




Speech By
Hon. Steve Minnikin
MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Record of Proceedings, 14 March 2025

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Hon. SJ MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business) (5.46 pm): To stand here in this august chamber and give my address-in-reply after being re-elected for a fifth term by the people of Chatsworth is indeed a true honour and one that I do not take for granted. I fully realise that it is a privilege and not a right to serve in this hallowed chamber and I am truly indebted to the people of Chatsworth. I thank them for giving me the opportunity of serving as their state member in this 58th Parliament. I again reaffirm my allegiance to His Majesty King Charles III and to his representative, Her Excellency the Governor, Dr Jeannette Young, the institution of parliament and of course the electors of Chatsworth who have entrusted me with a fifth term of electoral representation in this 58th Parliament. As I stated in my inaugural address-in-reply back in 2012—

Our role and responsibility as a government is to provide an opportunity deposit slip for all Queenslanders and not an entitlement chequebook. It is our responsibility as the government to be an enabler of opportunity and not a provider of assumed entitlement.

Even though four months have passed since the last state election, I take this opportunity to once again acknowledge the valuable contribution made by defeated and retiring members from the 57th Parliament. I congratulate all returning and new members of this 58th Parliament. I also congratulate Mr Speaker on his appointment to the role.

I remain steadfastly committed to doing what is best for the Chatsworth electorate, which I am proud to serve. Whilst I am deeply honoured to be a minister of the Crown, as I have repeatedly said the most important initials or title one can have as a politician is 'MP'. Without them you are not a minister, shadow minister, whip or anything else. It reinforces the notion in my mind that serving your local community as their MP is, and always will be, the highest priority. On this point, nothing has changed. Since first being elected 13 years ago in 2012, my passion to make the local community I represent in the eastern suburbs of Brisbane a better place in which to live will continue to be the focus of what drives me each and every day as a parliamentarian.

Being asked by the Premier to take on the role of Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Small and Family Business was a distinct privilege. It is a portfolio very dear to my heart, having set up an award-winning customer service centre at the Redland shire—now city—council 30 years ago. I am truly honoured to have been asked by the Premier to be the inaugural Minister for Customer Services and Open Data and Minister for Small and Family Business.

Navigating the labyrinthine structures of government services is often a daunting task. As the first Queensland Minister for Customer Services and Open Data in addition to Minister for Small and Family Business, I am committed to addressing some longstanding issues around customer service and how everyday Queenslanders receive government services. The challenges are well documented: red tape, jargon-rich communication and siloed government departments, all of which can confound and frustrate the very individuals seeking assistance. It takes more than just lip-service to overcome these hurdles; it takes a concerted effort and a vision.

To deliver better digital services, we must provide a reason to engage with a single platform for multiple services and supports. Securing a digital driver's licence on its own does not build trust or confidence in accessing digital services. We want to provide a single digital access point that pulls together the services that customers and business require on a daily or monthly basis—blue card, yellow card, birth certificates, sport and recreation grants, personal hardship and recovery grants—in one location and accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

By building this capability to allow access to these and other support services, we will change the way citizens and businesses interact. We will also build future capacity and possibilities for more effective and responsive services to meet the needs of communities. This is not simply a work stream enhancement but a philosophical shift. The approach will ensure that government is more understandable and accessible for the average citizen. To be clear, this is not about creating an impersonal, digital-only interface that alienates those less technologically minded. It is about offering choice: digital, face-to-face or phone. This multichannel customer experience approach recognises the diversity of preference and need across Queensland's wide demographic spectrum.

My vision and expectations are that Queensland sets a new standard that others will want to emulate: excellence in service delivery where the needs of the customers drive the evolution of systems and, importantly, the service we provide. This extends beyond mere administrative adjustments. It will revolutionise the way the Queensland government supports and assists citizens and businesses across the entire state. Queenslanders have already had a snapshot with the Queensland Open Hospitals initiative, the first of what will be many initiatives that align transparency and efficiency. By partnering with Queensland Health, we have enabled access to real-time data on emergency department waiting times, turning previously opaque systems into sources of empowerment for the health-seeking public. In an era where data drives decisions, the Queensland government's focus on open data is an essential and necessary first step. I look forward to updating the House as we progress.

We recognise that Queensland's economy is built on the back of over 495,000 small and family businesses that make up about 97 per cent of all Queensland businesses and employ more than one million people across the state. I can assure people that the Crisafulli government is focused on creating an environment in which small and family businesses are a key customer that we want to see, as I have said previously, not just survive but thrive.

Our Small and Family Business First commitments included refocusing the Queensland Small Business Commissioner on red-tape reduction and dispute resolution as part of our 100-day plan. Let's face it: red tape had been weighing down businesses across Queensland for far too long, and we all have experiences or examples. I thank the members on this side for their advocacy in identifying red tape from their local small businesses. It is something I would urge those from across this parliament to focus on if they are serious about small and family businesses.

Under phase 1, I wrote to more than 120 chambers of commerce across Queensland asking for their feedback and examples of red tape impeding small businesses from operating efficiently and profitably. I recently announced phase 2—the opening up of feedback to all 495,000 Queensland small and family businesses, whether they are a tradie, a tourism operator or a cafe or clothing store owner. Some of the feedback we have already received includes language on government forms being far too complicated, different information from different areas of government, or duplication in auditing and monitoring requirements. I am keen to hear from as many people as possible.

We have already started the journey across government. In addition to refocusing the Queensland Small Business Commissioner on red-tape reduction and delivering dispute management services, work is progressing on other commitments, including: delivering the Secure Communities Partnership Program to provide grants to small businesses and local governments to implement crime prevention measures; delivering a new dedicated small business concierge service to streamline government support and deliver a one-stop shop to improve access to government services—and I would like to pay tribute to the former shadow minister in this sphere, now the Minister for Transport and Main Roads, for his advocacy in this leading policy development; delivering the five-business-days On Time, Every Time Payment Guarantee for small businesses and immediate payments for invoices under \$10,000; making it easier for small businesses to tender for government work with simplified procurement processes, standardised contracts and smaller tenders; developing a small and family business innovation pathway; establishing a regional business gateway grant program to support chambers of commerce, trade organisations and local councils to operate business hubs in regional centres; and supporting small and family businesses with the cost of apprenticeship wages.

All politics are local, and I will continue to fight hard for the constituents of the Chatsworth electorate and look to improve amenities in my electorate. Leading into the 2024 state election campaign, I put forward my vision and plan for Chatsworth. These things included: Belmont State

School—\$10 million to deliver a new A block; Belmont State School—\$40,000 to upgrade facilities; Gumdale State School—\$661,000 to upgrade facilities; Carina State School, my old school—\$15,000 to upgrade facilities; Mayfield State School—\$550,000 to deliver a new acoustic wall in the undercover activity centre; an initiative very dear to my heart, the Queensland Koala Society—\$220,000 to deliver a fauna crossing on Old Cleveland Road at Carindale to keep our koalas and wildlife safer; and Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee, otherwise known as B4C—\$135,000 to deliver a weed control and rehabilitation program, and I acknowledge the great work that B4C do.

As I have stated in the past and will continue to acknowledge, there is one aspect of being a politician that unites all of us in this chamber, regardless of our various ideological beliefs: none of us can aspire to high office without the help of our wonderful support base. Therefore, I wish to place on record my sincere thanks to several important people. Firstly, to the local LNP branch members: thank you yet again for your dedication and professionalism during the last state campaign. None of you are paid a dime, yet you give up your time and effort in order to support me and the LNP overall. I am forever in your debt; I thank you sincerely. My dedicated campaign team continued to hit the pavements and letterbox dropped targeted areas of the electorate as well as undertook roadside duties and doorknocking.

To the many supporters, both from within the LNP and personal friends, who assisted with the pre-poll in the weeks leading up to election day, I give my deepest thanks. I acknowledge Charles, Mike, Drewe, Ken, Lauren, Ben, Renee, Tracey, Madeline, Paul, Greg and many others. Yet again, I would like to acknowledge the several hundred supporters throughout the Chatsworth electorate who enabled my mighty campaign team to erect election signs along their front yards and fences.

Yet again my mother, Denise, was exceptional in her support throughout the entire fifth campaign, particularly rising to the occasion with pre-polling. My love for her knows no bounds. I acknowledge the fact that eight weeks before the pre-poll she broke her knee. She was in plaster and she was hobbling, but she gave at least seven hours every day for pre-poll. She took medication at night, came back the next day and away she went. That is what I call a true champion.

As was the case several years ago when I first ran for preselection, my greatest support base is my immediate family. My two adult children, Heather and Lachlan, worked tirelessly around their university, school and sporting commitments to assist with my campaign for the fifth election in a row. I was full of pride and overwhelmed with their work ethic and dedication during the campaign; nothing politically will ever surpass my pride in watching them grow into fine free-spirited and thinking young individuals.

Twelve years ago I described my wife Roslyn in my inaugural speech as my 'rock of Gibraltar'. This description is just as apt today. I could only achieve politically as a member of parliament with the support and assistance of my wife for well over a quarter of a century. She has done a phenomenal job—not just throughout the campaign but throughout the course of my political career. Ros is a dedicated high school teacher and consummate professional in everything she does. My success in being elected for a fifth term is due, in no small part, to her efforts. As a teacher she is a busy professional in her own right and virtually runs the entire household when I am consumed with politics. To my extraordinary wife Ros: I thank you again from the bottom of my heart.

I have previously stated, and again reiterate, that our ideological battles here in this hallowed chamber are an important part of the overall democratic process. Indeed, robust debate is an important part of this but, as the approximately 1,100 names on the honour board of past members of the Legislative Assembly attests, our time here is, relatively speaking, short-lived as a proportion of our entire life's experiences. I believe it is incumbent, therefore, upon all of us to use our privileged time here responsibly in pursuing tangible outcomes for the electorates we all serve.

In closing my fifth address-in-reply speech, I am truly honoured to be returned for a fifth time. In closing my address, I will end where I always have with my previous address-in-reply speeches. I will again quote Hal Colebatch, who stated, 'The high privilege of democracy cannot be maintained unless the equally exalted responsibilities attracting to it are understood and observed.'