




Speech By  
**Christopher Whiting**

**MEMBER FOR BANCROFT**

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Record of Proceedings, 24 March 2021

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Mr WHITING** (Bancroft—ALP) (11.32 am): I rise to make my address-in-reply for this term. I start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which this parliament stands and the traditional owners of the land on which the electorate of Bancroft stands, the Gubbi Gubbi people. I acknowledge all those elders past, present and emerging.

I affirm my loyalty to the Queensland people. It is an honour to serve Queenslanders in the electorate of Bancroft every day as their MP. They inspire me and they teach me, especially those Queenslanders who rely solely on the mechanisms of government to deliver them the protections they need in their lives. They have a profound faith in government to help them out, because they have to. Sometimes there are no other backstops for them. I am always aware that everything for them can hinge on the quality of work that I do for them.

I congratulate the Premier and thank her for her strength and foresight. As we heard during the pandemic, we are safe because she is strong. Certainly, I congratulate the Speaker on his re-election to that position in this parliament.

This is my third address-in-reply speech. I will, of course, talk about what we aim to deliver in the electorate of Bancroft over the next four years. We will lead off with a new fire station for Mango Hill and North Lakes. We have commenced the process of acquiring the land and planning. I hope to see that happening in due course. I thank Mr Keith King, the Mango Hill Progress Association and the Deputy Premier for their work in getting this done. We will build a new school hall at Deception Bay State School, the oldest school in my electorate. The school excels in looking after the children of families who absolutely rely on the state to provide the best education and the best start in life.

We will also start planning for the widening of Deception Bay Road. I thank the Minister for Transport and Main Roads for this. It is something I have been chasing for six years. Six years ago when we came to government I asked where this program was on QTRIP. I had seen it there when I was a councillor. I was told that it had been removed under the previous government. It has taken us a while to get that project restored to the program. It was part of the \$400 million in cuts that we saw in that time.

We will deliver a priority development area approval for North Harbour at the northern end of the electorate. That is the culmination of years of work and effort by many people. I thank former minister Jones, the former treasurer, Treasurer Dick, Mayor Peter Flannery, Councillor Mark Booth, North Harbour itself and the Deputy Premier.

We will help deliver an artificial running track at Zammit Oval in Deception Bay. This project has been on my radar for many years. I acknowledge that it will be delivered through a partnership between all levels of government—federal, state and local. I thank Adam White and Dave Armitage from Deception Bay Little Athletics and the Deception Bay Athletics Club for pushing this for so many years.

An outside school hours care centre will be built at North Lakes State College. During the election we promised half a million dollars for that. It will very much be welcomed. They are using many classrooms to deliver this crucial service. This is one of the largest schools in Queensland and it delivers an absolutely excellent education for our local children. I acknowledge the leadership of the executive principal, Samantha Knowles.

Like every member, at least on this side, I will welcome the air-conditioning of all of our state schools—every single classroom, library and staffroom. In our electorate, \$1.2 million is going in to air conditioning and the electrical upgrade. I thank Bancroft communities for pushing this. We came out early with petitions. I think it was a crucial part of getting this adopted.

I note that we will see continuation of Skilling Queenslanders for Work. I acknowledge Minister Fentiman as well as the member for Bulimba, who will be carrying this program through. This is an absolutely crucial program in my area. This program has put 1,000 locals into jobs, 750 of them from Deception Bay. It is an absolutely outstanding success. It really is changing lives in our electorate.

I also note that we will be funding some key local government projects in our area through COVID Works for Queensland and the community stimulus package; for example, the first stage of a community facility at the old Fisheries site at Deception Bay and redoing the electrical and mechanics systems at Deception Bay pool—one of those jobs that the council really appreciates getting done. I mention the upgrade of the sporting fields at the North Lakes State College and the Kinsellas Road fields. Lights, amenities and stands will be provided through this \$1 million program. I thank the sport ministers, Minister Hinchliffe and former minister de Brenni, for that program. Through local government we are funding seven parks upgrades in the area including Endeavour Boulevard, a new playground at North Lakes and a new amenities block at the Uhlmann Road boat ramp.

I am proud to be a member of a government that has kept Queensland safe. As we have all heard, people have said, 'Aren't we lucky here in Queensland?' I say that it is not luck; it is the quality of leadership in this state. It is the Premier making tough decisions and sticking by them. It is putting the Chief Health Officer at the centre of our response, following her advice and enacting it faithfully. It is building up the contact-tracing capability in Queensland Health—and remember that those units were cut under the previous government. It is creating a partnership between all government departments. That is not luck; that is leadership by a Labor government.

We will now be following our outstanding health response with a solid, nation-leading economic recovery plan, and that plan includes safeguarding our health, supporting jobs, backing small business, making it in Queensland by growing manufacturing, building Queensland by driving investment in infrastructure, growing our regions, investing in skills and backing our frontline services. It is clear that we are on the right track, and the statistics show that. The total number of employed people in Queensland is back to pre-COVID levels. We have the strongest jobs recovery in the nation, with 224,000 jobs returning since May last year, and this week we heard that full-time employment has risen by 53,800 in February alone. New housing approvals are now 70 per cent higher than in March 2020. New loan commitments for owner-occupiers are now 51 per cent higher than in March 2020. We are experiencing the highest investment in new homes since 1994.

All of this shows the confidence that not only Queenslanders have in this state but also the rest of Australia has in Queensland. We will keep on creating more jobs in this term of office. The economic recovery plan will be supporting 55,000 jobs and our election commitments will be supporting or creating another 50,000 jobs. The Palaszczuk government is delivering \$8 billion worth of economic initiatives that will drive economic growth in Queensland and drive job creation.

We have another challenge coming up though—namely, climate change, and that is why I am wearing my climate stripes badge today. The picture presented by the recently released *State of the climate* report from the Bureau of Meteorology and the CSIRO forcibly reminds us what we are up against. Last year was the hottest year on record, but the years surrounding 2020 will be seen as some of the mildest that we have had in 100 years time when the population looks back.

In Queensland we have seen a significant drop-off in autumn and winter rain. We have seen a heavy reduction in stream flow and along the Queensland stretches of the Murray-Darling Basin stream flow has dropped off by up to 60 per cent in some cases. On the Great Barrier Reef we have seen marine heatwaves which are creating coral bleaching events. There will be more heavy rainfall events in Queensland that will cause localised flooding, as we have seen this week, but we are having fewer cyclones, albeit with a higher intensity.

Climate change is affecting Queensland now. Queenslanders are already adjusting their businesses and their lives around it. Our nation is crying out for leadership from the federal government, but I am proud to be part of a government that is doing the heavy lifting here in Queensland. We are

committed to reaching the 50 per cent renewable target by 2030, and we are on track. I know that in years to come I will be able to look back with pride on what the Palaszczuk government has delivered in this area.

There is other unfinished business that we have, and I am talking about treaty. Treaty is work that will take generations to finish and it will address generations of discrimination and disadvantage, but it can be our generation's finest achievement in this parliament. Treaty work involves a lot of talking and listening, and part of that involves truth telling. Truth telling means that we support Indigenous Australians to tell their stories. It means that we recognise the loss of life and the loss of land—massacres, displacement, loss and active resistance. It means framing our histories in a way to recognise Indigenous perspectives. There is a lot of primary evidence about what happened then, but we also need to acknowledge that these events may only be recorded in memory. What truth telling means is that we want Australians to be proud of their Indigenous heritage and see it as part of Australian culture. It is not about dwelling in the past; it is about reflecting and moving forward to a more positive future.

In this place we are good at talking, but some of us are not really good at listening. I refer to what the member for Surfers Paradise said in this debate earlier when he showed why we do not need members giving us more of their opinions. He said that we need to lead the way when it comes to inclusion and harmony and that we must not exacerbate tensions or inflame debates with inaccuracies or sweeping claims, and then proceeded to make a sweeping claim that could have inflamed debate and certainly did not contribute to the harmony. We do not need more lectures to First Nations people on Queensland history. How about we give our First Nations people a chance to talk directly to us and how about we focus on listening in this place?

Other unfinished business that I want to address—and I have spoken about this briefly before—are the barriers placed by the federal government for people in my electorate on becoming citizens. Most Samoans who have arrived in Australia through New Zealand after 2001 are not eligible for most benefits, as we are. They are stuck on the special category visa. They cannot access higher education or housing or a range of other things that we take for granted.

In Deception Bay there are many Samoan and New Zealand families who have been living in our community for 20 years. As I have said, their kids and grandkids go to our local schools and I see them working in some of the lowest paid and backbreaking jobs in Queensland. However, they cannot afford to go to uni because they are non-citizens. They are charged full fees. To become a citizen, you need to pay out thousands, maybe tens of thousands, of dollars in some cases and the process can take a long time—many years. These are the barriers that are stopping people in our community—dedicated community members in Queensland—from becoming citizens. It is unfair and I will be working to redress that situation with Aiga Samoa and many of the Samoan community in my area.

This is my seventh election campaign since the year 2000 when I put on shorts and Dunlop Volleys to go around Deception Bay in my first council election campaign.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr WHITING:** Have I improved? Thank you! Once again it was a collaborative effort of many like-minded people and I want to pay tribute to my campaign team of Jenelle, Jaya, Stephanie, Ethan and Jenny. Jenny has been with me on all of those seven campaigns and I congratulate her for her fortitude. I want to thank my many volunteers—I will get to those later—but I also want to thank the ETU for standing up with me when I asked it.

I want to pay tribute to my wife, Sian—my strength and delight—and of course to my beautiful, rascally children who will watch this in time to come—Guy, Rebecca and Arabella. They are all at one school at the moment, so we are going to enjoy that. I want to again thank my mother, Margaret, who always feels very much at home coming to this parliament. I also want to thank my wonderful darling sisters Jillian and Elizabeth and their families for supporting me as well and Sian's parents, Joy and Pat, who are a tower of strength and a support to our family.

To the electors of Bancroft, I say thank you once again and I say to you that the fire still burns within me—the passion to fight injustice, to stand up to bullies, to speak up for you and to fight on your behalf. I and my Labor colleagues will always be champions for you.

Mr Deputy Speaker Krause, the Deputy Speaker has reviewed and approved the remainder of my speech for incorporation. As such, I ask that the remainder of my speech be incorporated into the *Record of Proceedings*.

*The speech read as follows—*

I want to thank all these volunteers who have worked hard on the Bancroft campaign:

Abhi, Alistair Fournel, Barb Williams, Ben Chandler, Brendan Waite, Carol Lucas, Col Ellicombe, Colleen Carmody, Cynthia Hunt, Dan Hall, Darren Dickson, Dean Wells, Debbie Fox, Desley Porter, Diana Sparke, Dirk Bossard, Drago Domlija, Ed Nixon, Eileen Goodenough, Ethan Jones, Eva Fifer, Frank Foster, Irene Coonan, Isaac Baxter, Jan Macintyre, Jaya Tittagala, Bruce Head, Jennifer Whitlock, Jenny Foster, John Schembri, Joy O'Callaghan, Julia Wolverson, Keith McKenzie, Lilly Robinsonn-Hayes, Liz Hunt, Liz Ivan, Lyn McIntyre, Marcio Mostardeiro, Naginder Singh, Pat O'Callaghan, Prasadi Tittagala, Robbie Jones, Sarah Williams, Saroja Tittagala, Scott Stanford, Teresa Sharma, Trevor Andrew, Wendel Moloney, Marx and Julia Smith, Liz Hunt, Rohane Crichton, Margaret Su'e, Mitchell Hall, Tom Waters, Cara McLennan, Liz Broad, Meaghan Broad, Margaret Whiting, Nathan Jensen, Rob Shore, Almaria Hunt, Cynthia Hunt, Alison Hunt, Rhonda Nowakowski, Debbie Fox, Marji Hall, Afsheen Basha, John Holmes, Pat McShane, Rebecca Bellis, Michael O'Brien, Kim Dean, Jessica Klip, Trina Meurant, Stefano Bizzarri, Kieran O'Callaghan, Dean Wells, Steve Orlawski, Joanne O'Shanesy, Brock Taylor, Christine Wielks, Christine Lang, Ian Lang, Scott Russell, and Shannon Anderson, Waratah Blow, Zack Trapani.