




Speech By
Hon. Samuel O'Connor
MEMBER FOR BONNEY

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Hon. ST O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Youth) (8.36 pm): Deputy Speaker Krause, I begin by congratulating you on your elevation to that high role and I congratulate as well Mr Speaker, who is doing a magnificent job in that part of his service.

I will start my speech by thanking my community for putting their faith in me for the third time. It is the greatest honour of my life to serve the part of the Gold Coast that I have loved for my entire life and that I have called home for over a decade now. I am thankful every day for the opportunity I have been given and, after seven very long years working for our area from opposition, I am very excited to have the chance to fix the issues and fight for the ideas of everyone I represent.

At the outset I acknowledge the extraordinary Queenslander my seat is named after, one of the most incredible women our state has ever produced—Lores Bonney. In 1937, Lores became the first person to fly from Australia to South Africa after previously being the first woman to circumnavigate Australia by air and the first woman to fly from Australia to England. Having a seat named after her in this House is a fitting tribute, and I am proud to serve in her name. People do ask me frequently if there is a connection between Lores Bonney and our part of the Gold Coast. There is not quite one. She did spend her later years on the Gold Coast, but unfortunately it was on the southern Gold Coast; it was not in the best part of the Gold Coast which I represent.

Mr Vorster interjected.

Mr O'CONNOR: I am not taking that interjection from the member for Burleigh or the one that the member for Currumbin should have made if she was not on her phone.

As a local MP, I am working hard to make our area even better. We are working with the council to deliver a new home for the Labrador Men's Shed. For too long they have been stuck in a facility that is far too small and does not have enough car parking. It has stopped them from growing and helping more men in our community. We have found the perfect site for them to move to, right near the Labrador Community Garden next to the touch footy club, and work will not be far off starting.

As part of our 2032 Delivery Plan, we are investing in grassroots sport like at the Labrador football club, where we will deliver \$300,000 to build a covered viewing area. It will make game days even better at what is a great local club. Our plan will also leave a legacy for our area, with Labrador chosen to host the hockey. We were not included in Labor's plans for the games, so our changes mean that we will be part of the action and locals can see the biggest sporting event in the world just up the road from where they live. It will mean a major upgrade to what is already a fantastic hockey centre, so our Labrador Tigerstix juniors all the way through to our BHL teams will have the best hockey pitches in the world to train on and play on before and after the games. I will also be doing all I can to make sure this means we can get upgrades to Musgrave Avenue and better connectivity for people walking through to the light rail, Smith Collective and the broader health and knowledge precinct.

The beautiful Broadwater is our marine backyard and our most important natural asset. We made a commitment to better protect this precious environment by backing our nation's first dedicated marine wildlife hospital at Sea World with a \$10 million contribution in the electorate of Surfers Paradise.

Mr Langbroek: Hear, hear!

Mr O'CONNOR: I will take that 'hear, hear' from the member. The Sea World Foundation do an incredible job rescuing and rehabilitating hundreds of these marine animals. Last year alone they helped over 400, including 150 sea turtles. The marine wildlife hospital is long overdue state support to help their vets and marine scientists save more injured birds, turtles, dolphins, sharks, seals, whales and more. It will be an outstanding nature-based tourism and education attraction for our part of the Gold Coast as well. Most of the wildlife cared for by the Sea World teams are birds. That is important, because our area is also lucky to be home to around 40 eastern curlews that migrate from the Arctic to roost sites off Labrador every year from August to April. Local conservationist Bob Westerman tells me there are around 50 bird species around Curlew Island, and I remain committed to doing all I can to protect these special little sandbanks. That is absolutely something we can do alongside better managing our waterways for boaties. I echo the Premier's comments about tackling the derelict boats we see far too often in our Broadwater.

The Crisafulli government also recently released our Hospital Rescue Plan, the biggest investment ever made into our health system. There is one project that will make a big difference to my community, and that is the new Coomera Hospital. It has been unacceptable to not have a hospital between Southport and Logan for so long. The thousands of health and allied health workers I represent are stretched, overworked and under-resourced. It is about time they received the investment in infrastructure they so very much deserve. We are going to deliver at least 600 new beds for our region. That is 200 more than Labor's 400, which were by no means guaranteed to be delivered any time soon. They were also going to build this hospital without basic services like pathology, pharmacy or even an outpatient department. They had no real plan to connect it to the train station next door. In contrast, we will deliver a hospital that will include a day surgery, maternity services, operating theatres and an intensive care unit with a multistorey car park. Importantly, it will be properly integrated with local public transport. All of this will massively ease pressure on the Gold Coast University Hospital.

I also want to acknowledge Brett and Belinda Beasley for their ongoing courage and unparalleled resilience to drive change in the name of their son Jack. They live in Parkwood, the same suburb as me, and I am proud to call them friends. Since Jack's Law was introduced in 2023 there have been well over 1,000 weapons taken off our streets because of their advocacy. Earlier this year, on what would have been Jack's 23rd birthday, we introduced legislation to make Jack's Law permanent, honouring him forever, which was passed in our last sitting week. That delivers on the commitment we made to my community during the campaign at the Arundel Tavern.

I would not be here without the people who believed in me and who sacrificed so much to allow me to serve in this way. Firstly, to my magnificent partner, Mel: together we will continue to get through all of the challenges this role brings, as we have so far. My family as well—my mum, Suz; my dad, Rod; and my sister, Em—never hesitate to help when I need it. Mum is my unofficial media monitor. She will let me know when I get a run or a mention somewhere before I have any idea that I have. Dad spent hours meticulously restoring my Mitsubishi Triton ahead of the campaign. It is my old ute that I keep at the office for community use and used as a mobile billboard at election time. It is very special to me. Before I had that ute it was driven by sparkies at our family's electrical business, RT Edwards. Then it went to Tom's Clearance Centre—that was a small business that my grandpa decided to set up when he was in his mid-seventies in a failed attempt to retire—before I picked it up. It has been a mighty machine ever since. After the job that my dad did, I think it is going to keep going strong, helping local community groups with odd jobs. I reckon it probably has at least one more campaign in it, although the clutch did die last week. Mum and Dad both took leave to spend time on the pre-poll for the entire two weeks. As all members will attest, there is no greater electoral weapon than your parents on pre-poll. It is powerful.

Mr Mickelberg: Or children.

Mr O'CONNOR: Or children; I will take that interjection. I am not at that point yet, member for Buderim.

Nerida Smith is the heart and soul of the Bonney LNP. She is the ultimate servant of our party who gives so much to our cause and does so much for me. I value her advice, and alongside her I love fighting for what we believe in. Thank you to the other members of our SEC executive: Martin, Jordan and Mark. They all lead very busy professional lives, but I greatly appreciate the time they give to me

and the Liberal National Party. Thank you to Michael Stock and his daughter Piper for their help on the campaign. To all of our volunteers: I greatly appreciate your efforts. It means a great deal to me to have so many local people put their hand up to support me to continue serving in this way.

To my electorate office team over this last term—Deb, Twisha, Jono, Elissa, Amity and Allison, whom we recently welcomed—I could not do this without you. There are a lot of locals who are better off because of you, so please be proud of the difference that you make each and every single day. Deb has been with me since I was first elected. She does an exceptional job serving people. Twisha has just passed the three-year mark working with me. I am proud of how she has risen to every challenge we have faced over that time. I thank two of my long-serving staff who have taken on new opportunities throughout the term: Joe, who is now our local councillor overlapping with most of my electorate; and Katie. I could not be prouder of you both. I appreciate all that you have done for me over many years and I am thankful for our ongoing friendship.

Thank you as well to the other candidates who put their hands up to serve our beautiful part of the Gold Coast. I want to acknowledge their supporters who gave up so much of their own time to make their case. To the Javanmard family: it is always a pleasure to be on a booth with you. Thank you for the way that you take part in our democracy in so many elections. The One Nation candidate, Scott, is a passionate Labrador local who ran a respectful campaign, so I want to acknowledge him and his wife, Renee. To Labor's candidate, Kyle Kelly-Collins: good on you for putting your hand up and giving it a red hot crack.

More broadly, the LNP took a comprehensive plan for our state's environment to the 2024 election. It was certainly far more substantial than anything we saw from the Labor Party. I remember that during the campaign every time we made an announcement I would sit back and wait for them to match it or expand on it, but they never did. We can be very proud of what we put forward, which includes the largest single increase to the Parks and Wildlife Service in our state's history with the commitment to hire 150 rangers.

There is record funding for natural resource management organisations, including: \$118 million which has been delivered and is translating into practical programs on the ground across our state; a commitment of Zero Litter to the Bay by 2030, with \$35 million to improve stormwater infrastructure to stop rubbish entering our precious waterways; the biggest investment into wildlife hospitals, particularly in South-East Queensland, where it is so important to get the balance right between urban development and our natural environment; as well as a number of nature-based tourism projects across Queensland. I commend the Minister for the Environment and Tourism for his work on this and for his visionary 20-year tourism plan. As a Gold Coast MP, I know just how essential that will be in shaping our state's global presence and allowing us to make the most of the tourism opportunities ahead of the 2032 games and for many years afterwards.

After four years in the environment portfolio, I was honoured to be asked to serve in a new role by our now Premier David Crisafulli. The member for Broadwater is a true leader. During our hard days in opposition he showed his resilience, his determination and his unfaltering drive to achieve what he sets his mind to. He has been a great friend and a mentor to me over the last decade, and I am very proud to be his neighbouring MP. I am humbled by the trust he has placed in me in this new role.

Housing is one of the biggest challenges our state is facing. Over the last decade, the social housing portfolio under Labor grew by just six per cent, while our population grew at almost three times that rate. The community housing sector, despite its potential, grew just three per cent, weighed down by red tape and a government that was ideologically opposed to empowering them.

We have committed to delivering one million new homes, including 53,500 new social and community homes, by 2044. These numbers have bipartisan support, but we are determined to achieve them faster by committing to deliver on our targets two years earlier than the Labor Party. That means ramping up delivery with more funding, a new delivery model of an always-on procurement process, stronger partnerships with the community housing sector and, above all, a focus on outcomes. Our first budget shows that. I will touch more on that later in the week, but it did include \$5.6 billion to deliver more social and community homes.

The Crisafulli government is the first government in Queensland's history to lock in ongoing, permanent, perpetual funding for social and community housing delivery. That is half a billion dollars annually locked in every year beyond the forwards. It is an extraordinary thing and something we are very proud to be delivering.

For community housing, we have streamlined over 2,000 outdated agreements to just over 100 through our new master agreement model which will unlock the sector's potential to deliver more homes faster. We also know supportive housing must be part of the 53,500 new homes, and we are delivering. It is the only long-term solution for the complex and chronic homelessness we are seeing in far too

many communities across Queensland. We are giving the homelessness services sector the certainty they deserve, with a 20 per cent uplift in funding locked in until June 2029. I want to thank the members of our new Homelessness Ministerial Advisory Council. Their goodwill and expert advice has helped us build a new body for coordinating our response better. It is a body that is focused on action, not just talking about the problem. We are also making home ownership a reality for First Nations communities for the first time, with a rent-to-buy scheme starting on Palm Island very soon. This will be a powerful step towards housing security and self-determination.

Public works is another key part of my portfolio and it is another area where we have hit the ground running. We have launched a full overhaul of our procurement policies to make sure Queenslanders get better value for money. We have indefinitely paused the flawed Best Practice Industry Conditions—BPICs—which meant it cost more and took longer to get anything built in Queensland. Militant union activity and outdated policies cost us an average of 2½ days of productivity per week on construction sites in our state. That slowed down the delivery of housing and infrastructure that Queenslanders need to see. We are turning that around. Through our Building Reg Reno we are cutting red tape that slowed down builders, tradies and subbies. More than 50,000 licensees—97 per cent—will no longer have to do unnecessary financial reporting. Our changes support our broader QBCC reforms and they complement the Queensland Productivity Commission's higher level reform work.

There is new leadership at the QBCC as well, which was sorely needed. This is one of the issues that I hear most about from members across the chamber, and I look forward to seeing what our team—led by Commissioner Angelo Lambrinos and our new board chair Greg Chemello—can achieve together. Queenslanders deserve a better building regulator, and that is exactly what we are delivering.

There is also QFleet, where over 11,000 vehicles are managed by a small and mighty team of public servants. They do all the purchasing, leasing, servicing and sales, and they do it in a way that reduces carbon emissions while still making sure that our frontline public servants have the right vehicle for the job. QBuild is another team which makes a big difference, especially during natural disasters. I want to thank them for all they do and for the way they have welcomed me on my visits across Queensland.

As youth minister, it is a real honour to represent the around one in five Queenslanders who are under the age of 25. It is also a role the Labor Party scrapped three years ago, but we have been proud to bring it back. This year marks the 30th anniversary of the YMCA Queensland Youth Parliament. We had a record 471 applications from young people across our state wanting to take part. Over the next few months, the youth members will be meeting, advocating and working on the bills they will debate when they return to this very chamber.

Youth homelessness is a major concern and we are responding. I have seen firsthand the power of youth foyers in our community on the Gold Coast, and we are delivering at least eight more across the state. They are a smart investment in safe, secure housing and tangible outcomes for young people who are earning and learning. We currently have three operating in Logan, Townsville and the Gold Coast, and work is underway on the next ones in Cairns, Moreton Bay and Hervey Bay. These are not just buildings. Youth foyers break the cycle of disadvantage. They deliver a return on investment of six to one. Within two years, more than 80 per cent of their residents will exit to be self-sufficient with their housing needs.

For young Queenslanders dreaming of their first home, we are also delivering the nation-leading Boost to Buy shared equity scheme. This will help Queenslanders without access to the bank of mum and dad get into a home with as little as a two per cent deposit. We are going to back them in by funding 30 per cent equity in new homes and 25 per cent in existing homes. That is in addition to our abolition of stamp duty for all first home buyers on all new builds and our continuation of the boosted \$30,000 first home buyer grants.

The final part of my portfolio is night-life. As part of our commitment to a vibrant and safe night-life across Queensland, we have supported our Night-Life Economy Commissioner to set up a night-life expert advisory panel, who are doing great work. They are helping us put together our state's first night-life economy strategy, which is due by the end of the year. It is all about making sure that government is doing everything possible to allow this sector to thrive.

Finally, I want to congratulate all members on their election or re-election to this House. I particularly want to congratulate our new LNP members. I said that I would mention the member for Barron River if she was in the chamber. I want to congratulate the member for Barron River. I spent a lot of time in Cairns over the last year and I had the great privilege of campaigning alongside her and I am very proud to see the result that she achieved.

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Mr O'CONNOR: I am not taking that interjection from the transport minister. I am very proud to see the result she achieved and I was very proud to support her in that work. I thank all members for their efforts over that campaign. It was a magnificent result.

The member for Surfers Paradise, my good friend, has come into the chamber so I mention him because he does love being mentioned. I want to acknowledge him for all his guidance and mentorship. I mostly listen to him on what he advises me on. He has been a great friend over many years and I look forward to serving with him and the rest of the Gold Coast members.