




Speech By
Bruce Saunders

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (5.54 pm): I gave up believing in the tooth fairy many years ago! I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker Kelly, for being appointed as Deputy Speaker. I acknowledge possibly one of the best Speakers we ever had in this parliament: Curtis Pitt. I thank you both for your wonderful guidance over the years.

It is very humbling to be re-elected as the member for Maryborough. This is my third term as the member for Maryborough. Formed in 1865, Maryborough is one of the oldest electorates in this state. It is a very proud electorate. We in the Maryborough electorate are noted for being great innovators. We started with engineering, trains and timber.

I thank the voters of the Maryborough electorate, because they are great people. They are very honest people. They tell you straight to your face if you are wrong. If you do something right, they will congratulate you. They are probably the most salt-of-the-earth people I ever came across. Being born in Western Queensland, I know that the people of Maryborough are very good people.

Mr Harper: They must think a lot of you, too!

Mr SAUNDERS: I take that interjection from the member for Thuringowa: they do think a lot of me! I think a lot of the Maryborough voters. I really appreciate them giving me a third term in possibly one of the greatest state governments ever, the Palaszczuk Labor government. It is a government very focused on regional Queensland.

Before we jump aboard the Saunders train and go for a trip, I want to thank some people. First, I thank a very good friend of mine who has retired from my office. We call him 'the General'. His name is Ron Fossen. Ron served this country for 15 years with distinction in one of the top units in this country. He is a great bloke. I have known Ron for many years. It is sad for me to stand here tonight and talk about Ron retiring, because we never think we are going to retire. At 61 years of age, Ron decided that he had had enough. After serving his country and doing what he did, I can appreciate that.

Ron is one of the reasons the Palaszczuk government was elected. Ron was my campaign director in 2015. No-one is more committed to the Labor movement and to justice in this state than Ron. I really miss him being in the office. He was my office manager since 2015. He is a great Together member. That is the association I had with Ron for many years. Ron is probably tuning in tonight. He gets embarrassed when given accolades. I just say thanks, mate. Thanks for your service not only to my office and to the people of Maryborough but also to the community. Ron is very community minded, as he was for his country when he served in the armed forces. Ron will be missed.

I also thank the Maryborough ALP branch in which we have some great members. The 300-odd volunteers worked tirelessly in the heat of the October election, standing shoulder to shoulder. They are people who believe in the Labor movement and in what this government is doing. They believe that no-one should be left behind. We would not be here without people like them. I refer to people like Jim Nilon. We have been friends now for 41 or 42 years. He stood for the seat of Gregory in 1989 against Vaughan Johnson. We worked together on that campaign. When we look at people who help on campaigns, I have a great mate called Peter Killeen, an AMWU delegate—

Mr Tantari interjected.

Mr SAUNDERS: He is a great man; I take that interjection from the member for Hervey Bay. Pete Killeen is the AMWU delegate at Downer and Pete is one of the reasons why we are building trains at Downer. Pete is a fantastic man and has worked very hard for the workers at Downer.

There are three people whom I really want to congratulate. One is the Premier. The Premier has shown that she is a leader with backbone and a leader of substance for this state. The second is the Deputy Premier, who did a fantastic job during the pandemic. The third is the Treasurer. The Treasurer has his hand on the tiller guiding us through these tough times. Without the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer, I would hate to see where we would be now.

Mr Harper interjected.

Mr SAUNDERS: I take that interjection from the member for Thuringowa. I ask members to close their eyes and think about the 64 times the opposition wanted the borders to be opened. The situation in Queensland would be like the situation in England, Spain and other areas. We would not be able to get out and about. I have a lot of gratitude and respect for the Premier for standing firm and standing up to the bullies in Canberra—standing up to those bullies who tried to stand over her. That is the sign of a good leader. That is why Queenslanders voted for Labor.