




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 16 June 2021

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (6.43 pm): As I rise in this place I am extremely proud to be returned as the member for Gladstone. I am humbled that the people of my electorate have once again placed their confidence in me to represent them. While Queensland is the place to be, as we have seen there is no better jewel in the crown than the electorate of Gladstone. Three years ago I stood in this place and recommitted myself to work hard for my electorate. I reaffirmed my dedication to my position, and today I reaffirm that commitment. We have achieved a lot in Gladstone since 2015, and I am determined to continue to deliver for the electorate to ensure a bright future for every resident, every visitor and every investor.

As all members here know, you do not get elected to the Queensland parliament on your own. You can only do it with a dedicated team behind you, and I have the very best team. First and foremost I want to thank my much loved wife Theresa, who has been my biggest supporter and No. 1 advocate. The past 12 months have been a huge adjustment for us as I have taken on ministerial duties that keep me on the road for long stretches of time. I cannot adequately express how much her support has meant to me. Theresa drives me and inspires me to keep representing Gladstone the only way I know how, and that is full throttle. I have one more special thing to mention about my wife, who took up the slack and kept the wheels turning at home while I recovered from spinal surgery late last year. Without her dedication and support my recovery from surgery would have been a whole lot longer. Without a doubt, this is one of those times when a thankyou is just not enough.

One of the things that makes it easier to be away from home so much is knowing the huge support Theresa and I have from our family. Once again they were right behind me during the last election campaign. Our lovely daughter, Taylor, and our ever-dependable son, Blake, Taylor's husband, Matt, and our beautiful grand-daughter, Peyton, continually motivate me to keep delivering for Gladstone and future generations. I said this the last time, but it keeps getting more and more real to me: I know that I could not do what I do without their continued love and support. It means the world to me!

A very special thanks must also go to my mother and father, Annette and Neville Butcher. After the COVID-19 travel restrictions were lifted they were good to join the grey nomad life and take the caravan to all parts of the state, but they always planned to be back in Gladstone, ready to help me out for the state election. My dad hammered in nearly 150 corflutes around the electorate—not bad for an 'old fella' who recently turned 77. When it comes to convincing the people of Gladstone to continue to put their faith in me, my dad was certainly always up for the fight. Thank you also to my identical twin brother Wayne, who allowed me to be in more than one place at the same time. Thankfully, this campaign he managed to avoid doing any TV interviews for the cameras. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my extended family, especially my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Dave and Joanne Gourley, who are always available at a minute's notice to help in any way needed. I could not do it without any of them—not just during election campaigns, but all year-round. That support continues to this day.

Everyone in this House knows the value of committed local branch members, and I belong to the best branch that is no exception to the rule. In fact, the cooperation and assistance of my local ALP branch members has surpassed my expectation in every election I have run. When you add to that the volunteers from many walks of life, I have a campaign team that works like a dream. As a sitting member, there is nothing better than walking around town and seeing my 'red army' proudly wearing their campaign T-shirts while going about their everyday lives. We handed out over 450 T-shirts at the last election. As always, comrades from the trade unions came to the fore and rolled up their sleeves, many joining street stalling, doing a few hours pre-polling or on an election day polling booth on their way home from night shift. Like my good friend the member for Maryborough, I am a proud union man. I have seen firsthand the positive changes that our advocacy makes for workers.

I also must thank my good friend, the mayor of Gladstone, Matt Burnett. Like me, Matt is a huge advocate for Gladstone. It has been my pleasure to work alongside him to deliver the infrastructure and services that locals deserve. His advice and perspective on the challenges our community faces and the opportunities available to make it an even better place to live will make him an outstanding member for Flynn in the future. I look forward to working side by side with him to deliver for the community of Gladstone and the region. I encourage everyone to get behind him.

When it comes to people in your corner who will do anything asked, and often so much more that is not, I could not wish for a better colleague, comrade and friend than Shelly Holzheimer. Since I last had the opportunity to stand in this place and thank Shelly for her outstanding contribution to my success as the member for Gladstone, much has happened to Shelly in her personal life. She has dealt with the passing of her dear husband and my friend John and endured her own personal medical challenges, but if there is one thing you can say about Shelly, it is that she has an unbreakable spirit and determination. Even through her toughest times she has remained a constant support for me, my office and the community. First on the hustings, last to go home and master of the volunteer roster, my campaign simply would not run as smoothly as it has done in the past without Shelly's commitment to the cause. I do not think there are enough words to describe just how much inspiration those around Shelly have drawn from her strength and positivity even in the most difficult moments. It would be remiss of me not to inform the House that Shelly did in fact perform a celebratory 'shoey' on election night.

Last but not least on my list of gratitude, I want to acknowledge the part of my recent success at the polls that belongs to my hardworking staff. First, my electorate office staffers have, as always, done an incredible job—particularly over the last 18 months. In addition to my ministerial duties taking me away from Gladstone more often, they have had to navigate supporting our local community through a global pandemic, and they have met each and every challenge that has come to them. To my assistant electorate officers Jill Hopson, who has been in my office since day one, Jo Schuler and Alana Watt, thank you for everything that you do every day for our local community—not just when you are in the office but as outstanding ambassadors for our community on a personal level.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome to my new electorate officer, Danica Thumm, who joined my team in February 2021 and has hit the ground running. Danica replaced my former electorate officer, Tara Manning, late last year. Tara's departure surely was one of those examples of being both sad for your own loss but also excited for what the future would hold for her. After having been employed in my office since 2015, Tara accepted a wonderful career opportunity, still helping her local community working in her field of law. Tara had the ability to stay grounded through times of pressure, with her focus on delivering for the Gladstone community always her ultimate goal. We all miss her smiling face and her warm, friendly, effective manner in the office, but the beauty of a close community is that we can still catch up for a drink and a bite to eat, which we regularly do. I know everyone who has had dealings with Tara joins me in wishing her every success in her new job.

For the first time, I want to thank my ministerial staff for all the hard work they have done in the past 12 months—from helping me to get across my new portfolios to spending hours together in planes, cars and boats visiting regions right across the state. Every single one of them has done an outstanding job to help me fulfil my duties to the people of Queensland as a minister of the Crown. They are all prepared to go above and beyond the call of duty whenever needed, and I sincerely thank them for that. Dedication to a role is something that money cannot buy; it comes from within.

When I was first elected to represent the people of Gladstone back in 2015, I said my focus would be on delivering investment in critical infrastructure the region sorely needed, especially in our health services and schools. While there is still much more that I have on my list to deliver, I am proud of the progress that Gladstone has made. Last year I was proud to welcome the Premier to Gladstone to open the brand new \$42 million Gladstone Hospital emergency department. The new ED doubles the total operation to 22 treatment spaces with capacity to expand further at times when there is greater demand.

That was not the only health related news for the electorate last term. Working with then health minister and now Deputy Premier, I was able to secure the Mater hospital site in Gladstone, with a nearly \$20 million investment to continue providing vital health services for the local community. I want to thank the Deputy Premier for listening to my concerns about the potential loss of private clinic services in Gladstone. Because Labor invests in health services, we were able to keep these services—including the delivery of cancer and surgical services—in the now renamed Gladstone Hospital West Wing. There is more to do and I encourage the people of Gladstone to be patient because we are getting there.

In education, local Gladstone schools also secured important funding to upgrade facilities, improve access for students with disabilities and deliver skills training. Since being elected in 2015, I have been able to deliver more than \$140 million in upgrades to local schools in the Gladstone region. That funding includes the \$450,000 provided to Gladstone South State School to install security fencing and the \$400,000 for Gladstone Central State School to upgrade their amenities block. The funding goes right across Gladstone—like the \$350,000 that Clinton State School received to refurbish their G block classrooms and the \$280,000 that Gladstone State High School received for shade cover for their multipurpose courts. This is not just an investment in our kids' future; it is an investment delivered by local contractors, supporting local jobs in Gladstone, because that is what Labor does—we invest to create jobs. There are so many more examples of this Palaszczuk government's ongoing investment in Gladstone, including local road improvements, domestic and family violence support, more police, equipment for local fires, nine projects worth \$5.2 million delivered under the Works for Queensland program—and the list keeps going on and on.

As I mentioned earlier, in May last year I was fortunate enough to be tapped on the shoulder by the Premier to be Queensland's Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and now also the Minister for Water. I have always lived around and been a champion for regional Queenslanders so it was a great honour to be given the opportunity to be their voice and advocate even more strongly for their interests around the cabinet table. With my history working in the alumina industry, I was also thrilled to be able to work closely with the sector to deliver positive outcomes during what was for many businesses a very difficult time.

I am a huge believer in go, look and see. You cannot make decisions based in Brisbane or in Gladstone; you have to get out and talk to the people. My team and I have put in thousands of kilometres on the road, in the air and on the sea visiting all corners of the state in the last 12 months making sure regional Queenslanders were being heard in their own backyard. There are plenty of ministers who can tell you that I made sure their voices were heard loud and clear. That is what Labor governments do. We are considerate, we listen and we deliver.

I must take this opportunity to thank the Treasurer for handing over some incredible programs that are making a real difference to Queensland manufacturers. Over the past months, I have been lucky to announce Made in Queensland and regional Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program recipients right across the state that are helping businesses move into advanced manufacturing, grow their operations and create more and more local jobs in regional Queensland.

The regional manufacturing hubs are just one of those initiatives, and it was fantastic to be able to bring my portfolio and electorate responsibilities together to open a hub in Gladstone last year, adding to the hubs in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton—but we are not stopping there. I am looking forward to delivering on the Premier's announcement of a new hub in Mackay and one on the Gold Coast to further enhance this excellent program. I also look forward to delivering on another election commitment in the coming months by opening another round of the hugely successful Made in Queensland grants program—so stay tuned for more on that one.

As members could imagine, I have really enjoyed my responsibility as minister for craft beer in Queensland, visiting our talented craft brewers around the state and sampling their outstanding work. You will not be surprised to hear that I look forward to continuing to work very closely with the industry to help them grow and create those jobs that we know are there for the next four years.

In this term the Premier has handed me responsibility for water in Queensland. The prolonged droughts and recent deluges we saw last year across the state strengthen the importance of our focus on water planning, reserving, conservation and re-use. I look forward to delivering for the people of Queensland in this incredibly important portfolio area. It was a privilege to announce the latest round of Building our Regions, specifically focusing on water security for our regional communities. As we continue to implement our economic recovery plan in the wake of COVID, I feel a great deal of pride when I represent my electorate of Gladstone and the people of Queensland more broadly in this House and certainly around the cabinet table. It is nothing short of a privilege.

News reports over the last year have caused the public to question whether some in Canberra truly appreciate the privilege bestowed upon them when they turn up to work at Parliament House either as staff or as members of parliament. The start of a new parliamentary term serves as a reminder to all of us that public office is not just a job. Being here in this building means we have a unique opportunity to do something for the public. The positions that we hold in this House are privileged and we must remember that each and every day that we are here. We have the ability to provide comfort and stability to the people we serve. We also have the ability to provide Queenslanders with a feeling of security in times of uncertainty and to foster a feeling that in times of crisis we will be there.

Through all of this, our government will do its absolute best to make sure there are jobs, opportunities and a bright future for all of us in this great state. Everyone in this House is extremely lucky to be provided with the opportunity to represent our constituents and to make the lasting contribution that we do. I look forward to working with each and every one of you in this chamber to make everyone's life in Queensland all the better.