




Speech By  
**Hon. Dale Last**

**MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN**

---

Record of Proceedings, 22 May 2025

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Hon. DR LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Regional and Rural Development) (8.42 pm): I rise to provide my address-in-reply to the speech delivered by Her Excellency in opening the 58th Parliament of Queensland. It is, indeed, an honour and a privilege to be elected to represent the electorate of Burdekin in this place and to be a member of a government and a team that, as Her Excellency said, is focused every day on the issues that matter to Queenslanders.

The trust that my electorate has placed in me is both humbling and inspiring, and my commitment to deliver the services and infrastructure that we need across the electorate remains unwavering. I also want to put on the record my thanks and appreciation to the Premier for placing his faith and trust in me to be a minister in his cabinet, and I could not be happier to be the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, the Minister for Manufacturing and the Minister for Regional and Rural Development. The portfolios are such a good fit for my electorate and the resources sector, which is so very important to this state.

In my last address-in-reply speech, I spoke of the challenges faced by the Burdekin electorate and Queensland more widely. While we have kicked some goals over the last four years, many of those challenges remain and some additional challenges have arisen. Today is not a time to apportion blame. I acknowledge some of those challenges are not easily fixed, but that does not mean we should turn a blind eye to them.

During the last term, and by working with the Clermont community, we finally found a solution to what was one of the biggest issues in that community: the lack of a doctor. While Dr Tim's arrival meant Clermont would have a permanent hospital doctor for the first time in five years, we now face a similar situation in other communities in the electorate.

In order to realise the full potential of the Burdekin electorate, it is absolutely vital that we address access to essential services and critical infrastructure. That need is one of the reasons I welcome the Premier's expectation for ministers to engage more with frontline staff and customers. It is an undeniable fact that when essential services are not available families make the tough decision to move, and that reduction in population creates a downward spiral that means addressing the issues becomes more and more difficult.

I mentioned earlier that some of these challenges are not easily fixed. The reality is that the Burdekin electorate is not the only electorate facing these challenges. The people of Queensland made their voices heard on 26 October and elected a government based on their priorities. As a member who spent three terms on that side of the House, I offer some advice to those who are new to this place or who now find themselves in a vastly different position. As Her Excellency said, it is our responsibility to ensure everything we do is in service of the people of Queensland. We may not agree with the direction or even the decisions made in this place but we must remember that we are here because of the honour and the privilege bestowed upon us by the people of our electorates.

As the member for Burdekin, my pride for the electorate is as strong as ever, and my dedication to working for my electorate is unchanged. That pride and dedication is due to many things, but mostly it is due to the people of the electorate. There is seldom a day where I do not hear of an achievement of one of my constituents or of a challenge one of my constituents has overcome. Regardless of where in the electorate they live, the people of the Burdekin electorate do not shy away from hard work. They embody the Queensland spirit of never giving up, of sticking up for their community and of never backing down. My message to the people of the Burdekin is simple: thank you for your support and for the opportunity to represent you. You have my assurance that I will continue to fight for our fair share of the riches that we grow, mine and raise.

In the last term we celebrated the completion of the Bruce Highway's Haughton floodplain project years ahead of schedule due to a joint effort by representatives at all levels, and I was happy to be a part of it. While that project now provides improved flood immunity between Townsville and the Burdekin, the fight for better roads throughout the electorate continues. Both the Bruce Highway and the Peak Downs Highway remain priorities for me because they are vital connections for industry and are essential links to medical and other services.

It is reassuring for residents of the Burdekin electorate that this government has reinstated the Bruce Highway Advisory Council. Amongst the key deliverables for the Minister for Transport and Main Roads is an upgrade to bring the Bruce Highway up to standard when it comes to safety. The highways are not the only priorities. The Kilcummin Diamond Downs Road and the May Downs Road are roads that connect communities, that allow children to attend school and that act as the arteries of the region by connecting produce to consumers. Also, long stretches of the Bowen Developmental Road and the Clermont-Alpha Road remain unsealed, limiting the ability of communities to prosper.

Like the people who rely on those roads, I have had enough of the wrecked cars, the smashed windscreens, the shredded tyres and the crosses erected to honour those who have lost their lives. I have had enough of school buses being cancelled due to road conditions and patients waiting for an ambulance that has become a victim of substandard roads. That is why I was proud to announce this government's commitment of \$100 million to start the task of bringing unsealed roads up to scratch and \$20 million for upgrades on the Peak Downs Highway. While more will be needed and delivered, these announcements prove that we listened, and that is something we will continue to do. A key part of upgrading our highways was this government's success in securing a return to the 80-20 funding model, something that those opposite were unable to do.

Throughout the Burdekin electorate are communities with a great sense of pride. When there is a problem or an opportunity, we do not sit on the sidelines; we roll up our sleeves and we all pitch in. It is that sense of community that led to election commitments to support an aquatic centre at Clermont and an upgrade of the play space at Clermont State School. It is why in the north of the electorate we committed to upgrades at the Cungulla Recreational Fishing and Social Club and upgrades at the Collinsville Men's Shed.

For me, the next four years are about realising our potential and making our communities better places to live and work. This government will boost our communities with investments like the upgrade to the Burdekin Netball Association and Denison Park in Bowen—the home of the mighty Bowen Seagulls. We will put an end to the holding pattern that is Bowen's waterfront precinct with a master plan that examines the needs of local residents and businesses as well as the opportunities presented by tourism.

This government will answer the calls of thousands of residents in the Burdekin and finally establish a long overdue CT scanner at the Ayr Hospital. By doing this we will end the current scenario where up to 15 people per week are subjected to a round trip that can take up to five hours. Not only will this ensure faster diagnosis and treatment for potentially time-critical conditions and injuries, it will also ensure that nursing staff at the Ayr Hospital are available to assist patients rather than being in the back of an ambulance and it will reduce the demand on our local paramedics.

After five years of stalling, this government will fast-track the relocation of the Ayr Fire and Rescue Station to ensure that staff are no longer affected by carcinogenic materials. I thank the minister for her support in having that project approved.

Let me be clear: safety is of the utmost importance to this government. Not only will we make the community safer by enforcing consequences for actions when it comes to offenders, but we will also establish a dedicated Mining and Resources Coroner to provide a timely and professional response to fatalities in the resources sector. Time after time we have seen fatalities result in recommendations that were not enforced and, in the case of the previous government, not even actioned. It was Labor that closed down the Mining Warden's Court. It was a Labor resources minister who just four years ago spoke about how the Mining Warden's Court had prevented incidents and saved lives. It is the Crisafulli

LNP government that will ensure incidents are investigated and answers provided in a timely manner. It is the Crisafulli LNP government that will ensure that lessons learnt result in enforceable action. It is this government that will hold people accountable for their actions.

The Burdekin electorate is proudly home to the lion's share of Queensland's coalmines. Those mines generate billions of dollars in royalties each year that pay for infrastructure and services. As the Premier has made clear, Queensland's resources industry is open for business because this government values the economic contribution and the jobs that are generated by the industry.

When you talk about investor confidence in this great state, there are few contributors to the erosion of that confidence that have a more disastrous impact than projects sitting on a desk without explanation. Since taking office, I have signed in excess of 30 mining leases, relieving a bottleneck that has delayed some projects for more than a decade—projects that had met all the necessary requirements from an environmental and social point of view but they sat in limbo because of the ideology of those opposite.

We have established the Resources Cabinet Committee, a committee that has received worldwide interest—a committee comprising myself, the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer, the Minister for the Environment; a committee that is cutting through the red tape, overcoming the hurdles and the obstacles and making a difference. As I say to those mining companies when they come in the door to see me, 'You better have an application in your pocket,' because that is what we are about in Queensland. We want to value our resource industry. We want to see more mines opening and we want to see more gas being produced because that means jobs and it means prosperity for this state.

Our commitment to developing Queensland's critical minerals industry, combined with a government that embraces existing resource projects, means that we will need more workers in the resources industry. It is in Queensland's best interest to ensure that, wherever possible, we develop our own pool of talent and fill jobs in Queensland with Queenslanders. That is why the Crisafulli LNP government committed to an expansion of the Queensland Minerals and Energy Academy program. It is the reason we have committed funding to encourage women to take on operational and technical roles in our resources sector. The message to the resources industry and the workers in that sector is that, together with my assistant minister, you have a team that backs you and backs the industry.

Perhaps some of the greatest opportunities available to Queensland lay outside the south-east corner but, for too long, that potential has been ignored. This government will work collaboratively with groups like RDA to unlock regional opportunities, but we will also do our share of the heavy lifting through our Right Plan for Manufacturing. Included in that plan is a new manufacturing hub for the Darling Downs and support for our manufacturing sector in this state.

Regardless of whether you refer to the beef and grains grown in the western part of the electorate, to the famous mango and tomato crops in Bowen or to Australia's largest sugar-producing region in the Burdekin district, the fact is that the Burdekin electorate is an agricultural and resource powerhouse. For that reason, I welcome the Premier setting targets such as boosting our farm gate output to \$30 billion by 2030. As our primary producers know, this is no easy task, but it is a task that is made achievable thanks to the \$30 million Sowing the Seeds of Farming Innovation Fund and through the supercharging of scientifically backed research for the future of our food and fibre production.

The 10th anniversary of my election as the member for Burdekin recently passed. I reflect on the many years when I was the sole LNP state member in the north. Isn't it nice to be joined in this place by the members for Mundingburra, Thuringowa, Townsville, Cook, Barron River and Mulgrave—to have those representatives in here and to know that we are flying the flag in the north and the Far North?

**Mr Head:** And Central Queensland.

**Mr LAST:** And Central Queensland: Callide and Rockhampton and Mirani—look at them all with their hands up—and Mackay. I welcome my fellow government members. I look forward to working with them over the course of this term to make a real difference and to fly that flag so proudly in those areas.

As we begin the job of turning potential into reality for the Burdekin electorate and for Queensland, I want to acknowledge the people who for me have made this possible. Firstly, to my wife, Kim, and children, Jack and Molly: your unwavering support, love and encouragement is the reason I am standing here today. The sacrifices that you have made for the electorate and the sacrifices that you make for me and for Queensland do not go unnoticed, and every single day you inspire and motivate me to do my best.

I would also like to offer my thanks to my loyal staff—David, Mikayla and Sarah—who make the people of the Burdekin electorate their priority and to my ministerial office staff who make my job as resources minister so much easier. The range of issues they deal with is as diverse as the electorate and the state itself. With additional responsibilities as a minister, I know my electorate staff really carry an increased workload. They fly the flag when I am not there, and I certainly appreciate that.

As we see more and more conflict around the world, we are reminded of how lucky we are to live in a democracy. While elections illustrate our democracy, they are also challenging, especially in an electorate as large as the Burdekin. To my campaign volunteers, thank you. You overcame being away from your loved ones and the tyranny of distance. You withstood intimidation and unprovoked verbal attacks. To know that you overcame and withstood these immense challenges because you believe in me means more than you will ever know.

When you have six pre-polls to look after across an electorate the size of the Burdekin, where it is a seven-hour drive from one side of the electorate to the other, you certainly appreciate the work, the commitment and the effort that those volunteers have put in to helping me be re-elected as the member for Burdekin.

As the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Regional and Rural Development, I look for the opportunities to develop this great state and to create jobs across Queensland no matter whether it is in the resources sector or the manufacturing sector. When I visit the mine sites, the gas fields and all those manufacturing businesses and I see the pride they have in their businesses and how proudly they are flying the flag for this state, it is humbling.

I want to again commit my efforts and this government's efforts to ensuring that we continue to grow our resources and manufacturing sectors in this state. As I like to say, the portfolio I look after is the one that puts money in the bucket. That is the one that helps to pay the bills. I am going to proudly fly that flag throughout this term. I know that my fellow team members and the assistant minister are keen.

**Mr Head:** Do you know any good geologists?

**Mr LAST:** I am looking for a good geologist. They are hard to find. I am happy to promote what a good industry this is and the opportunities that exist across this state. On that recent trade mission overseas to the US our team felt such pride flying the flag for this state. We said, 'You need to come to Queensland if you want to see how it is done.' That is starting to happen already. Those delegations are starting to come through because of that interest and that commitment. They want to see how we do it because we do it best.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I stand before you humbled by the support of so many and by the opportunities that lay ahead. I look forward to once again taking up the fight on the issues that matter and making the Burdekin electorate and Queensland a better place to live, work and play.