




Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (5.24 pm): I rise in the House today to reply to the Governor's opening speech. I rise to support the amendments proposed by the member for Southern Downs, the honourable the Leader of the Opposition. I am disappointed that the government used a significant occasion such as the opening of parliament to politicise what should have been the clear direction of this current government.

I speak on behalf of the constituents of the Nanango electorate, a vast electorate that covers some 13,800 square kilometres and has 31 towns and many more communities. The region is blessed with some of the finest prime agricultural lands, tourism opportunities, natural resources and industry. I listened with keen interest to the Governor's speech on 25 March of this year. I listened on behalf of the people of my electorate and I asked myself if what was being said was good enough for them; would this new government support them over the next three years like our LNP government had done over the previous three years? I came to the conclusion that what was said certainly was not good enough for the people of my electorate and I can explain why. Firstly, in relation to agriculture, the backbone of my electorate is primary production: farming families who produce our food and fibres. They work so hard, mostly against the odds, every day to keep food on our tables and clothes on our backs. They are supported by hundreds of small businesses: businesspeople who sell seed and fertiliser, service their equipment and order their parts. There are contractors who build fences and spray crops, truck drivers who transport the livestock, agronomists who work alongside the farmer and meatworkers who process the meat. Our towns rely heavily on agriculture and not once during this government's speech was agriculture mentioned; neither was the word 'farmer' or 'primary producer'. This means that not once were the majority of the people who reside in my electorate acknowledged; not once were these people who have suffered through droughts and floods highlighted in this important address. It is like they did not even exist.

Since the Governor's speech I have had a couple of trips out west. Just this week I was in Hebel and Dirranbandi. Hebel is looking as dry as the places around Longreach. It is devastating for those families. I thank the members for Warrego and Gregory for hosting me in that region. It is wonderful to see those families and how they are dealing with what they are going through. I congratulate those two members, Ann Leahy and Lachy Millar, for the hard work they are putting into their community to support agricultural producers in this fine state.

Secondly, in relation to the regions, this government talks on the one hand about its new Building our Regions program yet on the other it scrapped our hugely successful Royalties for the Regions program. It has single-handedly reduced the amount that we pledged to the regions, almost \$500 million over four years, to just \$390 million and is trying to make out that that is a good thing. This shows absolute disregard for rural and regional areas. We created the Royalties for the Regions program to fund roads, bridges, water infrastructure and flood mitigation works that our regional communities desperately needed after 20 years of Labor neglect. There was no clearer demonstration of our LNP's pledge to Queensland's regions than this vitally important money that was flowing back

through our local councils and providing jobs for our locals. In my electorate of Nanango the community saw many great benefits from this project, with more than \$25 million injected into the region for projects such as new overtaking lanes and upgrades of wooden bridges and dangerous intersections. We also saw a major commitment of \$10 million, which was much-needed money for the upgrade of the Kingaroy wastewater treatment plant. That was a project that simply had to be done.

**Mr Powell:** It had to be.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I take the interjection from the member for Glass House. It did need to be done. If it was not for that \$10 million from the Royalties for the Regions program, the council would have had no funding and would have had to raise rates again. Our LNP government understood that regional Queensland is the engine room of our state economy and that resource-rich regions such as the Nanango electorate deserve to see the benefits of that industry.

I wish to talk about access to mental health services. For some time it has been one of my passions to improve access to mental health services in our regional areas. Whilst Labor does talk about expanding services for adolescents, there is no talk whatsoever about helping the people in my region. At the last sitting when they talked about 'region', they paired it with 'Townsville'. It is very difficult for the people who live in the Nanango electorate to travel to Brisbane, let alone Townsville, for mental health services. People are suffering from extreme drought conditions. In the past couple of months, I have visited some of those wonderful families and they are simply at the end of their tether. Farming families of my electorate, as well as those of Callide and further afield, have faced disasters such as floods and cyclones and have seen their farms and livelihoods destroyed.

I am committed to securing funding for a South Burnett clubhouse, which was a fully funded and budgeted local commitment that I made during the previous election. The proposed South Burnett clubhouse will offer a model of care that has a proven track record, providing intervention services that assist people from the region who experience mental health problems. It would be similar to the current and very successful Toowoomba Clubhouse, which provides vocational training and work experiences to people with mental illness, helping them connect with treatment and rehabilitation, and re-establishment with the working community. As I said, this was a fully budgeted local commitment. Therefore, I will again be calling on the minister to follow through with this vital commitment for my area.

I also call on the Minister for Health to continue the funding for the vital Mates Who Open Gates counselling support service for farmers. That innovative program provides on-farm counselling support for farming families, but is at risk of folding due to a lack of support from this government. As I said before, with more than 70 per cent of our state still in the grip of terrible drought and others still suffering from the effects of the cyclone, our farmers need all the support they can get. However, it seems that this government does not even realise that our primary producers are in real trouble.

Mates Who Open Gates was created and coordinated by a Toowoomba group called Ag Assist, led by Mr Rod Saal. At a social meeting, Mr Saal met the then health minister and now Leader of the Opposition, Lawrence Springborg, and we assisted Mr Saal with a pilot training project. The program trains volunteers who, at the invitation of a producer, visit the farm and lend an ear. That may lead to a referral for further support, or it may just open up a good opportunity for the producer to speak with someone else about their situation. Our former government recognised the value of the program and funded the pilot project. More than 80 volunteers went through the program and received training, which was more than double the number we predicted when Mr Saal first talked to us. The program needs to be extended for a further two years at least, because I know there is a need in my community and there is also a need further west, in Warrego and in Gregory. The project supported many people throughout my electorate, as the South Burnett was involved in one of the pilot programs.

Finally, there is a desperate need for a new hospital in Kingaroy. I was always very pleased that our minister put the Kingaroy Hospital at the top of the list of most needed projects. Our former government identified that several rural and regional hospitals, neglected by the previous Labor government, desperately needed replacing and, as I just said, at the top of the list was the Kingaroy Hospital. I welcome yesterday's announcement by the Chairman of the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Board, Mr Mike Horan, that it is the health board's continued priority to advocate for a new public hospital in Kingaroy.

The Kingaroy Hospital was built in 1938 and some extensions were completed in the eighties. The rest of the hospital is made up of demountable buildings that the staff try to make work. I congratulate all staff at the Kingaroy Hospital who helped my husband when he broke his arm recently. He started treatment in the Cherbourg Hospital where he was greatly helped and then the

cast was put on his arm at the Kingaroy Hospital. I put on record my gratitude and my thanks to all of the lovely nursing staff, the doctors and the administrative staff at the Kingaroy Hospital, who all work so hard. Yesterday, the plaster came off and he has recovered very well. Apparently it is still a bit stiff, but he is working on that.

Our government identified the Kingaroy Hospital as one of the 12 ageing rural hospitals in need of critical maintenance. That was also acknowledged in a 2010 report prepared by the former Labor government, yet nothing was done during its term in office. Our former government made the decision to invest some \$2 million to conduct vital upgrades, particularly around fire and staff safety, to ensure safety whilst they were waiting for a new hospital to be built. The maternity ward is one of the busiest non-specialist birthing centres in the state, with over 400 babies born each year. I could be corrected, but I understand that ours is the second highest birthing hospital regionally outside the south-east corner and Longreach. It is wonderful that so many babies are born in my area, because that means it is prosperous—

**An opposition member:** Future constituents.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** And future constituents. I congratulate all the mums. Unfortunately, the facilities that those mums and the hospital staff have to work in do not match the high level of need. There are only two birthing suites and it is quite disjointed, yet the staff do an amazing job. Until last year, our dental hospital waiting time was up to nine years. Under our LNP government, that was reduced to two years. I know all of the dentists of the South Burnett, the Somerset and the Toowoomba regions really appreciated having the load taken off them because of that amazing initiative of our government.

I wish to thank many people from within the Nanango electorate for their support over the past three years. In particular, I thank the entire Nanango State Executive Council and LNP groups. I thank the crew who make up the local branches. I acknowledge the Crows Nest branch and make particular mention of Bevan and Bev Kahler. Bevan had to retire this year, after working for many years for the LNP. I wish him all the best with his health and also thank Bev Kahler who has really supported him along the way. I acknowledge the great Goombungee branch, the Cooyar branch, the South Burnett branch and, obviously, the old branches of Yarraman, Nanango and Kingaroy. I make particular mention of Ian Badman who has taken the Kilcoy branch from strength to strength, expanding it into the Somerset region. There are so many people whom I want to thank, as it is one of the fastest growing branches in the state of Queensland. I do not want to leave anyone out, but in particular I mention Margie Lee-Madigan, Jane, Kimberley, Zac, Julie Pantlin, Jack Delaney, Chris Anderson and Ray Patroni. I want to give a special shout out to Col Kiem who has worked so hard for the Nanango electorate for many years and this year again came out of retirement to help me. He is wonderful. I thank Col and Lorraine for their understanding.

I want to do a big shout out to my sister, Jackie Allery, and my brother-in-law, John Allery. In the last three years, if it had not been for them—I cannot believe I am getting emotional—helping Jason and I out with our three beautiful daughters and providing a home for them when I was away, I would not have been able to do what I do. I really want to thank them. Of course, I thank my mum and dad. My mum often comes over and helps out with the kids and does the ironing. I have to say that so she continues to do it. I think she thought I did not need that for a while there.

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** No, you cannot. I say to everyone in this House, and particularly the new members doing their first speeches, that it is an emotional time and given the number of hours we all put into this job, we should give a shout out to all of our families. They do so much for us. They enable people like me to be all around my electorate. It is such a big electorate. I really want to thank my family. I have not actually rung my sister, Jackie, today, but she needs to have Elke this weekend. So if she could do that, that would be great.

I would also like to thank Kate, Lenny and Belinda who run my life for me in my electorate office. These girls are simply amazing. I really do want to do a shout out particularly to Kate Hay and her husband, Peter, to Lenny Hams and Belinda Purnell. These girls are simply amazing. I would not be able to do it without them.

To all of the people I have not mentioned, I certainly have not forgotten you. You have worked really hard for me. I am extremely honoured to have been re-elected to serve the people of the Nanango electorate. I intend to continue to fight to make sure agriculture stays on the agenda and that our regional area gets its fair share of funding. This electorate was left behind for so long. I was so proud over the last three years to get funding moving. I will take the jokes from the member for Glass House and the previous treasurer over the last three years who used to go on about how much funding we got, but we got it because it was desperately needed and we had been forgotten for a long

time. I am calling on the new government to not forget about us out there. I intend to continue to work hard and fight for a fair share for my electorate. I wish to continue to honour the commitments to my electorate of Nanango, a wonderful and vital area.

Thank you to all of those who have helped me.

**Mr Rickuss:** What about the Moore art festival, you did not mention it, I do not think?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I did not mention the Moore art festival. Thank you, member for Lockyer, for all of your great advice. The Moore art festival was only on a week or two ago. It was fabulous. We have some great artistic displays all the way through the Nanango electorate. We are on the tourist trail for small art shows. It is wonderful.