




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 25 February 2021

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (12.12 pm): It is with great honour that I rise to deliver a speech on the address-in-reply in this the 57th Parliament of Queensland. I begin by offering my congratulations to the Speaker, Curtis Pitt, the member for Mulgrave, on being re-elected to the highly regarded position of Speaker of this parliament. I had the privilege during the last term of government to serve as one of the panel of temporary speakers and as a member of the CLA, chaired by the Speaker. During that time I was part of a bipartisan parliamentary delegation to Papua New Guinea, led by the Speaker, and had a chance to observe the Speaker's performance in the various roles of the Speaker—a role in which the Speaker has proven to be a respectful and dignified ambassador for this parliament.

This is the start of my third term as a state member—the third time the voters of Condamine have put their faith in me to be their voice in this the Queensland parliament. This is not something that I take lightly. I will endeavour to repay the confidence the constituency has placed in me throughout this term by advocating for all the issues and concerns that are important to them.

Whilst the overall result of the 2020 election was disappointing for the LNP, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution and dedication of the past leadership team of Deb Frecklington and Tim Mander. They both worked tirelessly and selflessly throughout the term and could not have given more of themselves. There are a number of things that will influence the outcome of an election—timing and fate being two very important parts. This was particularly the case for the 2020 election. The platform that had been built over the first two years suddenly meant little at the beginning of 2020 with the advent of COVID-19. In times of crisis or disaster the public always turn to elected government officials for advice and assistance. This was evident in Queensland.

The difference with the COVID-19 pandemic was that, unlike cyclones, floods, or bushfires, it was an ongoing issue for the entire year and remains so in our community today, and possibly for years to come. This has had a huge impact on the election result. Deb and Tim, you both gave everything to the campaign in the most challenging of conditions and can both hold your heads high. It was just not to be. I must also acknowledge at this time the contribution of the families of both Deb and Tim. It is a huge impost on the families of senior members of a parliamentary team, particularly in the lead-up to an election. Sacrifices were made by both the partners and children of those members.

I offer my congratulations to David Crisafulli, opposition leader, and David Janetzki, deputy opposition leader. I thank them for entrusting me with the very important role of shadow minister for natural resources, mines and energy.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge those members who retired or did not recontest the last election. Whilst retirement was not the reason for the former member for Pumicestone, Simone Wilson, to not recontest, I wish her well in her new career and hope she gets to spend some quality time with her family.

Ted Sorensen, the retiring member for Hervey Bay, was a much loved member of this House—by both sides, I think it is fair to say—and will be missed by all. He was one of the genuine characters to have graced this chamber. Ted gave many years of service to his community, both at the local and state government level. I wish him all the best.

Last but by no means least, there is my old friend Mark McArdle. Mark held many positions over a long and distinguished career. He was a minister, a shadow minister and at one time leader of the Liberal Party. Whilst Lawrence Springborg is known as the father of the LNP for his role as the leader of the National Party in bringing the two parties together—

Mr Stevens: Mark's the mother.

Mr WEIR: Mark McArdle played just as important a role as the leader of the Liberal Party in the amalgamation of the two parties. In terms of the interjection from the member for Mermaid Beach, I can tell members that I introduced Mark at a function recently and I talked about the amalgamation of the two parties. I said that every wedding needs a bride. He gleefully took that acknowledgement. Mark faced some serious health issue during his time in this place, but his larrikin character continued unabated. My best wishes to him for whatever the future holds.

It is often said that politics is a tough game. This is particularly so for those members who are on the wrong end of an election defeat. Unfortunately, we lost two members in very close contests—Marty Hunt in Nicklin and David Batt in Bundaberg. They were dedicated, hardworking members and this House is the poorer for their absence. David Batt was someone I worked very closely with during the last term as we were on the same committee and became good friends. It was very difficult to see that seat fall by just nine votes. Marty and Batty, I wish you all the best and I sincerely hope that we see you both back in this chamber after the next election in 2024.

It is a massive commitment to stand as a candidate for a state seat and we had many strong, professional candidates across the state who were unsuccessful. Thank you to each and every one of them. I am hopeful many of them are able to recontest in the future. Congratulations to my colleagues who were re-elected this term to continue to fight the good fight as we are elected to do. A special congratulation goes to Amanda Camm for reclaiming the seat of Whitsunday for the LNP.

As I said at the beginning of this speech, I am truly humbled by the support shown to me by the voters of Condamine. Despite some of the swings we saw across various parts of the state, my primary vote in Condamine increased by 12.85 per cent. Whilst we try to increase our vote at every election, to see such a significant rise was remarkable and a credit to our whole campaign team.

Before I speak more about the issues we campaigned on, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my office staff. Whenever you deal with the public, whether it be in business or politics, the first interaction that you have is at the front counter or a phone call which can define your view of that establishment. It is no different in an electorate office—perhaps even more so due to the many and varied issues we are confronted with.

I believe the courtesy, respectfulness and helpfulness of my staff in responding and dealing with these issues has played no small role in the election result in Condamine. I would like to thank Kylie Fuelling for always going above and beyond in the role of EO. Kylie is always supportive, a great sounding-board for me and professional in all aspects of her work—something I am sure all shadow ministers who have visited the Condamine electorate can attest to. I thank Kieran Wagstaff, who also shared the EO role. Kieran has moved on this year and I wish him well in the new job and his COVID-interrupted wedding plans. Hopefully they will come to fruition for him next week. They have been cancelled due to COVID on about three occasions, I think.

Wendy Sutton and Sandy Cowan share the EA position. I thank them for all they do to ensure the smooth running of the office. Thank you to the campaign committee of Bradley Siddans, Jo Saal, Peter and Sonja Wilson, Frank and Kay Goodall, Ian and Marg Graham, Doug Allen and Greg Johnson. Due to COVID, our campaign meetings were held via Zoom, which everyone soon became quite adept at. There were many others who helped on election day and over the three weeks of pre-poll. I give special thanks to those who contributed financially to the campaign as no campaign can run without funds, and this is becoming increasingly difficult as this Labor government continue to introduce legislation to restrict our capacity to fundraise these necessary funds.

The local campaign was on issues that I have been campaigning and advocating for over a long period of time—some since I was elected. Many of them are issues I have spoken of in this House many times—none more so than the continual failure by this government to support the workers at the New Hope Acland mine by refusing to grant the necessary approvals for stage 3. Many of these workers I have come to know personally. It is very disappointing and distressing when you make the phone call to them after they have been laid off. There are more of those in the pipeline if this approval is not granted in the very near future. This mine will run out of coal long before November, which is the date set for the Land Court hearing.

The Palaszczuk government continues to hide behind the court appeal process, despite the fact that the appeal has nothing whatsoever to do with any environmental impacts. These requirements have all been approved—all ticked off. While this government dithers, workers continue to lose their

jobs and not just in Condamine. The refusal to allow stage 3 has also affected people all the way down to the Port of Brisbane. New Hope have stood down a further 70 employees since the state election. How many more will have to go? How many rail workers and workers at the Port of Brisbane will have to go?

Water security is a major issue in the electorate. We are seeing water being trucked into the towns of Cambooya and Clifton. Indeed, at Clifton we are seeing sewage trucked out and water trucked in. It is a totally unacceptable situation. During the election campaign, the then minister came to Toowoomba and stated that the government would be addressing this issue. Madam Deputy Speaker, you can imagine my amazement and disappointment when there was no funding allocated in the recent budget for this critical issue.

The need to secure land in the Westbrook locality for a future high school is an issue that I have been pursuing on behalf of the community. This would ideally be located within the proposed Fernleigh development at Westbrook where all issues such as traffic, drop-off zones and access to ovals and sporting facilities could be fully integrated and incorporated. This project is currently on hold due to issues with Toowoomba Regional Council fees, charges and conditions. One would hope this will be resolved in the near future for the greater good of the community of Westbrook and neighbouring townships.

Many communities in Condamine continue to suffer an increase in hooning, car theft and house break-ins. There is a lack of police presence, and nowhere is this more apparent than the one-officer station at Cambooya. There has not been an officer at Cambooya for several months. The station is unmanned. Given the growing population and social issues in the area, this situation is totally unacceptable. The police officers at Drayton are supposed to support the Cambooya community whilst a new officer is appointed. In terms of the geographical location of Cambooya, there is a police station at Drayton, which is over 15 kilometres away; there is a police station at Clifton, which is about 45 kilometres away; and there is one at Helidon and one at Pittsworth. Then we have the heavily populated area in between with not one resident police officer.

The Oakey community are holding a public meeting this Saturday to voice their concerns about crime in their local area. Kingsthorpe, Gowrie and Crows Nest townships all report the same problems with the lack of police presence in their communities.

More funding is needed on many, many other issues in Condamine. One that I would like to particularly note is the Oakey Hospital. The Oakey Hospital has not received any significant funding for many, many years. Due to this lapse, it now has very serious maintenance issues and is well and truly overdue for some very significant funding.

I will continue to fight for and to support the people of Condamine, whether it be about roads, whether it be about policing or whether it be about bad management by government. I consider it a great honour to be returned, and I will do my best to repay that honour that has been bestowed upon me.