




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 15 November 2018

ADJOURNMENT

Valedictory

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.44 pm): We are approaching the end of another memorable year in Queensland. We have witnessed wonderful events and we have been confronted by terrible tragedies too. It is a fact that sadness and happiness mark all of our lives. They were certainly the emotions that I felt at the start of 2018 at the funeral of Lady Florence Bjelke-Petersen. Lady Flo was an amazing and inspirational woman, and the response to her passing was a testament to the love and respect Queenslanders felt for her. Thousands attended her funeral in Kingaroy. It was heartwarming to see the then prime minister, then deputy prime minister and Premier pay tribute to Lady Flo's remarkable legacy. She was a rock of my community, and I will always be grateful for Lady Flo's support and guidance that she showed me.

In 2018 we also lost another outstanding political figure in Terry Mackenroth. He was a giant of the Queensland Labor Party. He served in this parliament for 28 years. Many of our present members were not even born when he was first elected. I know he was much loved by the Premier and others in the Labor Party, and he was a fine servant of this state.

Lady Flo and Terry Mackenroth had very different politics but they were both quintessential Queenslanders. The people of this state are a special breed, and we saw that time and time again this year. There is nowhere like our beautiful state, but Queensland and its weather can be cruel at times. In February and March, we saw severe flooding across regional communities in the Far North. I was grateful to the Mayor of Hinchinbrook, Ramon Jayo, for showing me around his community, including where the crocs had just wandered through his backyard. As always, I was amazed by the resilience and humour shown by North Queenslanders.

Wild weather struck again in our state in October when a supercell—or, in actual fact, two supercells—tore through my own electorate of Nanango. The supercell struck just 10 months after the South Burnett was battered by a savage storm on Boxing Day last year. Miraculously, no lives were lost during either storm. We will never forget the bravery of young Fiona Simpson and her grandma who both suffered appalling injuries from hailstones as Fiona sheltered her four-month-old baby. We will not forget the Kumbia State School kids who sheltered under the tables and protected each other from not only hail but flying glass. In Kumbia I was joined by the federal agriculture minister to survey the devastation caused at the fruit farms. Their crops were destroyed but the spirit of those farmers was not broken. You have to be tough to work on the land in Queensland.

In August, Australia finally woke up to the fact that there was a drought going on in Queensland. This crisis was not news to me or the colleagues of the Liberal National Party, but it was news to most Australians, including many here in South-East Queensland, but their response was remarkable. Millions of dollars poured in to help rural families. The drought has been dreadful for farmers, but it has united Queenslanders everywhere with their willingness to help.

That same spirit was shown again in September when Queenslanders came together to support our strawberry farmers. More than 14,000 strawberry sundaes were served in King George Square to raise funds for farmers—thanks in part to the efforts of my deputy, Tim Mander, the member for Everton. He was overwhelmed by the public response that day, as was I.

The support shown for farmers throughout 2018 proves that Queenslanders everywhere back the bush. They know our land is special and they respect those who grow the food we feed our families. Sadly, farmers have been stretched this year. Their passionate opposition to legislation has been dismissed out of hand, but I promise our farmers and the regional producers of this great state that I will continue to fight for them and they will always have a voice in parliament with the LNP.

I was proud to represent the LNP and regional Queenslanders with the Premier at a much happier occasion in April at the opening of the new Waltzing Matilda Centre in Winton. I was in Winton on the very day that the old centre burnt down in 2015, so I was really pleased to be back in Winton to join the thousands of others in—

An honourable member interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: No, I did not help burn it down. I did not want to take that interjection, but I thought I should. The new centre is fabulous, as the Premier and I got to experience. It is a fabulous new centre. I was thrilled to join the thousands of others from all over Australia who were celebrating the history of the outback and its most iconic song.

Queenslanders came together in a host of other ways, too, this year. The Gold Coast hosted the Commonwealth Games, which made us all proud. Of course, both the LNP government and the Labor government worked hard to deliver the world-class infrastructure that made the games possible. We welcomed athletes and visitors from 71 nations, but it was our athletes who stole the show. The Aussies won 83 gold and provided unforgettable sporting moments for spectators on the Gold Coast and for millions watching TV around the world.

The special guests at the games, of course, were Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall. They were greeted warmly across Queensland, although they could not match the media frenzy that greeted Prince Harry and the Duchess of Sussex on a visit to Fraser Island. Whilst they are a glamorous couple, it is their work for others that impresses me most, like most Queenslanders. Of course, Prince Harry founded the Invictus Games, which has done so much to honour and empower military veterans who have been wounded, both physically and psychologically. As we mark the 100th anniversary of the 1918 armistice, I recognise the sacrifice and the service of the men and women who have helped defend our nation and its values.

I also want to recognise Queensland's emergency services, who quietly protect Queenslanders each and every day. Our police, our fireys, our ambos and our SES volunteers are all prepared to put themselves in harm's way to protect others. That is the most notable public service of all. The danger they face was brought home in September when a young police officer, Peter McAulay, was run down while trying to stop a stolen vehicle at Booval. Peter, who is only 24, suffered horrific injuries and his life was hanging by a thread when he was admitted to the PA Hospital. Thankfully, after receiving outstanding medical care, Peter pulled through. His bravery and strength are an example to us all.

Just days ago, we saw Victorian police officers show the same courage when they confronted terror on the streets of Melbourne. Like Peter, they did not hesitate to perform their duty. Australians will never bow to terrorism. Extremism and violence have no place in our society and all political parties in Australia stand as one against such despicable acts.

Politicians disagree much of the time—probably most of the time—in this chamber. However, the din of political debate does not mean we are always divided. Both sides share fundamental values which enable us to come together for the public good. One example of this bipartisan support was for the national redress scheme for the victims of institutional child sexual abuse. Nothing can ever repair the damage that has been done to so many young people or to compensate them for the trauma they have suffered. We must do what we can and both Labor and the LNP were united in this decision. We were also united in our support of the drought appeal. I applaud everyone who has given whatever they can to ease the strain on our farming families.

Politicians on both sides of the House also came together this year to work on the Queensland Anti-cyberbullying Taskforce. I thank Madonna King for her work as chair of the task force and I recognise the role that the member for Coomera played as the LNP's representative on that body. Technology has brought society many benefits, but it has also created new pressures for young people. As a mum of three beautiful daughters, I support all measures, like everyone does in Queensland, to reduce the growing problem of online bullying.

While the Liberal National Party united with the Palaszczuk government on so many issues in 2018, we have also been very active as an opposition. Indeed, this has been an historic year for the LNP. This year we celebrated the 10th anniversary of the party's foundation. With that we farewelled, at the last election, one of the LNP's architects, Lawrence Springborg. Lawrence's intelligence, integrity and commitment to Queensland was unrivalled, but he also helped to inspire me to enter politics. He is missed by all on this side of the House, and we wish him well for the future.

There have been some other big changes in the LNP because this year is the first year that we have seen a female lead the LNP. I am incredibly proud to lead this party and I was humbled to win the support of my parliamentary colleagues. It does not matter whether you are a man or a woman; there is no greater privilege and responsibility than being chosen to lead your party. When I became leader I got to work straightaway. As a regional member, I know, as we all do, of the suffering that the ice epidemic is causing and we immediately began campaigning to highlight the need for action. The government responded by releasing its own ice strategy, but I believe there is still more to be done in relation to this scourge.

The new LNP leadership team also backed the campaign for the introduction of free swimming lessons—in fact, it was a policy we took to the last state election—so I welcomed the government's positive response to the campaign. I hope that together we can protect more Queensland kids from drowning.

The very first policy endorsed by my shadow cabinet was introducing real-time fuel price monitoring for Queensland. We backed this policy because we understand the financial pressure that fuel prices are putting on all Queenslanders. I was relieved when the Palaszczuk government eventually opted to introduce real-time fuel price monitoring and I look forward to its implementation.

The LNP continued to fight for drivers against congestion all year long. We were the first to pledge 50 per cent of the funding for the M1's urgently needed upgrades and we were the first to call for an inquiry into our toll roads. The new team that I lead has no shortage of energy or ideas and, like me, they want to make Queensland an economic powerhouse again.

Whenever I have faced a challenge in my life, I have rolled up my sleeves and tackled it head-on. I said I would provide solutions for Queensland and that is precisely what I and my team are doing. I am delighted to report that the Palaszczuk government is getting on board with some of our plan's key components. Labor have now said they will get behind Rookwood Weir. They have said they are going to back the Sunshine Coast rail line duplication. I was encouraged by the government's words but we will be watching to see real action, particularly in relation to the duplication of the Sunshine Coast rail line in 2019.

In recent weeks we have also seen the Palaszczuk government respond to the LNP's campaign on the racing tax and the blue card loopholes. I welcome the measures that have been announced, but I believe there is still more work to be done in this state to protect our children. I urge the government to consider the legislation proposed by my team to increase mandatory minimum punishments for murder and manslaughter of children. There are issues of serious public concern and at some point they just have to be addressed. The LNP will continue to make the case for action in 2019. I promise the House that the opposition will continue to hold the government to account on all fronts. We will continue to lay out our plan to ensure Queensland's best days are ahead of us.

Mr Speaker, on these occasions, it is customary to pay tribute to the people of the parliament and I would like to start by thanking you for your work throughout this year. You have performed your role fairly and honourably and you have demonstrated great patience. I thank you personally very much for your great patience—

Mr Watts: In your role.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON:—in your role. You have demonstrated great patience with those on this side of the House and that side of the House and the crossbenches. I extend my thanks to the Deputy Speaker and the temporary chairs who contribute to the smooth running of the House.

I also express my thanks to the many fine men and women who enable our parliament to function as well as it does. Of course, I thank Neil Laurie for his sage guidance and facial movements during parliament. There are many others who keep the wheels of democracy turning: of course, Deputy Clerk Michael Ries, who quietly ensures the smooth operation of the chamber; First Clerk Assistants, Amanda Honeyman and Bernice Watson, for their procedural guidance and professionalism both in this chamber and in committees; Chief Hansard Reporter, Jo Mathers, for the high standard she has to uphold because of what comes out of some of our mouths; and Director of Information Services, Parliamentary Library, Janet Prowse, whose small team helps all MPs with accurate and timely research briefs. On behalf of the opposition, I say that the Library saves us so many times.

The Director of Corporate and Electorate Services, Craig Atkinson, and his team provide so much to our MPs and our electorate officers. The Director of Property and Facility Services, Stewart Johnson, has been so busy in the last couple of months. He and his team have worked tirelessly to deal with what has been put before him in the last month or so in terms of this ever-aging building and limited resources. I acknowledge the members in this House who separately had pretty stressful evenings. I appreciate what you guys went through. The people in this chamber who spend their nights in this building know exactly what I am talking about, Minister for Fire and Emergency Services.

Of course there are many, many more parliamentary staff who work across all of the parliamentary departments so we cannot name them all, but I must make special mention of the team of our Sergeant-at-Arms, Mike Watkin—thank you, Michael. How could we get through sittings weeks without Simon Neale and the superb catering team? They ensure that the entire parliamentary precinct is well nourished. I would also like to thank the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel for the work they do in drafting amendments and private member's bills. I especially want to thank the cleaners, maintenance staff and gardeners, the people who look after the chooks and the bees, but particularly the amazing cleaning staff who look after the regional members when we stay here in Brisbane.

Several members of the Parliamentary Service staff are retiring at the end of this year, and they will be much missed by members and colleagues. Along with you, Mr Speaker, and the Premier, I would also like to acknowledge: Lyn Whelan, who is retiring from the committee office after 12 years; parliamentary attendant Margaret Curran, who is retiring after 19 years; Monica Pearce, from the parliamentary library who is retiring after 26 years; and Dave Newman from parliamentary security, who is retiring after an incredible 32 years service. I would like to thank Dave personally on behalf of one of my daughters, who buzzed him at about one o'clock one morning and he came to her service. I say thank you to Dave; we will miss you. The catering team will never be the same again without Colleen, who retires after 25 years of service. We all know that no-one makes a good roast sandwich like Colleen. Parliament will miss her very much.

Naturally, I also want to acknowledge the work of the entire opposition team. There are not many staff in the opposition office, but they are professional, hardworking and they always go the extra mile. Thank you to Matt, Shaun, Steph and the team.

My shadow ministers and my team here have been a huge support this year. I feel privileged to lead such an excellent and talented team. These men and women come from all walks of life, but they are united in their commitment to create a better Queensland. A special mention must go to my steadfast deputy, Tim Mander. We have built a great partnership, so thank you for your support. I also want to say thank you to Jarrod, our Manager of Opposition Business, for his ready wit and unwavering eye for detail and, until today, the wearer of probably the most tasteless jackets. The LNP benches welcomed many new members this year, and I have been so impressed by the experience and energy that they have brought to this parliament.

I also want to thank our Governor, the Hon. Paul de Jersey and his wife Kaye, and I congratulate him on the extension to his term that was announced this morning.

I extend my good wishes to all members of all parties in this House. We may not always agree, but it is important to recognise that all of us have a vital role to play in our democratic system. I believe that we should uphold the traditions of our parliament well.

Members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery also play a role in our democratic system, and I want to thank them for their contribution. They are fearless, hardworking and professional, and thanks to them 'fake news' is not a problem in Queensland.

The people who deserve my thanks are rarely in the precincts of parliament. I am so grateful to my Nanango electorate staff, Lenny and Belinda. They work hard, they laugh often, and I could not manage without them. Most of all I want to thank Isabella, Lucy, Elke and my husband, Jason. I thank the families of everyone in this House. As you well know, Mr Speaker, politics places a huge burden on our families, especially when you have to stay down here to do your job. It is not easy being away from the ones you love, and when you are together it is hard to push politics aside and be a normal family once again. I know that my family is with me every step of the way. Their love and support fills me with strength and brightens every day. Like all of us, I cannot wait to spend some time with our families and friends over this break. To our Premier Annastacia and her team I say merry Christmas and, although it is very early, I say to each and every one of you in this great House, 'Enjoy your holiday if you get one.'

Traditionally, this is a time for reflection and a time to be thankful. We are all naturally biased in favour of Queensland, but let us be honest: we live in the greatest state in the most amazing nation in the whole of the world. We are blessed to be here, and we should never forget it. Wherever your home is, wherever you are from, I wish you all a very merry Christmas and I look forward to getting back into it next year.