



Speech by

Hon. Jeff Seeneey

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard Thursday, 17 May 2012

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Hon. JW SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning) (9.55 am): I begin by seconding the motion as moved by the Premier and congratulating him on a great first speech in this Queensland parliament.

As members would realise, this is not my first speech in this parliament, but it is my first speech from this side of the parliament. It is my first speech as part of an LNP government that extends across both sides of the parliament. Those of us who have been in this parliament for a long time would understand the significance of my looking across the chamber at the members from Murrumba, Stretton and Springwood, knowing that they are LNP members. Over the next three years our focus is to make sure that the voters in electorates such as Murrumba, Stretton, Springwood, Lytton, Logan and a whole range of other electorates where people have voted for the LNP for the first time vote for us for a long time to come.

I congratulate all of the new members who make up this LNP government. After so many years it is wonderful to stand here and see so many of you joining us in this parliament. The people of Queensland have placed in us a huge trust and responsibility. For 14 years we were in opposition. For 14 years we sat on that side of the parliament in opposition and a relay of leaders have brought us from that point in 1998 to where we are today. I acknowledge them, because they did some hard yards. I acknowledge former leaders such as Mike Horan, who is not here. He retired and left this parliament with the respect of everybody. I acknowledge his deputy at the time, Vaughan Johnson, and leaders such as Bruce Flegg, Mark McArdle and Lawrence Springborg, who did so much to bring the LNP together. I acknowledge John-Paul Langbroek. They are the people who served the cause and who brought all of us who make up the LNP government to this point today.

I think all of us would agree that the one person whom we must acknowledge more than all in terms of the leadership that it took to get us to this point is the member for Ashgrove and now the Premier of Queensland. On 22 March 2011 he took the momentous decision to leave his position at the Brisbane City Council and move to state politics. The leadership that he has shown since has been a significant part of the reason why so many LNP members are in this chamber today. It was a bold move. Some said it was crazy brave. A lot of people said it would not work—quite a lot of people said it would not work. I remember coming back into this chamber on the Wednesday, the day after the leadership of the opposition had changed. The glee on the faces of those who sat on the government benches was something that I will never forget, but there are not too many of them here today.

They have met the political fate that they so richly deserve because we were able to bring to this state parliament a leader with experience, a leader with a track record, a leader with the respect of all Queenslanders and a leader who was able to build on the foundation of those who had gone before him in the leadership roles of the LNP to ensure that we could bring into this chamber a government—an LNP government—with a strength, a determination and a passion that this chamber has never seen before.

There are lots of things about those first few months that I will save for the book that I will one day write, and nobody else will read. No-one else had better read it; it might be libellous! But there is one thing that I want to acknowledge today and that is the role that Tim Nicholls played. When Tim and I had a lonely

discussion in a deserted coffee shop on Racecourse Road on a Sunday afternoon in late March it was very clear to both of us that if we were going to support Campbell's move then Tim had to put aside his own personal leadership ambitions. I congratulate Tim on the decision that he made and on the role that he has played in the leadership team that has led the effort since then. Tim, Campbell and I have formed a unique bond and I think it is a very strong bond that will be at the centre of the LNP government as we go forward. I want to recognise Tim's courage and selflessness today.

It is a huge task that the LNP government face. We have been left a legacy of failure, dysfunction and debt. I do not think that any Queensland government has failed to the extent that the previous Labor government that occupied this chamber failed. They left a legacy that will live on in infamy for generations. We saw a long list of crises as the end result of the maladministration of that government: the health crisis and the payroll scandal, Dr Patel, the fake Tahitian prince, the water crisis, the wasted billions of dollars on the water grid, the rusty desalination plants, the Traveston Dam, the destruction in the Mary Valley, soaring water prices and power prices that Queenslanders will struggle with for years, the kids in care crisis, the Bruce Highway crisis—the list goes on and on and on.

Mr Johnson: And the state of local government.

Mr SEENEY: Not to mention what they did to local government in Queensland; I thank the member for Gregory for reminding me of that. It is too easy to forget. The list of failure and dysfunction is so long that it is so easy to forget.

I think the first thing the few remaining members of that government who now constitute the opposition in this parliament should do is apologise to the people of Queensland for the extent of that failure. Only then would they recover any respect from me or from any Queenslander that was lost due to the extent of their failure and the extent of the suffering that they have inflicted on so many Queenslanders. The other thing that they should apologise for is the election campaign. The election campaign that was waged in Queensland in the run-up to the last election was unprecedented in my view and in the view of a lot of political commentators. What the failed Labor government tried to do was to cover its own failure and its own ineptitude by personally attacking not just the then candidate for Ashgrove but also his wife, his family and his wife's family. It was unprecedented and it was disgusting. It disgusted Queenslanders from Currumbin to Cook. It disgusted everybody. It is one of the reasons there are only seven members of this opposition in this parliament.

I am pleased it did not work for a lot of reasons. I am pleased it did not work because, had it worked, it would have become the norm in Queensland politics. It would have become the accepted way of operating in Queensland politics, and that would have been a tragedy for all of us who understand what politics should be about. The fact that it did not work hopefully will mean that nobody will try such despicable tactics again. I say quite genuinely to the Leader of the Opposition and her much diminished team that if they want to recover any respect in this parliament and in Queensland then the first thing they should do in this parliament is not just apologise for their track record of failure but also apologise for the way they ran the election campaign and for what they tried to do to Lisa Newman and her family.

There is no doubt that we as a government have a mandate. We have a mandate for change. We have a mandate to repair the damage that was done by so many years of Labor. We have a mandate to develop and to build Queensland. We have a mandate to build the four pillars that the Premier has spoken about this morning and that he spoke about so often during the election campaign—to build the four pillars of resources, agriculture, construction and tourism. In the weeks since the election, that is exactly what we have been doing.

Across government our ministers have begun the job of doing what we said we would do—that is, delivering on our promises. In a methodical, determined, workmanlike way we will deliver on the promises that we gave to the people of Queensland. We will develop the coal seam gas industry in a responsible way that makes up for the maladministration of the previous government, that brings to every Queenslander the benefits that that industry can bring but that safeguards the environment, that safeguards the rights of landholders and that protects regional communities. We will develop the resources industry in general across Queensland because it is the resources industry in particular that gives Queensland its great comparative advantage over other states and gives Australia its great comparative advantage over other countries. We will do these things in such a way that all Queenslanders will benefit. We will do them in a way that will prove that we can administer the state and the business of the state in a way that will allow the business of the state to grow.

One of the things that the previous government never seemed to understand is that if you are going to spend money you have to earn it first; you have to earn the money first before you spend it. The fact that they did not understand that led in a very real way to the \$85 billion worth of debt that will forever be their legacy. To address that legacy we have to grow the business of the state, and that is the focus of the portfolio that I have been given. We have reconstituted the department of state development. We have refocused the role of the Coordinator-General; we are unashamedly about ensuring that the Coordinator-

General can use the powers in the state development act to coordinate the development activities across the state and ensure that we can grow the business of the state.

We have already taken steps to deal with the mess that the previous government left in the Galilee Basin. The lack of planning of the Galilee Basin infrastructure is breathtaking when you understand the degree to which it is now confused. We have established the gas fields commission. We have established the Bruce Highway action group. We have met with the federal government—with Tony Burke—to avoid bureaucratic duplication. We have appointed a 'go to' person for the construction and development industry. We have worked to simplify the planning process. We are refocusing the UDLA and empowering local governments across Queensland to do what they do best: make decisions for their communities. All the things that I and my colleagues have talked about in this chamber for years and all the things that the Premier talked about for the 12 months when he was our leader outside the parliament are now being actioned, one at a time, methodically, workmanlike and determinedly. We will do what we said we would do. At the end of the three-year term I think all of the 78 members who sit in this chamber will be proud of what we as a government achieved.

At this point I want to thank some people. Members who know me know that I do not do this very often. My wife asks me, 'Why does everybody else thank everyone in their first speech in parliament but you never do?' It is because I have had so much else to talk about. But today I want to thank some people because, after 14 years in this parliament, this is undoubtedly the high point of my career and I want to thank the people who helped me get here.

First of all, I want to thank my wife, Therese. Thirty-two years married—34 years married, sorry. I will be in trouble for that tonight! Thirty-four years married and for 20 of those years I have been in public life, either in state politics or in local government. Everybody knows that it is our partners who bear the brunt of that. I acknowledge her for the great tower of strength that she has been. I acknowledge my kids—Dan, Helen and Tom. They are all grown up now, but they all grew up with their father as a politician or a councillor in a small country town, and that is a tough gig, so I acknowledge them.

I want to acknowledge some people who have been part of the Monto branch of the now LNP ever since we started together as a group in what was then the Young Nationals. Peter and Mary Sharp, Neville and Narelle Galloway, and Robyn and Robert Ogle have been part of my political life from day one. I acknowledge all of my electorate council people who were there at my preselection 14 years ago—Jimmy Tucker; Orla Hansen; Ken and Val McInnes, who were here yesterday; Ted Kirk from Gayndah; Gil and Michelle Smith; and old Bill Roberts and Percy Iszlaub from Murgon and Wondai respectively who used to say that they never thought they would live to see another LNP government. They not only lived to see it but they lived to see a great one.

I also acknowledge the colleagues who have served in this parliament with me since I came here in 1998. There have been some tough times. Some of them are still here and some of them have gone. I thank them for the support. I thank them for the tolerance they showed when they could not support me. I apologise for the times that I have upset people—and that is a long list, too. But I acknowledge that they will form the core of experience that will make this LNP government great. So I want to thank all of my colleagues who have served in this parliament.

Also, Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge your election. You, too, have been a colleague for many years. I want to acknowledge your elevation to the position of Speaker. I want to assure you of my support—of our support—and hope that the relationship we build in this parliament will be a good one and will contribute to the role of the parliament and the good things that this parliament can provide for the people of Queensland.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I hope that this government can provide hope for all Queenslanders but especially for regional people. I have unashamedly all of my political career—all of my career in public life—been about country towns and country people, and I hope that this government can deliver for country towns and country people. I am sure it is something that the Premier understands, because he and I have spoken about it many times. I am sure it is something that the cabinet ministers, if they do not understand it now, will come to understand. Things are different in country towns and things are different in regional Queensland and sometimes we have to be well aware of those differences in the regulation and the legislation that we deal with in this House.

I hope that in the future people will talk about the LNP government that was elected in 2012 as a government of integrity, a government that brought change, a government that was known for its achievements and a government that delivered on its promises. That is what I will be focusing on, and I hope that the other 77 members of the LNP government will join me in that task. I once again congratulate the Premier along with my good friend Tim Nicholls, the member for Clayfield, who will not exchange electorates with me no matter how many times I argue with him. I look forward to working with them and all of the LNP members in this government to make those things a reality.