




Speech by

Hon. Glen Elmes

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard Thursday, 31 May 2012

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Hon. GW ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and Minister Assisting the Premier) (12.29 pm): I am not sure whether that clapping from the public gallery is for me or for the member for Brisbane Central. I expect it is for the member for Brisbane Central.

Mr Langbroek: We have heard you before.

Mr ELMES: Maybe I should sit down now. Mr Deputy Speaker, could I first of all ask you to convey to Madam Speaker my congratulations to her on her attaining her high office. I was also very pleased to see that the Premier came into the chamber just before I started my speech. I think the debt that all of us in the LNP owe Campbell Newman and his wife, Lisa, can never, ever be repaid by any of us. I would like to state, as I have done in the past, my undying love for Her Majesty the Queen in this her diamond jubilee year. It is a great thing that she has been with us these last 60 years.

When I came into this place as the elected representative of Noosa in 2006, I came with mixed feelings. On one hand was the immense pride of being elected to parliament for the first time. The first experience of everything is unique and it holds a special place in our memories and in shaping who we are. There was also the humility coming from that election as an MP, and of course there was that awe of responsibility causing cold sweats in my palms that more than half of the electors of Noosa—some 56 per cent—had chosen a boy from Everton Park who calls Noosa home as the one to speak on their behalf, to represent their hopes and dreams for themselves and their children in this place, to sift their wants from their needs and to deliver, and, above all, to fight tooth and nail to always keep Noosa as 'Noosa'.

Re-election in 2009 was bitter sweet. Despite increasing my personal approval, we as the alternative government did not achieve our goal. So rising to speak today as a member of the Newman LNP government is very special indeed. As well as being a member of a government holding the trust of the Queensland community with 77 of the 89 seats in the 54th Parliament, I have been further entrusted by the Premier with the ministry that manages the government's responsibilities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs and I am the Minister Assisting the Premier. I cherish the trust and I cherish his faith. His trust is echoed by my cabinet and parliamentary colleagues for we are collectively responsible to the electorate and we will be judged collectively on what we do as a team. I especially cherish the faith and trust of the 77 per cent of electors of Noosa who have sent me here once more.

The period of aspiration to govern is over. The period for the inspiration of government is realised. The period of perspiration as the responsible government is just beginning. Responsible we will be in both senses of the word—we will be a responsible government and we will act as a responsible government. As a minister, I will be dealing with another tier of elected government—local Indigenous councils—as part of my responsibilities with the Minister for Local Government, who was in the chamber a second ago. I have met many of the mayors, councillors and CEOs already and I have a very, very high regard for them personally.

Above all things, the Liberal National Party is a party which stands for the individual. As I have said before in this place, the LNP is a party which encourages aspiration by the individual, provides for the

equality of opportunity, facilitates the way forward by which the individual may achieve and by which the individual may succeed to the advantage of us all, and provides a hand-up delivering independence rather than a handout which ensures dependency.

There is much to do in Queensland, and there is much to do in Queensland for our Indigenous communities. My first experience as a minister was only a few weeks ago on a visit to Cairns where I met Indigenous mayors and attended the funeral of the mayor of Aurukun. Last week I had the privilege of again going to the Far North to Coen to witness the handover by the Premier of traditional lands to traditional people. I followed this up with another two days of meetings with leaders of Indigenous community organisations.

I want to reinforce that this is a government which stands for the rights of our Indigenous communities, especially their land rights. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be in no doubt that the Newman government is committed in partnership to their future. We support native title, but the present native title arrangements to me are un-Australian. The present native title arrangements mitigate against the aspirations of Indigenous Australians to own their own land, to own their own home and to have a job in meaningful employment by which to provide with pride for their own family and their community.

The present native title arrangements hold land in community trusts too often, with little practical advantage for the Indigenous community. Native title was a great step forward for Indigenous Australians, but the time since the Mabo decision has shown us some of the practical flaws. We need this native title concept to advance, to become contemporary, so as to meet the emerging needs of Indigenous Australians now in 2012 and in the years ahead and for the generations to come. We see Indigenous Australians integrated into mainstream Australian society if that is their choice. We cannot in all consciousness support the ongoing maintenance of Aboriginal societies as a curiosity of ancient times, as a relic of the past, as a political trophy to be retained in abject neglect while state and federal governments underdeliver. We want to see Indigenous people use their land in such a way as to develop economically and sustainably and beyond traditional uses only. I have reflected on these matters previously in the House.

If as a minister I can make a positive long-term improvement to the life of just one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family, I will be pleased. If I can do the same for many families in many communities, I will be happy and that is my goal. In this regard, I am especially mindful of our intention which was so well expressed by the Premier, when he recently said—

The vision is that one day an Aboriginal man or woman living in Cape York will be able to come home to a house that they own, after a day at work on a croc farm, a prawn farm, the tropical fruit plantation or the mine, having earned real dollars instead of being on welfare, come home and enjoy a glass of beer or wine in their home. That's the vision and anyone who believes that's inappropriate well I think frankly they are being unfair and they don't want to give Aboriginal people a real future on the Cape.

I do not think that is a bad vision.

I am also mindful that the dialogue about my responsibilities is not dominated by a one-dimensional focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs while neglecting those for multicultural affairs. I am looking forward to the release next month of the information collected and reported from the 2011 national census and I will be interested to see the changes on which we will base future policies. In 2006 there were 3,904,508 people in Queensland on census night. By country of birth, there were almost as many New Zealanders as English, almost as many Germans and South Africans as Scots, surprisingly twice as many Dutch as Irish, as many Sri Lankans as Welsh and almost 55,000 people from Asian nations. Of the 18 languages identified as a language other than English spoken at home, 10 were Asian languages as well as Torres Strait Creole.

I will be interested to see the changes in our migration patterns since 2006. I look forward to the challenges that will be thrown up by this and how mindful we must be to become more culturally aware and welcoming—as are those who have taken the major step of leaving their country of birth to forge a new life in a country that for a significant number of them will be very, very different in almost every way from what they have been socialised in and grown up in.

My address would be incomplete if I did not pay tribute to those who have helped return me to this place. My re-election was helped by the team which has been with me, in many cases, from the beginning: Matt Collins; Nick Dondas; Barry Elms; Colleen Woods; Gus Hatter; Peg Burgin; Kenelm Creighton; Tony Tobin; Tony Fowler; Bruce and Glenise Clelland; David Peel; Earle Bailey, a former member of this House; David Atkinson; Chris Nolan; Sam Scanlon; and Richard Pearson. They all hold a special place in my heart, as do their wives and partners who support them so well on my behalf. They sacrifice their precious time with their loved ones for me.

There are many others in a team of 130 volunteers like Leanne Walsh, who manned polling booths on election day, and others who are ably led by a strong team of booth captains like Neil Carrington and

those who letterboxed widely like Sally McKay and the Pages, also handing out flyers at the markets and other public events. Then there are those like Tony Moran who just go wherever and do whatever they are asked. They are the salt of my earth. Then there are my electorate staff who have become my friends, Lyn Parker and Barb Hannon, who are my sounding boards and who amplify the belief which my electors have in me. Special mention goes to Sam Scanlon, who was at my side almost every minute of the campaign. Sam, you are a giant among men. Last but no means least, I thank my wonderful children, Teigan and Kristin, and the beautiful person who stands shoulder to shoulder with me in everything I do, my greatest supporter and the one who keeps me grounded, my darling wife, Lesleigh. To all of those people individually and collectively, thank you. To the electors of Noosa, once again, thank you, too.