



Speech by

Ian Rickuss

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

Hansard Wednesday, 7 March 2007

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr RICKUSS (Lockyer—NPA) (8.46 pm): I rise to speak in the address-in-reply debate. I am pleased to be re-elected by the voters of the Lockyer electorate. It is a great honour to be a member of this parliament. I am sure that every member realises that. I congratulate all members on their election and congratulate the Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

The National Party and my family and friends assisted me in the election campaign. It was a great honour to have so many people come out on polling day. I have 37 polling booths. That is a lot of polling booths that we have to man. I had support and help at all of those polling booths. A lot of people put a lot of work in at other times as well. They are good, hardworking people. It is great to see so many come out.

Some of the new members that we have on this side of the House are exciting members of parliament. I am sure the member for Hinchinbrook will be a great member of parliament for a long time. The member for Bundaberg is a great down-to-earth politician. I am sure that the member for Gympie will also perform very well. Some of the new Liberal members have shown a lot of promise. The member for Clayfield did a wonderful job in handling a bill today.

I have a large area to look after. It covers Greenbank, Flagstone, Harrisville, Willowbank and Amberley. They are diverse areas that are facing great expansion. I now have over 30,000 constituents on the electoral roll. I have five shires—Esk, Laidley, Gatton, Ipswich and Beaudesert. These shires are very important to the south-east Queensland plan. A lot of people are moving into these areas for lifestyle reasons. Areas like Willowbank, Ipswich-Harrisville, Esk and Laidley provide a great lifestyle. People can have a horse or pony for the kids. Unfortunately, quite a few families have motorbikes which seems to create a few problems for the neighbours. They are really good areas in terms of lifestyle.

Water is one of the big issues for all of south-east Queensland. In my maiden speech I promoted the recycled water project, and I know that the member for Toowoomba South has been promoting it for a long time as well. Before I came to parliament I was secretary of the City to Soil group for the Lockyer Valley, an organisation concerned with recycled water. Now, unfortunately, this government has procrastinated for so long on the recycled water project it is going to be needed for drinking water rather than irrigation and will cost in excess of \$2,000 a megalitre to be pumped into the dams for drinking. This unfortunately could leave farmers and other rural industries that should have had that recycled water six to eight years ago out in the cold. It is just a shame. It is a real shame. Not only that; if the government had stipulated the use of water-saving devices such as tanks we would not be in the position we are in now.

I have talked to some irrigators in my area on the Brisbane River. These irrigators know that up until 12 months ago the Brisbane River was flowing 12 inches higher than it is now. Therefore, those 12 inches of water were just running out to sea day in, day out. These irrigators live on the Brisbane River so they know what is going on. Effectively, there were hundreds of megalitres a day flowing out to sea. We realise that there have to be environmental flows, but when the prediction is for below average rainfall and the dams are down to 40-odd per cent surely it is time to start realising what we have to do.

Roads are also a big issue in my area. Roads like the Old Goodna Road that hooks up Greenbank to the new Springfield area is a council road, but I am sure that the state government should be assisting

the council to upgrade this road, because once the developments in Springfield such as the shopping centre and the university are in full swing this road will become a major thoroughfare. Teviot Road is the same in that it is a council road and is a thoroughfare. These roads have in excess of 10,000 cars a day on them. The Ipswich-Boonah Road, which leads out of Ipswich, has not only a high amount of traffic but also very dangerous corners. I receive many complaints about some of the quarrying trucks that travel along the Ipswich-Boonah Road. There are always improvements to be made to the Cunningham Highway. Unfortunately, much of it is only two lanes and that creates problems whenever there is an accident. There are always problems on the Cunningham Highway when the V8 races are at Willowbank. That creates a lot of congestion and a lot of confusion.

The Warrego Highway is a major thoroughfare through my electorate. With regard to the section of road from Blacksoil to Toowoomba, I have some statistics from the main roads department. There have been over 23 deaths and over 500 people injured in the last five years on that stretch of road—that is horrific—and 100 people a year are hospitalised. That is a large number of people. Roughly five people are killed every year on that 80-kilometre strip from Blacksoil to the top of the Toowoomba range. There really needs to be some major planning done by the state government on interchanges such as the Plainland interchange. The member for Toowoomba South would realise how great the Plainland interchange is. It makes such a difference to the whole area in that the through traffic can keep going. That is the sort of thing that has to be done in more places.

Mr Malone: You need another crossing.

Mr RICKUSS: That is right. The Toowoomba range crossing is very important. The number of heavy trucks that travel that road every day is just astronomical. We definitely need a second Toowoomba range crossing.

I also want to see some rail reports. I asked the transport minister last year for the report on the green corridor along the railway lines to New South Wales—that is, the interstate corridor. That has been looked at to see if it is possible to put a passenger corridor right beside the New South Wales corridor. This would be of great relief to the population in terms of public transport in the Flagstone, Greenbank and Jimboomba area. It really is needed. I know that Madam Deputy Speaker van Litsenburg would love a rail corridor to Redcliffe. I am sure that that is very high on her priorities. We can see that a lot of rail infrastructure needs to be put in place by this state government. I want to see the electrification of the rail line taken past Rosewood into the Lockyer, even if it is not taken up the range immediately, because I know that is in the long-term plan. If it were taken to Gatton or Helidon or Grantham it would actually be of benefit to the whole area. The super prison is now going into the Gatton area, and that would be a great asset for that, too. I feel that it should be a bit of a trade-off—that is, we should have the electrification of the rail lines through to at least Gatton seeing that we will be stuck with the super prison.

There are many schools in my area. There is some concern about the teacher aide hours. I have actually received quite a few emails about teacher aide hours, particularly for the prep year. A parent rang me who has taken their child out of a school in my area because a grade 4 boy was having to take prep girls to the toilet because there were only two teachers at the school and they just could not cope with all of the kids. The father felt uncomfortable about his grade 4 boy taking prep girls to the toilet so he actually pulled his son out of that small school and sent him to one of the bigger schools in the area. That is a concern for me. I must congratulate the education minister on the number of fibro roofs that were removed from the Lockyer high school. The Lockyer high school had something like—

Mr Schwarten: Public Works has done that, thank you.

Mr RICKUSS: Thank you then, Mr Schwarten. I will take that interjection. Actually, Minister, they worked very quickly too. I must congratulate the men. They did 15 roofs in 16 weeks. They had some pretty good gear, though. They had some pretty big cranes. It was one of those high schools that was expanded greatly—I think it has been going for about 80 or 90 years—in the 1950s and it had a heap of super six fibro roofs. They replaced those roofs and that is a great relief to many parents. There are still another 50 roofs to be done though, Minister, if you want to get into some of those roofs in the other schools in my area.

The admin staff go unrecognised in our schools. The admin staff work very hard and quite often have to handle many abusive parents in the schools. They do not have quite enough hours at times and they are almost underpaid, too. I do have a bit of sympathy for the admin staff. They do a lot of work, particularly in some of the bigger schools. I realise that there are principals, but admin staff are the first port of call so they do cop a lot of flak from parents and some parents can be quite unreasonable at times.

The Gatton campus of the University of Queensland is a great campus, but unfortunately numbers are down. I am sure they will start to grow. I think they have actually gone up two students on last year. They are only up a couple of students on last year, but it would be nice to see a turnaround in that.

Unfortunately the trades are taking many uni students at the moment, particularly from rural universities aimed at the OP 6 to 15 range.

The police in our area cover large areas. They are mostly small stations. Gatton and Laidley would be the two biggest stations in my electorate. They handle a lot of my electorate. The police from Harrisville, Ipswich and Moreton areas do a great job in the local area. I offer great support to the police and they offer great support to me, so if there are ever issues I can always ring up the local sergeants and they are very conciliatory. It was a bit of a shame about the Hurley affair. I think it was disgraceful the way that poor old Sergeant Hurley was handled, but unfortunately when politics comes into it good common sense gets thrown out the window.

Gatton is one of the busiest police stations in the state that issues drivers licences where there should be a stand-alone Queensland Transport licensing centre in the Lockyer Valley. Some of the biggest trucking companies in Queensland are based in the Lockyer Valley. Unfortunately, Queensland Transport will not build this stand-alone transport centre. It is so busy. The police want the transport office out of the police station. They are snowed under with transport work all day every day. To get a driver's licence in Laidley you have to wait until 16 June. How ridiculous is that—three months to get a driver's licence in Laidley!

Mr Hopper: Did you lose yours?

Mr RICKUSS: No, I did not lose it. We need a stand-alone driving centre in the Lockyer Valley. Like I said, my electoral roll now has over 30,000 names on it. This area is growing rapidly and it could support a stand-alone transport centre.

The five councils in my area work extremely hard. A lot of extra work is legislatively passed down to them from the state and federal governments. Some of the smaller councils have only 6,000 or 8,000 ratepayers in their base. So they work fairly hard. Unfortunately, the Department of Natural Resources and Water and the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries are not sufficiently resourced to make them really efficient. That could be resourced a fair bit more. The shadow spokesmen for those portfolios mentioned that in their contributions.

The Minister for Communities is sitting across from me in the chamber. He is going to spend a fair bit more money on respite help in the Lockyer Valley. That will be great for my area. I thank the minister for that. It is very welcome. The department of environment is a bit of a concern. It is all about being a policeman and not about assisting people.

I would like to thank my wife, Ann. She has been a great asset to me over my last term in this parliament and I am sure she will be a great asset in this term. I also thank my family. My electorate staff, Julie, Dana and Hope, have also been great assets to me. They are very efficient and work wonderfully well. I just hope that this government can deliver some of the infrastructure projects that it has promised to deliver.