




Speech By
Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (4.14 pm): First, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands on which we all gather here. I acknowledge the elders past, present and emerging of the many places we represent right throughout our wonderful state of Queensland. I acknowledge a particular close Indigenous elder who has welcomed me into her family, Auntie Lesley Williams, who, unfortunately, is currently recovering from a stroke and convalescing at home.

It is such a privilege to be back here on the fourth occasion providing my fourth address-in-reply speech to this House. Many speakers in the past have recognised not only the importance but also the privilege of being elected to this honourable House. As you know, Deputy Speaker Krause, I was privileged to represent the state of Queensland in the federal parliament as a senator. I congratulate all of the new and returned members elected to represent the good people of Queensland. It is an amazing privilege to represent the electorate of Ferry Grove and promote the desires and address the needs of this amazing electorate. I congratulate you, Deputy Speaker Krause, for your progression in terms of the position you currently hold as Deputy Speaker of this parliament.

The seat of Ferry Grove has only been held by three Labor members. The first member for the new seat was Glen Milliner, who retired. He was succeeded by Geoff Wilson. They both assisted me in this campaign to retain the seat on the fourth occasion. I also want to place on record my appreciation to the many agriculture stakeholders who have contacted me since my return to not only congratulate me on my re-election in the seat of Ferry Grove but also thank me and our previous government for the assistance, courage and conviction in delivering many outcomes with regard to that portfolio. I acknowledge the member for Gympie on his elevation to the ministry in this portfolio.

Mr Stevens: He is now the farmer's friend.

Mr FURNER: I take the interjection. He needs to come up with a different catchcry than 'Furner, the farmer's friend'. Maybe he will work something out. I will leave it up to him to come up with that particular title. I also want to acknowledge the good people of the agriculture department and my previous ministerial staff. They are outstanding workers who tirelessly work very hard day in and day out, seven days a week on many occasions, making sure we deliver outcomes for farmers throughout the state of Queensland.

This is my second time in opposition and I am not surprised by the way it operates. We will certainly hold this government to account in terms of their measures and the commitments they made leading into the election and while in opposition. We will make sure they deliver on the promises they have made. When you are elected it is important that you hold true to your position and to your values. We will, as an opposition, hold them to account.

It will come as no surprise that I am proud of the achievements in my electorate of Ferry Grove. Under the past two Labor governments, under two Labor premiers, we have laid the foundations for the future of our community. It is my hope that this excellent foundation will not be left to languish under this LNP administration—like it was the last time the LNP were in government.

Being in opposition provides me with greater opportunity to once again attend many of the events that members take for granted but that fall by the wayside when you hold a ministerial portfolio. They are things like attending school graduations and addressing the matters that are so important to a member of parliament.

I want to touch on some of the achievements of the Labor government since I was elected to the seat in 2015. We invested an extra \$113 million in our local schools. Just about every school was provided with funding and assistance under the previous Labor government and I would like to see that continue. We built or renovated over 70 classrooms to cater for our growing community and we also conducted the largest upgrade to Mitchelton Special School since it was opened 50 years ago. That school has educated some of the most vulnerable students in Brisbane's north-west. It was Labor that made sure they were safe and well educated and were not left behind.

Included in this expenditure were four new multipurpose halls, three new playgrounds, two new resource centres, two new covered basketball courts, a new centre of excellence for STEM, a new coding lab and a new amenities block which I was recently privileged to open at the Ferny Hills State School. Today, more teachers, teacher aides, administration staff and cleaning and grounds staff are employed in the Ferny Grove schools than ever before thanks to the investments in education by the former Labor governments. I wish to put on the record my appreciation of those education ministers who worked under the Labor government.

Labor has always prioritised education because education is the key to our children's future. Labor governments have always invested in our health and hospital services by expanding pathology, imaging, pharmacy, clinical and emergency services at Prince Charles Hospital which, unfortunately, were cut by the previous LNP government. We have also invested by restoring and expanding breast cancer screening at north-west health, which was also cut by the previous LNP government, and by replacing and increasing the number of ambulances in our local ambulance centre.

Labor governments have also invested heavily in roads and public transport infrastructure. Under Labor, we upgraded the Alderley Railway Station. We vastly expanded parking at the Ferny Grove Railway Station through the construction of the Ferny Grove transit orientated development, which also brings jobs, investment and amenity to our communities. When I first ran for office, it was one of my initiatives to doorknock over 9,000 homes and hear from people firsthand what they wanted in the electorate, and that was more parking at the Ferny Grove Railway Station. We will deliver that. We have already delivered the first stage of that development and construction work has commenced on the second stage, which will include not only state-of-the-art additional retail stores but also restaurants, units and so on.

We also increased safety and reduced traffic wait times on Samford Road through multiple projects including the Samford Road safety program and Samford Road intersection upgrade projects. I know the member for Pine Rivers is also committed to ensuring that funding comes to fruition. These projects will deliver safer travel and fewer hold-ups for people trying to get to work on time or get home to their families and they will do it in a cost-effective way. Contrast this to the last time the LNP were in power when Campbell Newman flamboyantly claimed he would fix the Samford Road-Wardell Street intersection by widening the road and removing houses only to spend an eye-watering \$65 million in 2014 to deliver half the project and then restore those houses once again. The only other so-called improvement was to drop another \$1.6 million in building a completely unnecessary set of lights to hold up commuters even more against the objections of Transport and Main Roads. I can only hope that this LNP government will be more productive for Brisbane's north-west than the last one was. My many constituents who lost their jobs under the last LNP government are dearly hoping they will not see history repeat itself once again.

It would be remiss of me to not refer to some stats about the election which one of my staff diligently put together and put those on the *Hansard* record. Labor suffered a 3.09 per cent 2PP swing against the high-water mark of the COVID election to record a comfortable 57.89 per cent in Ferny Grove. This represents a return to the historical average of Ferny Grove 2PP voting, which sees the ALP hold a solid 57.56 per cent 2PP standard margin. This election saw a dramatic and predictable decline by over 36 per cent of postal votes from the COVID election.

This was offset by absentee pre-poll votes, which were up by a remarkable 145 per cent. Twenty-five per cent of the electorate cast their ballot outside the electorate. This is the highest percentage ever recorded in Ferny Grove. Absentee and telephone voting combined with almost 21 per cent postal votes and almost 21 per cent pre-poll votes at the two early voting booths in Ferny Grove to yield a whopping 68.5 per cent of Ferny Grove voters who cast non-traditional local election day ballots. This represents only a 3.57 per cent decline on 2020 numbers. This suggests that a solid two-thirds of people will continue to seek ways of casting their ballot before election day in a way that is convenient for them, with the consequence that democracy sausage stalls will struggle to sell out or

will be cancelled altogether. As a side note, while we won every booth but one on a 2PP basis—nursing home mobile polling—there was a clear trend that votes cast closer to election day were flowing more favourably towards the Labor Party.

I can only hope that as I stand here today on my fourth occasion of delivering a speech on the address-in-reply this government will be more productive than the last. In doing so, I want to thank those people who work so diligently and tirelessly, and they are the people who work on our campaigns. I want to thank Laurence, Will and Terry for their tireless efforts throughout the campaign as well as the copious numbers of volunteers who selflessly turned out during street stalls, letterboxing, putting up yard signs and once again taking them down as well as handing out on pre-polls and on election day. They definitely are the salt of the earth. I know that, whether it be on this side of the chamber or the other side, those people are valued.

Without fear of missing out on acknowledging a couple of people, I want to put on record my appreciation of some outstanding people. Mike and Bronte Bailey, who initially worked and committed their time around the Cairns electorate, moved to my electorate several years ago. Mike, having recently had back surgery not once but twice, could not be held back. He was there putting in many hours whether on street stalls, on polling day or on pre-poll. Both worked tirelessly to see me returned.

I put on record my appreciation of the two former Labor premiers, premier Palaszczuk and premier Miles, former deputy premier Dick as well as the Queensland Labor caucus for their commitment and energy which generated so many crucial Labor outcomes for Queenslanders. It was just the other day when I was leaving the opening of the amenities block at Ferny Hills State School, as I indicated earlier, that a student who would have been in year 5 or year 6 said to me, 'Mr Furner, are you committed to the 50-cent fares?' I said, 'My oath, mate. That's in the bank.' Once again, I hope this new government continues with that promise and makes sure it is delivered and is sustainable for the future. It is an outcome that the previous Labor premier, Mr Miles, made sure was delivered across Queensland. It was well received and it is certainly recognised by many of our members and people who voted in support of us.

I want to thank the Labor Party, Kate Flanders and all the staff out of the office for their commitment in making sure many of us were returned. I want to thank the unions, the Services Union, which I have been a member of for many years—in fact, I joined them when I was an industrial officer with the Queensland Police Union and I continue to be a member—the Queensland United Firefighters Union and the Australian Workers' Union for their commitment during the campaign.

Finally, there is my family. I want to thank them for their commitment. On many occasions we take our family for granted, but they are always there for us and they always have our back. Thanks to my wife, Lorraine, my two daughters, Stacey and Sally. My son, Troy, and his wife, Daniela, and my two lovely grandchildren, like they have done in every other campaign, flew from interstate—the first campaign they flew from Cairns, intrastate. Nevertheless they were there supporting me in making sure I retained the seat of Ferny Grove, and what a great outcome that was. Thank you very much.