




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (4.15 pm): To stand here again representing Noosa and for the third term as the only elected Independent member of the Queensland parliament is the greatest of honours. We live in an incredible state and country, as demonstrated by the phenomenal response to Cyclone Alfred in March. Every day I am thankful for the caring, dedicated and selfless people we are surrounded by.

As I have said before, I am most definitely biased towards my electorate, which has been my home for over three decades now and where I will remain until my last breath. Many are unaware that Noosa is not a town; it is an electorate and shire of great beauty and it is more than a holiday destination. It is very much an intentional community of shared vision and goals. Residents and businesses are internationally recognised and awarded in their respective fields, including innovation through young environmental warriors who can raise 50,000 signatures on a petition and so much more.

If they have not done so already, I hope our newer members of parliament—and congratulations to you all—get the chance to visit Noosa. I always have spare beds available as, understandably, I wish to share my community and the passion we have to retain its uniqueness so that future generations of Queenslanders and visitors can also enjoy it. Noosa is an incredibly valuable asset as an international drawcard for our state and, as a biosphere, it is a living laboratory in which we find ways to live with the least impact on our natural assets.

The election seems a very long time ago but it was only eight months. It highlighted the Noosa passion. Independent supporters of all ages and ideologies undertook a campaign free of misinformation, negativity and grubby tactics. They filled the streets, waterways and foreshores, proudly wearing their T-shirts and bandanas. I will be forever grateful for the positive energy and spirit that emanated everywhere they went.

Special gratitude goes to my campaign manager, Trish, and her very small team. It was a really difficult campaign. After the 2020 election, I had hoped that the disrespectful behaviours displayed by political parties in our electorate would desist. However, sadly again up popped those infamous scratchies that residents were appalled by. Disappointingly, we again saw the reply paid envelopes for postal votes. Even though my private member's motion to see an end to what is a deceptive practice was not successful, I hope our new government will address this as part of delivering greater transparency and respect to all Queenslanders. Again we saw people from across the state being bussed in to hand out flyers at booths and the huge—and I mean huge—third-party signage that swamped all others. Our communities deserve better.

In amongst campaigning, there was deep sadness with the passing of my mum, my mother-in-law and two girlfriends, all within that month. Suppressing the grief was exhausting. However, on election night I felt they were all with us. I am grateful for the very special moments that I will always remember, including the surprise bagpipe band that played *When the saints go marching in*.

To my much better half, 'Shoey', my family, including my children and grandchildren—we have 11 between us—my friends and all of my supporters, all I can say again is how much I treasure you. You are my family in all ways that matter, and I thank you for your love, your incredible efforts, the high-fives on the street, thumping on my car roof, which nearly made me have an accident, and the tooting of horns. You really do make my world.

I am thankful for so much that was achieved last term. The completion of Six Mile Creek Bridge No. 7; the completion of stages 3, 4 and 5 of our better river management; the beginning of a new life for our decommissioned TAFE; and the construction of domestic and family violence units are just some examples. With still lots to do, there have been excellent commitments from both our previous government and our new government on some of these, including on the Tewantin Bypass and the Pomona pedestrian crossing, and we look forward to seeing progress. Of note is the appreciation from our community for the government's commitment to ensure that any state facilitated developments comply with Noosa's planning scheme, and I thank the Premier and the Deputy Premier for this. There are issues that are yet to have solid commitments, such as an end to the destruction of the Noosa North Shore and areas to the north, and broader Queensland issues such as better governance are much more than infrastructure and services. Of course, there will be more on that in my speech on the budget.

Collaboration and communication are key, and I hope our new government will address the flaws in our systems with an aim to delivering greater efficiency, transparency and value for taxpayers' dollars. I will say it again: system failures deeply impact residents' physical and mental wellbeing, which ultimately costs much more to address, whether that be from addictions, loss of productivity, increased domestic and family violence or increased crime.

Within my own electorate, we continue to experience an inappropriate volume of heavy haulage through our beautiful villages from the quarry four years on, and with the much awaited Planning and Environment Court determination delivering no resolution we ask our new government to do what no-one else has been able to do: end the trauma being experienced. This includes urgently appealing to the federal government to refuse an application to clear another 10 hectares of koala habitat, which is totally unacceptable in every possible way.

Other issues that we have advocated for and called on to be remedied finally look like being addressed, and I thank our new government for this. Announcements on bettering many realms, such as that recently passed legislation I mentioned before to allow the revoking of state facilitated developments, the suspension of the Best Practice Industry Conditions and the creation of a victims advocacy service, are all welcome. This includes our volunteers. Even though I do not believe we need an inquiry to identify why we have lost 10 per cent in our volunteer numbers, some form of action is appreciated. I trust that the funding of our volunteer organisations which work tirelessly will be assessed at the same time.

I will continue to seek an independent inquiry into the pandemic and the ongoing fallouts. Even though my private member's motion did not secure the previous government's support, given the importance of ensuring we are well prepared for any future pandemics, I hope our new government undertakes this to provide clarity and reassurance for Queenslanders.

In addition, our efforts to reform our estimates and committee processes, as well as chamber practices and standing and sessional orders, are key to better analysis and decision-making to ensure all voices of Queenslanders are heard. Creating an environment that encourages bipartisan agreement is vital to ending the wasting of taxpayers' dollars. Even though I have experienced how members of a committee can disrupt these efforts, this does not mean anyone should give up. We just need to mature as a parliament, and this is our opportunity to do that.

In our efforts and achievements, we do not thank enough those who make our communities in Queensland the most wonderful places to call home—everyone from front liners to departmental staff and ministers, to not-for-profits and volunteers and to fabulous residents, businesses and advocates. How blessed we are to live where we do with caring, compassionate and dedicated human beings. I make special mention of my staff—Lisa, Dylan, James and Jack—my work experience students and interns and volunteer Peta. You are all gold and you work so hard for our residents.

As I have said, we are in an era of opportunity to show appreciation for what was delivered under the previous government as well as for the new government addressing flaws, implementing policy for greater efficiency and equity and legislating based on evidence, not slogans. At the same time, we need to be empathetic to the needs of all Queenslanders, ensuring that decisions account for our diversity and, vitally, are considered beyond an election term to create a truly sustainable Queensland. Many of

these decisions may be hard to make and may not provide instant gratification; however, by being transparent with Queenslanders, demonstrating true integrity and ending the grubby tactics and poor behaviour that we have seen in this chamber some of the lost trust in politicians and our democracy will be restored.

This must be our legacy for Queensland's future, and it is one that, respectfully, I will continue to fight for. Again, I congratulate all MPs on both sides of this chamber and I look forward to working with you this term.