




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Forte, Mr B; London, Incident; Western Queensland

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.33 am): In the past few weeks, I have again been lucky enough to travel to western and southern parts of the state to address businesspeople and community leaders, and to meet, listen to and talk with everyday Queenslanders. As always when I travel to regional Queensland, I was struck by the enterprising spirit of locals who make a go of things despite the challenges posed by weather, long distances and, quite frankly, an unsympathetic and unlistening Labor government. On 30 May, I was at the Barcaldine town hall for the annual Western Queensland Local Government Association Conference, which I have attended previously. Before I go into detail, I convey to the House that it was while I was in Barcaldine that I learnt of the tragic loss of Queensland police officer Senior Constable Brett Forte.

As I mentioned in this place earlier today, no amount of words can express the depth of our sympathy to Brett's loving family, his wife, Susie, and their children, Emma, Brodie and Sam. Brett's courage in the face of extreme adversity is testament to his character and the officer he was. He was a third generation policeman and Susie, his wife, is also a police officer. Today and, indeed, at all times we stand with all police who put themselves in harm's way every day of the week to keep Queenslanders safe.

Whilst we have spoken about Senior Constable Forte, we should not forget his partner, Senior Constable Cath Nielsen, who had the fortitude and the experience to be able to fire back at the assailant and probably saved many lives, according to the officers I spoke with at the memorial service held in Toowoomba. We thank Senior Constable Cath Nielsen for her bravery in saving other lives.

Once again, to Susie and the children, as well as to Brett's other family members and many friends and colleagues, I say: our heartfelt thoughts are with you. On a chilly Toowoomba day I was indeed humbled to stand amongst you all to listen to the most moving of tributes as Brett was farewelled with letters from his parents, stories from his brothers and, most touchingly of all, a eulogy from Susie and their daughter, Emma. It was a dignified and fitting farewell for Brett and a recognition of his service, dedication and belief in the Police Service. The LNP does stand for strong and safe communities. We thank and honour the police family for the way that they have wrapped their arms around the Fortes.

Within days of that tragedy, Queenslanders awoke to more horror with the news of the London terror attacks on 3 June, when terrorists went on a rampage on London Bridge and in Borough Market. Eight people were murdered. Two of them were Australians Kirsty Boden and Brisbane's 21-year-old Sara Zelenak. Among the 48 injured was Brisbane's Candice Hedge. Again I pass my deepest condolences and those of the LNP to the victims and their families and to the people of the great City of London.

Many Australians have crossed London Bridge. It was not that long ago that I did it with my 14-year-old daughter, Kate. I am sure that many in this place have made a similar journey and know only too well the areas that we have read about with horror in recent weeks. Again, we find ourselves having to make statements that we wish we did not have to make, but we stand resolutely with the people of Great Britain. We will not be bowed by evil or, ultimately, the cowardice and weakness of those who perpetrate these disgraceful acts on humanity. There is no room to accept that type of violent behaviour anywhere.

Let me carry on on a brighter note. In Barcaldine, it was a privilege to deliver a keynote address to a packed audience that included the vast western region's 12 mayors, who are the backbone of local government in this state. My appreciation of the work and the challenges that western local governments face and my respect for the job that they do was brought home to me in my previous role as treasurer, and even more so now as leader of the LNP. That is because since Deb, the member for Nanango, and I were elected to the leadership 12 months ago we have spent an enormous amount of time travelling the regions. That has given us a great appreciation of just how wide, beautiful and, at times, confronting our state is, from Tropical Cyclone Debbie ravaged North Queensland to the drought and dog problems of Western Queensland. In Barcaldine, together with the member for Gregory, Lachlan Millar, I took the opportunity to explain how the LNP's five key priorities are going to help build a better Queensland and, of course, that means building a better Western Queensland.

A Nicholls LNP government will create jobs across Queensland and responsibly manage the state's finances, and the people know we can do that. They know that we will build stronger families by supporting family values and the frontier spirit that we saw in Western Queensland which makes Queensland the place that we all hold dear. We will build the roads, bridges and dams that we need, and we do need the dams to boost agricultural production and provide water security. We will provide safe and livable communities across Queensland and rebalance the scales of justice in favour of community safety. Most importantly, we will deliver better government—not more government—by getting out of the way of businesses, farmers and property owners in regional Queensland and letting enterprise do what it does best.

Our commitment to regional Queensland is unshakeable. Our party has a heritage and tradition that was born in regional Queensland, and we remain committed to it. We know that from time to time we need to renew our commitment, especially in the face of difficult challenges, and that is why we have announced a New Deal for regional Queensland. I am firmly of the belief, as are many people in regional Queensland, that the LNP is the only party that will implement the policies and solutions which are tailored to regional Queensland for regional Queenslanders. Regional members of my team such as Lachlan Millar, the member for Gregory, have been working alongside their federal counterparts to put together our New Deal for regional Queensland. Under our New Deal, the state LNP will work with our counterparts in Canberra to support a new economically viable ultracritical coal-fired power station in North Queensland. We will implement a refreshed 10-year action plan to improve the Bruce Highway. We will build new infrastructure, including dams, to provide water security and job-creating agricultural projects. We will introduce tough new measures to tackle the regional crime and ice crisis and crack down on the bikies.

Mrs Lauga: Put them in boot camps.

Mr NICHOLLS: I hear the member for Keppel. Wasn't it the member for Keppel who, whilst in Melbourne, posted on Facebook 'Can someone tell me where I should go for dinner?'

Mrs Frecklington: Whoops!

Mr NICHOLLS: Whoops. Was there much regional produce down there? More importantly, did anyone come to her aid? Chalking up frequent flyer points and supporting Queensland tourism in Melbourne: that is what she was doing. The member for Keppel should listen to this.

We will implement a \$100 million youth jobs package to boost employment and assist small business. We will oppose the headlong rush of Labor's irresponsible 50 per cent renewable energy policy, which will only drive up the cost of power and lead to a less reliable system. We will provide ongoing support for our resources industry, particularly coal jobs, throughout Queensland. You will not find any of the vacillation that we saw for two weeks from those on that side as they decided whether they would support it or oppose it. We will ensure that fair vegetation management laws are in place. We know what Labor want to do to people in regional Queensland: they want to take away their rights to manage their own properties in the best way possible to satisfy the needs of the crazy green ideologues of the inner cities of Sydney and Melbourne. We will continue to be the only party that fights for canegrowers to get a solution and farmers for workable policy solutions. We will protect and enhance the Great Barrier Reef—we started it and we invested \$35 million in it—and we will implement a comprehensive ice strategy to reduce drug abuse.

After Barcaldine I went to Toowoomba to speak to the Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise group. TSBE has been a tremendous operation for advancing the prospects of that region and the LNP has consistently supported it. We will continue to work with TSBE to develop the region and see activities go ahead. In that sense, one can only acknowledge the great investment which has been made by the Wagner family in the Brisbane West Wellcamp Airport. We fought to build the infrastructure that Toowoomba needs, including the \$50 million ring-road project, the Highfields school, the Warrego Highway upgrades and more than \$50 million for the Toowoomba Range Railway and the Toowoomba Second Range Crossing. Only the LNP will deliver for regional Queensland.

(Time expired)