



Speech by

## Ray Hopper

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Hansard Wednesday, 19 August 2009

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### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

**Mr HOPPER** (Condamine—LNP) (8.11 pm): As we all know, the state election was held on 21 March 2009 and, quite simply, it disgusts me that we are still delivering the address-in-reply this late in the year. What sort of show are we running? Our Leader of Opposition Business had to fight for this time tonight. Those opposite could not run a Sunday school picnic.

Following the redistribution, the seat of Darling Downs was abolished, as was the seat of Cunningham. A new seat was formed, known as the seat of Condamine. I had the honour of being the first member elected to the seat of Darling Downs and I also have the honour of being the first member elected to the seat of Condamine. The electorate of Condamine takes in the towns of Dalby, Bell, Bowenville, Kingsthorpe, Jondaryan, Oakey, Pittsworth, Wyreema, Westbrook, Clifton and a big part of Toowoomba. The electorate of Condamine is mainly agricultural, with coal and gas miners becoming major players within the electorate. I have picked up approximately 16,000 new voters. Election day was quite a day. I thank the people who helped. They came out in droves and stood in the hot sun all day, handing out how-to-vote cards. My children and other family members did that, and I appreciate it. I thank my staff at the time, Donna, Julie and Lisa, for the work they did. Two very special people launched themselves into my campaign: Scotty Buckholtz and Pat Weir. Special thanks go to those people.

I wish to get down to some serious stuff. Every week 1,500 people move to Queensland. Currently, our federal government debt is \$320 billion and our state debt is \$85 billion. Every day \$10 million to \$12 million is paid in interest; that is money that the people of Queensland have to fork out. Members opposite sit there and yell, scream, squawk and laugh, but they are part of the worst government in the history of Queensland. They should hang their heads in shame.

Government backbenchers are copping it from the union movement as they announce the sell-off of Queensland's assets, and they have to sit and take it. They should hang their heads in shame. It is disgusting to see what is happening in this state. Forestry Plantations Queensland is part of that sell-off. Last year it made a profit. We are selling the wealth-creating assets of the state. If we take away the wealth creation, there will be no money left to run the state. If we sell the wealth creators, we are in serious trouble.

At the moment we are seeing a revamp of the agricultural colleges. What will happen there? I know for a fact that a fair bit of land will be sold. I went to a seminar in Dalby at which the minister spoke about deinvesting to reinvest. What has been done over the past two years to promote our agricultural colleges? Have any promotions been put in place? Has anything been done since Tom Barton stood in the chamber, sacked all the boards and formed one corporate body to run the agricultural colleges? That marked the downfall of our agricultural colleges. Matt Foley said that that action meant the end of the Bjelke-Petersen era. I know for a fact that this government was out to destroy those boards. Once you sack the boards and get rid of the local input, it is very hard to attract students and make the colleges grow. That is simply unacceptable.

We have seen the sell-off of Queensland Rail. We have heard the announcements that freight will no longer move west of Toowoomba and that freight travel from Mount Isa to Townsville will stop immediately. People in the west are suffering immensely. It will take three years to get the grain off the Darling Downs, simply because this government listened to the climate change advisers who said that it will not rain much so we do not need grain trains. We have had three crops in a row and hopefully that will continue. We need to move our produce. New mines are opening up at Chinchilla. How will that product get to port? It will have to be moved by road. That is the only way. It is unacceptable that the agriculture and mining sectors are facing such problems because of the decisions of this government.

As I drove to parliament this week, I noticed that at the bottom of the range fuel was \$1.18 a litre and in Brisbane the price ranged from \$1.26 to \$1.32. The abolition of the fuel tax has meant a rise of 10c a litre in the cost of petrol. That is unbelievable. That has a huge impact on people's everyday lives. Whenever they use their cars to pick up groceries or run the kids to school, they will have to bear that cost. There will be a massive impost on agriculture in Queensland.

The Warrego Highway is in a simply disgusting state. I know it is a federally funded road, but has this government tried to attract any funding for that area? Over the past few years there have been a number of deaths on the road from Dalby to Warra. We know that when semitrailers try to pass vehicles coming the other way, they are hitting car mirrors. They cannot get off the edge of the road because if they did their trucks would tip over. Minister Wallace has spoken about the \$400 million that it would cost to fix that road. However, sections of it need to be fixed immediately. The traffic volume will double within five years time. It is a mess.

We all know the issues involved with the second crossing of the Toowoomba range. It is simply disgusting that that crossing has not been built, yet sacrifices have been made to build the ring-road in Victoria. Considering the amount of traffic that uses the range crossing, there will be more deaths if the situation is not addressed. We have to fix it.

The government is going to fast-track the World Heritage listing of Cape York. During the election campaign the government did deals with the Greens that won it 11 seats. That is disgusting and will have a huge impact on agriculture. One million hectares of regrowth has been locked up. Recently I attended a two-day agricultural investment conference in Townsville, at which DPI staff said that we have to open up more agricultural land in Queensland. That goes against every policy that this government is putting in place. The government is locking up, locking up and locking up. In 30 years time we need to have doubled the world's food production, but the government's eyes are blinded to that fact. There is so much wealth to be offered in Queensland, but we are restricted by government legislation. The stranglehold that the wild rivers legislation is putting on Queensland is totally unacceptable.

The creation of fishing zones in Moreton Bay means that more fishing areas have been locked up in another deal with the Greens to attract the green vote. At Hervey Bay fishing inspectors have prosecuted visitors from Victoria because they had one or two extra fish in their caravan freezer. It is simply disgusting. How does a family from the west who come down to go fishing know where those zones are? It is simply impossible to understand. We saw the introduction of a buyback of fishing licences—\$15 million. What happened? There were latent licences. Some fishermen got paid—some of them got \$250,000, some of them got \$300,000. The next day they were offered \$20,000 or \$30,000 for the licence in the draw. They took the money and were out fishing again the next day. What an absolute waste of taxpayers' money—an absolute sham and a fraud. It simply did not work. It was not policed properly and this government should hang its head in shame. Those fishermen knew what they were doing. They are out there fishing again. Nothing was done to address the latent licences.

Exceptional circumstances funding has been recently cut. We have heard reports that during the next six months there is expected to be very little rainfall in South-East Queensland once again. So we will have a continuing drought situation if those reports are right. Exceptional circumstances are one of these payments that includes an interest subsidy and a payment that also helps put food on the table for some of those families who suffer in dry times. Let us hope that we can seriously look at that situation.

Prime agricultural land in the electorate of Condamine is under threat of going to mining companies, to be dug up and torn up. We are seeing drilling on the Jimbour Plain right now. We have seen FutureFood start up from the Haystack Road area, which is an open flood plain. It is some of the best agricultural country in the world. We have seen the Friends of Felton start up. In the Felton Valley we now have a mining company that is going to build a petrochemical plant at the headwaters of the Murray-Darling. That is simply unacceptable.

Barnaby Joyce came to the Felton Valley. There will be a Senate inquiry and hopefully we will hold the hearing at the Felton Hall. We will hopefully show those senators exactly where that mining company plans to dig up that country. It is simply unacceptable. It cannot possibly happen in that area. If we keep digging up our prime agricultural land, how are we going to grow food for Queensland? I congratulate the

Friends of Felton—Rob McCreath and the crew out there. They have taken a massive fight to the federal government, to senators and to anyone they possibly can to try to get help. You cannot blame them. They buy their land to grow food, they love the land and they create wealth. We must protect these people and the homes that they own.

The government has announced that it wants to double the size of the national parks. How about we look after the parks we have in the first place? We need fire breaks—you name it. There are pests in the national parks such as feral pigs. If a match gets away, we will end up with fires like those that happened in Canberra.

We heard the announcement just in the last couple of weeks of a power station to be built at Laidley. They are calling it the Mulgowie Road power plant—145 kilometres of pipeline will be built to take coal seam gas from Tipton, just east of Cecil Plains and south of Dalby, to a gas-fired power station at Laidley. That pipeline will hold approximately 1,900 pounds of pressure. We have seen these pipelines blow up around the world. I have seen pictures where they have flattened everything within 500 metres. That pipeline is going through some of the best agricultural country in Queensland. That is simply unacceptable.

At harvest time some farmers need to bring a semitrailer in to meet the header. Once that pipeline is put across the front of their property they will not be able to bring the semitrailer in because you cannot drive on top of it in something that weighs 30 or 40 tonnes. So what compensation will be worked out to cover the impost of that on these people? The pipeline looks like it will run through the property that I own at Wyreema. It will devalue the property immediately. We will never subdivide it. You cannot live on top of the pipeline.

Why aren't government easements being used? I have a four-chain road in front of my property, yet they will not put it on government land. Is it too much red tape? What is the problem? We have seen the maps. The pipeline could run beside the road the whole way, but the pipeline is going to go through privately owned land the whole way. That is simply unacceptable. Not once was the member for Lockyer or I briefed on this situation—not once. It has been snuck through. We have not been able to get maps. The only maps we could get was through a real estate agent. That is simply unacceptable. We had to put the maps together ourselves to find out where the pipeline was going.

It is being built by a subsidiary of Babcock and Brown, who has gone broke. I believe that the administrator will be looking to sell off this project to raise funds and it will be at the expense of a lot of people. It will hurt a lot of people if this project goes ahead. It is simply ludicrous and unacceptable. Why would you run gas 140 kilometres in a pipeline and build a power station at Laidley? It is simply unacceptable. It should be done like Braemar, out in the country where a power station should be and where the gas is. That is the simple, common-sense thing to do. This is a ludicrous situation. Our farmers were unaware until a couple of weeks ago. No-one has been told about this project and it will have a major impost on people. It is simply unacceptable.

There will be a Surat Basin Coal Conference in Dalby this weekend, and I will be attending that conference. We will be looking at the amount of gas and coal that there is in the Surat Basin for the future that will affect our electorate. It not only affects our electorate but also brings wealth to our electorate. The employment it brings is to be commended. I met with some coal seam gas drillers today. The problem is that we will have so much gas supplied in the next few years, yet we do not have the drilling rigs. All of those contracts are going overseas. The Canadians are coming in. They put on 30 men per rig. They are bringing their rigs in. It is very hard to keep the wealth within this nation. It is a global thing at the moment. So there are some very strong issues facing some of those people. I have five minutes left. There is no clock.

**Mr Shine:** You don't have to go the whole time.

**Mr HOPPER:** You just sit and take it, cowboy. We have seen another outbreak of the Hendra virus. I would like to see something put in place to try to protect horse facilities from bat colonies. Wherever a Hendra virus outbreak has taken place, there has been a bat infestation nearby. Whether it is from the afterbirth, urine or body fluids, if a horse then eats the grass containing bacteria then they contract that virus. We have seen the deaths of three people. Six people have contracted that disease and three of them have died. That is a 50 per cent death rate. That is simply unacceptable. We are putting bats before humans. That is exactly what we are doing. We would rather protect the life of dirty, stinking vermin than protect the lives of human beings? How many people in this chamber own mouse traps? How many people own fly spray? It is exactly the same thing. When you get a mouse in the house you catch it. You get rid of the vermin. Bats should not live near human beings. It is as simple as that.

We have a field harvester who shoots roos and pigs for human and pet food from the Mount Garnet area. He recently took out a loan to purchase a refrigerated trailer in which to store the meat for the price of \$20,000. He is due to take delivery of that trailer on Thursday. Prior to committing to this outlay he spoke to relevant industry people who buy the product and shopped around for the best trailer. He also spoke to

Safe Food Queensland outlining his purpose and plans. Safe Food then proceeded to send him the relevant paperwork for permit accreditation which he completed and sent back to them. As he is due to collect the trailer this week, he decided to make a courtesy call to Safe Food this morning and was advised over the phone that this application was refused and he will not be able to purchase the trailer as there have been legislative changes in that they will no longer be accepting refrigerated animals—the animal must get back to the processing plant within two hours. He has received nothing in writing stating this.

He subsequently rang Wayne Breddan in the Townsville office who was unaware of any legislative changes as well as the manufacturer of the trailers who was also unaware of any changes. He says that there are plenty of people using similar vehicles who are continuing their operations as far as he knows. He is very upset as he has spoken to Safe Food a number of times and they were aware of what he was doing and at no time was he informed of the potential legislative changes. Ludicrous legislation like that comes into place which hurts human beings. It hurts genuine people who work hard trying to make a living.

We also heard Minister Robertson stand up and defame Barnaby Joyce over an alleged donation to his election campaign. Barnaby Joyce never ever once received a donation from anyone. The donations went to the LNP.

I challenge Minister Robertson to say outside the chamber what he said in the chamber because he could make Barnaby a very, very rich man. That is the sort of rot that goes on in this chamber. We have a broke state. We have the worst government that has ever run Queensland. The new backbenchers up there should enjoy their next two years.