




Speech By  
**James Lister**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS**

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### MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.35 pm): It is with great gratitude and pride that I stand here today to deliver my first speech in the Queensland parliament. At the outset, I would like to thank the people of Southern Downs for electing me and I offer my promise that I will do all I can to repay their trust throughout the coming years. I acknowledge His Excellency's address at the opening of parliament. I would like to confirm my allegiance to the Crown, to this parliament and to people of my country and my electorate of Southern Downs. To coin a phrase, this is my first go at a maiden speech. I trust that I might be pardoned for sticking to that tried and true formula of giving an account of myself, talking about the people who have made me who I am in my life and talking about the special people and places that are Southern Downs.

I believe it is also customary for a new member to acknowledge their predecessor. He, of course, is the Hon. Lawrence Springborg, who was a steadfast and well-respected identity in this chamber and around our state. Given that he did not make a valedictory speech before he departed parliament, I think it is appropriate that I start by paying tribute to him.

It is more than a generation since there has been a new member for the areas which we now know as Southern Downs. Lawrence Springborg served as a member of this parliament for 27 years 358 days. He is quite simply a colossus of Queensland politics and it is my great pleasure to recognise his excellence as a servant of Queensland, as a person and as my campaign manager, mentor and mate.

Lawrence was first elected to the district of Carnarvon at the general election in 1989, following the retirement of former National Party member the late honourable Peter McKecknie. Lawrence was just 21 years old and at the time the youngest person ever elected to the Queensland parliament. He went on to win and hold the new larger seat of Warwick for the National Party until the redistribution in 2001 created the seat of Southern Downs that we know today. Lawrence held Southern Downs until retiring at the last election—giving him the distinction of being 28 years a member of this parliament and having been elected on 10 consecutive occasions. In his time as an MP Lawrence served on many committees, as a whip, a shadow minister, deputy leader, Leader of the Opposition, father of the House and minister—some of these roles on multiple occasions. He is widely regarded, along with my honourable colleague the member for Caloundra, as a founding father of the LNP.

Following my preselection as the LNP candidate for Southern Downs in March 2017, Lawrence offered to be my campaign manager. That is an offer that I seized without a second thought because I cannot think of a more fortunate position for a new candidate to find themselves in than to have the support, wisdom and clout of a much loved retiring member. Lawrence emphasised to me the importance of defending and sticking with one's values and of cherishing, above all other things in politics, the fundamental privilege of being elected as an MP. I am thankful for Lawrence's ongoing support as I settle into this role of MP. On behalf of the people of Southern Downs, I thank him and his family for their long and dedicated service to the people.

I was born on the Gold Coast in 1976. My father, Paul, was in the restaurant business and my mother, Jennifer, had been a flight attendant with TAA back in the days of Fokker Friendships, DC-9s and 727s. She stayed home to raise my younger sister, Holly, and me. My mother and father are here in the gallery today, and I want to pay special tribute to them for the sacrifices they made and for the love and understanding that they gave me and still give me today. Thanks, Mum and Dad, especially for being such supportive grandparents throughout the past tumultuous 12 months. My sister, Holly, who could not be here today, is an ambulance paramedic at Stanthorpe, and I am delighted to say that she and her husband, Peter, only three weeks ago celebrated the birth of a healthy baby boy—well done, Holly.

When I was very young my family moved to Brisbane where we lived in a lovely old Queenslander in what was then the unremarkable suburb of Newmarket. I remember its prominent and at the time still functioning smoke stack at the old PGH brickworks. I remember the busy Telecom depot nearby and the sound of children being rebuked over a loudspeaker for running rather than walking at the nearby Newmarket public swimming pools. I had a happy childhood marked with bikes and billycarts, climbing mango trees, going to cubs and judo, making model aeroplanes and, strangely for a young boy, keeping an eye on electricity strikes, the Fitzgerald inquiry and the plight of Sir Joh.

I progressed through Wilston State School and Brisbane Grammar School and then went on to university next door at QUT where I gained a Bachelor of Applied Science. I spent a year working at the University of Sydney's wheat research station at Narrabri and, whilst I was at uni in Brisbane, I worked delivering pizzas and also as a medical orderly at the Wesley Hospital.

In 1998 I was employed by the National Party as the Young Nationals development officer, and that was a job that I really relished. I travelled the state recruiting young Nats, organising balls, toga parties and toad races. At the time I also contested the 1998 state election in the seat of Logan. I was also employed by Graeme Haycroft at Labour Hire Australia, where I worked with small business in recruiting and labour hire services.

In 2000 I made the decision to join the Royal Australian Air Force, or perhaps I should say the Royal Australian Air Force agreed to take me on. My initial officer training was at Point Cook. After that I was posted to RAAF Base Amberley where, as a young flying officer, I cut my teeth as a section commander and learnt the value of taking advice from my boss, my warrant officer and my sergeants. They saved me from myself on more than one occasion and I am grateful to them, particularly Wing Commander Glen Campbell and Warrant Officer Errol Reidlinger, whose patience and wisdom set me up for a happy and varied Air Force career.

Over the next 17 years I undertook postings all over Australia, and I am proud to have spent time deployed in the Middle East as part of the International Coalition Against Terrorism. I had a wonderful time as an Air Force officer, and there are two postings in particular upon which I reflect with pride and satisfaction. In 2004 I served as aide-de-camp to the then Governor-General, the Hon. Major General Michael Jeffery, and for nine months over 2007 and 2008 I was aide-de-camp to the then Governor of Queensland, the Hon. Dame Quentin Bryce. These jobs gave me a glimpse of the highest level of executive government and the eccentricities of protocol with ambassadors, presidents, judges and generals.

As I travelled all over Australia with the vice-regal persons, those aide-de-camp roles exposed me to the great good that is done in our communities everywhere by volunteers and local community groups. They also gave me the chance to sample and observe Australian life far and wide in all its rich diversity. I saw up close the importance of pomp and ceremony in recognising and thanking people from all walks of life for the good things that they do. There is much to be valued in the grandeur of Government House and the status of viceroy as a way of signalling our community's true esteem for the worthy deeds of both humble and mighty Queenslanders and Australians alike. It was an honour to serve the Crown and the people of Australia and Queensland in those roles, and I will cherish the many happy memories I have of those military postings until my final hour.

During my appointment as aide-de-camp to the Governor, I met and then married my wonderful wife, Belinda. She had been an army officer and we met shortly after she had transferred to the Royal Australian Air Force. We have two wonderful children—Jeremy, who turned seven years old this month, and William, who turns four next month. They bring us great joy and satisfaction, and of course frustration, but they love us in the way that only small children can love their parents—innocently and without design. It is very hard to be away from them, as I am sure all parents in this chamber would understand.

Belinda has been a most wonderful partner in life. Always calm and wise and, it must be said, right, she has stood by me and supported me and our kids throughout the strains of military postings and separations. There has been no better demonstration of this support than in the hard work and love

which Belinda put into the campaign for my election in Southern Downs. Never one to be idle, Belinda threw herself into politics for the first time, taking on several local party executive positions and being always at the centre of the myriad of things which go on in a year-long push for election. To say that she worked harder than me is no exaggeration, and I am quite certain I speak for everyone who joined me in the campaign that Belinda was, and remains, a most effective and beloved part of the team. In fact, even prior to my election Belinda had been asked to speak and give presentations in her own right. On one occasion at least the hosts suggested that if Belinda could not make it then perhaps I could attend to represent her.

In late 2016, when Lawrence Springborg announced that he would retire from parliament at the next general election, I decided to contest my party's preselection for Southern Downs. Whilst my parents and my sister have lived in Stanthorpe for more than a decade, I had not as I had spent years in the military and had been posted all over the country. In spite of this, the membership of the seven local LNP branches in my electorate, whose decision it was to choose a candidate, have been most welcoming to Belinda and me, electing me to be their candidate with an overwhelming majority of votes.

They also came out in strength throughout the 2017 election campaign, raising funds and, along with many non-LNP volunteers, manned our 35 polling booths on election day and for the long pre-poll period before. I must thank in particular my local branch chairs—Dell Thompson, Les Kable, Dawn Scrymgeour, Sue Johnson, Councillor Vic Pennisi, Helen Piedl-Horton and Councillor Lachlan Brennan, who is also the chairman of my local electorate council. They, along with their branch members, have guided and supported Belinda and me throughout a very busy and challenging year. Vic, Sue, Lachie and Dawn have worked particularly hard throughout the 10 months of my candidacy and, along with our photographer, Glenda Riley, gave generously of their time and resources throughout the campaign.

Other local identities who worked very hard and provided advice, guidance and support in all sorts of ways include, in no particular order, Andrew Gale, Steph Ingall, Chris Bell, Darryl Evans, Ross Bartley, David Kemp, Trish Roberts, Clair Johns, Lewis von Stiglitz, Peter Kemp, Bev Jordan, Dr John and Joan Shrapnel, Tori DeMamiel, Joe Coorey, Jim Samios, Andrew Cooper, Sue Lloyd and her daughters Erin, Abbie, Shelby and Ebonie, Phil Bowles, Denis Reynolds, Alistair Logan, Col Glasser, Betsy Turner, Noel Smith, Michael Offerdahl, Shirley Carrigan, Joy Phillips, David Eglington, Ewan Young, John Boucher, Reverend Alan Colyer, Angelo Puglisi, Bill Humble, Len Rigg, Peter and Heather Watters, Steven Tancred, Ian Henderson, Mark and Councillor Marika McNichol, and Bev Hall—special thanks to you all and particular thanks to the Hon. Lawrence Springborg for managing our campaign and providing the wisdom, experience and leadership that all successful campaigns demand.

For as long as I can recall I wanted to be an MP. I have always wanted to be the one who was both the servant of and leader to his community. I have always wanted to employ my values and strengths to fight for local interests and to do good for people. I clearly remember coming to parliament in 1988 with my grade 7 class from Wilston State School. We were treated to a tour of the building and a talk about the workings of parliament and, afterwards, the obligatory small glass of very weak orange cordial and a small rectangular biscuit. My honourable friend the member for Pumicestone has similar recollections of her visit in that same year I believe. My most memorable exposure to this place, however, was on 16 October 2007 when, as the Governor's aide-de-camp, I marched stiffly on to the floor of the House—buttons shining, sword in hand—to deliver a rolled up message to the Speaker. To the obvious merriment of members on both sides, I was taunted and jeered at riotously, although *Hansard*, true to its tradition of understatement, merely described the event as 'Messenger admitted.'

After giving the Speaker the Governor's message, I hastily about-faced and retreated from the chamber wondering why on earth the honourable members were being so hard on me. The last things I heard above the cacophony before exiting the chamber were, 'Well, he's better than the last one,' and 'Yeah, he can come back.' Well, indeed I have come back and I look forward to the opportunity to revisit that good-natured fun when one of my successor aides-de-camp brave the Assembly to deliver another message.

My electorate of Southern Downs is a wonderful place, with friendly and involving communities, a strong economic base and a remarkable and varied landscape. It is bounded by Weengallon in the west, Cecil Plains and Allora in the north, Goomburra, Tregony and the Great Dividing Range in the east, and the Queensland-New South Wales border to the south. The current electoral boundaries, which incidentally were unaltered by the recent statewide redistribution, encompass three major centres—Goondiwindi, Stanthorpe and Warwick. Smaller, though no less valued, centres include Wallangarra, Ballandean, Allora, Killarney, Maryvale, Yangan, Leyburn, Inglewood, Millmerran, Texas, Yelarbon and Talwood.

The electorate is also home to many smaller towns and villages, frequently with their own local hall, sports club, gun club and primary school and, most importantly, a proud sense of community

identity. There are way too many to mention, but I will refer to some as an indication of the extent to which these small communities comprise the wider electorate of Southern Downs. On the Granite Belt around Stanthorpe where I live are places like Lyra, Eukey, Glen Aplin, Kyoomba, Severnlea, Greenlands, Thorndale, Pikedale, Applethorpe, The Summit, Thulimba, Cottonvale and Dalveen. The Granite Belt is also home to some of the post World War I soldier settlements to which His Excellency referred in his speech yesterday—places such as Fleurbaix, Somme, Messines, Pozieres, Amiens—or, as the French more correctly say, ‘Am-y-on’—Passchendaele and Bapaume—all named after scenes of unforgettable Western Front battles in which Australian soldiers fought and died.

Around Warwick there are localities such as Tannymorel, Freestone, Gladfield, Goomburra, Maryvale, Emu Vale, Mount Colliery, Swanfels, Murrays Bridge, Pratten, Sandy Creek and Karara. Around Goondiwindi we have North Talwood, South Talwood, Bungunya, Toobeah, Lundavra, Tarawera, Kioma, Kindon, Billa Billa, Yagaburne and Wondalli. In the north surrounding Millmerran are communities such as Cecil Plains, Condamine Plains, Lemontree, Yandilla, Pampas, Canning Creek and Leyburn.

The economic base of Southern Downs is founded on primary industries, tourism and services. We have large and efficient industries in beef, sheep, dairy, grain, cotton, forestry and fruit and vegetables, and we think that ours are among the most productive primary industries in the country. I note with delight that on every menu I have seen here at Parliament House produce and wines from Southern Downs take pride of place, and rightly too, and it would be terrific to see this example followed at this year’s Commonwealth Games.

We are also blessed with a vibrant services sector across our towns. Small businesses abound in catering for domestic, rural and industrial demands, and their operators—often families generations old—proudly serve their customers and communities through thick and thin, good times and bad. Tourism is very important in Southern Downs. Our B&Bs, wine and fruit tourism, festivals and, in Stanthorpe, Queensland’s coldest climate make Southern Downs a favourite for visitors.

Southern Downs is home to some very innovative large and emerging businesses such as the meat processor John Dee and fruit juice producer Grove Juice in Warwick, Australian Vinegar, Jamworks Gourmet Foods and Sweet’s Strawberry Runners in Stanthorpe, the new Darwallah chicken hatchery in Allora and Carpendale Commodities and the Woods Group of companies around Goondiwindi. These businesses demonstrate that the future for industry does not exclusively lie in the big cities. It equally can be in electorates like Southern Downs where costs are low, where interstate and international markets are now easily at hand and where life is good.

What all of those industries have in common is that they are comprised overwhelmingly of small businesses and small farms. They are family concerns where proudly independent people with passion and ideas work very hard and invest with no certain outcome in order to create jobs and incomes and to generate the tax revenues upon which our necessary public sector activities and welfare measures depend. These small businesses contribute so much to the social and economic fabric of my electorate and our state. What they and the people who depend upon them need are a great business environment where governments tax and regulate sparingly, keep energy prices under control and provide the water and transport infrastructure that industry needs to be competitive, thrive and employ people.

I end my maiden speech where I began, in thanking the people of Southern Downs for giving me the honour of being their member in this parliament. I truly look forward to playing my part in this place as a faithful representative of my part of this great state.