




Speech By  
**Steve Minnikin**

**MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH**

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**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (4.52 pm): It is indeed a true honour to stand in the House and give my speech on the address-in-reply after being re-elected for a second term by the people of Chatsworth. With the parliamentary time delay of several months in making this speech on the address-in-reply compared to the opening address earlier this year, it has changed the context somewhat. Given that several former surrounding electorate colleagues from the 54th Parliament were not successful at the last election, I fully realise that it is indeed a privilege and not a right to serve in this hallowed chamber. I am truly indebted to the people of Chatsworth for giving me the opportunity of serving as their state member in this 55th Parliament.

As I did in my inaugural speech three years ago, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today, the Jagera and Turrbal peoples. I again reaffirm my allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and to her representative, His Excellency the Governor Paul de Jersey, the institution of parliament and the electors of Chatsworth who have entrusted me with another three years of electoral representation in this august chamber.

Politics is a tough and brutal business, but one needs to show respect for the institution of parliament and the voting result and wishes of the people. The old political adage 'oppositions do not win government; governments lose government' was no better illustrated than by the state election result earlier this year. Even though this speech on the address-in-reply has taken several months to get the call, despite the passage of time I still take this opportunity to once again thank the valuable contribution given by defeated and retiring members from the 54th Parliament and congratulate all returning and new members of this parliament. Although I now sit on the opposite side of the chamber in this 55th Parliament, I remain equally committed to doing what is best for the Chatsworth electorate, which I proudly serve. My passion to make the local community I represent a better place in which to live will be the focus of what drives me each and every day as a parliamentarian.

In preparing this speech on the address-in-reply, a logical starting point was to revisit my inaugural speech delivered a few years ago. The key theme which ran through my first speech was the notion of responsibility. I spoke of my responsibility to my seat of Chatsworth to uphold my core Liberal values, taking responsibility for one's own actions and risk, responsibility towards our children and future generations and to the first Australians. This key theme of responsibility will be used as a point of reference throughout this address-in-reply.

Like all members of parliament, I listened with keen interest to the Governor's opening speech on 25 March outlining the Palaszczuk government's agenda given that the Labor Party consistently stated in the election campaign that it would not sell assets, reduce services or increase taxes. Given that I have a business degree and a master's degree in property economics, I was very eager to discover what this magic fourth economic solution must be. The Governor's opening speech lasted 31 minutes, according to Hansard records, and it was undergraduate dross. This is not a reflection on

the Governor, as he merely reads what is prepared by the government of the day. I read with interest the section dealing with the debt action plan, focusing on paying \$12 billion worth of the state's \$46 billion general government debt over the next decade using the retention of revenue from government owned corporations.

With the state budget handed down a few months ago, we now know this was a hollow projection as this will not be achieved according to the government's own projections over the forward estimates. As for the section 'building our regions', what a joke. This growing state needs decent infrastructure. How is this need going to be funded? I look forward to the release of the government's forward infrastructure plan while maintaining an ongoing program of capital works estimated at \$9 billion a year. Again, show us the money, as the budget papers told us very little. Queensland is now an infrastructure-free zone. Compare and contrast development in this state with New South Wales.

As I have repeatedly stated in this House, there is nothing wrong with government debt as long as it is being applied to state building assets that have an economic utility across several generations of taxpayers, thereby avoiding unfair intergenerational debt. Amounts of \$1¼ billion towards the Health payroll system, \$2.6 billion for the Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme and \$1.2 billion for the Gold Coast desalination plant—projects which are costing Queenslanders \$150 million a year in interest repayments and \$33 million a year in care and maintenance costs alone—are the past failed Labor government's gifts that keep on giving. It is absurd and irresponsible.

As I have equally stated in the past, I do not believe in opposition that you merely disagree for the sake of it. If the government does something in the best interests of the people, it is churlish and irresponsible not to state that fact. Therefore, I applauded the government's intention to respond to the recommendations by the task force on domestic violence chaired by Dame Quentin Bryce, as outlined earlier in this year's opening address by the Governor. There have been several heartfelt speeches made in this chamber from both sides on the scourge of domestic violence. It is without doubt morally reprehensible, and both sides of politics and the general community need to work collectively on this area of public policy. It is a travesty and grossly irresponsible, however, that the Palaszczuk government's credentials on this important social issue have been sullied and tainted by virtue of the fact that they accept and court the support of the member for Cook, despite their faux indignation and outrage. We offered a pragmatic solution to overcome this issue, but again it was not supported by Labor.

Over the last few years, I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to meet many new people in both my capacity as the local member for Chatsworth and through my additional responsibility formerly as the assistant minister for public transport. Being able to make a real difference to someone's life or one of their family members through the actions of being a state member of parliament is the greatest satisfaction of the job. As I stated in my inaugural speech—

Our role and responsibility as a government is to provide an opportunity deposit slip for all Queenslanders and not an entitlement chequebook. It is our responsibility as the government to be an enabler of opportunity and not a provider of assumed entitlement.

I wish to place on record my sincere thanks and appreciation to the former premier, Campbell Newman, and his wife, Lisa, for the many years of public service they devoted to both City Hall and the pervious few years in state politics. I wish them both, along with their family, all the very best for the future.

Whilst I acknowledge the good work the previous LNP government did, I would like to take this opportunity to focus on the Chatsworth specific challenges that I encountered as the local member. I was proud to be instrumental in securing the Carindale park-and-ride—a must do on my list when first elected in 2012. For years, residents had been pleading for the unused Crown land to be turned into a park-and-ride. However, due to senseless ALP policy, this plea was never answered. Given that some of us come from the real commercial world and adhere to the notion of the time-quality-cost paradigm, the Carindale park-and-ride was opened in July that same year under budget and on time—a relief not only for commuters but also for households surrounding the Carindale bus interchange, as cars were no longer clogging the streets. Interestingly, patronage also increased significantly as a result of the Carindale park-and-ride construction, as it was now easier to park and catch buses from this busy transport hub.

It was one of my proudest achievements during my first term to be a part of the historic public transport fare decrease policy. The axing of the carbon tax meant a five per cent fare decrease for commuters.

**An honourable member:** For the first time ever.

**Mr MINNIKIN:** I take that interjection from the member. That meant on average a Chatsworth resident travelling from Carindale in my electorate into the CBD saved around \$100 per annum. That is more money in their pocket which means more of an incentive to hop on a bus instead of jumping in

the car. Obviously, the economic proposition around price elasticity of demand was beyond the comprehension of past Labor transport ministers, including the current Premier.

Even though I am a member of the opposition in this chamber, my action plan for Chatsworth still forms the basis of my vision for the next three years in office. Vision is not a word that figured prominently in the Governor's opening speech. In relation to our responsibility to the First Australians, it was an absolute privilege to be part of the previous LNP government that offered Indigenous Australians the ability to acquire freehold land title, with landmark legislation introduced into this chamber. Indeed, this landmark legislation was something I will look back upon with immense satisfaction once my time in this place is over. I was proud to be part of the LNP government who introduced it.

The action plan that I took to the people of Chatsworth at the last election consisted of five key issues that were and still are critical to everyone in my local area. Firstly, I mention storage accommodation in the sports hall for Belmont State School, one of two independent public schools in my electorate. I hope that the current government can move past the union's whims and keep this excellent initiative going for the sake of better education in Queensland. Secondly, despite missing out in the budget, I will continue to fight and lobby for new classroom buildings at Camp Hill State Infants and Primary School, which coincidentally is another independent public school. There is a chronic need to construct an outside school hours care building, as this program is at more than peak capacity as they have become victims of their own success.

Thirdly, I will continue to fight for a grant to upgrade the Rowland Cowan Basketball Stadium located within the Clem Jones Centre. The Spartans basketball team deserve a first-class facility to match the high-class basketball they play across the country in the SEABL league. Even though I secured \$90,000 for a changing room upgrade in our term of government, there is still much more to be done and I intend to try and do just that.

The second last item on my action plan regards cost-of-living relief with electricity price hikes. The ALP ran a campaign misleading Queenslanders over the leasing of assets, yet they initially planned at one stage to merge all three energy corporations which had been questioned at the time by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. We now know what they have done in the 2015-16 budget with their shifting of \$4 billion of government debt on to the balance sheets of state-owned businesses. Stay tuned on this genius piece of public policy!

Lastly, over the past three years, I have been working tirelessly with the Gumdale State School community to put the motions in place for their much talked about master plan to occur. As mentioned in my budget reply speech, I lobbied hard for funding to be committed to stage 1 to improve amenities for local students and teachers centred around creating much needed building canopy space by constructing a new sports oval on adjoining department of education land. I achieved this goal during my first term and I am pleased that funding has been provided for in the current 2015-16 budget. I am also pleased that tenders have now been called for this project and I intend to see it through to its conclusion.

As we all know, all politics is local so in relation to my electorate responsibilities of Chatsworth and as outlined in my recent budget reply speech, the traffic congestion along Old Cleveland Road will continue and residents will ruminate this fact as they now pay extra for their car registration. As I have previously advised the House, Old Cleveland Road is a major thoroughfare through many electorates—both LNP and ALP held—so it is time for the Labor government to come through with a solution. They failed in the recent budget so commuters can thank the ALP for delays in travel times for the foreseeable future. I note with interest the Brisbane City Council ALP candidates are now trying to neutralise this issue with a 'two bit' solution. It is my responsibility to continue with these issues on behalf of the Chatsworth community.

Other issues I intend to pursue during the 55th Parliament include Commonwealth-state relations, competitive federalism, and housing supply and affordability, especially for first home buyers. This ridiculous blame game between federal and state governments, especially in the key areas of health and education, is beyond a joke and urgent reform of our constitutional responsibilities is paramount. I will be following the white paper on this area with close interest.

There is one aspect of being a politician that unites all of us in this chamber, regardless of our ideological beliefs. None of us can aspire to high office without the help of our wonderful supporters. I wish to place on record my sincere thanks to several important people. Firstly, to the local LNP branch members, thank you for your dedication and professionalism during the state campaign earlier this year, with a particular call out to the magnificent young members of the Chatsworth flying squad who were out assisting every morning with roadsides, doorknocking or letterbox dropping. To Luke, Julia, Hayden, Katherine, Katrina, Tristan and Harrison, I give my sincerest thanks.

There were several days during the state campaign back in January when the mercury was rising and the weather was particularly hot and uncomfortable, but my dedicated support team continued to hit the pavements and letterbox drop targeted areas of the electorate. Although the campaign was fully funded and will be again in the future, money can never buy the human spirit. To the many supporters both from within the Liberal National Party and personal friends who assisted with the pre-poll in the weeks leading up to election day, I give my deepest thanks. I acknowledge Drewe, Kerri, Ken, Jan, Steven, George, Paula, Marion, Paul, Kev, Matt and many others. I also acknowledge the numerous supporters throughout the Chatsworth electorate who enabled me to erect sign sites along their front yards and fences. I love Australian democracy.

My mother, Denise, was exceptional in her support throughout the entire campaign and my love for her knows no bounds. The support received from my mother-in-law, Corina Mole, was also incredible throughout the campaign and I thank her from the bottom of my heart. As was the case several years ago when I first ran for preselection, my greatest support base is my immediate family. My two sons, Harrison and Lachlan, worked tirelessly around their school and sporting commitments to assist with my re-election. Whilst I was extremely proud and impressed with their work ethic and dedication during the campaign, nothing politically will ever surpass my pride in watching them grow into fine young men. As I mentioned in my inaugural speech, I would give up my life for them in a heartbeat.

I described my wife, Roslyn, in my inaugural speech as my 'rock of Gibraltar'. How do you summarise someone who means so much to you in a few sentences given my time remaining? Well, I will give it a go. Everything I have done politically could only have been done with the support and assistance of my wife of 22 years, Roz. I value her wisdom, encouragement, friendship, attention to infinitesimal detail, love and uncompromising belief in always striving to be your best. She did a phenomenal job throughout the campaign, and my eventual success on the day is due in no small part to her efforts. I thank her from the bottom of my heart.

Our ideological battles here in this hallowed chamber are an important part of the overall democratic process, but as the approximate 1,200 names on the honour board of past members of the Legislative Assembly attests, our time here is, relatively speaking, short lived as a proportion of our entire life's experiences. It is incumbent upon all of us, therefore, to use our privileged time here responsibly.

In closing, I dedicate my second address-in-reply speech to the memories of my father, Jeff Minnikin, and my father-in-law, Harry Mole. Sadly, both men passed away towards the end of last year. Both had a profound influence on me in many different ways. If I can be half the man that either of these two gentlemen were, I will leave this place very satisfied indeed.

I am honoured to be returned for a second term as the state member for Chatsworth and will continue at all times to be responsible for my deeds and actions in this wonderful place in which I absolutely adore serving. As Hal Colebatch stated, the high privilege of democracy cannot be maintained unless the equally exalted responsibilities attracting to it are understood and observed.