



Speech by

Lawrence Springborg

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (9.17 pm): I start this evening by expressing my loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen, an absolutely fantastic monarch—a person who has gone about her role with extraordinary dignity, extraordinary diligence and extraordinary application in the time that she has filled that role, and a person who is a role model for many people around the world. On anyone's objective analysis, we are looking at a monarch who has barely put a foot wrong in the time that she has held her very, very esteemed position.

I would also like to express my thanks to the Governor, Penelope Wensley, for her attendance at the opening of parliament. I also take the opportunity to congratulate the Speaker on his election to this high office. In the time that I have been here I have seen a lot of Speakers take on that particular role and have had a chance to objectively consider their consistent application of the rules of the House and the way that they have fulfilled their role. I think that we are seeing in the Speaker a person who, without an ounce of partiality, is adjudicating the matters of this House very well and, again, I would like to express my congratulations to the Speaker.

I also thank my family who have been extremely supportive of me over a long period of time in my role as the member for Southern Downs and the various other office positions I have held—whether it was as a shadow minister, as a whip in government or opposition, as a minister, as Deputy Leader of the Opposition or even as Leader of the Opposition. It is impossible to do this job without the support of your family, and I think all members absolutely appreciate that.

To my wife, Linda, I say thank you very much for your forbearance and thank you very much for what you have done with your dedication, your support and your loyalty under what no doubt from time to time has been trying circumstances, particularly when I was Leader of the Opposition and away from home so much. I was away up to probably 250 or 260 days a year; I actually counted it. I was regularly away 14 or 15 nights in a row.

I thank my wife for raising our four children largely in my absence—Megan, Jens, Laura and Thomas. I also thank them for their support in having a father they have got to know more over the telephone than in person. I am very proud of them—we are both very proud of them—for what they have done while growing up and the way they have always held themselves with great dignity and great respect when they have been in the community. We are certainly proud of the application they show in everything they do.

I also thank my electorate staff and the staff who supported me in my role as Leader of the Opposition and in my current role as deputy leader. To the electors of Southern Downs, thank you very much for your support over the last 19½ years. I will continue to serve those people with great application and great loyalty because they have expressed their loyalty to me over such a long time.

I thank those people who were involved in my local election, and I will not name all of them. To my electorate chairman, David Littleproud, and campaign chairman, Jill Smith, and to the whole team, I say thank you very much for doing such an able job in generally my absence during the campaign. You

ensured that everything went so smoothly and that we were able to deliver a very strong result for the people of Southern Downs.

I also thank those people throughout Queensland who supported our side of politics—indeed, those people who supported the LNP. I am very proud of the fact that over 49 per cent of Queenslanders actually supported the LNP in Queensland on our first outing. That is no mean feat. On 26 July last year when we formed the LNP—which people said was absolutely impossible—a lot of people did not think we would be able to go to a state election eight months later and competently put together an organisation with such a wonderful team of candidates who produced such a strong result and built for the future. So to the people of Queensland, I thank you very much for your support. We have laid a very solid foundation for a great alternative government in the future.

I thank the fantastic team of LNP candidates whom we had standing for us. They were an outstanding team of LNP candidates. To all of those new members who were elected to parliament, we are very proud of you and your contribution. As we look towards the back of the House now, we are seeing the numbers swell on this side—the numbers that we actually should have on this side. I remember when I was here in 2001 and we basically had members of the government sitting behind us here. To see the balance restored now with such a fantastic team of members really makes me proud. I have no doubt that a lot of our candidates who lost will be back next time. I have no doubt that they will be back and they will actually be in this parliament next time, particularly after the active betrayal we have seen from those members opposite. The government members have hoodwinked the people of Queensland.

To the organisation competently run by Bruce McIver and Gary Spence, I say thank you very much. To Michael O'Dwyer, our state director, and our wonderful team at the secretariat, I say thank you very much. To Mark McArdle, who joined me on the journey for the formation of the LNP and was such a wonderful deputy, I say thank you. I thank all of the shadow ministers. With the shadow Treasurer sitting here, I would like to indicate what a wonderful job he did with our costings during the election. We had 34 pages of costings, and then I look at this piece of trash I am holding that was put out by the most unpopular member of parliament, the Treasurer, who is sitting over there. He had 36 per cent of the vote—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! Member for Southern Downs, if you want to refer to a document, please do not use it as a prop.

Mr SPRINGBORG: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am holding the summary of the Labor Party's commitments at the last state election. This is what the Labor Party came up with. Isn't it wonderful? With the whole resources of Treasury leading up to the election, Labor came up with 60 line items and it only has costings with regard to expenditure on five of them. There is one offset here, some sort of fanciful payroll tax; it is a one-off cut that it will give to the people. After this effort from the most unpopular member of parliament—with 40 losing candidates actually getting a higher primary vote than him—is it any wonder that we are seeing the level of deception and betrayal now being practically expressed by the people of Queensland in the opinion polls, with their opinion of the Premier and this particular government?

While I was listening to the Governor's speech, which was delivered in good faith by the Governor at the opening of parliament, I noticed there were two things in particular that were actually there by omission; actually there were probably a number of others. One of them was the fuel tax. The government did not tell us anything about a fuel tax even at the opening of parliament, and the government told us nothing about its privatisation agenda at the opening of parliament. There was nothing about a fuel tax and nothing about the privatisation agenda at the opening of parliament. I wonder what the Governor thinks now after she outlined the intentions for her new government for this particular term. It just goes to show the level of active deception by this government. We now understand the level of heartache and the level of financial strain which has been placed on the people of Queensland by this government as a consequence of its act of betrayal, particularly with the introduction of an 8.35c per litre fuel tax, which is over 9c a litre when the GST is put on top of it.

I go back to the government's Q2 document from last year. It was this 'wonderful' document—and I use the word in inverted commas—which Mike Kaiser brought out of New South Wales as this Helen Demidenko look-alike thing. It was devised by Mike Kaiser and he forced it down the throat of Morris lemma and then brought it up here. The Q2 document says that the people of Queensland travel further than anyone else because we are the most decentralised state and it is very important to maintain the competitive advantage by not having a fuel tax in Queensland.

What about those mothers in the western part of Queensland up near Urandangi who actually drive 300 kilometres one way—a 600-kilometre return trip—once or twice a week just to take their kids to playgroup? What are they paying? I look at my own wife and the amount of running around she does. Sometimes she drives up to 600 or 700 kilometres a week just taking the kids to sport, let alone other things she needs to do. That is the normal thing that people do in the country. There was no mention of that and the impact of the fuel tax on the people of Queensland—the impact on the battlers, the impact on the

pensioners, the impact on food prices, the impact on transportation prices—by this government during the election campaign.

Isn't it amazing what the privatisation agenda has done to actually disconnect the true believers? The honourable member for Brisbane Central spoke before about the level of outrage which was felt by certain people regarding Work Choices. I can tell honourable members opposite that it is absolutely nothing compared to the level of outrage which is being felt out there in the community at the moment because of the privatisation of Queensland Rail, our ports, Forestry Plantations Queensland and Queensland Motorways Ltd. This is nothing to do with good financial management. This is about a fire sale from a desperate government which is now trying to plug an election black hole and plug the black hole of its own maladministration during the last almost 20 years in office.

The people of Queensland will not forget. It is very interesting to look at the fellow traveller of this government, the union movement, which is now squealing, bellyaching and carrying on.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr SPRINGBORG: They have to do a lot more to atone for their sins, because the union movement was absolutely complicit in the election of this government. They are the ones that funded it and I actually share the views of the member for Callide.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Wendt): Order! Member for Callide! Member for Brisbane Central, if you wish to interject, please return to your seat. I would ask members on my left to give their deputy leader a chance.

Mr SPRINGBORG: I reflect on the comments of the member for Callide, who was talking about the way that the good, decent, hardworking teachers of Queensland have felt betrayed by this government. The government said that it was going to do certain things in good faith if it was elected. Yet this government has been backing away, backing down, and maligning and marginalising teachers in Queensland. Now we are seeing unprecedented industrial disputation from teachers in Queensland. We have the Teachers Union pretending to stand up for teachers. This Teachers Union is the same Teachers Union that donated money to the Labor Party to get the government elected. We have this ignominious situation at the moment where we have the union movement putting up a billboard saying, 'Vote out Rachel Nolan because the member for Ipswich has betrayed you.' Yet, on the other hand, it has stuck its hands into its coffers and pulled out money to get the government re-elected. What sort of absolute hypocrisy is that?

This Labor government in Queensland has put this state into a situation of generational debt whereby it will be almost impossible to bail out future governments. If we look across Australia, what we will see at the end of the current foray into this extraordinary debt situation by the Rudd government, and with all of the debt right across Australia with regard to all the other states which they are guaranteeing, is that we will be about half a trillion dollars in debt. The interest bill on that alone is about \$35 billion a year. That is more than the sum total of all of the surpluses of all the Australian governments, whether they be Commonwealth or state, at any time in our history in any financial year. It is impossible to pay the interest alone, let alone bail us out of that debt.

What we have is Kevin Rudd running around talking about being an economic conservative. He makes Gough Whitlam look like an economic conservative. That is how bad this bloke is. The creme de la creme is the Treasurer—the most unpopular member of the Queensland parliament, with 40 losing candidates getting a higher primary vote than him. We have seen some budget wizardry produced by him. Over the next couple of years we will have peak debt in Queensland approaching \$100 billion. How do you pay that off? The Treasurer has no plan whatsoever other than to sell everything in Queensland and then hope for the best after that.

I want to look at some of the issues across my electorate that continue to cause people concern. There are a number of things that I would like to talk about.

Mr Fraser: How did Newspoll go once your face was on TV every night?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I would like to engage with the Treasurer a little bit more, but I have only five minutes left. It is great to see that he has finally got going. I was wondering if he was sitting over there finally having a synapse. We had two neurons that finally came together.

The first thing I would like to do is table a non-conforming petition with 341 signatures from the people of Killarney calling for this government to invest in an ambulance station for the people of Killarney.

Tabled paper: Non-conforming petition regarding the establishment of an ambulance station in Killarney [\[761\]](#).

Their contention is right. These people pay their ambulance levy in Queensland. Many of them, because they are hardworking businesspeople and individuals, pay more than once. They pay on multiple occasions. They have recently lost their doctor as a consequence of the closure of the small private medical practice in town. They are most concerned now that they do not have that mantle of cover and would like the government to consider the provision of what they call a one-person ambulance station in that community. I think that is a reasonable ask. I certainly back their call for a new medical centre. There is an application which has gone to the Commonwealth government for funding through its programs for the establishment of regional medical centres. One would hope that the current government in Queensland would be prepared to provide at least some degree of support in lobbying for that as well. That is the least that this government can do. When I wrote to the former minister for health in Queensland he showed absolutely no interest in that issue on behalf of that community.

When it comes to the people of the Granite Belt, I am most concerned that they do not have this government's commitment to a new water supply. They have experienced the government dillydallying for a long period of time. The government has had the issue before the Coordinator-General in Queensland. The local council has jumped through all of the hoops and now the government is sending it back to laws. They have been waiting for this now for almost 20 years. We have an issue of expanding population—albeit steady expanding population—on the Granite Belt, particularly in the community of Stanthorpe, and we do not have a commitment from this government in supporting them in their need for a new water supply.

Another major issue for the people of the Granite Belt is that of the scourge of flying foxes.

Mr Wettenhall: Why do you hate flying foxes?

Mr SPRINGBORG: I bet the honourable member likes to have a lovely peach, a lovely plum, a lovely nectarine or a lovely apricot. I do not know where he thinks they come from. They might just materialise from thin air! While he is at home tucked up in bed, maybe dreaming about a nice, juicy pre-Christmas peach, he must realise that there are people in my constituency who are trying to defend their crops.

If the government wants to bring in non-lethal means of protection, then let us do it. Last year it did away with damage mitigation permits. The Ministry for Primary Industries said that they would have a solution this year. There is no solution. No solution has been put forward. The DPI alone has estimated that the loss of production on the Granite Belt and the cost to individual farmers was \$12 million. Some people lost 40 per cent of their crops. Government members are chortling and carrying on. If something as catastrophic as that happened in the city, there would be an immediate response—and so there should be. But in this case it is out of sight, out of mind—but please keep sending the peaches, the plums, the apricots and the nectarines.

If this government does not have an alternative non-lethal means this year then I call on it to do what the New South Wales Labor government has done—that is, bring in interim damage mitigation permits until it has a solution. The Labor government in New South Wales has enough common sense to do that. It is something that needs to be done unless the government can come up with a solution in the next 10 weeks.

There are a whole range of issues in the area of health, particularly the provision of dental services, which has been made even more complicated with the superhealth districts in Queensland where our area is being serviced from Ipswich. Frankly, we are being lost in this huge amorphous mass. The smaller communities are basically out on their own. What we have here is a government which is out of touch, which does not understand what the people of Queensland are going through and which is more interested in playing with budget black holes than solving the real issues of Queenslanders.

(Time expired)