




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR HILL

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (12.19 pm): It is a great honour to be elected to the 56th Parliament. I join with others in congratulating all those who have returned to serve their communities and those who have been given the privilege of being elected to office for the first time. When I was first elected in 2004, I thought it was a dream. At that time there were people here such as Kevin Lingard, who served under the Bjelke-Petersen government and was a Speaker of the House, and within the Labor Party we had Terry Mackenroth, Tom Barton and Henry Palaszczuk who came from the old guard. It has been a great honour to be elected again and I acknowledge all of those who have been elected for the first time.

I express my extraordinary gratitude and affection for my family. They have supported me over the 14½ years that I have been a member of parliament. My first electorate covered over 270,000 square kilometres. My second electorate, the electorate of Dalrymple, was 1,200 kilometres long. It took 12 to 14 hours to get from one end of it to the other. I acknowledge my wife, Heather, for bearing the weight of home life and supporting our children, because as a member of parliament I am continually away from home. I express my appreciation to Heather and our wonderful children, Anna, Joel, Daniel and Naomi. When I first entered parliament Naomi was two years old and has just had her 17th birthday.

To the constituents of the newly created electorate of Hill, thank you for putting your faith in me as your member of parliament. I thank the constituents of the former electorates of Mulgrave and Hinchinbrook for trusting me and acknowledging my record in the service of the former electorate of Dalrymple, which gave them the confidence to give me the opportunity to represent them in this parliament. To the constituents of the seat of Hill who were also in my former electorate of Dalrymple, I say thank you for recognising that I have been able to accomplish significant things on behalf of our community and for giving me the opportunity to represent you and fight for our fair share.

I ask for the indulgence of the House to take a minute to thank the constituents from my former electorate of Dalrymple, the Charters Towers Regional Council area and the area stretching through to Moranbah for giving me the opportunity to represent that area for the past 14 years. It is difficult to no longer represent those who had entrusted me with that responsibility for so long. That has now happened to me twice: once when I represented the seat of Charters Towers, which was abolished, and, secondly, when I represented the seat of Dalrymple, which has also been abolished.

Our role has never been something that I have been able to do easily. Our role is unique. As I have mentioned in the House before, it is a privilege to be chosen out of five million people as one of 93 individuals who come here to carry out our duties and represent the views, the issues and the passions of the people and to fight for the best outcomes for our areas. In this parliament, we are the ones who represent our areas, which is something that we can all be very proud of.

I want to mention a very special person who has supported me with commitment and dedication. She has been a rock to me, both professionally and personally. I acknowledge Verna Mitchell, my 76-year-old electorate officer in Charters Towers. Verna has worked with me from 2005 until the

electorate of Dalrymple was abolished in November last year. Until the last redistribution, Verna was with me through some of my greatest challenges and also to celebrate my wins. As those who have been members of parliament for a while will understand and those who are new to the role will learn, supportive staff are the backbone of our service. Nobody was more fiercely loyal, dedicated to and passionate about the region and its people than my electorate officer, Verna Mitchell. I know she will be relishing her retirement at the present moment. I am deeply indebted to both Verna and my assistant electorate officer, Lorraine, for their hard work and dedication in serving the communities of Charters Towers and surrounds. I miss working with them, although, as I said, Verna is enjoying retirement. Both women are mighty people who helped and supported me through very tough times.

I thank those who gave their energies and their efforts to cover the booths, hand out information, put up signs and corflutes, and help me to get my message out loud and clear as a candidate reaching out to new areas. I have picked up an extra 17,000 or 18,000 new constituents. A huge thank you goes to Rene Kung for his drive and support and to all those who committed time to helping us out. I thank Jenny Coffison for taking on the campaign role in the Cassowary Coast area for the first time, which is a role that Rene Kung performed for three election campaigns.

As a member of a minor party, I am very proud that the KAP has been able to punch above its weight and achieve significant outcomes for Queensland and our electorates. In the last parliament, the member for Traeger and I introduced nine private members' bills. We secured the passage of the Sugar Industry (Real Choice in Marketing) Amendment Bill. I acknowledge Lawrence Springborg for his role in working very passionately with us to achieve that security for our canegrowers. We have given them a choice in the marketing of their sugar. In other words, if canegrowers want a miller to market their sugar, the canegrowers can choose the miller; if they want the QSL to market their sugar, they can choose the QSL. Now there is a choice and there is competition. It was a pleasure to work with Lawrence and serve with him from 2004 until the end of the last parliament in November 2017.

The KAP has introduced the rural debt bill, the Stradbroke Island bill, the taxi bill, the rural pubs bill, legislation for blue cards and vegetation management, as well as the safer waterways legislation. We were very proud to move the amendment for the four per cent ethanol mandate, which is being introduced throughout Queensland and which I believe is a better outcome for the state.

I want to mention the Ravenshoe tragedy, which has had a huge impact on the people of the Tablelands. Lives were lost. The tragedy highlighted the need for local emergency services and health services to be upgraded. Before that tragedy, a petition with over 6,000 signatures pushed for an upgrade to the Atherton Hospital. I thank the former minister for health, Cameron Dick, for visiting the Tablelands on the back of that petition and acknowledging that something needed to be done about local health services. The hospital received \$17 million for an upgrade and the Tablelands community will benefit from that.

At the Dimbulah Hospital, people had to wait outside and wheelchairs could not get through. The hospital was located in a little house that was filled with asbestos. On the back of another petition, we received \$5 million to upgrade that hospital. It was not just about money going to an area; when a community is behind you, you can achieve virtually anything. I express our appreciation for that. I want to acknowledge that, at the time of the Ravenshoe blast, the government played a great role in supporting the community and the region.

Many issues are brought up in the parliament and I want to mention the Millaa Millaa-Malanda Road. We are very passionate about this issue, because we get tired of seeing local contractors that have expertise in road maintenance and road construction pushed aside because they are little and do not have the funding and resources of the big companies. However, they know that if they do not do a good job in their region they will never again receive a contract. The issue with the Millaa Millaa-Malanda Road involved melted tar getting stuck to the tyres of vehicles.

I am not just pointing the finger at them. In the past Western Australian contract companies have been given the tender for a government road. Southern contractors do not understand the weather conditions, the terrain, the high altitude and the Wet Tropics conditions. The locals know these things. As an example, \$5 million was provided by the Minister for Main Roads to upgrade the Upper Barron Road. The council received the tender and used local contractors. It is a state-of-the-art road. It is so important that we give locals the opportunity to tender. We need to acknowledge that it is not about the cheapest quote but who can do the job properly otherwise they have to keep going over and over the road again. They will upgrade a road and they are coming back over it three months later. This is money that is going back to the community. It is money that is going into local jobs and the whole community benefits.

I would also like to mention the Feluga pub turn-off. It is a death trap. There have been a lot of near misses. We need the state government to work with the federal government to upgrade that intersection. We need more passing lanes. It is a death trap. There have been lives lost there before. If we can get funds in that area and they can work together that would be warmly appreciated. It would benefit the community by saving lives.

I turn now to the Palmerston Highway, which was in my electorate. I lobbied the Minister for Main Roads at the time. We were given \$3 million and then another \$4.7 million. We probably need another \$20 million to really fix the problem. It is a major arterial route. A lot of water comes down that range each year and a lot of cars and trucks. The road is basically disintegrating. There have been a huge number of accidents on that road. We need the state government to put some dollars into the main road.

One thing that is very important to my electorate and has a lot of community support is the Tully Showgrounds grandstand. It was condemned. I have mentioned this in the parliament before and there has been strong representation on this from the Isaac Regional Council, the Tully Rugby League Football Club and other community groups. There are up to 13 users of the Tully Showgrounds but there is no grandstand. At the last Tully show we had elderly people standing watching the performances. The community is very passionate about this. It is much needed. It is very difficult when the football clubs—the women as well—the tennis groups, the touch teams, the pony clubs use the showground but yet there is no grandstand.

In conclusion I congratulate everyone. It is a great honour to be elected to represent the views and issues of the people of one's electorate in the parliament. I look forward to continuing to serve the people of Hill.