




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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ADJOURNMENT

Valedictory

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.32 pm): This year, 2019, has certainly been a tough year for Queensland. The people of this great state have been tested many times by natural disasters. However, Queenslanders have risen to every challenge. From the Far North to the Southern Downs, Queenslanders have faced danger and destruction, but we have never given in to despair.

I wish to thank every member of our emergency services for the bravery, compassion and determination they have shown in the face of floods and fires. I want to thank every rural firefighter, every SES member and every other volunteer who has helped save lives and homes. I want to thank everyone who has rallied to support those whose homes and businesses could not be saved. This House cannot thank you enough. You make us all proud to be Queenslanders.

I will never forget my visit to Townsville in the aftermath of the February floods. While suburbs were submerged by water and mud, together with my deputy and the member for Burdekin I joined the volunteers cleaning up Westbrook Drive in Idalia. Off-duty soldier Matt Anderson and his partner Marlene ran the clean-up with military precision. Their own home had been flooded but their priority was helping others. That is the spirit that makes Queensland great.

As the recovery got underway in Townsville devastation was spreading across the north-west where more than an estimated 650 head of cattle were lost. I flew with grazier Marcus Kerr close to his Julia Creek property and I never again want to see the scenes we saw below. I have never seen anything so gut-wrenching: hundreds and hundreds of cattle lay dead. After battling through years and years of drought it was a really cruel blow for so many.

I am pleased to report that nine months later the north-west is getting back on its feet. Forget Flemington; the best place to be this year for Melbourne Cup was the Richmond races. It was great to see that the community came back stronger than ever. Those there said that the race day was their first big blowout after a very long and a very hard year. I can tell honourable members that the rums were flowing pretty freely from around 2.30 or 3 pm. They continued to flow until quite late in the evening as well.

A government member interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: There was responsible service of alcohol there that day. The next day I had an opportunity to go to several of the properties that had been affected by that devastation that we saw in the north-west earlier this year. Of course, every good day that starts in the bush starts with a smoko, and I spent that with Ardie and Kacie Lord. We were able to sit down and discuss the LNP's big, bold, ambitious vision for the new Bradfield scheme. We talked about water and we talked about their kids' hopes for the future and wanting to keep them in the north-west.

Then I headed over to see Ryan and Tracey Hacon. After another great feed of beef sandwiches Ryan took me out for a tour of his property on the way to Julia Creek. That was a drive I do not think I will ever forget. As we drove through each of the different paddocks along the back way to Julia Creek Ryan recalled how many cattle had died in each paddock as we drove through. He remembered exactly where the helicopters had landed and he showed me where he had buried the thousands and thousands of cattle that he lost. He talked about—and this was a drive of well over an hour—the stock he had to leave and the stock he had to bury. I can tell honourable members that nine months on, the emotions were still raw.

This Christmas my thoughts—and I know the thoughts of everyone in this House—will be with those in the north-west and every other Queenslanders who bravely faced the floods this year. I really want to give a shout-out to Prime Minister Scott Morrison for the hope he gave the people in the north-west during that visit when he and I were there, and I know he has been back since. My thoughts will also be with the victims of this year's bushfires, and Queensland faced ferocious fires this year. We know that for 86 years generations of Queenslanders enjoyed the beauty of Binna Burra. Today, unfortunately, Binna Burra is most famous for the bushfire that swept through it on Sunday, 8 September. The blackened remains of the lodge symbolised this year's fires. However, the fires spread far beyond Binna Burra, Beechmont and Canungra.

This year an army of Queenslanders united to fight bushfires around Stanthorpe, Yeppoon, Noosa, Bundaberg, Somerset, Kilkivan and countless other communities. Our rural fireys have put their own lives on the line to fight the flames around the clock day in, day out and they are still doing it. There is really only one word to describe them, and that is heroes. Our rural fireys do not ask for gratitude or recognition, but they deserve it. I would also like to place on record my thanks to the firefighters who flew to Queensland from all across Australia and New Zealand to help us in our time of need. We are blessed to have such great mates. The bushfire season has not ended and we know that this danger will remain for many months, so we must ensure that Queensland is as ready as it can be. We must ensure our fireys have the manpower and the equipment they need to keep Queenslanders safe.

This year we must also remember the struggles faced by regional Queensland. Two-thirds of our state is drought declared. Two-thirds of this state is just, quite simply, at breaking point. At times rural communities feel that they are facing this crisis alone, but they are not. Queenslanders in every corner of this state are with them and so are we. I promise rural and regional Queenslanders they will always have a voice in this parliament.

The role of the opposition is to hold the government to account and we have certainly done that this year. There is not enough time to mention it all, but we have helped to ensure that people with disabilities will continue to enjoy cheap transport.

We stood with the small businesses and the farmers against the activists. We helped to save Queensland craft brewers from a new tax. We demanded a second M1, more air conditioning in our schools, more maternity services in the bush, and better skills and training. We continue to offer solutions for the crime crisis facing Townsville. We continue to demand water security for our drought-stricken regions.

We called for tougher laws for unlawful protesters. We called for the government to come clean on Paradise Dam. We stood up for juveniles during the watch house crisis. We have called for an overhaul of the child safety system. We have called for an open and transparent review into mine safety. We will continue to push for a full and open review of the preparedness of Queensland in terms of bushfires. My team and I will continue to fight for these issues, because they matter in every corner of Queensland.

I would like to use this opportunity to recognise one of Brisbane's best loved leaders. Politicians do not come any better than Graham Quirk. Brisbane's former Lord Mayor is a great man who has done tremendous things for this great city. We wish him all the very best for the future. I also congratulate the new Lord Mayor, Adrian Schrinner. Brisbane City Council is in good shape and has been left in very capable hands. I place on the record my heartfelt congratulations to Prime Minister Scott Morrison and the Queensland LNP team who were returned to Canberra in 23 seats out of 30.

I would also like to remember the former members who passed away this year. Vicky Kippin-O'Connor was the first woman in the National Party to be elected to any parliament in Australia. Vicky was a National Party colleague of Martin Tenni, the former member for Barron River whom we acknowledged this morning.

Mr Speaker, if you will indulge me, I left the chamber this morning and ran into one of the press gallery, Pat Lion, who said to me, 'Deb, I need to tell you a story that when I was young I used to use a tarpaulin as a slip-and-slide in Martin Tenni's backyard.'

Mr Mander: Picture that.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am not taking that interjection! Both Martin and Vicky will be greatly missed by their families this Christmas and by their many friends on both sides of politics.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to recognise your hard work and dedication throughout this year of parliament. You have brought a dignity to this chamber and to the office of Speaker and have ensured fairness in all of our proceedings. I thank you. On behalf of the LNP, I thank you for your dedication to this very important role. I also thank all of those members who have deputised you. Mr Deputy Speaker, I apologise that this side of the House constantly calls you 'Acting Speaker'. We know that you have the job but for some reason we keep calling you that. I know that you scowl at us each time. He is still scowling at us!

Let me also thank the many fine people of the parliament who ensure the smooth running of this place—firstly, to the Clerk, Neil Laurie, whose knowledge and wisdom is invaluable to this parliament. Neil leads a dedicated and tireless team which also includes Deputy Clerk Michael Ries and First Clerk Assistants Bernice Watson and Amanda Honeyman. We know that Amanda will begin the new year with a baby. Amanda, we wish all the best for you, your family and your bub.

I also recognise the work of the Director of Corporate and Electorate Services, Craig Atkinson, and the Office of Queensland Parliamentary Counsel. I also would like to give, along with the Premier, a special mention to the Director of Information Services and Parliamentary Librarian, Janet Prowse. Janet really is a library legend. I mentioned to her just the other day at the lighting of the Christmas tree that I would like to read the new Frances Whiting book *The Best Kind of Beautiful*. By 10 am the next day it was sitting on my desk and the note said that I could have it out until February. Thank you, Janet. You really are the best kind of beautiful.

I thank also the Director of Property and Facility Services, Stewart Johnson. Stewart's team ensures that the parliament is much more than a debating chamber. His team makes this place a home for every member of this parliament. In particular, I know that those regional members are so grateful for the work that you do. All of us, but I think especially the member for Burdekin, thank you for the work that has been done to improve the safety of the Annexe following last year's fire—and I think we can leave that there.

I thank all the cleaners, catering staff, maintenance team and security guards. They do not just look after this building. I know it is dangerous to mention names, but I just have to. I really want to give a shout-out to Helena Simpson. Helena has been a cleaner here since 1985. I do not think any one of us gets in that lift without Helena saying hello, knowing us all by our names.

An honourable member interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: She has also worked in catering. I apologise. She has worked in the parliamentary precinct since 1985. She has worked in many different areas but that is currently her role. Today she has set up for our Christmas drinks this evening. Helena, we look forward to that. I thank Andrew, who is I think one of the best coffee makers we have had for many years. In security, I give a special shout-out to Phil Flaherty. Phil knows the extra hard work he has done this year to make all of us in this place feel welcome. Phil, you know what you did and thank you so very much. In IT, Glenn Simpson is always ready to fix my wi-fi which for some reason never works in my room—but it is working now, so thank you, Glenn. I also want to give a massive shout-out to chef Andy Bowden. This year I had to make what is meant to be my prize-winning pesto that was not prize winning this year. I had to make it in the Annexe, and Andy made sure I had everything available to be able to cook it in Deb's kitchen on level 19.

There are a few other people I would like to mention. I thank Hansard Chief Reporter Jo Mathers and her team for somehow making sense of all of our waffle. I thank Sergeant-at-Arms Michael Watkin; Sue Cawcutt, who is retiring next month after eight years as committee secretary; and Col Ogle, who has completed 25 years of parliamentary service this year and is now enjoying a well-earned retirement. I must also recognise the tremendous contribution made by Chief Parliamentary Attendant Angie Jones. Angie has served the parliament for 30 years. That is quite an innings. Thank you Angie. I also give a shout-out to Margaret and Lyn, who helped me thread a needle just this morning when my button fell off so I could sew it back on.

Of course, I thank the whole opposition team for its outstanding work this year. Our team does not have a fraction of the resources that the government has—that goes with being in opposition, no matter what side of politics you are from—but we punch above our weight. I say a massive thankyou to our administrative staff and our advisers, both here and in all of our electorate offices. I particularly thank my electorate officers in Kingaroy: Lenny, Belinda and Jules. I also thank every single LNP member of this House, their families and their staff. Their dedication to their local communities is unrivalled. I thank them so very much.

I am so proud of my shadow cabinet. I am so proud of this team. I know that we are going to make 2020 an even bigger and better year. The shadow cabinet has travelled to each and every corner of this great state of ours, working and listening to the people of Queensland. I especially want to thank my deputy, the member for Everton. He is a wonderful colleague and a wonderful friend. To you and to Gail: enjoy what little family time you are going to get off over this Christmas break. I also thank the Manager of Opposition Business, the member for Kawana, for the vigour he shows in this House and for the entertainment that I think he gives both sides of the House. To each and every one of the LNP team: please take some time and enjoy this Christmas break with your families.

To everyone on the crossbenches and to the members of the government—to the Premier and her team and to all of her cabinet: I wish each and every one of you a well-deserved break. I hope that you get to spend some precious time with your loved ones and your friends.

This Christmas I know that we will all be thinking of the member for Stretton. We were all moved by the courage he has shown this week and please know that everyone on this side of the House, like the whole House, is thinking of you. I also extend my good wishes to our Governor, the Hon. Paul de Jersey, and his wife, Kaye. Let me also thank the parliamentary press gallery for its work this year. This is the people's house and the press are the eyes of the people, and fortunately this gallery has excellent vision. Of course, thank you Sarah Vogler for your contribution to journalism along with Tegan George, who has left us for the bright lights of Canberra.

An honourable member: Bright lights?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, that is exactly what she said! For families Christmas is the most special time of the year and I am blessed to have a beautiful and loving family. The families of MPs do not stand in elections but they make huge sacrifices for us to do our jobs, so of course to my husband and to Isabella, to Lucy and to Elke: thank you for being there again for me this year.

Finally, I want to wish every Queenslander a merry Christmas and a happy new year. We are so fortunate to live in this beautiful state, but it is the people who make Queensland such a special state. Their courage, compassion and quick wit has no equal. It is an honour and a privilege to serve the people of this state and it is my parting wish that every Queenslander enjoys a safe break and a merry Christmas with the ones they love.