


Speech By
David Crisafulli

MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Record of Proceedings, 22 March 2018

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr CRISAFULLI** (Broadwater—LNP) (12.42 pm): I thank His Excellency the Governor for the speech he gave to parliament. Mr Speaker, I congratulate you on your election to this high office. I know it is never right to refer to somebody's absence in the chamber, but I can reflect on your presence in the chamber. The fact that you have come back before lunch means a great deal to me. Your friendship and your decency has meant a lot to me over the years.

In my first speech to this place I spoke about the journey of my broader migrant family to the cane fields of Ingham and the values that drive me. While my home is now 1,500 kilometres away on the beautiful northern Gold Coast, those same country traits guide me today. Six years ago I told this House of my career in the media and the essential role it plays in holding government to account. While we do not always like what is penned, it remains a better outcome than the gagging of the Fourth Estate we have seen throughout the globe.

I also spoke about my admiration for those people who fill the now 77 council chambers across the state. Just as in state and federal parliaments, a small number of bad apples can sometimes occupy positions of power. I do not want to see a return to the day when local government loses its decision-making power and becomes a delivery agent for state driven centralist policy because of the actions of a few.

While I left parliament with these values intact, I also left with a valuable lesson. I was a young man in a hurry and at times took for granted the position and the people who had given me a once-in-a-generation opportunity. I did not see my result coming and a high proportion of preferences running against me meant winning on primary votes counted for nothing. Back then, as I do now, I felt a sense of gratitude rather than anger towards the people of Townsville. They took a chance on me as a young councillor, deputy mayor and state member of parliament. While I have found home on the Gold Coast, I will never forget the north. I hope during my second chance in this place I might be able to do something for a very special part of our state that has done so much for my family.

I said in my maiden speech that prior to my involvement in politics I was not a political tragic. I had never immersed myself in student politics at university. I lived what I described as a pretty normal life. So it was in the last few years I decided to build a business instead of providing running political commentary. What started as an idea to provide advice and strategy to one business looking to submit a document to government instead of the traditional model of lobbying turned into several more clients. Within two months I had taken an office in the south-east and began servicing clients from Cairns to Adelaide. In the end it was the woman who had consoled me during the dark days after my election loss who decided it was in the interests of the family to move. With fond memories of our holidays in years gone by on the Gold Coast and a desire to pursue her own career, it was Tegan who sold our family home, found our new place to live and packed and unpacked our worldly possessions to start afresh. She is watching today from work. Hello!

During the past few years I have learnt what it takes to run a business. In that time I have worked for more than two dozen different clients from multinational giants, Australian institutions and mum-and-dad businesses in the property, planning and engineering sectors. All the while I did what I always vowed I would and that was to be a businessman and not a disgruntled political commentator. I did not raise so much as a squeak when those in this House referred to my loss or indeed speculation I would run again; it was not my place. What I will do is set the record straight on an allegation that I somehow cut and run from a company I was involved in that was placed into liquidation after I left the business.

The company that was referred to in this House was a registered training organisation, SET Solutions, with interests in Queensland and Melbourne. I entered the organisation on the promise of a deal to inject capital into the business. When this did not eventuate, rather than cut and run I worked to bring in new revenue, streamline costs and worked to sign a new deal to bring about new ownership. In my four months with the business we returned a profit each and every month.

Once the new ownership was signed I made a commitment with our major suppliers to meet their current accounts and to pay their outstanding debts that predated my time in the business. While I was a director of that company, that commitment to those creditors was met bar one: myself. I forewent all of the money that had been agreed and I was entitled to for the work I undertook to ensure that my word was honoured. Promises made must be kept.

There has been justifiable scrutiny of the RTO sector in Victoria, but I left the business without a single mark of wrongdoing against my conduct or actions. More than two years on, I have never received one cent of the money I was promised. Like many people in small business, I left with the knowledge of what it is like to have a creditor go down owing you significant money and the need to balance your own books when this occurs.

While the past three years has seen me travel and work in almost every state across the country, it has also meant I have been home far more than at any time in my working life. It has enabled me to be a better dad to two fantastic little girls and a better husband to a wife of 16 years. It has also allowed me to become embedded in my new local community. I have volunteered for numerous sporting and community events. I became the first corporate member of the Hope Island Rotary Club and have helped Tegan turn our home into a small collection point for a food and distribution charity called Newlife Street Care for locals in need.

Broadwater is a wonderful community in which to live. From the bustling village that is Paradise Point to growing schools in Coombabah and Biggera Waters, a marine precinct in Hollywell, the largest shopping centre and major employer at Runaway Bay and some spectacular canal estates in Helensvale and Hope Island, we are proud to call this home. The presence of the largely unpopulated but truly majestic southern Moreton Bay islands completes a great part of our state.

I am pleased with the result we secured as a team. I know that without the welcome we have received in the area my result would not have been possible. To my branch chairmen, Sam and Gary; campaign committee John, Tegan, Trent, Joe, Kylie, Fran, Bernard and Roger; and my great mates and supporters Brett and Pat, thanks for all you did. To Alec, who becomes the first staff member working in the electorate office, thanks for your faith in me.

There is much I would like to achieve in the local area now and into the future. At the top of the list is a broadwater that we can be proud of where regular dredging, upgraded facilities, better enforcement and better laws regarding the permanent vessels that are having an impact on our environment are things that we can work towards as a parliament. There is unlikely to be a single member on the Gold Coast who will not mention in this address-in-reply the need to fix the M1. It is choking the potential of a city with a bright future, and upgrades to it and an alternate corridor must both be pursued.

Locally, I will work to find ways to ensure that the duplication of the Jabiru Island bridge happens during my time in this place, even if it means dealing with the Minister for Transport and Main Roads. Law and order must remain a focus on the coast. Whilst my area prides itself on being a safe and great place to raise a family, we are seeing what can happen when quotas at the Runaway Bay Police Station are not met. I will work to ensure this does not happen in the future and that adequate staffing levels are provided across my electorate.

Both the Coombabah and Biggera Waters schools have seen a resurgence in numbers in recent times on the back of two dynamic principals and their teams. The facilities at these schools are not a fitting environment for our kids to be learning in. Whilst a campaign that I have assisted in has resulted in an unsafe demountable being removed from Coombabah primary, our challenge now is to work to

get these old buildings not only removed but replaced. It is a challenge that I know the member for Bonney will be engaging in at nearby Coombabah State High School, which is geographically located in his area but serves families from our respective electorates. I could not be more pleased to have Sam as my neighbour and I cannot think of anyone better.

Whilst it is acknowledged that a bad day in government is still a greater honour than a good day in opposition, I am pleased to have been asked to serve on the LNP's front bench. I wish to thank the member for Nanango not just for this opportunity but for the privilege of what I see as the smart pairing of tourism and environment related responsibilities. I have already been able to generate some interest in what I see as the sensible idea of opening up our national parks to tourism opportunities.

I aim to be part of an opposition that holds the government to account but also puts forward support in areas that are of interest to all Queenslanders. Low-impact tourism in national parks is a win for the economy, but it can also improve the environment by ensuring the funding and surveillance needed to have them at their best. This House should also spend considerable time debating the new economy that will drive Queensland into the future. As shadow science minister, I hope that I can highlight those individuals and institutions we should consider backing.

There is no doubt that our community is yearning for leadership. While we can all seek to portray the last election in whatever light we choose, the numbers show a community disengaged with politics across-the-board. It is up to us in this chamber to change that by debating issues, not individuals; by listening and undertaking reform with purpose; and by talking about the things they discuss over the breakfast bar rather than those that fill social media. That means coming up with solutions for the things we control instead of political pointscoring. In the first sitting of parliament the government chose to attack the federal coalition on nearly 70 occasions during question time and ministerial statements. The word 'vision' was not used once.

I do not know how long I will be in this place. I do not know whether I will leave at a time of my choosing or whether I will again wake to the pain that I felt on 1 February 2015, but I do know a few certainties. This time there will be no need for the rush I was in in 2012. This time I will pour my energy into being the fiercest of competitors in this place, but I will remember that the eyes looking back at me are still fathers, sisters and grandparents of someone. This time I will ensure that I tell those who mean everything to me how they made me feel when I needed them the most. This time I will be the man those migrant farmers before me would truly be proud of.