



Speech by

## Hon. V. LESTER

### MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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Hansard 4 August 1998

#### ADDRESS IN REPLY

**Hon. V. P. LESTER** (Keppel—NPA) (4.39 p.m.): I am happy to be back here in the House after so many years of continuous service in the Parliament. I thank all of those people who stood shoulder to shoulder with me to ensure that I would win well on the most recent occasion.

I pay a special tribute to my long-serving secretary, Gail Ryder; her assistants, Susan Kingsley and Sharon; and to my wife, Mary, who spends more and more time in the electorate office so that we can keep up with the increasing demands on a member of Parliament to service the electorate.

I also pay a very special tribute to Mrs Gwen Simpson, the joint campaign director, who has looked after the Rockhampton section for many years, and to Mr Noel McFarlane, who was my very first campaign director some 24 years ago. Ours is a partnership that has gone from strength to strength. It is people like these who have helped me be here today, continuously doing the job that I should do. I also pay a special tribute to those many helpers who got behind me during the run to this last election and to the so many of them who flocked to the polling booths to make sure that there were people there handing out how-to-vote cards and batting for Vince Lester.

Perhaps one of the very nicest things that could ever happen to me as a father was for my two daughters, Mary-ann and Veronica, to arrive in Yeppoon two days before the election in a hired van. Here they were with my six grandchildren—Justin, Tommy, Katie, Simon, Matthew and Sebastian—on election day, working with me. It is great to have a family that backs me up so very much.

I also pay a sincere tribute to former Premier Rob Borbidge. He was so easy to deal with. Issues that were never touched before were addressed. An example is Kinka Beach. People only ever talked about it and the problem got worse until the water started to get near some of our homes. Mr Borbidge came to the electorate of Keppel, walked along the beach and said, "It's got to be fixed", and fixed it has been. I thank him very much.

I mention other one-off, difficult issues, such as Curraman Creek Road. People started to use that road as a short cut from Emu Park towards the northern part of Rockhampton. An enormous amount of dust was coming up from that council road. We were able to work out a very legitimate deal that sees that road now being bituminised.

The Premier came to my electorate on another occasion for the opening of the Rosslyn Bay boat harbour—another very excellent event in the history of the electorate. That truly was a great day. Later in the afternoon we attended at the flower and tea gardens on Tanby Road and later went back to attend the opening of the courthouse extensions. That also was a magnificent event.

I will not tell members what happened when we went to the local publican that afternoon. As one who does not frequent bars very often and being most unused to it, I dropped my glass of lemonade, but people seemed to understand and we cleaned it up. Perhaps I might talk to the member for Bulimba about how I can conduct myself better in a bar.

**Mr Borbidge:** You need some training.

**Mr LESTER:** The Leader of the Opposition said that I need some training. I might limit my expertise, however, in those areas because so far things have worked fairly well.

Over time I have built up a great relationship with the schools in my area. So much work has been done there. I pay a particular tribute to the teachers and support staff who work at our schools.

Just to see the grounds, the way they are kept by our janitors and groundspeople, to see the way our teachers really put everything they have got into giving children a better education and the way our teachers fight, as they should, for the latest teaching methods, computers and so on, and to see what some of those schools have done to add computer technology to schools such as Frenchville is really great.

There are some great schools in the electorate of Keppel. Work has been done recently at Lakes Creek. More work needs to be done. There are difficulties there because the numbers are not quite as high as they used to be. The janitor's job is under threat. That school is a picture; the janitor there needs to be retained.

The Cawarral State School is a great school. We have been able to get a tuckshop and other facilities in place there. I pay tribute to the Keppel Sands State School P & C. Many of the parents go in and sit with the teacher and assist with the teaching of their children. A special shade area has been built and people are doing a great job in that hot, sunny area. Just about a whole new school has been built at Coowonga, along with a teacher's house. Narimbera is a great school as well.

An administration block needs to be built at Emu Park. We have waited a while for it. We have had some quite good help over the years, but it is time we got just a little bit more done at this great centre of learning at Emu Park.

While talking about Emu Park, I should pay a tribute to that wonderful councillor, Faye Owens. She really is a dynamo. Each year she and I team up to raise money for the spastics. Over the years she and I have raised more money between us than the rest of the spastics organisations together in central Queensland. Last year I had to wheel Councillor Faye Owens in a wheelie bin all the way from Kinka Beach to Emu Park.

**Mr Sullivan:** What a load of rubbish!

**Mr LESTER:** The member saying "what a load of rubbish" is obviously joking, so I will not be too hard on him. A lot of money was placed into that bin. That helped the spastics in no uncertain terms. They were very appreciative of what we did. I am not sure quite what Councillor Owens has lined up for me this time. It is still a couple of weeks away, but it will be something similar.

I also pay tribute to the efforts of the people of the Taranganbah school and the Yeppoon State High School. Efforts are being made to assist the disabled there. A special learning centre for disabled people is required. We do not have such a centre on the Capricorn Coast at present. Some people are unfortunately very severely disabled and do need their own centre. We are working on that. The Yeppoon State School does have a centre for younger people who are disabled. A very good job is being done there.

We had quite a lot of difficulty, not only with the Goss Government but also with my own Government for a little while, in getting a new toilet block for Farnborough. But in true coalition fashion, the Government came good. Recently a fete was held at the Farnborough school and it was good to see it all working well. The Byfield school in that wonderful area is doing well. An excellent education is being provided at the North Rockhampton State High School. It used to be the great music school of central Queensland and, indeed, Queensland. It slipped a little bit, but it is coming on really well.

Before I go on, I pay tribute to the college chaplains at these schools who are providing very good service. These chaplains have an expertise that some other people do not seem to have—even those who are taught how to handle students who might exhibit a little dissent. Some of the reason for such dissent is that these particular students just do not have the opportunities to learn at home. We can say that training should occur in the home—and so it certainly should—but in some instances that does not happen and we cannot blame our teachers.

The chaplains do a heck of a lot of good work. Even during the run-up to the election I took the time to come down for a special dinner for all the chaplains of Queensland held here at Parliament House. Chaplaincy is an area to which I would like to see the present Government give some money. The Government only has to give a little bit of money and it will get it back three times over; some very good results will be achieved.

**Mr Schwarten:** I always give them a donation.

**Mr LESTER:** The honourable member has been very good. As I understand it, the member was either at or tried to attend that dinner—something that was noted. The member's efforts have been recognised. From time to time, the member for Rockhampton and I do some bipartisan work in the public interest.

**Mr Schwarten:** We'll do it again.

**Mr LESTER:** We will do that again. We have achieved a lot. Just occasionally, politics can be put aside in the public interest. The same can also be said about the member for Fitzroy, Mr Pearce. Such small efforts from time to time are worth while. After all, all members are here to help people to lead a better life.

Thanks to the previous Education Minister, the Frenchville State School has been totally revamped. With the assistance of its excellent principal, Alan Knox, we have been able to achieve a lot. The electricity supply was a problem at that school, but that was fixed up recently. I also point out that the Mount Archer P & C has done an enormous amount of work, as have the P & Cs at Parkhurst and the Caves.

I appreciate the efforts of the previous Government in relation to the TAFE centre at Yeppoon, which still needs a bit of upgrading. Its students are now able to take advantage of a video conferencing facility. Some courses at the Yeppoon TAFE do not always attract the necessary numbers. That problem has been overcome, because students can now utilise video conferencing facilities via which they can be linked to a teacher in some other part of the State giving a lesson in the relevant subject. That initiative has been very welcome, even if it was a long time coming.

The Catholic schools in the area are doing a good job. For example, St Anthony's school in Rockhampton, Sacred Heart, Emmaus and so on are doing a lot of good work. Governments and members of Parliament sometimes make the mistake of saying how great they have been to Catholic schools and, for that matter, other private schools. However, without the efforts of those schools the taxpayers' bill would be much higher. The Baptist school on Norman Road is also doing a very good job, as is the Assembly of God school.

One of the highlights for Emu Park, besides its obtaining a full-time Ambulance Service, was the construction of a prototype brand spanking new police station. The Emu Park area is growing and it has needed an additional police officer for a long time. The previous police officer used to work, by himself, out of what can best be described as a little cubbyhouse; it had a veranda and a room. I invited Russell Cooper to have a look at it. He could not believe his eyes. It was built in the Dark Ages. When the first prototype movable police station was built at Emu Park, the people could not believe it, either. They woke up one morning to find a new police station.

The Minister gave me the opportunity to open that police station at a grand opening ceremony to which everybody in the town was invited. Everyone turned up, the Lions catered, and it was a terrific function attended by hundreds of people. The Police Commissioner said to me afterwards, "I have never seen anything like it. We never get this many people at the opening of a police station." I said to him, "You haven't always been dealing with Vince Lester." Everybody was invited and fed at no additional cost to the police department. The people really loved it.

Under the previous Government, Yeppoon was able to get additional police officers. It now has 14 uniformed officers and three detectives. With the arrival of the brand spanking new police boat for which we fought, we needed an additional water police officer. The previous Government's handling of crime in Yeppoon was poor. At one point, Yeppoon was down to six uniformed police officers, which was not very good and meant that police officers were extremely stressed. The wives of the officers told me that they were very upset about the situation. That problem has now been fixed up. However, we still need more resources. We need that station to be a 24-hour station in its own right.

There are still a few problems. For example, there are insufficient numbers of police available to facilitate an offender's being detained in the watch-house. Offenders must be taken into Rockhampton by two police officers, which is an extraordinary waste of time and a poor utilisation of resources. We need the other two officers that were promised and which we would have had by now under a coalition Government. We need that station to be a 24-hour police station.

In the last Budget moves were made to provide a major police complex in North Rockhampton. I refer to the new regional command police station and all that goes with that. That project must proceed. North Rockhampton has 75% of the population. That project is budgeted for and it must proceed at all costs, or the Minister will be hearing about it from me.

I am very pleased also that the ambulance and fire stations for North Rockhampton are being built. Those are very good moves in the right direction. The dental clinic in North Rockhampton is a bit wonky around the knees and we need a new one as soon as possible. It does not matter whether it is built in Mr Schwarten's electorate or in mine, as long as it is in North Rockhampton; that is all we are worried about.

Not only have we obtained a new police boat; the emergency services in various areas, through a subsidy arrangement, have been able to get a number of new boats. I wish to pay tribute to the volunteers from the Coastguard who patrol the beaches and oceans. During times of disaster, they often venture into very rough seas and risk their lives, particularly in the older boats. They have always been there to help.

The DPI has also received a good new boat to protect the local fisheries. Some people will always do the wrong thing, and we are having huge problems with respect to the fisheries in the area. Some areas are being fished out and there are not as many fish as there used to be. Hopefully, with a bit of commonsense that issue can be addressed.

The new courthouse in Rockhampton is another initiative that went ahead and is functioning particularly well.

**Mr Borbidge:** A magnificent facility.

**Mr LESTER:** There is no doubt that it is an absolutely magnificent facility.

In conclusion, I pay tribute to the Central Queensland University, which is the largest regional university in Australia. It has some 13,000 students, many of whom are attracted to its campuses from all over the world. The Smart City project will bring the seat of learning in arts, education and other areas slap-bang into the middle of the town. The mall, which has its difficulties, will be loaded with students, similar to the way the Grafton mall is loaded with students from the Trinity College in Dublin. The riverbanks will also be used, and new life will be brought to the City of Rockhampton. The Rockhampton City Council seems to need some prompting in relation to this matter. It needs to work hard with the university. We do not need traffic flowing through that area, as it is proposing at the moment; otherwise the university may lose interest. I cannot say enough——

Time expired.

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