




Speech By
Rob Molhoek

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (3.42 pm): I rise to speak about the period leading up to the election and of course the honour of being re-elected as a representative of the people of Southport. Like so many others who have gone before me in this House I would like to add my gratitude to the chorus of thanks to Deb, Jason and her family for the leadership they provided during the last term of government and the election and Deb's deputy leader Tim Mander, the member for Everton.

As someone who has run and lost—I ran for mayor of the Gold Coast in 2008 and narrowly lost—I think I have something of an insight into just a little bit of the disappointment one feels through that experience but, more importantly, the impact it has on families. My best wishes especially go to Jason and Deb's beautiful family because it is not just the member who runs in those roles but also the whole family gets caught up in it. They absolutely served us as a party, and as Queenslanders they set a great example to all of us around the strength of their family.

I also want to add my congratulations to our new leader David Crisafulli, the member for Broadwater, and his family and David Janetzki, our new deputy leader, the member for Toowoomba South. I look forward to working with both of them through this term of parliament over the next four years because there is still so much to be done.

I also want to say how pleased I am with the opportunity I have been given to work as an assistant shadow minister in a number of areas. It is amazing how issues get a hold of you at some point in your life and then they keep coming back. When I first ran for council the issues I was passionate about were homelessness, the challenges of mental health that are so often brought on by drug and alcohol abuse, the need to stand up for our kids and the importance of providing hope and opportunity for our young people, so it is truly a privilege to have been asked to take on the areas of mental health, drug and alcohol treatment, families and seniors.

I also need to pass on a quick thanks to my former deputy whip Mark Boothman, the member for Theodore. We had a lot of fun in the last term.

An opposition member: He is still here.

Mr MOLHOEK: I know he is still here and he is still the deputy whip. Mark, it was an absolute treat to serve alongside you in that role. I know we still have plenty of good times ahead.

Of course, last year was a challenging year for Queenslanders, Australians and the world. I think it would be remiss of me not to say thank you to all those frontline emergency service workers across the state who have so wonderfully stepped up and taken such great care of us, protected us and provided comfort and support in what was an incredibly challenging year. While we are not quite through it yet, we have certainly come a long way from where we were standing this time last year in this House.

I also want to say thanks to a number of people in my team. I want to thank my campaign team: Allan Godbee, Andrea Chivers, Bevan Sim, James Kennett and Juval Stephens—who stepped in as the chair of my SEC on short notice when my previous chair sadly had to resign due to health issues; my good mates Steven Lutz and William Ou Bai; and my electoral staff Samantha Hawthorn and Jackson Hills, all of whom provided tremendous support and a lot of assistance in the campaign.

I want to thank all of my booth captains too: Adrian Bernard, who manned Bellevue Park State School; Allan Godbee and Steve Lutz, who looked after the Southport Baptist Church; David Lister, who was the booth captain at my old high school, Keebra Park; Doug and Sue Lipp, who are absolute stalwarts of the LNP. They stood there all day and ran the team at Benowa State High School. My older brother John ran the family booth. It has become a bit of a tradition that the family all line up at the Southport Community Centre. My brother John and my sister Connie always run that booth for me. Lea Fitzpatrick looked after the booth at Trinity College. Reg and Caroline Williams have been booth captains for me for many years and this year they looked after the booth at Ashmore State School.

Amongst the volunteers were some great people who helped out. It was great to have the P&F president from my old school, Arthur Lord, and some of his family on the booth at Keebra Park and through pre-poll. I also want to thank Anita and Alana Whimpey for their support during pre-poll and again on election day. Special thanks to Bruce Vasey-Brown, another great stalwart of our party who was there every single day on pre-poll and then in the afternoons would go and help someone else on another booth and pre-poll. They all did a fantastic job and put in a lot of work for us as a party.

I thank my old friend Kim Goldup. She is an old school mate from Keebra Park, one of the foundation students at that school, and a very decorated and acclaimed former police officer here in Queensland recognised for bravery and the work that she did in bringing down some of the paedophile rings around the time of Expo 88. I thank Kim and her new husband, Steve, for their assistance. To my adopted aunt and uncle, Ken and Liisa Stanley, thank you for helping out.

I did touch on my family. I have to thank my nephew, Peter Murray. I thank my niece Lynda Robertson and her husband, Cliff, and their three wonderful kids, Jacob, Zac and Katie. I also thank my other niece Elizabeth and her husband, Josh Leveridge, and their little boy, Rueben, who thought it was so much fun to be there on polling day helping out.

My sons, who are perhaps not always excited about election days and elections, always turn out on election day. To Tim and Sarah, to Andrew and to Matt, all of you, thank you for being there. I was a little disappointed this year that my son Dave and his wife, Maddy, could not help but unfortunately they were at the hospital delivering our second grandchild who arrived on election night.

Mr Krause: Poor timing!

Mr MOLHOEK: It was very poor timing on Maddy's part, I thought, but we have gotten over it and moved past it!

I also want to thank Rock and Joan O'Keefe from Ashmore Rotary. Rock was one of the founders of the new Men's Shed there. It was great that they were able to help. I also thank Ross Lee, who not only is a solicitor in Southport but also provides hundreds if not thousands of hours of community service time in running a community legal service for the people of the Gold Coast.

I have so much I want to talk about in this 20 minutes and it is never long enough. There has been some fairly significant news this last week and I thought it would be remiss of me not to mention it. I have had the privilege and honour of being a director of Bravehearts on and off for nearly 15 years. Sadly, but understandably, Hetty Johnston announced her retirement this week as the executive director. Hetty is well-known to everyone in this House. It would be remiss of me not to take a few minutes to focus on her accomplishments and her contribution to child safety not only here in Queensland but all around the nation. Hetty is without a doubt one of the most renowned child protection advocates in our nation but, as she said in her own words, 'Bravehearts has grown up and my time is done.' After 25 years, I think she is allowed to take a bit of a break and step away from the fray—not that she will be stepping too far away.

Hetty founded the organisation in 1977 amid a personal nightmare, and the organisation has grown to become the leading voice in the battle to prevent child sexual assault and exploitation. We have actually been working on a succession plan for a number of years, and Hetty, like myself, is pleased that we are able to move forward with some new leadership. We have a lot of great people in Bravehearts doing great work, and the vision and passion of Bravehearts will continue under the new chief executive officer, Alison Geale.

When Hetty launched Bravehearts, no-one was talking much about the issue, but now there are so many other voices in our nation who are talking about child sexual abuse, like our Australian of the Year, Grace Tame. As all members in the House would agree, the work of Bravehearts and the commitment of Hetty Johnston have saved countless children from harm. Under her leadership, we have seen more than a million young people educated in primary schools across the nation with Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure.

When Bravehearts launched its inaugural White Balloon Day, those initiatives resulted in a 500 per cent increase in the number of police disclosures annually. There is so much I could say about Bravehearts, but I probably owe it to the people of Southport to talk about my dreams and hopes for the electorate. Thank you, Hetty. All of us here are grateful for the work she has done. We certainly wish her well, and we know fully she will not be off the scene for long but it is time for her to take a well-deserved rest.

I return to my comments on Southport. The Gold Coast is a vibrant and growing city. Queensland is going through significant growth off the back of COVID with every man, every woman and their dog wanting to move here, and Southport is no exception. In my electorate, I have more than 65,000 residents but only 32,000 people on the electoral roll. One of the reasons for that is that we have a large number of Kiwis who are not citizens who live in some of the suburbs. We also have Griffith University and the health and knowledge precinct, so a large number of itinerant people live on the fringes of my electorate. We have a large number of domestic and international students. We also have a large number of businesses and manufacturing businesses located in the electorate. A lot of people come and go.

What is particularly interesting about Southport is that I have 18 schools. Some of my country colleagues would say, 'Gee, that's not many schools.' If Lachlan Millar were here, he would be saying, 'You should see how many I have in Gregory.' In a very small area, for some reason we have a concentration of schools. On a daily basis, some 23,000 students travel in and out of my electorate to go to school. There are five private schools and the balance are state schools. I can assure the House that every one of those schools is reaching breaking point in terms of capacity and I will be raising this with the minister in due course. Even my old school of Keebra Park has gone from 500 students a few years ago to more than 1,200 students this year. Benowa State High School has in excess of 2,200 students and Southport State High School has a student population approaching 2,000.

It will come as no surprise to the House that I have a bit of a shopping list of projects that I have been talking to the schools about. We desperately need more sporting and recreational facilities at Keebra Park. We need to establish some sort of a sports centre of excellence at this school because of the incredible track record that the school has in producing sports champions in so many fields of sport. We also need money to upgrade and extend the multipurpose hall at Keebra Park.

At Ashmore State School, we have priorities like a long overdue upgrade of the administration building, the need for a multipurpose hall and additional classrooms for prep. At Bellevue Park State School, it may not seem like a big issue but there is a desperate need for new fencing because there have been some significant security challenges in that area and it adjoins a park and there is a need for an additional fence. There is also a need to revamp some of the old classrooms to meet current standards and to provide some soundproofing for music rooms and performing arts. They are just a few of the things on the list of some 20 or 30 projects that we have identified in the Southport electorate that are so desperately needed to meet the growing demands of the school population in my area in particular.

There are so many other things that need to be done. One of the things that COVID has highlighted is the incredible shortage we have across the state in terms of facilities for the homeless. Aside from the obvious need for more public and affordable housing—and we have heard much about that today in the House—we need more crisis accommodation and support services for victims and families experiencing domestic violence. In terms of the facilities on the Gold Coast, at Southport Still Waters is a wonderful centre that the Salvation Army built in 1982. One of my reflections on this is that there has been very little additional capacity added either there or to any other service within the electorate.

The other issue we have seen throughout COVID is an uplift of people on the street with mental health and drug and alcohol addictions. While great strides have been made and a lot of effort has been put into trying to house some of these people, the sad fact is that some of these people do not wish to be housed. Unfortunately, we do not necessarily have enough services or accommodation facilities to meet the needs of some of the most disadvantaged people in our city. We even see evidence of that here in Brisbane and in other parts of the state.

The other project that I would like to flag today is the need for us to work up a plan in terms of safe corridors for international students. I know we still have a bit of work to do in respect of COVID. The Queensland economy and the Gold Coast economy are incredibly dependent on the income and even the cultural exchanges that come from that. I touched on the number of school students in my electorate. It might interest the House to know that even as we sit here today there are some 26,000 international students on the Gold Coast. There are 23 separate colleges within the Southport electorate and a couple of extra colleges in Surfers Paradise that fundamentally cater to advanced learning and advanced education not only for international students but also domestic students from all around Australia. Had COVID not hit when it did, we would have seen a record number of international students on the Gold Coast last year. There were 42,000 enrolled, and some 16,000 have not been able to come because of international travel restrictions. To put that into context, if we look at export earnings for Queensland, mining is obviously the big one. The second largest earner is actually international education, worth \$9 billion about two years ago.

I should mention how pleased I am that TAFE has had further upgrades. We upgraded the Southport campus a few years ago. Last year additional money was spent on refurbishing level 3 or 4 to accommodate allied health services. Next week it will be my pleasure to join some of my colleagues and other members of this House and perhaps even the minister at the opening of the new \$13 million trade centre at the Gold Coast TAFE in Heeb Street.

Like my other colleagues, I also want to finish by briefly saying it is an incredible privilege to be a member of this House. It is not something that I take lightly. It is my intent to work just as hard this term, if not harder, for the people of Southport and the Gold Coast. They have given us their trust and we need to repay that with hard work and we need to deliver on the services, the facilities and the activities that people expect from us as a government.