




Speech By  
**Tim Nicholls**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (3.57 pm): This is now the fifth time I have been given the opportunity to speak in this chamber in the address-in-reply, having secured the support of the people of Clayfield for every parliament since first being elected in September 2006. That being the case, I do find myself confronted by similar circumstances to Zsa Zsa Gabor's sixth husband. I know what I am supposed to do, but I do not quite know how to make it interesting. Nevertheless, I shall try.

For the first time in my 12 years in this place I also find myself in the somewhat unfamiliar territory of addressing the House from that most exalted of parliamentary positions, and that is the back bench. I say exalted because the position of a backbencher is one where traditionally considerable latitude is given to express one's views, free from the absolute adherence to the convention of cabinet or indeed shadow cabinet solidarity and indeed free from the absolute dictates of the party machine.

In exercising that freedom, there is a strong obligation to do so sparingly and hopefully wisely. I am well aware of the limits of such freedom and I intend to stay well within those limits. I also intend to follow in the tradition of former party leaders like Lawrence Springborg, Jeff Seeney and you, Deputy Speaker McArdle, the member for Caloundra, and offer advice only if it is sought and to do so privately and discreetly. I will not engage in running commentary or media displays. There is no shortage of commentators who already do that, often to no avail or for any benefit except an agenda that is not the agenda of the members of the LNP in this place.

I want to again thank the people of Clayfield for returning me to represent them in this place for the 56th Parliament of Queensland. I acknowledge His Excellency the Governor and in doing so I thank him for his address. I also reflect on the outstanding service of His Excellency and Mrs de Jersey since His Excellency's appointment in July 2014. Both have been outstanding representatives of the Crown and, more importantly, tremendous envoys for the people of Queensland. I have enjoyed working with His Excellency both in government and out of it, and Mary and I have enjoyed the hospitality of Government House on many occasions.

I also congratulate the member for Mulgrave on his unexpected elevation to the role of Speaker. I hope he has got over the shock of his unsought for change in position following the last election. In a spirit of conciliation amongst those members of the ex-treasurers club, I am available for completely confidential counselling sessions where I would encourage him to get all of his gripes off his chest, safe and secure in the knowledge that it will go no further!

I also congratulate the member for Nanango on her election as Leader of the LNP here in Queensland. Perhaps more than most in this place I have had the opportunity of working with and watching the member for Nanango. I am in no doubt as to her passion to build a better Queensland and of her determination to succeed to lead this state as premier at the head of an LNP government that will get on with the job of delivering for Queenslanders. Her history shows that it would be a mistake to underestimate that determination, and I am in no doubt that she will put her all into the political battle ahead. In doing so, she is unwaveringly supported by her husband, Jason, and their three daughters— an impressive and dedicated family supporting an impressive and determined leader.

I also congratulate the member for Inala on winning the election. Of course I worked hard for a different result, but that was not to be. One of the great and enduring benefits of living in this great state is the peaceful and largely respectful way we go about changing government. I am proud to have played my part in that process. We accept the decision of the people no matter how much I wished it was otherwise. As leader of the LNP at the time, I accept responsibility for the outcome of the election. To the many members of the LNP who fought the good fight throughout Queensland, I say thank you for your hard work and commitment and I am sorry I was not able to deliver a different result for you.

I also want to thank my colleagues in the 55th Parliament for their support and encouragement during my time as opposition leader. Their hard work and commitment to the LNP cause and to the cause of building a better Queensland sustained and enthused me during that time. The first electoral test for our team came with the by-election for Toowoomba South in mid-2016. Despite the difficulties facing the local campaign in the wake of a long and tiring federal election and in spite of the naysayers, the outcome in Toowoomba South was a testament to staying the course, running a solid campaign and having a genuinely local and committed candidate. LNP party members turned out yet again to support their local candidate. They were joined by an enthusiastic crew of Young LNPers from South-East Queensland and MPs from across the state. Everyone pitched in to help—and we were successful.

**Mr Powell:** It was freezing.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Since being elected on what was—and I take the interjection from the member for Glass House—a wet, windy and bitterly cold election day, David Janetzki has gone on to repay the faith of the party and his team with hard work and commitment to the Toowoomba region. He and Mel have also increased the local population with new son Samuel now just over a year old.

Amongst our achievements in the 55th Parliament, the LNP introduced 18 significant private members' bills—indeed, more than any other opposition in this place. I reflect on the comments from the Premier this morning in relation to introducing bills. We introduced 18. Half of the private members' bills in the last term of parliament were introduced by the LNP. Some were passed including the Bail (Domestic Violence) and Another Act Amendment Act, as well as Mason's law, which is a testament to the perseverance and commitment of the former member for Aspley, Tracy Davis, and the former member for Hinchinbrook, now councillor, Andrew Cripps.

Other bills we introduced were not passed but were nonetheless successful. They were successful because they forced the government to introduce its own legislation after ours dealing with the same matters. Whether that was dealing with institutional child sex abuse or domestic violence reforms, the tow truck industry or compulsory smoke alarms or, indeed, reshaping Queensland's planning laws, very real and significant changes were made in Queensland to deliver better outcomes for Queenslanders as a result of the work of the LNP opposition in the 55th Parliament.

I also acknowledge the former member for Mansfield, Ian Walker, who introduced legislation to finally ensure that the constant guessing game of when the next election will be held was put to an end. The only irony is that the 2017 election was the last one of those guessing games and, despite his outstanding work in his community, Ian was ultimately not re-elected.

To former colleagues Scott Emerson, Ian Rickuss, Glen Elmes, Tarnya Smith, Matt McEachan, Sid Cramp and Verity Barton, I say thank you for your hard work and dedication to the cause. While losing friends and colleagues was distressing and painful, there was also a very large upside to the 2017 election campaign. The LNP welcomed a swag of new members and regained seats where our supporters and branch members had been loyal and determined for many years.

In Nicklin, after many long years, Marty Hunt has been elected—a representative truly in touch with his community and already a ferocious fighter for his electorate. In Bundaberg we welcomed David Batt—again another new member with a long history of service both as a police officer and as a councillor. He has big shoes to fill after the mighty Jack Dempsey, but he is moving quickly to establish himself in this new role. In Buderim the election of Brent Mickelberg was a clear case of the electorate and electors seeing through the sham and self-interest of the former member and realising that it is the LNP, not the loons of One Nation, which can provide solid, dependable and sensible representation in the community's best interests on the Sunshine Coast.

Talking of the Sunshine Coast, the new member for the new seat of Ninderry, Dan Purdie, has justified my faith in him. From a standing start to full on campaigning in a very short period of time, Dan has already made his mark on the new electorate and it is a pleasure to have him in this place. From Pumicestone we welcome Simone Wilson. Simone did it tough campaigning in the middle of Labor territory and up against a sitting member that the Premier and Labor cynically supported right up to election eve. Despite slurs and vandalism of her signs and corflutes, Simone kept going and ultimately prevailed and was successful.

In the Lockyer, despite all the claims of the pundits and experts, Jim McDonald fought off One Nation and went on to win the seat handsomely. While I do not need to eat raw onions, I think I have sampled just about everything else grown in or around the Lockyer Valley.

At the Gold Coast we achieved success in the new seat of Bonney with one of the hardest working candidates I have seen. Sam O'Connor has shown that the LNP can, as it must, reach out to younger people and gain their trust while still honouring the tenets of the LNP. He and his extended family and friends worked tirelessly to show voters why he was the best choice to represent them in that new seat. Winning in all of those seats was never going to be easy. All were hotly contested, all had tight margins and some had been held by another party.

In Callide, with Colin Boyce we had a candidate who travelled thousands and thousands of kilometres across one of Queensland's most disparate and diverse electorates. His success is a testament to that hard work and that of his family. In the much changed seat of Broadwater and after some vigorous democratic debate, we have seen the return of the former member for Mundingburra, David Crisafulli. To all of those new and returning members, I say welcome and congratulations.

I also want to recognise all of our other great local candidates who ran for us in 2017—candidates like Casie Scott in Townsville who gave the sitting member in a traditional safe Labor seat such a close run, coming within 107 votes, and candidates like Nick Elston, who fought so hard in Ferny Grove and Belinda Kippen in Miller, as well as Jamie Forster in McConnel next door to me. The team in around Cairns included Penny Johnson, Karina Samperi, Sam Marino and Mario Quagliata, as well as our candidates in Central Queensland like Kerry Latter and Peter Blundell. These are just some of the terrific candidates who put their lives on hold while they campaigned to build a better Queensland. It was a pleasure to support them all and to campaign with them. While they may not have been elected, they have earned our thanks and respect for their willingness to stand and fight to build a better Queensland.

The year 2017 was also a year of significant loss for this place. On the LNP side we saw the retirement of two former leaders: Jeff Seeney, previously a deputy premier, and Lawrence Springborg, a former health minister—both friends, both in different ways mentors to many in this place and both who made a difference to the lives of so many Queenslanders through their dedication, service, resolve and hard work.

There were few who could match it with the former member for Callide when he was in full flight. There were few who could match his passion and his ability to look at a difficult question and come up with a compelling argument. I think it is fair to say that he was not necessarily everyone's cup of tea. He was never afraid to straighten you out when he thought you were heading the wrong way, and I think it is fair to say that 'tact' was not his strong suit. I am sure he would probably agree.

His motto was 'for country people and country towns' and he lived up to that motto for almost 20 years in this place. More than that, Jeff was a parliamentarian. He loved this place. He gave it his all. He sacrificed a lot. He fought for members of this place against all comers. He believed in the primacy of MPs and he never apologised for it. If you ever, ever needed someone to fight your corner, to stand with you when the shells were falling all around, when the numbers were against you, Jeff Seeney was your man. Many in this place, myself included, owe Jeff a tremendous debt.

Lawrence Springborg's story is well known. His commitment to the Nationals and then the LNP cause was and still is enduring. His calmness and experience helped and assisted so many members in this place over his 28 years as an MP. Even in his final year, he worked on dealing with the insidious effects of black lung disease with the member for Bundamba in an unlikely parliamentary committee partnership that exposed failings at many levels that are still being resolved today. The election did not allow for a valedictory for these members, but today I want to recognise and honour their service to our state, to our parliament, to their electorates and to the LNP.

While our shadow cabinet and MPs are the public face of the LNP, we could not do our job without the help, assistance and dedication of our staff. I thank all LNP electorate officers for their hard work dealing with the many and varying challenges of our electorate offices. In particular, I thank Sam and Katy in my office for their hard work. I also want to thank Nickie, who has come on board since the election and who is working wonders with my social media as well as for my constituents.

In the opposition leader's office, we were well served by an outstanding staff. Indeed, as I told them all at the end of 2017, they were the best staff it had been my great honour to have worked with in my time in this place. I particularly want to thank my chief of staff, Gerard Benedet, whose organisational skill and leadership, whose policy depth and whose calmness under pressure delivered outstanding policies to build a better Queensland and also an election campaign that ran faultlessly and to schedule. It was probably the best campaign run by an opposition in Queensland with only one fault—we did not win. Any failings in that campaign are mine and not his.

The policy team under Matt Jeffries provided policies that were both effective and responsible and, despite the best efforts of all of our opponents, policies that were bulletproof, that added up and that did not need any new taxes or charges being placed on the people of Queensland. My media team under Matt Fynes-Clinton and Shaun Rigby did an outstanding job. Up at all hours and dealing with the gentle souls of the parliamentary media gallery was no easy task, as I am sure many will agree. Our advancers, Julia Dixon, Katie Mickleberg and Pete Coulson, all worked incredible hours and made sure everyone was catered for, especially on the campaign bus and on the campaign plane.

Of course, my long-suffering and dedicated EA, Kim McInnes, together with Steph Fairley and Michelle Waugh made sure my diary was organised, my family knew where I was and the bills were paid. Kim's infectious laughter and wicked sense of humour were a much needed touch of the real world in the bubble of the campaign. I say thank you to all of them.

I also want to acknowledge the support provided by LNP headquarters. Campaign director Lincoln Folo and his staff barely saw their families and barely got home themselves. They managed candidates across the state, they got the mail out, they produced the material needed, they wrote the ads, they responded to opposition attacks and they played equal parts sergeant major and counsellor to members, candidates and campaign teams.

Our team was also supported by the president, Gary Spence, and the executive of the LNP. I must say we worked in an extremely constructive and cooperative manner during my time as leader. We did not always agree, but we always recognised the need to work out our differences and we did. The LNP works best when the organisational wing and the parliamentary wing understand and respect each other's roles and responsibilities and accept the principle of comity that should apply in that relationship.

I also want to thank all on the Clayfield campaign team who looked after the campaign for me in Clayfield. While I was on the road, I relied on my local campaign team, led by Mary Caroline van Passen, to cover the bases in Clayfield. Together with the hard work by the campaign treasurer, John Cotter Jr, the team was able to ensure that, even in the difficult circumstances of a significant redistribution and an often absent MP, we were able to retain Clayfield in the face of concerted campaigns by greens, anti-Adani campaigners, of course the unions and lastly the ALP. To all who worked so hard on the Clayfield campaign, I extend my sincere thanks.

Leading a major political party is a tremendous honour, and it was one I was aware of every day throughout my travels in Queensland. I want to thank all those Queenslanders who were so willing to engage in the great democratic debate last year. Invariably, Queenslanders were friendly, open, forthright and free with their advice—you would not expect anything else. As I travelled the state, I again marvelled at its beauty, its diversity and its people. It reinforced my determination to take to the people our plan to build a better Queensland, to create jobs across Queensland and better manage our finances, to build stronger families, to provide safe and livable communities, to deliver better government not more government and, as everyone on this side I am sure can repeat after me, to build the roads, the bridges and the dams that we need. Our policies and announcements—some 400-plus of them—were all designed to do that. I am sure members on this side remain committed to doing the best they can for their communities and for this state. I know I do.

Sadly, under this Labor government, mediocrity is the order of the day. We are still waiting for major projects to commence after four years. After four years, we are still waiting to see what this Labor government has to build for Queensland. They talk about and promote Queen's Wharf all the time, but it was a decision of the LNP government. The second range crossing, which is the single largest inland road being built in Australia, is a result of the LNP government at a state level and a federal level. It gets more and more—

**Mr Bailey** interjected.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** The cut-and-run minister—who could not cut it in council so he ran—talks about 1 William Street. Without 1 William Street, the rest of it does not happen. The only way he could build Queen's Wharf and get the 14,000-plus jobs that that will deliver is actually by building 1 William Street. I am sure if the minister wanted to vacate there would be no shortage of people willing and in fact probably more able to take his position in that building. Debt is worse at \$83 billion; it is up in the stratosphere. The fiscal deficits continue to grow, and the lack of financial accountability continues under this Labor government.

I want to talk about my family. People have heard me talk about them often. They are indeed the foundation of whatever success I have achieved. I am eternally grateful to Mary for her support, patience and perseverance as I have for the last 18 years pursued my chosen vocation. As many know, Mary is an OT with Education Queensland and has been for 25 years. She works with kids with substantial disabilities and is a caring, compassionate and dedicated person—she would have to be to be with me. Hopefully, with a little more time on my hands, I can help Mary fulfil some more of her ambitions.

The three kids have all grown up around politics. I am pleased to say none have turned and all are dedicated supporters of their dad and the LNP—hopefully in that order. Jeremy and Duncan have now both finished school and are at uni, or more realistically are enrolled at uni but usually at the pub. Kate, who is in year 10, continues to be the shining hope of her father but is showing worrying signs of being more interested in politics than is good for her. Truly, we cannot do this job without our families. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.