefly on some comments that I made in my maiden speech. I said—

While Southport's prominence may have waned a little in recent years compared with the apartment boom along the foreshore areas of the Gold Coast, it is today a sleeping giant.

Those were my comments in 2012. I continued—

As we prepare for Southport's Centenary in 2018 and the Commonwealth Games that same year, we have before us a unique opportunity to leverage a new future for Southport and the Gold Coast and, with that future, more permanent jobs and greater economic prosperity. As the new local member, it is my sincere hope to lead that fight for Southport's revitalisation from the industrial areas of Ashmore and Molendinar to the health and knowledge precinct around Parklands and Southport's central business district.

I am proud of what has been achieved. While it would be inappropriate for me to take credit, there has been a tremendous amount achieved because of the efforts of people from the Southport Chamber of Commerce, the Committee for Southport, the Gold Coast City Council and local councillor Dawn Crichlow. All of us working collaboratively have seen a tremendous transformation. Through Jeff Seeney's office in the Newman government Southport was declared the first priority development area in Queensland. Since then we have seen an incredible revitalisation of the CBD. At the same time, Gold Coast mayor Tom Tate and the councillors saw fit to declare Southport the CBD of the Gold Coast in the new city plan four years ago. We have seen a new fishing club built on the foreshore—one of the oldest fishing clubs in Australia—and president John Ford has been an absolute fighter and champion of that over many years. We have seen new boat ramps, foreshore works and boat-launching facilities. We have seen significant upgrades to the Broadwater Parklands to better accommodate the many sporting events that occur within the Southport precinct.

We have also benefited from the Commonwealth Games. There is no doubt that everyone is happy with the incredible Gold Coast Aquatic Centre and the new Gold Coast Hockey Centre at Labrador. I am particularly proud of the fact that we made the decision when in government to move what were to be temporary facilities for the Commonwealth Games at the Broadwater Parklands to Coomera and Carrara. We now have that magnificent indoor sports centre at Coomera which is getting so much use, and we also have incredible new facilities at Carrara as a result of deciding not to waste money on temporary facilities but rather work with council to invest in new permanent facilities for the games.

There is so much else happening in Southport. We have seen an \$8 million renovation of the Gold Coast TAFE campus in Southport. It is now one of the busiest and most successful TAFEs in Queensland. There have been continuous recreational improvements both in the Broadwater and at The Spit. We have seen tree plantings and road upgrades. We have seen a sewer put into The Spit to facilitate upgraded and improved toilet facilities. On top of that, we have seen some \$600 million in road improvements throughout the Southport electorate over the last four or five years with upgrades to Smith Street, Ferry Road, Olsen Avenue, the Ross Street interchange and of course Bundall Road.

In today's address-in-reply it would be remiss of me not to re-state my belief that Southport is not the appropriate place for a second casino on the Gold Coast. I have spoken about this previously in an adjournment speech in this current sitting of the parliament. Carey Park is an important recreational and car parking space that supports the Southport CBD, the Broadwater Parklands and various activities there. From talking to residents in my local community I know that the last thing anyone wants to see is public land in Southport sold off for a global tourism hub or casino. More importantly, nor should we put at risk clubs like Club CSi, which is the former workers' club, Southport Sharks or the Southport RSL, which have worked so hard through very challenging years to re-establish their clubs and meet community expectations within Southport.

All that said though, there is still more to be done. I am pleased that the current council is conducting a planning scheme review of the Southport CBD with a view to creating overlays to support the legal precinct within the core of the Southport area with the long-term hope of facilitating more legal services, professional chambers and ultimately, as the city continues to grow, to facilitate more court services for the Gold Coast.

Like so many in this House, I also believe that the continued expansion of light rail is a priority for our city. I am pleased that while we were in government we were able to plan stage 2 of the light rail to Helensvale. While it was not us who were able to deliver it, I am pleased that it was delivered in partnership with the state government, local councils and the federal government in time for the Commonwealth Games. That extension has been a boon for the Gold Coast and the local business community.

One of the great challenges in my electorate that I do want to discuss in a little bit of detail is the growth in our local schools. I have some 18 schools in my electorate such as Benowa State High School, Southport State School—which I attended as a child—Keebra Park State High, Bellevue Park State School, Musgrave Hill State School, Southport State High School, Ashmore State School and a number of private schools. One of the challenges is that with so much infill development happening as a result of the PDA, town planning and the Commonwealth Games village, we are going to see more pressure on those schools.

One of the things that the principals of these schools have said to me is that it is incredibly important to preserve the green space of those schools because many of them are on fairly constrained land areas. They have limited green space and it would be easy to simply put more temporary buildings into those schools, but what we need to see over time is a very clear and concise plan to redevelop some of the existing footprint of those schools. Perhaps they could go up in some cases or multipurpose facilities could be built, but there is a significant need for all of the schools to be expanded in the coming years.

Of particular note, there is a desperate need at Keebra Park for a sport centre of excellence. That is something we have been talking about and are hoping to get some preliminary designs for so that we can start to lobby. There is certainly a need for more classroom space at Ashmore State School. It has been put on the record here many times the incredible growth and success of the first independent public school, Southport State High School, which has received some funding for more classrooms. That school continues to grow and continues to be under significant pressure.

There are many other challenges that I hope to address in the coming years. They are challenges not just for me but for all of us in this House. With regard to Smith Street, there is no overpass into Molendinar from the west. As you head east along Smith Street you can take an off-ramp into the industrial estates of Molendinar, but as you come from Brisbane and head east there is no off-ramp and no overpass; nor is there any access from the industrial estate to the light rail station at Parkwood. My hope is that in due course we will be able to build a business case for both of those projects and we will see greater access provided into that industrial area.

Now that things are on track and we are starting to see new commercial space developed—the old hospital site is now available for redevelopment; it was cleared, all the old buildings were demolished and it has subsequently been sold—there is a need for all of us as a business community to work on business attraction into the CBD of Southport. There are so many great opportunities.

As a local business group we have identified and are quite passionate about the need for further crisis accommodation not just for victims of domestic violence but also for young people. It is my sincere hope that the government will deliver a youth foyer for Southport along the lines of the one that was developed in Logan five or six years ago. It is an excellent model. It is actually a more cost-effective way to manage young people who do not really want to live in a residential care facility. It is a model that provides great support for those young people at a level that is appropriate—giving them the freedom and the support they need to get on with their lives, to study, to find a job or to complete an apprenticeship. I am looking forward to that project being developed in Southport in the coming year.

I could not let this opportunity pass without touching on the issues of domestic violence and child protection. As many members know, I have a longstanding involvement with Bravehearts. Just last weekend we had our annual strategic review. It breaks my heart, as I know it does many in the House, that, in spite of all our best efforts, in spite of all the hard work of successive governments, we see rates of abuse, rates of neglect and rates of sexual abuse continue to spiral in our state and our nation. I call on all members and colleagues to continue to not only work on improving outcomes for our young people and our vulnerable but also work harder to close the Indigenous gap, particularly in Far North Queensland. I believe that we need to establish a child advocacy centre here in Brisbane and in regional centres, and we need a very strong reconciliation action plan to close the gap, particularly for Indigenous young people in Queensland.

I know that all of us face challenges. It is not always easy being a member of parliament. Like all members, I am incredibly honoured by and grateful for the great privilege that the people of Southport have bestowed on me to be their representative in this House. It is my goal to continue to hold the government to account. Like my colleagues, I find it incredibly frustrating that we continue to have the asset sale debate, even though the LNP has never sold a single asset and all of the assets that have been sold in the history of Queensland have been sold by previous governments. My appeal to the House is for some integrity around these issues. The people of Queensland have spoken. We have certainly heard that message in the past.

What the people of Queensland need is a strong plan and a strong vision to build a stronger Queensland. The LNP is the party that is pro business and pro enterprise. We are the party that wants to support farmers, mining, development, economic growth and private job creation. We believe in fewer rules, fewer restrictions, a big Queensland, more tourists, more international students, more mining, cheaper electricity, more dams, more farming and more livestock. I will work with my colleagues to stand up for Queenslanders.