




Speech By  
**Tim Nicholls**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2016

### VALEDICTORY

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.47 am): As the 2016 parliamentary year draws to a close, and after a long session this week, I rise to reflect on what has been a busy year: a year of great promise, challenges and, at times, unthinkable tragedy across our state. In recent weeks we were left shocked by the tragedy at Dreamworld, as reflected on by the Premier, when four young lives were taken so suddenly. It hit home for all of us. As Queenslanders, we have all spent a day with loved ones at those parks. I have taken my kids to Dreamworld on many occasions, having bought them season passes. It could have been any one of us on that ride that tragic day.

In the same week we were sickened by the random and senseless attack on Brisbane bus driver Manmeet Allisher, a talented entertainer and a much loved member of his community. Amid the darkness of that horrific act, we were buoyed by the bravery and selflessness of taxidriver Aguek Nyok. Both the Premier and I met Mr Nyok at the service held at the Sikh temple in Inala. Originally from South Sudan, Aguek arrived in Australia as a refugee. He taught us all what it is to be a Queenslander when he put his own life at significant risk to save others that day. As Queenslanders so often do in these challenging times, we united together and when we do we are stronger for it.

We have seen upheavals in the political world. In the United States of America and in the United Kingdom we have seen the most obvious of those upheavals, but they ripple throughout the rest of the world. France and many other countries are also experiencing those sorts of changes, be they on the left or the right.

However, we can also reflect on brighter times throughout the year, such as our mighty Maroons notching their second series win in a row, slowly climbing their way back to one day, hopefully, surpassing their previous record of eight in a row. Also notching up two consecutive wins were the Queensland Firebirds, who are stronger than ever, taking out the 2017 ANZ Championship.

For the LNP 2017 has been a year of significant progress and growth and we, too, are stronger than ever. In saying that, I would also like to acknowledge past leaders. We would not be in this position if it were not for the hard work of Lawrence Springborg and John-Paul Langbroek, who showed leadership at a time when our party could easily have been destabilised. Instead, they galvanised our members and helped us move forward as a dynamic and cohesive team that is energised for the future and regularly holds this government to account.

One of the achievements of our team during the year was shown in the united effort with respect to vegetation management. That effort was on full display when we successfully defeated Labor's unfair vegetation management laws just a few months ago—laws that would have made farmers criminals on their own land and driven up prices for new home buyers, laws that would have hindered, not helped, our rural families who provide the food and fibre we rely on, all to appease a certain inner-city Brisbane Greens vote. I am proud that we stood beside our farmers and graziers every step of the way and we will continue to do so into the future.

We are also joined by a new member in this place: David Janetzki, the member for Toowoomba South, who in difficult conditions achieved terrific results in this year's by-election and is serving the region well as an energetic and tireless local member. I am sure that he will continue to do so.

We are hard at work developing and delivering policies that will show Queenslanders that our experienced and enthusiastic team has the credentials to get this state moving again. In the last few months we have hit the ground running, with major policy announcements including our Get Queensland Working jobs package, which will help create 20,000 jobs for young Queenslanders. We have spoken about reintroducing our successful Royalties for Regions. When we speak to regional Queenslanders their chief concern is a hunger for jobs. That is why we have committed to restoring and refining our signature \$495 million Royalties for Regions program: to help unlock the economic potential of regional Queensland, create more jobs and improve our communities. This will build on our 2012-15 program, which invested in 147 regional community infrastructure, road and flood projects with a combined value of more than \$790 million.

We have spoken about taking the scourge of the drug ice off our streets. We have announced a five-point action plan to help take that drug off our streets, including a \$1 million Dob in a Dealer reporting program. We have announced that the LNP will commit to a landmark container deposit scheme as the next step in protecting our environment. Our CDS will give consumers, businesses and charities a 10-cent refund for aluminium, glass and plastic drink containers returned for recycling. For too long Queensland has lagged behind other states. For too long this government failed to take action on this important environmental reform.

One of the proudest moments not only for the LNP but also I think for this parliament was when we provided justice for survivors of child sexual abuse. The LNP was the first to act to lift the statute of limitations on child sexual abuse claims to empower victims to seek justice in their own time. Under previous laws, victims had only three years from their 18th birthday to lodge claims for compensation. Our policy, which has been adopted in this place, saw that limit lifted in recognition of the time it can take for Queenslanders to deal with that trauma. That was not enough for us. We pushed to have those laws apply not just to survivors of institutional abuse but to all child sexual abuse survivors, because everyone deserves their day in court. We were also successful in pushing the laws to include survivors who have been pressured into accepting a settlement in the past because of previous time limitations. By removing past deeds, all survivors will be able to apply to a court to review and to potentially revisit those settlements. That is an Australian first that we can justly be proud of.

We were proud to move the motion that led to the creation of the inquiry by this House into black lung disease—an inquiry pushed by the LNP by a resolution in this House and now uncovering reams and reams of maladministration over many years that does no government of the past, of any political persuasion, proud but will provide justice and information for those who suffer coal workers' pneumoconiosis.

We have announced our Wi-Fi tourism policy. We live in the greatest state in the greatest country in the world, but we need to do more to spread the word. That is why we have committed to funding 500 Wi-Fi hotspots in key tourism destinations, so that our international tourists and visitors can tell the rest of the world what we already know—that is, you would not want to be in any other part of the world and it is a great place to come. We will commit \$3 million over three years to allow tourists to share their Queensland holiday with their friends across the globe and we will work with councils to introduce that program.

From tourism to the environment, an LNP government will commit to a ban on single-use plastic bags across the state. These single-use supermarket bags have an average life span of just 12 minutes but can take more than a thousand years to fully decompose. By phasing out single-use bags from our local supermarkets across our first term of government, we will be making an important investment in our future. This is a simple lifestyle change that will cut public waste, reduce landfill and provide a safer environment for our wildlife and families. Unlike others who sat around waiting for two years to do something, we saw the gap and decided to take action. Those actions have been supported by a number of community organisations and environmental organisations.

We spoke about tourism. We spoke about what makes Queensland great and why people visit here. Nothing is more iconic in Queensland than the Great Barrier Reef. In Cairns recently we were proud to reaffirm our commitment to the future of the Great Barrier Reef, building on the investment of \$35 million a year that the LNP put into the Great Barrier Reef while in government. That is why a future LNP government will commit \$300,000 to the Citizens of the Reef program—an initiative run by science and conservation leaders from across the globe that will raise much needed awareness. Our investment is on top of the \$1.3 million contribution made by the federal government. Instead of talking the reef down, we are about talking the reef up so that our tourism operators can invest more and employ more, supporting more than 67,000 jobs and delivering \$6 billion a year to our economy.

The regions are vital to Queensland. Deb and I have spent a lot of our time travelling the state, meeting families, business owners and operators and everyday Queenslanders. As we have moved around and listened to people in our cities, towns and regions, the message we have heard loud and clear is that Queenslanders feel they are being left behind. They are concerned that the economy is grinding to a halt and they do not believe that the current government has a plan for growing the economy or delivering the jobs Queenslanders need. They are unsure of what the future holds and they want a team that has a plan for the future, that is committed to getting Queensland moving again.

I will not run through the litany of mistakes made by Labor over the past 12 months or so, but those out there in the regions know it—whether it is a rising youth unemployment rate, topping 27 per cent in Cairns, where youth unemployment continues to drive a higher crime rate; whether it is the failures of the justice system under this government which are creating a revolving door in relation to youth crime, where offenders are hauled before the courts and released only to embark on further crime sprees days later; whether it is opening the doors to criminal gangs again by watering down the LNP's tough laws. There are those in Queensland who are living these experiences day by day, and it would not be appropriate to conclude the year without making reference to what they feel, what they are experiencing in the regions and what their concerns are. These are the experiences lived by people and these are the experiences that we are listening to and we are hearing that will help us formulate our policies in 2017.

We cannot do it alone. There are many people behind the scenes. Here in this place, despite our successes, despite holding this government to account as a strong and effective and accountable opposition should—including the amendments that were made tonight by the member for Glass House, the shadow transport minister, in relation to the Heavy Vehicle National Law—there are many others we must thank.

Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the significant role you play in the day-to-day business of this House, in ensuring that we can have a full and, as always described, robust debate on important subjects while maintaining the democratic processes that we so often take for granted. This is not a simple task, but I extend my thanks and those of the LNP to you, the Deputy Speaker and the temporary Speakers who contribute to the smooth running of the House and the damage to our eardrums.

To the Clerk of the Parliament, Neil Laurie: I thank you for your dedication, your advice and your continual assistance to all members of the House. I would also like to acknowledge the work of Deputy Clerk, Michael Ries; First Clerk Assistant, Leanne Clare; and the Director of Corporate and House Services, Michael Hickey, for the assistance they provide to ensure parliament can run smoothly and effectively.

Thanks to our Manager of Information Services, Mike Coburn, and our hardworking catering team, led by Simon Neale, who ensure we are well fed for long nights in the House. I join with the Premier in saying that the standard and the quality of food has changed remarkably in recent months and, I must say, in my judgement and in the judgement of colleagues, for the better. I thank the catering staff for their hard work, for their long nights and for their patience and perseverance. I also acknowledge new facilities manager, Stewart Johnson, who now oversees the refurbished level 7. It is a terrific new entertaining area and I am sure no-one will be terribly sad to see the end of the old Sebel tables and chairs on those levels. I look forward to seeing many events occur in those areas.

Thank you to the Sergeant-at-Arms, Michael Watkin, and all the security staff, who make sure that everyone who works here can do so safely and return to their families at the end of the day or at the week's end. A warm thanks to the Chief Hansard Reporter, Lucinda Osmond, and all of her hard workers, who do a tremendous job. I have never found them to misquote me at all, let me say, Mr Speaker. At times the House can move very quickly, but it would appear that Lucinda and her team never miss a beat. I also wish to acknowledge the work of committee staff and the secretariats. Our committees work hard to provide thoughtful advice on the merits of policies before the House. Whilst we do not always agree in those committees, we value their contribution and thank them for their care, diligence and patience.

I must also give my sincere thanks to all the hardworking electorate staff, especially my own electorate staff, Sam and Jan. Your tireless efforts keep our offices moving, even when we cannot physically be there, and ensure that our local constituents and communities can be well served and have their needs taken care of. It is no easy task and we could not do it without you. Thank you to the opposition staff in my office for the many hours of hard work you put in behind the scenes. You know who you are and how much faith our team has in you.

To my deputy, Deb Frecklington: thank you for your enthusiasm and wholehearted support and for all the hours of driving and travelling you do from your electorate of Nanango. It is not easy to live three hours from the city of Brisbane and carry on the role that you do. After we finish up at the end of

a hard week you then have to drive three hours home at two, three or six o'clock in the morning to meet constituent engagements the next day and then come back again. I know how much time Deb spends away from Jason and her three lovely girls, Isabella, Lucy and Elke, so to you, Deb, I say a particular thanks.

To all my shadow ministers: thank you for your tireless efforts this year and your dedication to your portfolios. I see firsthand the effort that those shadow ministers put in, and I am proud to be leading such a dynamic and determined team.

To my entire LNP parliamentary team: I thank each and every one of you for your support this year. We should all be proud of what we have achieved so far. I know that we will continue to build on this momentum in 2017 and I am excited for the year ahead.

To the Clayfield SEC and our SECs and branches across the state and in particular in my area, Mark Passfield and Mary Caroline van Paasen, and to all our 14,000 LNP members: the broad branches of all levels of community and society make up the LNP, and that is what makes our party so great. I thank you for your enthusiasm and support throughout the year. We have a lot to look forward to.

I want to acknowledge at the end of this year the Governor, the Hon. Paul de Jersey, and his wife, Kaye, for their invaluable contribution to Queensland community and Queensland life. The care and pride they take in fulfilling this important role should be an example to all in public life.

Finally, to my long-suffering and still dedicated and talking to me wife, Mary, and our children, Jeremy, Duncan and Kate: you are and always will be my proudest achievement. I thank you for your unwavering support and love. Jeremy has finished school this year and his younger brother will follow later next year, with Kate not far behind. When I started in this business some 16 years ago I could carry Jeremy from my elbow to my hand. He is now four inches taller than me and is embarking on a career at university—I hope, if the marks are good enough, otherwise somewhere else. He will have to go out and earn it. It shows how quickly time flies in this place, how much time we spend in this place and the sacrifice that we and our families—on both sides of the House—make in not having fathers and mothers around. It is truly to our partners, to our friends and to our families that we owe a debt of gratitude.

Let me take this opportunity to thank members from all sides of parliament for their contribution this year. I want to particularly acknowledge the Premier, the Deputy Premier and their team and members of the crossbenches and other parties. Although we may not always agree—we may rarely agree—we are united in our passion for this great state. I think all of us come to this place with a desire to deliver a better outcome. In doing so, not only do I acknowledge the support of my family but I also acknowledge the support that all of us as MPs receive from our friends, our partners and our families.

The media are an essential part of our processes here in Queensland. It is never going to be an easy relationship, but it is always going to be a necessary relationship, a necessary part of our democracy. Whilst we may always wonder where that photo came from or where that grab was made, there is no doubt that we are stronger for having a robust media that questions us and, if you like, puts us to the test. Can I give special sympathy to those members of the media who are assigned to the night shifts. Believe me, we know how you all feel. You are part of this parliament late into the night and into the early hours, and we thank you for your dedication to your craft and your cause.

I want to wish everyone a merry and festive Christmas period. I hope that all can spend time surrounded by loved ones and enjoy a well-earned break over the Christmas period so that we can return refreshed and revitalised for what is sure to be a huge year in 2017.

Finally, on behalf of the opposition I wish all Queenslanders a safe and very happy Christmas and new year. There is nothing quite like a Queensland Christmas: swimming in the pool or the surf, playing backyard cricket and enjoying a barbie with family and friends. In many respects we are lucky to enjoy those privileges, so I would also like to acknowledge those Queenslanders who are not as fortunate, who do not anticipate such happy times and for whom our simple pleasures are things to be fondly sought after. Our thoughts and prayers are with you over the Christmas break and we hope that there will be greater joys ahead for you in 2017.

Mr Speaker, it is well past time that we finished in this place. Let us conclude our business promptly and take some time to enjoy some of your Christmas hospitality. Merry Christmas to all!