



## Speech by

# Mr LEN STEPHAN

## MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

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Hansard 6 August 1998

### ADDRESS IN REPLY

**Mr STEPHAN** (Gympie—NPA) (5.23 p.m.): I take the opportunity provided by the debate on the Address in Reply to pledge my loyalty to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. I also extend courtesies to His Excellency the Governor following his opening of the Parliament. I wish him all the very best in his work. I also extend congratulations to Mr Speaker and to the Chairman of Committees, the member for Woodridge. I have no doubt that both men will carry out their work with a great deal of enthusiasm.

I say thankyou to my family: to Ruth, who has been a part of the whole operation since I took on this job; and to our three girls, Helen, Gail and Lynette and their families. They have been a great inspiration to me.

I say thankyou to Elizabeth, my electorate officer, who has settled in very well in the past couple of years. I appreciate her work also. I also give thanks to the electorate council for the amount of work that it put into the campaign and to the committee itself. I also thank the members of the community who came along to help.

I say thankyou very much to the electors of Gympie for the opportunity they have given me to represent such a hospitable and beautiful place. I look forward to continuing to work with the constituents of this beautiful area. I take this opportunity to thank them very much for all their courtesies.

Integral to Queensland's future economic development is a reduction in the level of unemployment in the State, as set out in the Speech given by the Governor at the opening of the Parliament. The objective of a reduction in unemployment is one we can all certainly relate to. The Government has a clear priority to enhance the availability and security of employment and to ensure that as many people as possible can and do get a job that they can not only perform but also enjoy.

On many occasions as the member for Gympie I come across people and organisations who really do put their best foot forward. One of those organisations is Roadcraft. About 18 or 20 years ago, the two Rotary clubs in Gympie decided that something had to be done about the number of young people who were losing their lives because of their not being able to handle the cars they were driving and the roads on which they were travelling. What they have done and put in place over that period is a great credit to them.

I have just completed a form calling for expressions of interest in connection with the youth development program. However, the level of funding needed to keep Roadcraft operating needs to be addressed. This program is ongoing, and we want to ensure that money is being spent wisely.

Roadcraft is a non-profit incorporated association. As I said before, the two Rotary clubs of Gympie got together to address the issue of road trauma among the region's youth. Roadcraft has kept youth road trauma as its focus and has added driver education to its program options. It has certainly been doing that very well. Roadcraft was offered a site adjacent to Lakeside International Raceway. It had a view to constructing two training facilities there—a driver education circuit and a traffic safety circuit. The driver education circuit will be the facility for conducting the student driver education courses and the components of the youth program for which Roadcraft is seeking that assistance. A letter from it that I have, which was not written all that long ago, states that a traffic safety circuit was to be constructed at a future date.

The Youth Road Trauma Prevention and Driving Skills Vocational Program will address two critical issues, one of which is the unacceptable rate of road-related deaths and injury among Queensland's young drivers, passengers and pedestrians. The other issue is youth unemployment. To a potential employer, a young job seeker who has received training in informed and responsible road and vehicle use must be better suited to employment than someone without that training.

The program will be directed at 16 to 19-year-olds and will suppose little or no driving experience. By the end of the program each participant should be equipped with a driver's licence, understand why young people kill themselves on the road and how not to join the list of casualties. They should have the confidence, knowledge and attitude to approach driving in a responsible and competent manner.

The program would be conducted in four stages, one of which would be a learn-to-drive component, the cost of which could only be estimated as the system progresses. For example, Stage 1 involves basic skills development over a one-day course that equips the participant with the basic skills required for operating a vehicle. As such, it is largely practical. Stage 2 involves educating student drivers over a two-day course that addresses vehicle dynamics, the effects of alcohol and drugs, crash causes, traffic interaction and stopping distances. Again, there is a high practical component in that course. Stage 3 involves a component taken with a registered driving school and is coordinated by Roadcraft. The duration of the component would depend on the competency of the student. Stage 4 involves a two-day course to be taken at least one month after securing a licence. It should be acknowledged that these programs will benefit not only learner drivers but everybody in the community, because they teach people behind the wheel to understand their vehicle and what they are doing.

I wish to raise also the National Competition Policy, which is proving problematic for the dairying industry. The participants in the industry have been left wondering what they will need to do to keep their businesses operating. A lot of producers know how to handle——

**Ms Bligh** interjected.

**Mr STEPHAN:** The dairy farmers know what they are doing, which is far more than can be said about a lot of members in this House. I do not know whether the member has sat beside a cow or even knows what one looks like. Perhaps someone can show her.

As a consequence, commercial pressures are impacting—and they will continue to impact—on the industry, forcing greater restructuring. For example, pressure from retailers through the supermarket tendering process has seen a reduction of more than 3c per litre at the farm gate. That is a price that no dairy producer who wishes to stay in production could begin to contemplate.

The public benefit test is not doing anything at all for the confidence of producers and for ensuring that they will continue to be able to produce in a very competitive market. Economic analysis suggests that, in most scenarios, deregulation is likely to have little overall impact on the Queensland economy. However, it is considered that the regional impacts of deregulation are likely to be very significant. Producers with low equity and high indebtedness and/or are located in marginal dairying areas distant from processing plants would be at greatest risk. Attendant consequences for regional communities in terms of job losses come at a time when we cannot afford to lose that expertise. We cannot afford to take no steps to help our producers and simply let them go out of business. They are necessary and we need to encourage them to continue.

I take the opportunity to speak about the comments by the Minister for the Environment, Rod Welford, in relation to the water conservation programs that the previous Government began to put in place. A newspaper article states—

"Mr Welford said he would review all dams proposed by the Water Infrastructure Task Force report."

It is a pity that we cannot get through to the Minister the message that it is necessary to continue with the water conservation programs that are in place. When members opposite were previously in Government, in over seven years they built only one dam, and even it was started before they came into power.

**Mr Mickel:** We built the Bundaberg irrigation system.

**Mr STEPHAN:** That is a very small system. It will help those people, but it will not be the answer for the surrounding producing areas. The member cannot say that, because his former Government built a dam there, that will overcome all of the water conservation problems. That is a very short-sighted attitude. The Government has not made any compensation for the water that will be required if we are to be competitive in world markets.

I know that other areas are putting in place programs to make sure that water will be used—and used wisely—and that we have some for future generations. For example, researchers are trying to make sure that we make the best use of the water that is available. Along with this is the reasoning that

underground water has possibly not been tapped to its fullest extent. There are possibilities there, but we just cannot sit on our hands and say, "That is all right. We have some water there underground, so we do not need to worry too much about it." It is just a pity that members opposite adopt that sort of attitude.

Before closing, I would also like to talk about the opportunities that we put in place to better look after people, particularly in the instances of education. The Tin Can Bay school is in the process of being constructed at this time, and about \$7m is involved in that. Pomona State High School was completed in the past couple of years, and that area is still growing at a very fast rate. \$480,000 was spent in that area. We just cannot let these types of things get away from us. With a growing population, these areas need facilities for education, and that certainly needs to be encouraged.

Goldmining operations are also operating in Gympie, which was and still is a goldmining town. It is certainly not as great as it was back in the 1860s and 1890s, but gold is still coming out of those areas. They have mined down to almost a kilometre underground, and that is creating a few problems. The heat generation is fairly high for those who work down there and it is hard to catch one's breath. I congratulate the company and the workers for the way that they go about their business and for ensuring that they put in an honest day's work in those facilities.

Time expired.

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