




Speech by

Ian Rickuss

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

Hansard Tuesday, 5 June 2012

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr RICKUSS** (Lockyer—LNP) (12.44 pm): I rise to speak in the address-in-reply for this 54th Parliament. It was my privilege to be here when the Governor, accompanied by her husband, Stuart, opened the parliament. Stuart has a strong connection with the Gatton campus in the Lockyer Valley. It is a privilege to speak in this House again. The voters of Lockyer keep honouring me by electing me as the member for Lockyer. It is definitely a great privilege. Thank you to my wife, Ann, who does a great job assisting me, and my two sons, Luke and Joel, and their wives, Julie and Felicity. I have two grandchildren as well, Sinead and Archie, who are great little kids.

A government member: No great-grandchildren?

Mr RICKUSS: No great-grandchildren, no. I would also like to acknowledge my staff, Hope, Erica, Julie and Dana, who work extremely hard and make me look a much better politician than I am at times.

A government member: They must work very hard!

Mr RICKUSS: They do work extremely hard. I also acknowledge the hardworking branch people in Lockyer, at Peak Crossing and Harrisville. They helped me get elected. There are 35 polling booths. Manning 35 polling booths requires hundreds of people, so it is a big effort. Branch people—like Tina and Alan Fry and Linton and Melinda Brimblecombe—work extremely hard and assist with the booths. There are too many people to mention and thank individually, but I thank them all. I thank Scott Buchholz, the federal member for Wright, which covers most of my electorate. As the Ipswich members know, my electorate covers a little bit of Blair, too, and hopefully we will have a new member there shortly.

I acknowledge Premier Campbell Newman and the LNP team. They did a great job. I think enough has been said about the sacrifices people have made. It is great to see that we are here in the chamber with the extraordinary numbers that we have. Jeff Seeney and Tim Nicholls work extremely hard. I feel that Jeff is probably one of the wiser politicians in this chamber. Some of his PR skills fall short but political nous he has in abundance. Tim will do a great job as Treasurer. I am a bit surprised he let Jarrod Bleijie do him over by taking SPER back. I was a bit amazed by that. I am sure Tim will do a great job. I congratulate all the ministers and members of parliament who have been elevated to the important roles of whips, committee chairs and assistant ministers. I congratulate all the new members. It is great to be in here with this many members. We used to sit in a little huddle over there where the Labor members are now. It is a great change.

I give a special thanks to Jack Dempsey, the police minister; Jann Stuckey, the tourism minister; David Crisafulli, the local government minister and Andrew Cripps, the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, who have already visited my electorate. One of the councillors commented on a world of change it is when ministers are visiting electorates wanting to assist.

Lockyer has 11 neighbouring electorates. It was great to be able to talk to some of the media on the night of the election and acknowledge at 6.20 pm that we had won Algester and Logan. I called that very early and I was pleased to see that we had. On the night I was in a polling booth at the southern end of my electorate which is always a pretty tight polling booth for me. My vote was fairly strong, but Logan and Algester were also fairly strong.

I am excited to be appointed chair of the Agriculture, Resources and Environment Committee. There are some exciting issues that we have to look at, including the issue of coal seam gas. A lot of the mining and gas issues are not so much about the gas or the coal; really, it is about land access and water. That is what concerns a lot of people. It is an issue that we have to manage and manage appropriately. Unfortunately, when members on the other side of the House were in government there was no great depth of knowledge. We have that knowledge and we have started to put things in place to make improvements.

Public transport is an important issue for my electorate, as it is for every electorate. We have very limited public transport. In the next week or so I am meeting with TransLink to discuss some of our issues and to see whether we can improve some of our services. Public transport is always a difficult issue because in South-East Queensland state and local governments subsidise it by somewhere in the vicinity of \$1 billion. It will always be an issue. It is almost a chicken-and-egg situation. People want public transport, but they do not use it; they do not use it because it is not there. It is an ongoing issue that will be very difficult to manage.

In the Lockyer we need a Queensland Transport centre. Previous ministers, particularly Minister Lucas, were of the opinion that IT would solve all our licensing issues—that is, that people would be able to go online to get a driver's licence and so on. However, it does not work that way. We need a stand-alone Queensland Transport centre in the Gatton area. It is a transport hub. There are trucking companies with 200 or 300 trucks, but on a daily basis they have to drive to Toowoomba or Ipswich to do their transport business. It beggars belief that we do not have a decent, stand-alone Queensland Transport centre.

Main Roads: I am continually speaking to the Minister for Main Roads about the Warrego Highway, the Cunningham Highway, the Gatton-Esk Road and the Ipswich-Boonah Road. Those roads are important to my electorate, particular the Warrego and Cunningham highways. Unfortunately, we have to leverage appropriate funding out of the federal government. Those are important thoroughfares. Everything that is transported on the Downs uses either the Cunningham Highway or the Warrego Highway. As everyone knows, Cunningham's Gap is continually blocked and at times the Toowoomba Range is a disaster. We have to improve those things.

It is good to see the Minister for Education in the House. I represent about 35 schools and the Gatton tertiary campus, which has become a great campus. The education minister visited the Gatton campus and was very impressed with the facilities there. They continue to improve. It is a great tertiary institution. It is the oldest tertiary institution in Queensland and I am very proud to have it in my electorate. You can go to virtually any town or village in Queensland and find that the local Elders bloke or the local Primac person will have been to Gatton or through Gatton. Quite a few members have done degrees through Gatton. It is a great institution.

Police and emergency services: our side of politics has made promises that will strengthen police and emergency services. The Minister for Police is starting to act immediately against the outlaw motorcycle gangs, which is great.

Local government areas: the Lockyer, Somerset, Scenic Rim, Logan, Toowoomba and Ipswich councils all have an effect on my area. I have to deal with a lot of councillors and councils on different issues. I am sure that this government will work constructively with those people.

DNR issues affect the land, creeks, gullies and so on. I am sure that members will remember the terrible floods we had in the Lockyer Valley, which highlighted the DNR issues that we have to manage such as streams, flood plains, levy banks et cetera. They are complex issues that take some understanding. Hopefully, we can do a good job.

EPA management involves the management of flying foxes, with their noise and smell, and the management of the forests. I notice the Minister for National Parks is sitting in the chamber. We need to look at whether some of the old state forests should be national parks or whether they should be declared to be more robust and opened up to greater community access. We have to have that discussion. For almost a century some of the forests were accessed by loggers with timber trucks, but then they were locked away as national park. To me, that seems a crime.

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services looks after vulnerable people who require assistance. I am sure all new members will face some heartbreaking experiences when dealing with child safety issues. It is just one of those things.

The Minister for Housing and Public Works understands the difficult issues that he has ahead of him. He will face some difficult issues in supporting some of the needier members of the community.

The Attorney-General must enact laws that are fair and just and laws that people expect, which is a difficult job. It will be interesting to see how the bikie legislation that was introduced by the previous government stands up in the higher courts. I feel that some of those laws were poorly drafted and might need to be revisited. The Attorney-General has come up with a few ideas about boot camps and the like.

An ex-senior police officer from my area is rather critical of boot camps, so it will be interesting to see whether we can make them work.

Science, information and technology are fast moving and changing all the time. This is a difficult issue that was no more highlighted than by the Health payroll debacle, which has now cost over \$500 million. We have to get those sorts of things right. You cannot throw that sort of stuff out. It has to be done right and done right the first time.

Energy and water supply: power and water are important to every family and must be managed properly. This must not be about trying to rip money off people. They have to be managed properly. Every family needs them and every home needs them. It is very important that we look after those things.

National parks, sports and racing are important issues. The minister just spoke about country racing, which is very dear to my heart and that of the Manager of Government Business, who is a great advocate for racing. Last year we took a trip to Melbourne to look at some of the country racing issues there. Some good ideas came out of that trip and I am sure some of those ideas will be put into our policies. It was a great trip. We can learn a lot from other states; some states do it better than we do. Victoria does racing very well and I encourage the minister to talk to some of our counterparts in Victoria. They are doing a great job. It is an industry that needs to be supported.

Doubling agriculture is a great aspirational target. We have to ensure that we have the settings right at the state and federal levels, so that we have profitable farms. In the Lockyer Valley there are probably 400 or 500 horticultural farmers who have been doing it very tough for the past couple of years because the settings are not quite right. This morning in his MPI, the member for Beaudesert spoke about how difficult it is for the farmers around our areas to keep going. It is really difficult for farming, with the high dollar and other issues that have been holding them back. Hopefully, some of the government settings will fall into place and things will come right.

As I have said, mining and coal seam gas issues are about water and access. Mostly, farmers are doers. They are hard workers who love to see productivity taking place, but they are concerned about what could happen to the land, their mother country. This is a real issue and they do have concerns about it. We have to get this right, particularly with mining. The problems with mining are about land access and water. It is not so much about the gas extraction; it is about land access and water. We have to have the right settings in place to make sure we manage those issues.

Construction, mining, tourism and agriculture are four great pillars on which to build an economy. Good agriculture almost plays into good tourism; it has a flow-on effect. For good construction, whether it be roads, buildings or mines, we have to have the settings right. The results of the election were amazing and they showed that the Labor Party had become a straw party full of straw people.

Mr Johnson: There's only seven bits of straw over there.

Mr RICKUSS: That is right. They have become a straw party that is hollow; there is nothing there. They do not seem to understand the truth. The real problem is that, as my colleague from Logan would say, they cannot handle the truth. Still they are not on top of it. The LNP will strive to be a good government for all Queenslanders, not false and pretentious. We have a lot of listening new politicians. Let us not procrastinate; let us now plan, let us now prosper. LNP Queensland!