




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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MOTION OF CONFIDENCE

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (11.57 pm): It is a great honour to be elected to the 55th Parliament of Queensland. I acknowledge you, Mr Speaker, on your election as Speaker. It is a very proud moment for you. I congratulate all the new members. I heard some of the maiden speeches. They were very passionate. It is a special moment because there are only 89 members of parliament. A lot of people try to get here year in year out but you are one of them—congratulations. I can remember when I was first elected. I thought it was a dream.

This election saw the Newman government come crashing down from a massive majority of 78 seats to 42. The people of Queensland have spoken loudly and are telling politicians that, if you are arrogant and go against the will of the people and those who elected you, they will boot you out. This was evident in the 2012 election when the Beattie-Bligh government was reduced to seven seats because of years of a big majority, arrogance and asset sales. So determined were Queenslanders for a change that even the union movement campaigned against the Labor Party.

Sadly, the Newman government learnt nothing from the Beattie-Bligh era but advanced further with mass sackings, cutbacks, closures and legislation against opposition; declaring war on doctors, unions, public servants and motorbike riders; appointing their own government-friendly CMC; and smashing through electoral funding laws that were designed to boost the LNP's electoral chances—to name just a few. The Newman government will go down in history as probably the most arrogant government of all time. But it is sad that the LNP is still under an illusion and blames everyone else for losing government. I commend the member for South Brisbane, who acknowledged that the Labor Party deserved what they got in the 2012 election, but not the LNP—they are still frothing at the mouth. Rather than soul searching, they are still looking for revenge and blame.

Returning to the election, after it was clear that both parties could not govern in their own right, the member for Mount Isa and I were continually asked and scrutinised as to which political party we would side with, and we presented our 27 policies to both parties. I would like to stress that those policies were not just about lobbying for the needs in our electorate but were for the benefit of not only rural and regional Queensland but also Queensland. I want to talk about just a few of them.

One of our policies was to have an inquiry into the increase in electricity prices. Mr Speaker, if you cast your mind back to 2007, the Labor Party and the Liberal Party both agreed to privatise the retail arm of the energy sector. We were told that from that time electricity prices would decrease because of competition; they tripled. Only last year Peter Beattie came out and said that the greatest mistake he ever made was privatising the retail arm because he could not believe how greedy the corporates were. The LNP government went about doing exactly the same thing. They were out there looking to sell our energy, our poles and wires, and our power stations—the whole lot. I am very glad that the people of Queensland have spoken and booted them out because, as I said, they were one of the most arrogant governments of all time and the people of Queensland did not want asset sales

from the beginning. So one of our policies that we presented to the parties was to have an inquiry into the massive increase in electricity prices, because the last thing we want is pensioners having to negotiate with multinationals over their power bills.

Another of our policies was to mandate 10 per cent ethanol. We are buying \$22 billion in fuel from the Middle East. All we are saying is that Queenslanders should produce 10 per cent of that. That is not much to ask. We introduced a bill in the last parliament but it got thrown out of course. But that bill was the same as the LNP's bill that they had introduced the year before and the year before that. They tried to get it passed by the Labor Party but it was rejected and they accused the Labor Party. So we introduced the same bill when the LNP were in government and they rejected it as well. What we are talking about here is not only jobs for Queensland but also having clean air and clean fuel and likewise helping to reduce electricity prices.

Another of our policies was to upgrade the Gregory Development Road. The reason we included this is that after Cyclone Larry politicians flew in and promised an inland highway because the Bruce Highway was cut off for nearly two weeks. The upgrade of the Gregory Development Road was an opportunity for transport and tourists—everyone—to use that access route in times of mass flooding. Not only that; it would be good for relieving traffic congestion on the Bruce Highway. It would save spending money on the Bruce Highway but it would also provide an alternative access route which would breathe life into those country towns. This was one of the policies that we were negotiating. It would create jobs for rural Queensland and benefit rural areas, but when it floods or when there is a cyclone everyone would have another access route to use.

Another of our policies was to prioritise government tenders for locals—and I acknowledge and appreciate that the government is doing this. Previously we have had government tenders for roadworks—you name it—and Western Australian companies were awarded the tenders for that work in Charters Towers, and likewise on the Atherton Tablelands, when we had local contractors and machines laying idle. I commend the government for taking the decision to prioritise government tenders.

Another of our policies was to do with the railway line in the Galilee Basin. It is very simple. In the past we built our own railway lines and the mining companies used them. So they paid us royalties and likewise the transport haulage costs and that money would go back to the state. When we privatised Queensland Rail, \$1.7 billion a year in profit was going back to the state. If we build the railway line in the Galilee Basin, we will own it. We can then give other mining companies the opportunity to tap into and use that railway track. So we will get royalties but we will also get the rail transport haulage costs and that money will go back to the state. That would not only benefit us but also create jobs and open up the Galilee Basin.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr KNUTH: You wanted to give \$500 million to the Indian company; is that right? It is about jobs and money going back to the state. You can build your tunnels. You can build your Premier's precinct over there with that money. But at the same time you are creating about 27,000 jobs. These were some of the policies that we put up to both parties.

As the seats were declared for the 55th Parliament, it was clear that the Labor Party would govern with the support of the Independent member for Nicklin, the Speaker of the House. We, the KAP, were not forced to side with either party—and it must be made clear that our electorates voted for us as their representatives because of our party policies and our independence. We, first and foremost, represent the issues of those people who elected us. We are not Liberals. We are not Labor. We are a separate party but we are determined to stand up for those that both parties have rejected in the past. We are not here to side with the ALP or the LNP. We are not remotely interested in party politics.

We believe that it is too early to give a vote of confidence to the government at this stage as, like the member for Mount Isa said, there are many issues that need to be addressed, particularly in rural and regional Queensland. One is the fair milk mark to ensure that farmers are paid a fair price. Another is fair funding for rural and regional Queensland. Then there is security of land tenure; the upgrade of the inland highway, as I talked about; an inquiry into the massive increase in electricity prices; mandating ethanol; and a commitment and assurance that rural and regional Queensland do not become the forgotten ones.

But we are very committed to working with this government in this parliament, to working for the good of Queensland and for the good of our electorates. Yesterday I indicated on ABC Radio that I was optimistic for this term of parliament and that this state had needed this hung parliament. We needed the hung parliament to get back to basics. We needed to get back to having robust debate and not to having legislation that communities do not want rammed through the parliament,

particularly at the bidding of large corporate interests. This new parliament now provides the opportunity for two-minute speeches in prime time to raise issues that are important to the people in our electorates so they can see what we are doing—that we are out there fighting for them and not hidden away so they do not get the opportunity to see what is happening. That is what this new parliament is doing.

While I have indicated that it is too early to give a vote of confidence to the government at this stage, I would like to acknowledge the government's goodwill and gesture to work with us. I appreciate the fact that since the election two ministers have visited my electorate already to talk to constituents about issues that are important to them. Have you ever heard of such a thing?

What I want to say now is important and needs to be heard. In the previous government, there was only one genuine minister, John McVeigh, who visited my electorate over a three-year period—just one. All of those others who came to my electorate hurled abuse and even threatened my constituents with 'If you don't vote for the LNP, you'll get nothing.' That is the reason why they were booted out and that is why I am glad we have a hung parliament at this moment. I hope we have good governance because that is what I want to see.

I note that in his speech tonight the member for Hinchinbrook said that I should be concerned that Labor has not yet introduced vegetation laws and that this will hurt landowners. I can assure my constituents that if laws that do impact upon them are introduced we will be taking on the government and we will be fighting to protect landowners. I am also keen to work with this government to remove some of the member for Hinchinbrook's antirural amendments that removed a landowner's objection and notification rights to big mining developments and laws that give the Coordinator-General the supreme power over environmental objection rights to landowners, as well as restoring stockyards, dams and bores under the provision of restricted land.

Queenslanders have been belted around for too long. I believe that this hung parliament was what was needed to whoa and steady things up. I want to reiterate that we are not here to side with the ALP or the LNP, and my electorate put a vote of confidence in me because of that reason. Like we said, we believe it is too early to give a vote of confidence in this government at this stage. However, we are determined to work with this government as there are many issues that have been spelt out that need to be addressed in rural and regional Queensland. Mr Speaker, I inform the House that we will be abstaining from the vote on the motion of confidence.