




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.44 pm): I stand here today again a very humbled man. I am honoured to again be elected as the member for Gregory. I therefore confirm my allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and her representative, His Excellency the Governor, Paul de Jersey, and my loyalty to this parliament and, most importantly, the electors of the Gregory electorate. I would also like to congratulate our opposition leader, Deb Frecklington, and our Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Tim Mander, who are doing a sterling job. I would like to thank the people of Gregory for placing their confidence in me again and I would like to thank the electorate of Gregory for being a great place to represent. I would also like to congratulate the new members to this parliament—on this side and the other side. On my side, I would like to congratulate Sam, Jim, Brent, David, Marty, Dan, Simone, who sits next to me, and Colin Boyce, who represents the neighbouring electorate of Callide.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Pugh): Order! Member for Gregory, I take this opportunity to remind you that you should always refer to members by their correct titles rather than their first names.

Mr MILLAR: Madam Deputy Speaker, I was just trying to be friendly. I would like to acknowledge the wonderful efforts of the Gregory SEC chairman and a person who is very close to me, Mike Burns. He is a truly great man who has dedicated his life to our side of politics like he did for his great mate the former member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, who we saw here yesterday. Mike stood beside me every step of the way in the first campaign and in the last campaign. I could not have done it without his calming influence, his steady hand and, most of all, his loyalty and support.

I acknowledge my SEC treasurer, Ross Drayton, who is a wonderful and generous man with his time and his determination and belief in our cause for agriculture and small business and his love of rural and regional communities. He took time out from running his small business, Central Bikes. I would also like to pay tribute to Rosemary and Warwick Champion. Rosemary is truly an inspiring woman in the outback. Despite nearly seven years of drought, Rosemary has stood at my prepolling and in 40-plus degree heat on polling day. I would like to acknowledge the wonderful Lenore and Peter Johnston, who also helped me through this campaign. Bruce and Helen Collins and John and Katrina Payne from Winton are great people. I am truly blessed and so lucky to be able to represent them.

I would like to thank David and Nel Brooks from Birdsville, Don Burden, Brett Walsh, Sonia and Peter Doyle, Sue and John Engwicht and Jeanette Bunting. I give my condolences to Jeanette, who has recently lost her husband. He was a truly wonderful man. For quite a few decades he was involved in the rural fire brigade in the Central Highlands. He will be sorely missed in the Central Highlands. His beautiful wife, Jeanette, is such an inspiration to me, as is Helen Quinn, who helps me out. I also acknowledge Ian Burnett, Rob, Roberta and Peter Donnelly from Barcaldine and Paul and Ali Donnelly.

I would like to thank my brother Hamish Millar, Elyshia Ruttley, Cassie Turner and Georgie Kent—all known as #thedreamteam. I thank them for looking after the Blackwater North polling booth for me. I also make mention of a great bloke called Robert Bryce. He is a good mate of the member for Broadwater, but Rob and his partner saw the light and moved to Emerald and organised all of my booths in Emerald.

I would like to make special mention of Graeme and Lyn Johnston of Emerald. They are truly wonderful people. Graeme is the principal of Emerald Christian College. Graeme has continued to support me and I thank him for that. I would like to mention Sonia Burton, who ran my campaign office. She is a beautiful and kind woman who always puts her life on hold during election campaigns to help us retain the seat of Gregory. Sonia and Guy are going through a significant drought at the moment and are certainly finding it hard to find home for cattle. I truly thank Sonia and Guy.

I make special mention of a bloke who many in this House know: the former member for Gregory for all of 26 years, Vaughan Johnson, who stood side by side with me during the last election campaign, the last parliamentary term, and who continued to do that by travelling through the back country—through Winton, Boulia, Bedourie and Birdsville—and standing at my prepoll and also on polling day. Vaughan is a man of integrity and honesty and he has endeared himself to many. He has been a big part of my life. Vaughan has been a man of inspiration, guidance and a mentor. He is someone who has stood side by side with me. I sincerely thank him.

I would also like to thank Sean Dillon, Andrew Cowper, Bev Maunsell, Bev Morton, Neil and Margaret Dunbar, Lorry Brimblecombe, Tim Eversham, Billie Edwards and Al Bonham, Tanya Forsythe, Hayden Jones, Eddie Vella and Mary Vella, and, of course, Don Williams, John Baker, Trudy Gorrington and Charlie Brimblecombe and so many others who helped. There are so many people to thank for helping me through this campaign.

I am blessed to have such fantastic electorate staff in Longreach and Emerald: Nicky Heslin, Elyshia Ruttley and, of course, Larissa Burnett who has taken up a position in Health. I am also lucky to welcome Alex Scott. I am truly lucky to have wonderful experienced staff to guide me through as the member for Gregory. They have allowed me to hit the ground running. I would also like to mention Laura Nolan who worked for me in the first term and has come back to me recently to help me in my office—a truly talented woman and always on hand and offering to help.

Like most members, my family has played a major role in my life and also in my election to the seat of Gregory. To my beautiful wife Peta, my three children, Lucy, Ellie and Poppy, you always stand beside me and I am so blessed to have you. I would also like to congratulate everyone who was successful at the recent election. It is good to see new members in this place. It is great to hear their maiden speeches.

One of the biggest issues we face in Gregory is drought. It has savaged us for the last seven years. It has been a national disaster. It is something we have had to deal with for seven years and we are desperately trying to overcome many obstacles. I congratulate everyone who donates and thinks of us in such a terrible time. We need the Mitchell grass to come back. We need people to come back. Hopefully we will have rain during the wet season.

The seat of Gregory is a special seat. There have been only four members in the seat of Gregory since 1950. That shows the longevity of the members. It is a privilege to be the member for Gregory. Sir Wally Rae was a member of this parliament and served in various state government ministries. Wally worked as a stock and station agent before serving as a bomber pilot in World War II. After the war he bought a property located west of Blackall. He entered Queensland parliament in 1956.

Bill Glasson Snr was a member for Gregory. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1945. He was a member of the Country Party. He was elected to the Winton Shire Council in 1955, serving until 1957, and in 1974 was elected in the seat of Gregory. He joined the front bench in 1980 as the minister for lands and forestry. Many of us would know one of Bill Glasson's sons, Bill Glasson Jnr, who is very well known in this state as a specialist ophthalmologist and eye surgeon who continues to practise here in Brisbane and also comes out to Western Queensland.

As I have mentioned, the drought is terrible at the moment. I encourage people to donate to the Western Queensland Drought Appeal. There is also the Country Women's Association drought appeal and I ask people to please donate there. When donating to the drought appeals we must realise that cash is king. People right across this nation are kind hearted when it comes to drought and they donate hampers, shampoo and necessities and think that bringing that up to Western Queensland is going to help. It does help, but it also has a side effect that impacts on small business. There was a time when we had hampers and hams come up. It was well intentioned and people did take them, but then in Longreach, Blackall and Barcaldine there were shops that were not able to sell anything for a month. They are the businesses that are employing our local people and people who come off the land.

If someone wants to help in the drought cash is the best way. Donate to the Queensland Country Women's Association drought appeal or to the Western Queensland Drought Appeal. The Western Queensland Drought Appeal has been going for three years. It has been able to put cash on the table. That is what we need to do. We have a joint venture with Westpac, and I thank them so much, where we send debit cards anonymously to people we know who are struggling. There might be \$250 on that debit card. It can only be spent in the local town. It can buy books, clothes, mechanical work on the Toyota or a battery. It all helps to keep that town going.

We have been blessed with outback tourism. If people want to help in the drought I urge them to ask their friends to visit Ilfracombe, Isisford or Yaraka, where the member for Toowoomba South came with me the other day, and spend some time in Western Queensland. We have a unique outback product. It is very special. Western Queensland in the middle of the night with all the stars glowing and the friendly atmosphere is something that visitors will never forget. Bring your kids out. Make sure you stay in a motel. Make sure that you just come out. We would love to see you. We need to see you.

I thank the Minister for Health for committing to the Blackwater Hospital. I am a little bit disappointed that we have only put \$1 million towards it. We need another \$16 million. The Blackall Hospital needs to be constructed as soon as possible. The health of the community is very important and it will create jobs. I call on the minister to make sure that that commitment is there.

I have had a commitment from the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services in relation to the Longreach Fire Station. He has promised to fund that in the next financial year. We have land that has been set aside. It needs to happen. We have to put infrastructure in seats like Gregory which will provide an economy for the community.

Tonight here in parliament we are celebrating 90 years of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The RFDS does so much for Western Queensland, whether it is flying someone out for emergency surgery or supplying clinics. The Royal Flying Doctor Service is a true saviour in Western Queensland. I ask members to support them. They are certainly what is needed out there and they do so much for us. I call on the Minister for Health to consider donating to the Heart of Australia truck. They are providing cardiovascular services in Western Queensland so we do not have to come down to Brisbane. To have a specialist cardiologist available is essential and is saving lives. I call on the Palaszczuk government to fund or help play a role with the Heart of Australia truck.

I keep banging on about roads. We still need the Blackall-Jericho Road completed. It was promised a long time ago that we would have bitumen all the way from Jericho to Yaraka because we took the rail line out. We only have another 30 kilometres to go. Let us get this done. It is important. We must look at the Torrens Creek Road. It is not in my electorate—it is in the electorate of the member for Traeger—and it is an important linkage for people in Gregory. The Bauhinia Downs-Woorabinda-Duaringa Road needs sealing as well.

There has been a lot of talk about the drought. The Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries is in the House. We need to ensure that the Central Highlands Regional Council area is drought declared again. We need to get the local drought committees back to assess it. It is tough at the moment. People in the Central Highlands are having to move cattle. It is important that they get access to state drought funding and also the federal government's drought funding which has been announced by David Littleproud. I call on the Palaszczuk government to have these shires drought declared. It is very important. All we can do is wish for rain. Rain is essential. At the moment the Bureau of Meteorology is not promising, but I am hoping that they are wrong and that we get a huge wet season. That is important.

Finally, I thank everybody who helped to re-elect me. It is an absolute honour and privilege. I will leave the House with something that I have said previously. A lady I have great admiration for is Rosemary Menkens. In her last speech, she said—

... respect is earned, honesty is appreciated, trust is gained and loyalty is always returned.