




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2023

VALEDICTORY

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (5.45 pm): It is again a privilege to represent the crossbench in summarising a year that saw both celebrations and frustrations but, importantly, deep gratitude. Happily for all in the chamber I will stick with the celebrations, as our frustrations are well documented and well aired in this chamber, though I may add ruminations. The diversity of those of us across the back is not only geographical but also in social representation, covering 28 per cent of Queensland. In spite of this, we did agree and have a united, joint statement. There are other things that we have agreed on. Of course, members know our views about the committee system et cetera. All I need to say is that we will never give up on those.

There were many events outside of this chamber's role that have reiterated the importance of unity and for a diversity of viewpoints to be respected. The divisions being created in our country by events overseas are deeply saddening. As a multicultural society, we must be united in our efforts for peace. Healing is needed, as is a reminder of who we are, what we strive for and what we aspire to.

This year saw six bills by the crossbench introduced or debated. This again demonstrated diversity—from climate change transition, inclusionary strategy, family school costs all the way to liquid fuel supply, bush education and blue card bills. With the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee, there is opportunity to obtain bipartisan agreement in our efforts for greater safety across Queensland. We thank the government for this.

There were projects delivered for our electorates and some protests, but I will stick with what was delivered. The replacement of Six Mile Creek Bridge No. 7 in Noosa is nearly complete, which is fantastic, and many projects that have been hard fought for, such as the Pomona campus hall, are very appreciated.

In Katter country there has been a much needed CT scanner for Ingham hospital, the completion of the Atherton Hospital and the launch of their relocation sentencing policy. CopperString has been a welcome addition—not so the gillnet fishing bans or the speeding fines. That was not on the Santa wish list!

For the Greens electorates of Maiwar and South Brisbane: interim funding for school upgrades, a pedestrian crossing and the start of the Montague Road Corridor is good news; however, there was no early Santa visit, with little progress on a new site for the inner-west primary school.

For Mirani there is a pipeline for Mount Morgan. Member for Mirani, I think the bulk of the money went your way with the pipeline, Rookwood Weir being up and running and Mount Morgan producing gold and jobs soon. I hope that you share some of that gold with the rest of us! Some areas along the Bruce Highway were sealed, although I did see on his Santa wish list that you want to do some repurposing of the old Sarina hospital for accommodation. I am sure that if you have been a good boy, Santa may deliver that.

We celebrate our incredible electorates and all within and send our deep gratitude to them. I also congratulate them on the work they all do for our communities. I thank our fabulous frontliners in both the private and public sectors, from our nurses, teachers, police and QPWS rangers all the way through to our retail and hospitality workers, plumbers and carers. The list goes on and on. Thank you.

I especially call out our government agencies. I have deep appreciation for your efforts throughout the year, because it has been a tough one. To our not-for-profits and community organisations and all of our volunteers: there are no words to express how we feel about you. There is provision of so much—whether sports for our kids, support for those experiencing hardships or saving lives. We could not exist without you and every day you put others first, often at great detriment or danger to yourselves, all without pay and at times not a lot of thanks. I know that every MP would agree: you are gold.

To the Premier, all ministers, departmental and agency staff, our gratitude goes to you all. There are many challenges along the way and frustrations can lead to your inboxes overflowing. I am not sure whether we need to apologise for that, but we are persistent. Our weeks in parliament are made special by the incredible parliamentary teams from chamber attendants, IT, catering, security and housekeeping through to maintenance, Hansard, our secretariats and library research teams. Your smiles, friendly and efficient service and efforts for us are deeply appreciated. We especially love the cheery and at times creepy decorations, cafe creations and our gardens, which are beautiful. When you actually go out there, they are very much the calm in the storm.

To our Speaker, all deputies and acting speakers, I say thank you for all that you do. There were moments that we as MPs made your job extremely difficult and may we do better in the lead-up to the election in demonstrating to Queenslanders that we can voice our opinions whilst being respectful to the chair and each other.

To our Clerk, that you continue again to not lose a hair through the annexe renovation, our contesting of the standing orders, conventions and determinations, all the way to our efforts to make change is truly testament to who you are. Your endless knowledge and advice—we cannot imagine how we could ever do without that.

To our own staff I say that we and our electorates appreciate you every day even if you do not hear these words enough. No, that does not mean you get out of doing the 10,000 step challenge next year. It just means those who missed out this year will need to join us in 2024.

To all MPs on both sides and your staff, families and electorates, we send hearty wishes for a wonderful Christmas with ongoing recovery for those who have experienced disasters and loss. Know that we think of your communities at these traumatic times and ask that Santa brings all you could ask for including no fires and some rain. Thank you for the friendships and coffee conversations and, even in the heat of a debate, the lighter moments. It was really lovely earlier to hear much laughter in here. It is nice. Going to those lighter moments, including the lighting of the tree which I know you are itching to get to, I say merry Christmas, everyone. See you in 2024.