




Speech by

Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Thursday, 31 May 2012

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (8.54 pm): I start by also expressing my appreciation of Her Excellency the Governor for opening this the 54th Parliament of Queensland. I also acknowledge Mr Stuart McCosker. Her Excellency and Mr McCosker have been frequent visitors to the electorate of Glass House, and it was a pleasure to welcome them again as recently as Sunday to the Bankfoot House Open Day. I suspect in my new role as minister not only for the environment but also heritage and given Her Excellency's avid interest in heritage matters that our paths shall cross on numerous more occasions.

I also acknowledge our Premier. Premier, to you, to Lisa, to your daughters and to your extended families, thank you. You withstood the vilest of storms, carried yourselves with honour and dignity and drove with your usual verve and vigour our campaign to success and the LNP to government. Premier, I thank you for the honour and responsibility you have bestowed upon me in my appointment as the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Deputy Premier and Treasurer. Your leadership within the parliament in the lead-up to the election was exemplary, your friendship and advice priceless.

Three years ago I delivered my first speech—my first address-in-reply speech. At the time I was staggered that a former frustrated public servant had been humbly elected as the new LNP member for Glass House. I am still struggling to understand where those last three years have gone. As I grappled with the responsibility of representing a wonderful part of a wonderful state in this esteemed chamber, I spoke of how I wanted to approach this important position. I spoke about Sir Francis Nicklin, as many others have also done in their maiden speeches over the last couple of weeks. Sir Francis Nicklin hailed from my home town of Palmwoods. He was renowned, as the good member for Murrumba mentioned in his speech this evening, for his trustworthiness, honesty, resilience, conciliation, assertiveness and sternness. I knew I could do far worse than seek direction from the example left for me by Sir Nicklin.

Three years ago, I spoke about my Christian faith and spoke of the challenge that whoever wants to be great must become a servant. I also mentioned my university studies in geography and history as well as politics, but I did not mention I also studied Russian language and culture for four years. I remember—not necessarily with the fondest of memories—one particular subject on the Russian Intelligentsia. It was pretty tough going—

Mr Stevens interjected.

Mr POWELL: No, I am not a Communist, member for Mermaid Beach. I am sitting on the wrong side of the chamber for that. It was pretty tough going but I do recall reading some of the works of Leo Tolstoy. I need to declare—just in case the member for Mermaid Beach gets carried away again—that I do not share Tolstoy's eventual anarchistic predilections but Tolstoy did leave us some wise words of wisdom. It was Tolstoy who wrote—

Joy can be real only if people look upon their life as a service, and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness.

I have chosen—and the people of Glass House have again afforded me the opportunity—to live a life of service. After three years in the role and with the prospect of serving in the Newman government for the next three years, I can assure everyone that Tolstoy was spot on. This job, this service, brings joy.

If I look at just some examples in my own electorate over the last three years of the joy that I have received because of the work and the outcomes we have been able to achieve in Glass House, members may get some sense of that joy. I will look at electorate-wide issues and focus perhaps on public transport. I stood up alongside other members on the Sunshine Coast when Sunshine Coast commuters were treated with absolute and utter disregard when a new timetable was promoted for the North Coast rail line.

I thank the member for Caloundra for his support and my fellow colleagues in this chamber. We stood up for the voices of Sunshine Coast commuters and, whilst not achieving all that we intended, helped get the then government to back down on its proposed timetable. Even more joyful is the fact that in electing an LNP government I know that Sunshine Coast commuters will not be facing 15 per cent fare increases year after year after year. This LNP government is committed to drive down the cost of living, and we are doing that for Sunshine Coast commuters by halving those fare increases each and every year.

If I focus on the townships in my electorate—and there are more than a dozen of them—we have had success at the township level as well. An early win was to get a fully funded and supervised pedestrian crossing for Elimbah State School. I acknowledge my comrade in arms—and do not get carried away again, member for Mermaid Beach—Councillor Adrian Raedel from the Moreton Bay Regional Council who, together with the P&C at Elimbah State School, fought the fight to ensure that we had a supervised crossing on Beerburum Road outside Elimbah State School. For too long that school community had been fighting for that crossing. Too many times kids had been hit or nearly hit, and one final accident was one too many. With the assistance of the good council and the good councillor, we were able to achieve that outcome by pressuring the then state government to provide that.

I refer to the township of Conondale. All of us have experienced the heartache of the 2011 floods. I, like many others, continue to see the damage wreaked upon the electorate of Glass House. There are still four roads that are either fully closed or partially closed while they continue to be repaired. But for the community of Conondale, Grigor Bridge is such an intrinsic part of its infrastructure and its ability to get to the outside world. Every time it rained in 2010 or 2011 that nearly century-old bridge was damaged again and again and again. It was closed for weeks on end after each incident, causing people to have to travel more than 40 kilometres out of their way to get to places like Maleny—and I am talking kids trying to get to school. The government at the time in its wisdom believed that it was only a case of repairing the bridge instead of replacing it. I thank Major General Mick Slater for taking the time to visit Conondale and for helping me convince the former Labor government that it was time to replace this bridge, not repair it. The good news is that those works will start in the next couple of months.

At the personal level or the family level, I can think of examples where, through the work of my office and through my intervention, we have achieved outcomes for families and individuals in the electorate of Glass House. I think of Mat and Lisa Sherry, a fellow Palmwoods family who were the only family in their street whose property was not going to be resumed as part of the north coast rail duplication. They were going to be left isolated by that work. They were going to lose their dam that is the main water source for their horses. When Transport did the original study it looked at an air photo rather than testing it on the ground and therefore they were not to be bought out. We convinced the government to get out of George Street, go to Palmwoods and witness firsthand the fact that their property was going to be impacted just as much as their neighbours' properties. As a result, the Sherrys received fair compensation. The fantastic news is that they moved only within the township of Palmwoods itself and Mat and Lisa continue to be an intrinsic part of the Palmwoods Devils rugby league club. Joy in this job has also now come from my role in the environment portfolio, first as the shadow opposition spokesperson and now as the minister.

Mr Cripps: And what a tremendous minister you are as well.

Mr POWELL: Again, Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, you are getting a little carried away, but I take the interjection and I thank you for your kind words. I had wonderful pleasure in visiting many of the electorates now represented by LNP members in this House. It was a fantastic opportunity to see the best parts of the state—the environmental parts of this state.

Mr Johnson: Have you been out to Gregory yet?

Mr POWELL: Member for Gregory, I have not, but we are coming soon.

Mr Johnson: Because that's the rest of Queensland!

Mr POWELL: Yes, that is the rest of Queensland—the only third of Queensland I have not seen. I need to follow up with the member for Gregory to ensure that we get out there very soon.

Mr Johnson: It's the real part of Queensland.

Mr POWELL: So I am told, member for Gregory. Those visits allowed me to also develop the policies we needed to take to the election to convince Queensland that we stand for strong environmental protection but that we do so in a balanced and reasonable way. It is now my pleasure to be implementing many of those policies, whether it be to remove the waste levy, to work on the cape or to address many of the wildlife issues in our state, and I again thank the Premier for the opportunity in which to do that. We are very much about a balance in this portfolio. We are about putting science first, not politics.

Mr Newman: Hear, hear! It's not about Greens preferences, is it?

Mr POWELL: This is not and never will be about Greens preferences, and I take that interjection from the Premier. We will never make decisions on Green party political preferences. We will make decisions—the right decisions, the best decisions—for the environment based on the science. We will not sell out.

But let me return to Tolstoy. Joy can be real only if people look upon their life as a service and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness. Not only do I have joy through a life of service; I have a definite object in life outside of myself, and that is to be the best husband and father I can be. Fortunately, at a time where I could have taken my eye off that object, I have been reminded in a very real and in a very hard way that, as important as this new role as minister is, my family comes first. They are the source of my true happiness.

On that note, I again thank the Premier and Deputy Premier and my colleagues for their support through what has been the most challenging period of my life to date and to my many friends and family who through their prayers and support have strengthened me and my family. To my wife, Taryn, I do not know where to begin for fear I will not be able to stop. Thank you. Thank you for continuing to support me in this amazing adventure. Thank you for caring so diligently for our crazy young brood. Thank you for being forgiving and understanding. But thank you most of all for getting well again. In those dark hours of the past two months, my mind has taken me to a place I do not want to return to for a very, very long time. A future without you is no future at all.

To my kids Daniel, Erin, Brielle, Benjamin and Rohanna: boy, haven't we had some fun and adventure! Thank you for being the troopers you are. Dan and Erin, you stepped up when mum and dad needed you to. You have had to grow in wisdom and maturity far too fast. Keep having fun, big kids. We do not need to rush you anymore. Adolescence will come soon enough.

Mr Elmes: And don't you know it then!

Mr POWELL: Yes, won't I know it then! I take that interjection from the member for Noosa. Brielle, dad misses your hugs, beautiful girl. Benjamin, I'll be home soon to read you *A Dragon in a Wagon*. Rohanna, keep on being the little imp you are. Kids, I love each of you so very, very much; I just hope you have recovered from Sweden's win in Eurovision by the time I get home—crushing win, crushing win!

In the time left to me I need to thank team Glass House. Alaina, you have been with me since the 2009 election campaign. I hope you are with me for plenty more. You juggle the responsibilities of the electorate office with shadow portfolio responsibilities so effortlessly and efficiently. I know there is a new world for both of us now. Hang in there. Frangi, thanks for coming on board and holding the fort. There is no doubt you won over the people of Glass House and the environmental stakeholders with your bubbly and friendly persona. You are an asset to the team, girl, and I thank you. Johanna, we did it! You stepped up and helped out in a portfolio that potentially could not have been further removed from your strengths and experiences, but I think in hindsight that helped us, helped me and helped the LNP in the preparation of a strong suite of environmental policies. Congratulations on your new role. May the friendship and professional relationship long continue. To my campaign managers Joyce and Bob, where do I start? Joyce, I hope one of these days you are able to find a less taxing hobby, but in the meantime keep doing what you are doing. Bob, bad luck in your own election effort, mate. You put in a great attempt and should be very proud of what you have achieved for the Sunshine Coast hinterland. To my campaign treasurer Susannah, who had to grapple with the Labor imposed laws and regulations surrounding campaign finances, you set a benchmark that few electorates could match, and I thank you.

To Greg, Florence, Margaret, Stan, Bob, Peter, John, Cary, John, Kel, Gerry, Annette, Rod, Graham, David, and everyone else who helped in each of the four branches of Palmwoods, Maleny, Glass House-Berwah, Wamuran-Woodford—and I must not forget the women's sections as well of Maleny and Glass House—you humble me with your efforts and your enthusiasm. To all of the election day workers, I thank them. To Bruce McIver, James McGrath, David Moore, Matt McEachan, Peter, Zoe, Paul, Mitch, Maddy, Danielle and so, so many others, we are here because of your efforts.

To my family, in particular my father, Steve, and my brother, Glenn, who manned the Forest Glen booth all day and to Jono, thanks for giving us a hand. You must be pretty stoked. You helped to bring in the new LNP member for Kallangur in your home town of Petrie in the morning and then turned up to help me in the afternoon and get your brother returned as well. To mum, thanks for being one of my biggest fans and to my sister Suzanne as well. Mum and dad, I am who you raised me to be and I hope I have made you proud.

I want to also put on the record my thanks to my new ministerial team. It is early days but I am excited by what I see. Finally, my greatest appreciation goes once again to the people of Glass House. It is they who have allowed me to discover real joy. It is they who I serve. As Tolstoy said—

Joy can only be real only if people look upon their life as a service, and have a definite object in life outside themselves and their personal happiness.

All I can say is I am a pretty happy man.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!