




Speech By
Bruce Saunders

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

Record of Proceedings, 23 March 2021

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (5.00 pm), continuing: We are back on the tracks. Before we adjourned I was explaining in very simple terms to the mob opposite why they lost the election and how the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer were a tower of strength during COVID and also during the election campaign. Before I go on to thank others, I thank Team LNP for being on the side of Team Saunders. They gave me a candidate who was a gift that kept on giving. I also thank the federal member for Wide Bay: Llew, thank you, mate! You were the fifth column in my office all the time and I really appreciated it.

I would like to thank other people who helped immensely during my campaign. In particular, I thank my daughters, Ashleigh Jane and Melina Maree, who are a tower of strength for me. I know where they get their intelligence from and I know it is not from me. They are highly skilled young women and it is a pleasure to work with them and their partners, Marty and Anthony. During the campaign I borrowed Anthony's ute. He said I drive it like I stole it. I thank my two daughters. They are wonderful young women. As a parent I am very proud of my daughters and very proud of their achievements in life. That is what parents do.

Mr Harper: They are probably proud of you too.

Mr SAUNDERS: I take that interjection from the member for Thuringowa: I think that they are—sometimes. I thank my wife. During the campaign she stood shoulder to shoulder with me. She is the rock behind me. I thank my family. They are amazing. I am very privileged to be not only a husband to my wife but also a father to my wonderful daughters. When we see what is going on now with young women, I shudder to think that that could happen to my daughter. I am glad that people are standing up. It is about time that men stand up and become men. I am talking not only about what is happening in Canberra and around the state but also about domestic violence. I say to men: keep your hands in your pockets and be men. Be good citizens not only for your city or the town where you live but also for your state and your country.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has really delivered for Maryborough. It has been a great government for Maryborough. I want to talk about what the government has delivered in the past five years. I want to talk about how Maryborough has progressed, particularly in terms of Downer and the rail contracts that have come through from the work of the member for Miller, the Premier and the cabinet. That has kept our city alive. It has been fantastic to bring manufacturing back to regional Queensland. We build the best trains not only in Queensland but, I would say, in the world. When you see the NGR trains—

Mr Harper: You didn't get them from India, mate.

Mr SAUNDERS: No, we are refurbishing the trains; I take the interjection from the member for Thuringowa. The skill set at the workshop that is refurbishing those trains is absolutely amazing. There are so many things happening in Maryborough that, Mr Deputy Speaker, I may have to ask you if I can stay for another hour.

The Rheinmetall NIOA Munitions plant, which makes shell casings, is backed by the state government and the federal government. It is backed by state development and it is backed by Ergon Energy with power supply. It is a wonderful project for our city. It will employ a lot of very skilled workers. We have the train contracts. Other smaller manufacturing companies have started up and are now working with companies such as Downer. There is a great company in Maryborough, Allweld, that makes boats and ambulances and also supplies Ergon Energy. It is a fantastic small company that has now grown into a very good manufacturing plant in Maryborough city. Those things are happening through job-creation programs. In the years that I have been in politics the job creation that is happening under the Palaszczuk Labor government is absolutely second to none.

I want to talk about some of the infrastructure that has been built in my electorate. Let's close the door, make sure that the conductor has everyone on board and take a little train ride around Maryborough city. Firstly, let's look at the upgrades at Maryborough State High School, for which I thank the minister who has been amazing. Maryborough High is very special to a lot of people. It used to be a grammar school and is now a state school. It has some of Maryborough city's most iconic buildings.

Mr Ryan: And an excellent principal.

Mr SAUNDERS: I take that interjection from the police minister: the school does have an excellent principal. He is a good bloke. The money injected into that school by the Palaszczuk government has lifted Maryborough High to the levels at which it should have been. That school now has over 1,150 students, up from 550, because of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to education. All of our primary schools have benefitted from upgrades to car parks and the installation of nearby traffic lights. This government is committed to education, health care and creating jobs. It is a traditional Labor government, as far as I can see.

Next on the tour is the Howard police and fire station, which represents a huge investment in a regional town in my electorate. I was with the police minister when we opened that complex, which replaces a police station that was over 100 years old. The officers had to go outside to use the toilet. It is a very modern complex. We have upgraded the police station and the fire station. We have also upgraded the SES facility. It is a really great complex in a regional town in my electorate.

Now let's look at what we have done with the roads. At Burrum Heads all the roads and intersections have been upgraded. Serenity Drive and Drury Lane were a problem and we have fixed the turning lanes there. The intersection at the Yarrilee State Primary School will be upgraded with a \$20-odd million investment from the Palaszczuk government. That project has been talked about for years but who delivered it? Once again it was the Palaszczuk Labor government!

I can talk on and on about what has happened in the electorate in terms of job creation. I think that the best program that any government has brought into Queensland is the Works for Queensland program. It is a rolled-gold program that is enabling us to complete projects in the Maryborough electorate that council could only dream about because it could not fund them. Works for Queensland has come along and over \$50 million has been invested in the Maryborough electorate since the Palaszczuk Labor government was elected. Some of that money has been spent on footpaths. Maryborough has an ageing population so it is really great to see footpath and intersection upgrades. People can cross safely using islands in the middle of roads because of Works for Queensland. People can get out of their houses and walk or use mobility scooters to get into the CBD or to shopping centres. That is fantastic to see.

The Works for Queensland program allowed me to work closely with the mayor on one particular project. We have a great mayor and councillors in Maryborough city. I am talking about the water park, which is absolutely fantastic. That was a \$3 million investment from the Palaszczuk Labor government through Works for Queensland. While some people may not understand this, that park will transform entertainment for a lot of people. Families will be able to get together and enjoy the water park. The water park would never have been built without Works for Queensland. Works for Queensland is rolled gold.

People tell me that the Maryborough CBD is looking very good. The majority of the upgrades to the CBD have been funded by the Palaszczuk Labor government through Works for Queensland. When I think of how the city was five years ago and look at it now, I can see what a long way we have come and it is because the Palaszczuk Labor government has invested a lot in regional Queensland.

Mr Healy: Hear, hear!

Mr SAUNDERS: I hear the interjection from the member for Cairns. From the Torres Strait right down to Brisbane, we see not only roadworks but also hospital upgrades.

I move on to my hospital. The brand new A&E, which we opened in 2020 with the then health minister, is state of the art. The results of the \$12 million-odd investment in the A&E at Maryborough Hospital are eye-opening. To be quite honest, before it looked pretty shabby and pretty bad; now it is a

very modern A&E. The health minister, the member for Redcliffe, had a great look at it when walking through it with me last week. She was very happy with the outcome, as are the staff and patients. We have seen a huge increase in the number of people going to the A&E. You know the old saying: if you build it, they will come. That is what has happened at the A&E in Maryborough.

Since being elected, we have upgraded the air conditioning and lifts at Maryborough Hospital. I know it is not sexy, for want of a better word, to talk about electrical work in a hospital, but we cannot have new equipment such as scanners and machines unless we do electrical upgrades. We have a great scanner there now.

The Palaszczuk Labor government has invested a lot of money in Maryborough Hospital, bringing it forward from where it used to be. As I have said to a lot of people, in that dreadful time between 2012 and 2015 you could not even get a bandaid at the hospital. Since the Palaszczuk Labor government—

Mr Harper interjected.

Mr SAUNDERS: I take that interjection from the member for Thuringowa. There were a lot of public servant sackings during their term of government. I thank the member for Thuringowa for reminding me of that.

I would like to thank my union. A very good friend of mine is Alex Scott from the Together union. Alex and I have been friends for a long time. I would like to thank Alex and Katie Flanders, the assistant state secretary. Another good person who has worked with me through my campaign from the Together union is Allison Finley-Bissett. At every campaign Allison takes leave from her work, rolls up her sleeves and works hard. I am a proud union member—I always have been—and I will die a union member. My wife tells me that I bleed purple, because I do bleed Together. I would like to thank all the Together people who have helped me since 2015, particularly in this last campaign. Their support was invaluable. I personally thank Alex, Katie and Alison Finley-Bissett for the great faith they have always shown in me as one of their members.

I will always look after my public servants. Some people say, 'We do not need public servants.' The public servants in my electorate are the frontline people; they are the people who take your blood at the hospital, the people who make sure your records are right, the people at the schools who make sure everything is done correctly. They are the people we rely on in our day-to-day life.

I would like to thank the member for Caloundra. I listened to his maiden speech; it was a great speech. I do a lot with corrections officers. I have a lot of good friends who are corrections officers. I really value the work they do in our community. I know that the minister does, too. The minister has been to the Maryborough correctional centre and has spoken to the officers in my electorate. I know that he has helped on many occasions. They are very good people who do a very dangerous job. I say to the corrections officers who stood by my side in the 2020 election: we made sure that correctional centres would not be privatised, that they would not have to buy their own uniforms and that wages would not be cut, which would have happened if the LNP had got into power.

When we go to work we may have a tough day, but at least we know what to expect; they do not. I have a lot of admiration and respect for corrections officers right across this state, particularly my friends who work in the correctional centres who, as I said, stood by my side. They are there all the time. I know that this government will always make sure corrections officers are looked after. It is great to be in the chamber with an ally and very good friend in the member for Caloundra. He and I have a lot of mutual friends in corrections, and it is great to be here with him.

The opposition still do not get why they did not win the election. They are still going on and on. They are not talking about the future. They are not talking about what Queenslanders want to hear. Queenslanders want to hear about what will happen when we come out of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of jobs, health care and education. They want to be sure of what will be delivered. They place a lot of trust in this Palaszczuk Labor government. That is why we won the election. The opposition still do not get it. They can have inquiry after inquiry, but until they understand and think about Queenslanders the way we do and until they put Queenslanders first they will spend a long time on the opposition benches.