




Speech By
Glen Kelly

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

Record of Proceedings, 28 November 2024

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr G KELLY** (Mirani—LNP) (7.33 pm): Members of the House, distinguished guests and the people of Mirani, I stand here today deeply humbled and profoundly honoured to represent the people of Mirani in the 58th Parliament of Queensland. Mirani is not just a small town west of Mackay; the electorate of Mirani is the beating heart of Central Queensland. It is the sugarcane fields, the cattle stations, the coal ports, the power station and the coastal communities that form the backbone of Queensland. It is the families who rise before dawn, the workers who keep our economy moving and the land that provides for us all. For me, this is not just a job; it feels as though it is my time. It is about carrying forward my family's legacy of resilience, hard work and a deep respect for the land we call home.

My family's story goes back to the 1860s, when two brothers, Harry and Eden Coombs, left England in search of a better life. They settled west of Rockhampton on a patch of land with rolling hills, permanent water and, as luck would have it, the sniff of gold in the air. With little more than basic tools and a lot of determination, they built a life, sending word back to England for the rest of the family to join them. They worked cutting timber for the Mount Morgan mine—back then the richest place in the world. Producing gold, silver and copper, slowly but surely they built up what became Edithvale—a 4,000-acre property that over the years was a hard slog and weathered floods, droughts and bushfires and one of the most destructive plants ever known in Australia's history, the prickly pear.

That resilience runs deep in my family. My great-grandfather Jim Kelly came from Kilderry, Ireland, and came to Townsville in the 1920s. He and his siblings were orphaned young during the black flu pandemic and grew up in an orphanage near Rockhampton in a little place called Neerkol. Despite the odds, they made good lives for themselves in these local communities surrounding Neerkol.

Jim married Mabel Coombs of Edithvale and they started a family. Together with his siblings they relocated north, where they worked as canecutters in the Pioneer Valley. Jim and Mabel later returned to the Kalapa district to start a small dairy farm. Two of Jim's brothers went off to war and one, my great-uncle John Patrick Kelly, made the ultimate sacrifice and never came back. His name lives on, commemorated near Greenmount Homestead, just west of Walkerston.

My parents, Darrell and Noela Kelly, continued the tradition of hard work. They started out on a small piece of land in Kalapa, working the dairy farm, beef cattle and a grain-growing enterprise. My dad, now 86, still lives in a little silky oak house where his mum raised my brother, Paul, and me. Life on the farm was not easy but it taught us the values that I still carry with me today: discipline, determination and a commitment to the community.

Growing up, my days started early, milking cows with Dad before school; cricket, footy and soccer on the weekends; and farm work in between. It was a simple life. I rode my pushbike three kilometres to the primary school and home again every day. I caught a 45-seater bus with 60 sweaty schoolkids to Rockhampton State High School. That is when I realised school was not for me. Mum always put her boys first. In my case, it was carting me off to sport every weekend. Thanks to her, I excelled at cricket

and made the Queensland Country teams and the CQ teams. I later spent 17 years working at the Stanwell Power Station, unloading, pushing coal and earthworks while juggling running the farm. Balancing both was tough. By 2007 I decided to step away from the power station to focus on my farm.

In 2008 I met my wife, Nikki, who has been my rock ever since. Together we built a life on the family property, raising our two daughters, Laine and Paige, whom I am very proud of. Nikki's work as a teacher inspires me, and our girls remind me every day why this fight matters, not just for our family but also for every family in regional Queensland.

Life on the land is not for the faint-hearted. I fought through the devastating fires of 2018 and the crippling droughts that followed. Those challenges did not just test their resilience; they reinforced my belief that regional Queenslanders need a strong voice in parliament. Almost six years ago to the day, I was one of many rural firefighters involved in the Stanwell-Kabra fire event that has gone down in history due to the evacuation at Gracemere. With no air support available due to other wildfires in the state, rural and urban crews fought from the ground with everything they had to protect our communities. With wind speeds of up to 50 kilometres an hour, it was a harrowing firestorm unlike anything we had ever seen before. After witnessing horrific scenes on the ground, it was an enormous relief when it started to rain on us through that thick smoke as two 737 water bombers arrived from Bundaberg, dumping water on us to save our lives. Then life on the land became tougher: cattle prices crashed and we could not get feed for the stock anywhere. These were very trying times until the rain came in February 2020. These tough times strengthened my resolve about the importance of community and the need to have someone strong to stand up for the people of our region.

Politics has always sparked my interest, whether it was yelling at the radio or TV during a news bulletin, sharing a spirited debate around the back of the ute or having a good vent at the dinner table about the latest decision from the prime minister or premier of the day. These moments, though casual, were where my passion for representing everyday people truly took root—discussions fuelled by a deep sense of fairness and a desire to see better outcomes for our communities. So it was no surprise to any of my friends or family when I decided to take on the role of president of the Ridgeland LNP branch at the southern end of the electorate of Mirani, bringing along new members to join me in the fight for the bush. Now as I reflect on the tough times, I also acknowledge the tough campaign that brought me the privilege of standing here before all of you today. I want to pay tribute to my predecessor, Steven Andrew, who represented Mirani for seven years—it is not an easy seat to win, I can tell you that—and I respect his contribution.

I also offer my congratulations to the member for Condamine, Pat Weir, on his appointment as Speaker of the House. I would like to congratulate the Premier, the Hon. David Crisafulli, and all of his ministers and members of parliament on their iconic election to the government of Queensland, with a special shout-out and congratulations to my newly elected CQ colleagues. For the first time in history the voice of regional Queensland has never been louder, and I am excited to be part of this newly elected team and I look forward to working with you all in standing up for regional Queensland. I would also like to thank my federal colleagues across the state. The guidance they gave us and their support was absolutely amazing and something I will never forget.

A special mention goes to my family—Nikki, who was my fantastic campaign manager, and my girls, Laine and Paige, whose love and support carried me through this campaign. I need to thank my dear late mum. She gave me so much love and I miss her dearly. Thanks also to my dad, Darrell, and my brother Paul for their support.

To my campaign team, thank you. I could not have done this without the tireless efforts of those who letterboxed, phone canvassed and stood at polling booths in the heat of a Queensland October. I do not have to remind anyone here that the campaign does take an army. I am extremely grateful that I had the dedication and focused army of volunteers providing not only physical but emotional support to me during this campaign period. A special thanks goes out to a little dog called Bella, which I met in Mirani.

Government members interjected.

Mr G KELLY: I know.

Government members interjected.

Mr G KELLY: Please! People get very excited when they hear the words '10,000 steps' and I get that, I really do. Doing 10,000 steps is something that has been very helpful in keeping Queenslanders healthy, but I did 10,000 steps that day in three-quarters of an hour chasing that little dog. It took me three hours to catch the damn thing, so you can imagine how many steps I took that day thanks to Bella! I caught the damn dog and I took it back to its owners. The owners were very proud to have their little dog back for which they were quite happy to give me two bags of lemons. As we walked towards that

lemon tree, it looked like a mandarin tree to me. It smelt like mandarins, it certainly tasted like mandarins and it had peel like mandarins—but they were deadset sure it was a lemon tree. So I walked away with two bags of ‘lemons’—which to this day I have googled and searched and I have come to the decision they are called ‘lemdarins’.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to Harold James, known affectionately as Uncle George, a respected traditional elder of the Darumbal people. Uncle George has generously shared his wisdom and perspectives with me, offering me invaluable insights as a traditional owner and a fantastic adviser. His guidance has deepened my understanding and appreciation of the rich cultural heritage of our region.

The electorate of Mirani is vast, stretching over 63,000 square kilometres. From the cane fields of Sarina to the cattle country of the Isaac, from the ports at Hay Point to the reliable coal-fired power station of Stanwell, to Rookwood Weir at Riverslea, Gogango to the pristine coastlines like Clairview, Mirani is as diverse as it is beautiful. This diversity is our strength but it also presents challenges. During the campaign trail, locals in Mirani raised their concerns with me about the limited access to health care, that our roads are atrocious, that crime has been left to escalate, that farmers are burdened with endless red tape and that the cost of living has left families in my community struggling and some even homeless.

With so much happening in our lives and our focus often on other priorities, many of us in Mirani's smaller communities may have overlooked something significant quietly unfolding around us—the rapid push towards renewable energy. I have witnessed firsthand how developers of renewable projects can operate unnoticed in our communities. By the time we become aware of their presence, decisions about what would happen in our area have already been made, leaving us with little or no say in the matter.

I strongly object to the way the red tape has been slashed, giving developers free rein to proceed without proper oversight, often at the expense of the environment they claim to protect. Many of these wind projects are concentrated along the Great Dividing Range, where vulnerable species like koalas and greater gliders are overlooked entirely. Add to this the destruction of vast areas of remnant vegetation in some of Queensland's most pristine mountain ranges and the ripple effects on ecosystems, including the Great Barrier Reef, become undeniable.

As a farmer myself, I know our deep connection to the environment is not just part of the job; it is a way of life. Farmers care for their land not only because of their livelihood but because they understand the role of preserving it for their children, for their communities and for the future of our state. Nature is an amazing thing but, if we keep going with this plan of wind and solar projects that have been already approved, let alone what is in the wind, it will be too late and nature will not be able to heal. In parliament, I will bring this practical, grounded perspective to debates against sustainability, ensuring that farmers' voices and expertise are front and centre in conversations about our environment.

When I think of my vision for Mirani, I cannot help but draw inspiration from a great leader and former member for Mirani, Ted Malone. Ted served this electorate for 21 years with unwavering dedication, and his legacy continues to resonate throughout our region. As a fellow farmer, Ted understood the challenges and opportunities that came with living and working on the land. Like me, he knew firsthand the importance of perseverance, hard work and staying connected to the people he represented.

Ted's passion for advocating for rural and regional Queenslanders was unmatched. He fought tirelessly for better infrastructure, improved health care and education tailored to meet the needs of our diverse communities. He did not just speak for Mirani; he lived its challenges, celebrated its triumphs and always put its people first. As I begin my journey in this role, I aspire to carry forward Ted's legacy of strong representation, commonsense leadership and a relentless commitment to ensuring Mirani remains a great place to live, work and raise a family.

My journey from the dairy yards of Kalapa to this chamber is a testament to the opportunities Mirani offers to those who work hard. I look forward to working with the new Crisafulli LNP government to bring back a fresh start to Queensland. May Premier Crisafulli's leadership be remembered alongside legendary figures such as Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen and Mike Ahern, who left legacies in shaping our state.

Queenslanders are calling for generational change, and the 58th Parliament has the opportunity to make transformative decisions that will benefit not only us today but also our children and grandchildren into the future. This new chapter offers the chance to build a stronger, more prosperous Queensland for generations to come. I wish to thank the House for the courtesy its members have extended to me.