



Speech by


**Bruce Young**

**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

Hansard Tuesday, 29 May 2012

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## MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr YOUNG** (Keppel—LNP) (2.31 pm): I pledge my allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I also acknowledge all serving members, past and present, of Australia's armed services, with special mention to those who serve in the Queensland police force. The honourable member for Bundaberg may note that I have stated 'police force', not service. I also want to mention Detective Senior Sergeant Terry Hanly, who recently retired from the force. Terry had a long and distinguished career with the police force.

I was born in Mount Morgan—a birthplace I share with the honourable member for Buderim. There is no doubt that if one were to look into our lineage we could even be related! Prior to achievements in modern mining, I could safely say that I was born in the greatest hole on earth. I left Mount Morgan at an early age and carried out all of my education in Rockhampton. We had a small farm on a lovely creek and my working life started as a station hand, working for legendary bushman Bill Scantleberry in the Dawson Valley. The property 'Mapala' was well known for its rough horses and, after being thrown one day, Bill commented, 'Use your teeth, boy, if you think it'll help.' I later went on to work for Stanbroke Pastoral Co. in North Queensland. I had decided to further my studies at the Emerald Pastoral College when my father lined me up a job as a heavy equipment diesel fitter. The trade was relatively new and I went to Brisbane for college. At college my friendship extended to apprentices from all over Queensland. I still have friends who worked at Weipa and MKU, Mary Kathleen Uranium.

As a child I can only say that I had a very pleasant and happy family life. I came from a family of all boys and now have a family of all girls. Quite a contrast! My dad was a copper and would take us boys to remote locations on the coast for holidays. The locations were usually the scene of a death or a police investigation. At a later date Dad would take us there, partly to get away and partly to give Mum a break. We would take some guns, some fishing gear, rice, flour and very little else. Dad would go for long walks on the beach—a beachcomber in the true sense of the word. Dad had seen the pointy end of humanity and was very happy to be at peace. He would throw himself down on an old blanket on the sand and fall asleep almost immediately. The rest of us would spend the rest of the night keeping the fires going so the mozzies did not carry us away.

I was raised on a stable diet of *Time* magazines and at primary school, when students would stand up in front of the class, I would belt out some rebellion in some far-flung country talking about the democratic liberation freedom movement, all of which went over the heads of my fellow students and also the teacher. Later in life at school trivia nights I impressed all by naming all of the countries in Africa. Dad had a large office underneath his house where he housed—you guessed it—50 years of *Time* magazines. My father would spend many hours in his office, working late into the night typing out police reports.

I later worked for BHP-Utah in mining and married along the way and had three beautiful little girls. I loved working for BHP-Utah and they loved me. Back then we worked a three-shift panel—day, afternoon and night shift. When scrub-pulling teams were in the area, I would often get to repair bulldozers. We had some old LandCruisers set up with tools and we would work night shift at the mine, travel to the site, work all day and then work night shift that night. Needless to say, you slept well the next day. I was always studying and taught the apprentices at the mine. I did many post trade courses for tradespersons at the

mine through TAFE and I also did lots of equipment training courses—namely, Caterpillar et cetera. Dysart was a very stable and enjoyable mining community, very similar to that of Mount Morgan in the early days. There was no crime. If someone was to face the Magistrates Court, he then had to face the ridicule of walking past the many mine staff on his way to work. Sons of miners were often warned about someone else's failings and the embarrassment that it had brought to the family. The various unions had ways of punishing people who engaged in antisocial behaviour.

All of this came to an end when we purchased a medical business in Yeppoon. My wife, a GP, was offered a medical practice in Yeppoon and we acquired two very old weatherboard houses as part of the deal. We now have 12 doctors, about 50 staff and three surgeries along the Capricorn Coast. I became the equipment manager for Carpentaria, the parent company for QRX, NQX and about a dozen other transport firms. Believe me, mining and transport are poles apart. At the mine if a D10 dozer had died, someone would two-way the workshop office and we would advise that we would attend to it whenever. However, in the road transport industry, someone's freight is on that truck and they want it now. Carpentaria was owned by three brothers who controlled 52 per cent. The other 48 per cent was controlled by TNT or, back then, Thomas National Transport. I applied the same principles of equipment management from BHP-Utah to the transport industry. Although I looked after the central division of Queensland, we had equipment all over Australia. Three people managed the equipment in Queensland. I was the guy in CQ. I looked after plant, workshops, staff, terminals and we had a large transport company in Moranbah where there were 40 road trains in that one operation.

At a conference I got to know then mayor of Gladstone, Col Brown, an immensely likeable chap who was at peace with himself. Col said that Rockhampton would never go ahead because of its politics and the fact that it could and would be cut off by flooding. This was in 1993, after the big flood of 1991. Col was an old Labor boy who forged a healthy relationship with Joh Bjelke-Petersen. His pragmatic thinking was the start of Gladstone's success. I admired his quiet style of leadership. Although he was small in stature, his wisdom was respected. The recent media in Gladstone reflects the poor engineering decisions combined with a government that had clearly—and I say clearly—lost its way. Had the wisdom of Joh Bjelke-Petersen been called upon, a bridge to Curtis Island would have been placed below Graham Creek and the dredge spoil used for land reclamation, which we now know was the case with Reg Tanna coal terminal.

Monumental mistakes have been made in the Gladstone region. The complete lack of forward planning, especially in housing, will now prove to be one of our biggest challenges. I commend the member for Gladstone for her efforts to bring this matter to the table. I wish to assure the member for Gladstone that we are listening now.

However, Rockhampton is a completely different story. This once vibrant city, boasted to be the second capital of Queensland, with two meatworks, a large railway repair facility and the largest cattle saleyard in Australia, sadly, has fallen to be the poor cousin of Gladstone, Mackay and even Emerald. Fellow members of the House, there is a cyclone out there in Central Queensland. Everything is going at 100 miles an hour and stuck in the eye of that cyclone is Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast, standing still. We need the leadership and capital of our former mayor Rex Pilbeam. 'Sexy Remy', as he was affectionately known, was the last bastion of leaders Rockhampton has seen. His achievements are still talked about today. The barrage on the Fitzroy River—his greatest achievement—displayed the foresight of his leadership. The barrage is Rockhampton's greatest asset, with water from the mighty Fitzroy now heading to the Capricorn Coast and eventually Gladstone and beyond. Rex Pilbeam sealed most roads, created kerbing and channelling in Rockhampton and completed the sewerage system.

As a young man, I spent some time in Papua New Guinea. Now, I travel widely up and down the coast. When returning to Rockhampton, flying low over the Yeppen crossing I said to myself, 'I am back in Port Moresby.' That is sad but true. Rockhampton has missed out on being the centre of the mining boom. Under three levels of Labor government, Rockhampton missed out on critical levels of funding and planning. Our federal member has been the biggest disappointment. She presides over a history of inaction, acknowledged widely, to the detriment of the people of Rockhampton and its surrounds. She had an opportunity to lead this great area but, sadly, has failed. I worked on the first Yeppen crossing to Egans Hill. I have no doubt that if Joh Bjelke-Petersen was still with us this second flood-proof crossing would now be completed. The cost of the 2011 flood event by far outweighed the cost of flood-proofing the Bruce Highway at Rockhampton. Did any studies look into the cost of providing hospital services such as dialysis and the cost of transport of patients by rotary wing aircraft to Rockhampton? No, they did not. Did any studies look into the road damage caused by heavy haulage vehicles that had to bypass Rockhampton via Emerald and Barcaldine to take freight to North Queensland? No, they did not. The only studies were carried out by Central Queensland University. The cost of the 2011 flood event to Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast was calculated to be \$85 million. The true cost of this flood event, which cut this great state in half for 13 days, will never be known.

I first became a public voice in the early 2000s when we purchased a lovely property on Waterpark Creek. The former Livingstone shire council extracted water upstream from our property. This was the only

water supply for the rapidly growing Capricorn Coast. The council had plans to extract water from another small creek. They were rapidly pumping one creek dry and were now looking to do the same at another location. What started as a small meeting on the edge of the creek turned into years of argument, scientific studies, reference groups, countless government meetings and filing cabinets full of correspondence. My argument was always to head to the secure source of the Fitzroy River. The \$50 million in funding finally came when a severe drought forced the government's hand and it relented at one meeting when the Capricorn Coast had 100 days of water left—something that is not widely known. The Livingstone shire was now—and I say 'now'—very much onside and came up with one-third of the funding. Another third came from the state government and the remainder came from the federal government under the National Water Initiative.

I went on to fight other poor decisions by local and state governments, such as the Rockhampton Regional Council's superdump. The superdump to service the greater Rockhampton region, which had a life of 40 years and which was to take in excess of 100,000 tonnes of rubbish per year, was to be located on Hedlow Creek 25 kilometres from the Fitzroy River, the water source of Rockhampton and now the Capricorn Coast. What were they thinking? As I stated before, the greatest asset Rockhampton has is the water that sits behind our barrage. This water, which is now under threat from the growth of mining in the Fitzroy Basin, is something that the Newman government will have to manage extremely well. We have 42 coalmines in the basin and 45 more on the drawing board.

The result of the election held on 24 March was a clear indication that the people of Queensland wanted to get back to a stable and productive government to provide front-line services and to get the state's finances back on track. We will not fail them. I would like to thank my campaign team, who worked tirelessly: Don and Ngaire Kane, my campaign manager; Sandy Bredhauer, who phoned at daylight every morning and who proved to be a loyal and very hard worker; Neville and Gail Jones; Jack and Ray Cowie; Michelle Landry and family; John Arnold; Ray Thompson; and Michael Evans, who proved to be a wealth of knowledge. I would also like to acknowledge James McGrath, the campaign director, who received a stinging phone call from me early one morning about a poor decision. However, that will not diminish the respect I have for him. The campaign was going well when the 'hand of God' touched Bruce Young. The New South Wales Nationals, under the leadership of the state director, Ben Franklin, decided to take holidays and help me for the last five weeks of the campaign. Nathan Quigley, Ross Cadell, Douglas Martin, William Coates, Thomas Aubert and Anthony Sarks became our extended family and we worked seven days a week into the election. These young men will no doubt become the leaders of tomorrow and I am forever in their debt.

My wife, Geraldine, and three daughters, Megan, Katherine and Bridget, were always there to support me in the campaign, which, looking back, was a lot of hard work but a pleasurable and memorable experience. I had made a great big trailer sign which travelled widely throughout the campaign. That campaign sign had two faces: Bruce Young and Campbell Newman. On one occasion out on the highway two old farmers stopped for a yarn and after some small talk one of the old chaps pointed to Campbell and asked, 'Bruce, what's the story about your younger brother? Is he into politics, too?' I would like to thank the people of Keppel who placed their trust in me. I will work hard to represent them. Thank you.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!