



Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

Hansard Wednesday, 22 April 2009

MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr CRANDON (Coomera—LNP) (5.13 pm): I am honoured and feel humbled to be standing here today at the end of one journey and at the beginning of another. The people of the new state seat of Coomera have demonstrated their trust and confidence in me to be their first representative for Coomera in this House, and I will honour that trust. I wish to acknowledge the support of so many people who were committed to the singular goal of winning this new seat for the Liberal National Party, the LNP. But before I do, I want to acknowledge my family. Firstly, I acknowledge the most important person in my life—my wife, Pauline, who has been my most committed supporter. Throughout our almost 40 years together, she has believed in me and made it possible for me to achieve goals that would not have been possible without her dedication. Pauline, I love you and I thank you for being there for me through thick and thin.

I acknowledge our sons and our grandchildren and their love for Pauline and me, because it means everything to us; my mother, who passed away more than a decade ago at too young an age, who taught me and my siblings the meaning of unequivocal love; my father, who, in his 80th year, remains committed to helping his ever-expanding family and who works so hard to keep in touch with all of them. Father, thank you for all the ways you have helped me, for the advice you have given me and for your enduring love for our family. I and my brothers and sisters know how difficult life has been at times for you and are in awe of your devotion to mum during those last 18 months of her life. Lastly, I want to acknowledge my brothers and sisters and their families, who have shown so much love and support to me and their commitment to our extended family.

It is said that one rarely has more than a few true friends. I believe this to be so, but I am glad to say that I have some of the truest. Some have been lifelong friends and others are very new. I will cherish those friendships during the years ahead and gain strength from them. Our new friends have come to us through this campaign. They come from varying backgrounds and have one thing in common: a desire to make a difference through a new conservative political party—the Liberal National Party, the LNP. I have noted through many conversations that some had not been active members for quite some time but, because of the merger, have returned to the fold. This alone is proof of the success of the merger strategy and reinforces the view that one conservative party—this conservative party—will be a force to be reckoned with in the years to come. As stated earlier, the people of the new Coomera electorate have put their trust in me. My promise to you is that I will fight for what is right for Coomera. I will focus my energies on the priorities that you, the people of Coomera, have told me are important to you.

My family comes from proud but humble beginnings. My parents are UK immigrants from the early 1960s. We were ten-pound Poms no less. My dad had a dream: to build his own home. He achieved that dream at Kippa-Ring on the Redcliffe peninsula. I can remember dad working on the house with very primitive tools by today's standards until late into the night and on weekends whilst working two jobs to help pay for materials. His example instilled in me a work ethic that, I am proud to say, has allowed me a degree of success and has in turn allowed my family to enjoy the benefits of that hard work.

Pauline and I moved our young family to Eagleby in 1978 where we spent the first nine years of our life in the then Albert electorate. This is when our community involvement began, with the delivery of phone books to help raise the funds to build a scout den. I am happy to report that that building continues

to serve the community needs as a local church. My business activities commenced in Beenleigh in the early 1980s. A change of vocation saw me commencing work as a financial planner in 1987 in Loganholme. We then returned to work in Beenleigh with our financial planning practice in 1993 and remained there until selling the business last year. Following almost 10 years with the Rotary Club of Beenleigh, I became closely involved with the Beenleigh Police Citizens Youth Club, joining the committee. I look forward to continuing to work with this wonderful organisation which does so much not only for underprivileged youth but for all young people right throughout Queensland.

Around the same time I accepted the role of area chairman for the Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal, and I would encourage my fellow members to get behind this worthwhile cause on the weekend of 23 and 24 May in your local community. Once again, the Salvos do so much wonderful work to help those less fortunate in our towns and cities. I believe that my business and community activities, together with my academic qualifications and life experience, collectively give me a unique view of the world that will hold me in good stead when helping those who have put their trust in me.

I feel the journey that brought me to this House started all of those years ago in Eagleby, and how wonderful it is to find myself here today representing that very same community. It would be remiss of me not to mention the diversity of the electorate, which has the M1 as its western boundary. In the north and south respectively are the suburban communities of Eagleby and Helensvale. Between these two ends there are very diverse communities, which include rural areas such as Alberton, Norwell and Woongoolba, village type communities such as Cabbage Tree Point and Jacobs Well, and relatively new suburban areas such as parts of Ormeau, which are promoted for marketing purposes as Jacobs Ridge. As well, there is Coomera Waters, which many people living in South-East Queensland would not know exists due to its location behind the Dreamworld precinct. But Coomera Waters is at the centre of the fastest growing region in Australia. The planned Coomera Town Centre on Foxwell Road will cause a further explosion in that growth. Then there are the areas that include Hope Island, some of which are gated, and the gated community of Sanctuary Cove, which is unique in the world.

I said at the beginning that I am at the end of one journey and at the beginning of another. What I mean by that is that my business life is over and now I look forward to representing the people of Coomera in public life. It is because the new seat was formed that I felt it time for me to step up to the plate—that and the formation of a new conservative political party. Had these two things not occurred within weeks of one another and had I not recently sold my business, I would not have commenced this new journey. The incredible coincidence of these things occurring has given me this wonderful opportunity to serve the people of Coomera and Queensland. It is destiny and I embrace the opportunity. Once all of this was set in motion, the most incredible group of people began to form. It seemed that they were stepping into a play just on cue to take up their positions. It has been an amazing time.

There are many local issues, both big and small, that I will be fighting to resolve over the coming years. A major one is access to and over the M1. Imagine, if you will, the idea that, as a mum or dad wanting to take your children to school, you will most likely be in a traffic jam for the best part of an hour for the round trip. I am not talking about traffic on the M1; I am talking about traffic trying to get from Coomera on the eastern side of the M1 to schools located on the western side—schools that are just a few kilometres away.

We then have railway infrastructure. The Coomera electorate has within its boundaries three of the five railway stations servicing the Gold Coast: Helensvale, which also services the Gaven and Broadwater electorates, and the other two stations, Coomera and Ormeau. In addition, many of the Coomera residents in the north use Beenleigh Railway Station. During peak times most of the Coomera electorate commuters look forward to standing for the 75-minute journey to work or sitting on the floor. Many have taken to bringing their own chair. I ask the House: is it any wonder that the Gold Coast service has been referred to as the 'Bombay Express'? During my campaign I heard my opponent, when confronted by local people complaining about these two issues, use the excuse that we are in the middle of unprecedented growth in our region. My response to that statement was, 'Exactly, and we have known about it for more than a decade. Why has something not been done about it? Why has the government ignored these issues?' These critical issues will only be exacerbated by the huge growth expectations that I mentioned earlier.

The M1 and our rail service have to be two major priorities for this term of government. If they are not resolved now, the area will be crippled as the population explodes further. As well, there is the question of the draft South East Queensland Regional Plan, together with the draft north-east Gold Coast land use and infrastructure study. So far as the northern part of the Coomera electorate is concerned, specifically an area known as the cane fields, these documents contain major flaws and inaccuracies regarding, for example, land use suitability, which make the recommended outcomes totally inappropriate. These issues must be addressed. We need a shorter term plan for this area with accurate information regarding land use suitability—a 10-year plan, a plan that gives more certainty to those families who have been living and working in the area for four or five or even six generations, as to what they can expect for their hard work. The cane farmers are ageing and their sons and daughters are moving to more certain futures—certainty that cane farming cannot give them.

I now come to a medium- to long-term goal. With all that is happening in the electorate of Coomera—the population explosion, the Coomera Town Centre and so much more—it is my intention to push for planning to commence now for a new hospital. From what I have read, I understand that the land has been earmarked. The indication is, however, that a hospital is slated for consideration some 20 years from now. That is too far away. I urge the government to fast-track the planning process for a new Coomera hospital—a hospital that will be needed far sooner than the current planning suggests, a hospital that can be available for the population needs of Coomera and the surrounding area within 10 years.

On a broader matter, I must say that I am passionate about the dual issues of mental health and drug and alcohol abuse. These two issues go hand in hand. The evidence tells us that both have cause and effect. People suffering mental illness often turn to alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism. They are self-medicating and soon discover it only exacerbates their problem. On the other hand, our young people who experiment with drugs and alcohol risk causing mental health issues later in life. We need funding for education programs about the dangers of self-medicating and experimenting with drugs and alcohol. We need an increase in funding to facilitate an expansion of management programs for those in our society who are already caught in the grip of these terrible twins. I call on the government as a matter of urgency to adequately provide what is needed.

This new state government has some huge challenges ahead. Knee-jerk reactions to economic management cannot continue. This government must act more responsibly with regard to how it spends state revenues. For example, the cost-plus concept that was implemented in building the water grid invited abuse. Every dollar spent by the contractors guaranteed them greater profits. I have heard reports of some workers not having a full-time role, yet they were full-time employees drawing a significant wage. By overemploying workers and, of course, having to spend money on training and induction programs—all on a cost-plus basis—the contractors were simply pocketing greater profits. This flaw in the concept contributed to the huge blow-out in costs to complete the grid. Queenslanders will go on paying for that blow-out in additional interest for years to come, on top of increases in water rates.

I now turn to the matter of recognising some outstanding individuals and groups who have given me so much support leading up to the election. With their help, we achieved the biggest swing in the state to win a seat. That swing was over 10 per cent. There were other, greater swings, but they did not determine the result in the electorate. The swing in Coomera won the seat for the LNP. Firstly, I must recognise the honourable Ivan Gibbs, who represented the Albert electorate—much of which is now Coomera—so ably for 15 years. I must also recognise Ivan's principal supporter, Doris Gibbs OBE. I am so fortunate to have Ivan and Doris living in this newest state seat. I thank them both. They treated Pauline and me like family. I thank them for their total commitment to us and the campaign following the preselection. I also recognise the honourable David Jull, the federal member for Fadden, retired, who gave me such outstanding advice and provided me with an insight into politics that has proven to be invaluable. To Gary Berndt, my campaign manager, and his wife, Robin: it is a simple fact that without them we could not have done it. I thank them both.

I thank Warren Pike, the Coomera SEC chair and Glenice, his wife. Thank you so much for your support and friendship. Vivienne Shield was my right arm during the campaign. How pleased I am that you decided to take such an active role. Thank you, Viv. To John Hayward, my 72-year-old doorknocking partner, I say thanks and I am sorry we never got to the pub. What a wonderful group the ABC ladies are. The efforts you put in, often at short notice, were invaluable. You also managed to keep the kitchen well stocked with biscuits. Thank you. Thank you, also, to those totally committed members of the Coomera North branch and the Gold Coast North Shore branch who made such a commitment. You know who you are. I thank also those LNP candidates and members of parliament who showed such camaraderie during the campaign. Finally, to all family, friends and partners in the community who volunteered their time and effort to help me in this endeavour: I will remember you forever.

Some years ago I was given as a gift a framed copy of a poem attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson. It is entitled *A Philosophy to Live By*, and states—

To laugh often and much;
To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;
To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;
To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others;
To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition;
To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived.
This is to have succeeded.

All those years ago I adopted that poem as my philosophy to live by. Today, I dedicate it to all of those people who showed their commitment to our cause, because in so doing they have given me the opportunity to further my commitment to the people of Coomera and Queensland. Once again, thank you.