




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (6.22 pm): I rise with pride to make my contribution to the address-in-reply and affirm my ongoing allegiance to the Crown, to the people of my country and particularly to the people of my electorate of Southern Downs, whom I am so honoured to have the opportunity to represent.

A government member: Hear, hear!

Mr LISTER: I acknowledge my good friend in saying, 'Hear, hear!' to that. It is nice to know that there are many of us in the House who feel that way. It is an enormous privilege to be an MP—we all know that—and many of us have said that in the course of our contributions. I thought I might speak about my electorate and how that particular honour is experienced by me. This is my third term and I am most grateful indeed that the people of Southern Downs elected me to be their representative once again, and I can certainly confidently assure them that I will continue to be a vociferous and boisterous representative in this House. I remember speaking to the member for Southern Downs before me, the Hon. Councillor Lawrence Springborg AM, the Mayor of Goondiwindi—a great friend and mentor. I told him about the first time I was ejected from the House for disorderly conduct and I was rather proud of myself at the time. He was not. He said, 'It's not the Southern Downs way,' but I assured him that things had changed.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LISTER: If it were that good an impersonation, I will do it for Lawrence at some stage. I am much grateful for the opportunity I have, and the electorate of Southern Downs is a marvellous place. It has a unique and varied landscape, an involving and friendly—

Mr Head: The second best electorate in Queensland.

Mr LISTER: I will not take that interjection from my honourable friend the member for Callide. It has involving communities and we are a productive, industrious place and very diverse. The electorate stretches from the top of Cunninghams Gap all the way to about 140 kilometres west of Goondiwindi just short of the towns of Nindigully, Thallon and Mungindi. It also includes the major centres of Millmerran and up to Cecil Plains, Allora, Warwick, Killarney and Stanthorpe down to Wallangarra and the Queensland-New South Wales border near Texas and Inglewood and smaller places like Karara and Torwood. It is a place where every individual town has its own character—its own gun club, its own Lions club, its own scene.

One of the great enriching experiences of being a country MP—and I am sure that my honourable friends who consider themselves country MPs as well would agree with me—is that wherever you go people will give you a fair go. There might be electors who would not vote for me in a pink fit, but they will still invite me to their AGM or they will come and poke me in the chest and say, 'What are you doing about this?', and engage with me. That makes the role of representing a large electorate easier because, if you are embraced by those communities and given the opportunity to represent them, you are able to do so to the best of your ability.

I want to thank my campaign manager Carol Clark for the wonderful work that she did with the LNP membership to run the campaign for my re-election. Carol is unfortunately in hospital recovering from surgery. I do not know whether or not she is watching, but I wish her well and thank her sincerely for her dedication and very hard work in a tough campaign considering the size and diversity of our electorate. I also want to thank the LNP membership in my electorate. We have branches in Warwick, Killarney, Stanthorpe, Inglewood, Texas, Yelarbon, Goondiwindi and also the Granite Belt women's branch. They came together as party members, as all sides do, to get their members across the line. I thank them for the not insignificant amount of work that they put into standing at pre-polls. Two weeks of pre-poll in three pre-polling centres is a significant amount of work. Many of the members have done so in spite of being somewhat older than me and they have done it with a smile on their face, so I am most grateful to them for that.

I also want to thank my family, because it is my immediate family who are the ones who experience the life of being the family of an MP. I might be home one or two nights a week; the rest of the time I am in a motel in Goondiwindi or Millmerran or I am down here for parliament or something like that. We all know that the effect of that on our families is not a positive. Belinda and I were very blessed late last year to welcome our fourth child into the world—George, who is—

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr LISTER: Thank you. He is a lovely little fellow. He has brightened our lives, but it is not easy for my wife when George is nocturnal. We have a three-year-old, Amelia, who is also somewhat nocturnal, and two boisterous boys—Jeremy is 14 and William is 11—and to run the show with that band of terrorists on her own is no small thing at all and I express my undying love and gratitude to Belinda for doing that. I hope that I can one day make it up to her.

We have difficulties in Southern Downs. All electorates do. The ones which occupy the minds of us most of the time are the things which we face every day, particularly roads. I know that a number of my colleagues such as the member for Callide know that the roads in our electorates in the bush are very rough. In fact, the standard of the roads and the highways in Southern Downs is appalling, which has come from a decade of underinvestment. I make nothing up in saying that you could consult QTRIP and see that billions of dollars have been withdrawn from the ongoing maintenance of roads in electorates like mine and Callide. This has meant that roads have been patched and then repatched and then repatched on top of the repatches without an ongoing plan of investment to pull up roads and improve the gravel base to improve drainage and so forth and to lay them smoothly. This is no academic matter. In an electorate like Southern Downs, transport is vital in order to get our products to market and for people to get around the electorate, and I take that acknowledgement from the Minister for Primary Industries and my good friend the member for Gympie. He certainly knows what I mean. I was very upset to see in the rains which were associated with Tropical Cyclone Alfred that many people had smashed alloy wheels on their cars from driving through potholes on the Cunningham Highway. This is a major road in our electorate.