




Speech by

Hon. Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Hansard Tuesday, 29 May 2012

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Hon. AP CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (Minister for Natural Resources and Mines) (9.09 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the people of the Hinchinbrook electorate, I request that you convey to the Speaker my congratulations on her election to that high and respected office. While all members of this place have a responsibility to behave in a manner that reflects positively on the House, the Speaker is particularly burdened with the responsibility of ensuring that the traditional impartiality and dignity of that office is preserved. I would note that, as the first woman to be elected Speaker of the Queensland parliament, another first in a long list of firsts for women from the conservative side of politics has been added to. The first woman elected to this parliament, the first woman appointed to cabinet in this parliament, the first woman to be a Deputy Premier and now the first woman to be elected Speaker is a track record for which the LNP can be proud in terms of the participation of women in politics—and all on merit.

I am truly humbled and honoured to have been returned as the member for Hinchinbrook. I thank the people of the Hinchinbrook electorate for their support. I intend to repay that support by continuing to provide the strong representation to all of my constituents that they deserve and that I have endeavoured to provide since I was first elected. I am pleased and proud for the third time to pledge my loyalty to our most gracious sovereign Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, to her representative in the great state of Queensland, Her Excellency the Governor, and to the people of the Hinchinbrook electorate. I am particularly pleased to do so in this the year of Her Majesty's diamond jubilee celebrations. For the third time in an address-in-reply I reaffirm my view that our current constitutional arrangements have served the people of Queensland and the people of Australia well and I am a strong and committed advocate for retaining our present constitutional arrangements in the interests of good government.

I wish to offer my sincere thanks to the people who assisted me in being returned as the member for Hinchinbrook. In the first instance I thank the people who make up the branches and the committees of the LNP in Hinchinbrook. They are dedicated supporters of our party and they helped me enormously during the recent election campaign. I am very grateful for their support. There were also many people who are not members of the LNP who volunteered their time and who supported me during the election campaign. I am also very grateful to those people. It was wonderful to have so many who are not directly connected with the LNP express confidence in me and, once again, I will do my best to repay that confidence.

I would in particular like to extend my thanks to my campaign directors, Nat La Spina and Marc Rowell, whose support and guidance once again proved invaluable. Nat La Spina is well known to many longer serving LNP members in this House and is respected in North Queensland as someone who has stuck with us through thick and through thin, in good times and in bad times, and who has demonstrated unswerving loyalty to our party. Marc Rowell is also well known to many longer serving LNP members in this House and I was very lucky indeed to have him as a mentor of mine, who encouraged me and who has been a great source of feedback and advice. Marc is my immediate predecessor in this place, a person who is well respected by both sides of the House, and I understand that he continues to take a very strong interest in politics and the fortunes of the state of Queensland, particularly North Queensland. I

would also like to put on the record my thanks to Bryce MacDonald and Wally Skinner, two members of my party who gave me very strong support during the election campaign.

As always, my family were unfailing in their support for my endeavours. I wish to express my gratitude to my mum and dad, Lloyd and Lorraine, for their love and encouragement. They have made a lot of sacrifices for me in the past and, amazingly, they insist on continuing to make sacrifices to support me in my public life and I am doing everything that I can to make them proud of me. They worked hard to give me the opportunity to get a good education and instilled in me the values and principles that guide me. For that, I am very grateful and I thank them. I also thank my brother and my good friend, Graham, who is a reluctant participant in politics but who is someone whose support I know I can always rely on and who enjoys his self-appointed role of keeping me grounded. All members in this place should understand and appreciate the importance of the support we receive from our friends and family. They make significant sacrifices for us to be able to discharge our duties.

The other source of support without which we could not do our jobs is the support that we receive from our staff. I would like to put on the record my appreciation for the dedication of my staff in the Hinchinbrook electorate office, Leisa Menegon, Jess Exelby and Lorraine Valinoti, who really are dedicated to their jobs and are genuinely committed to serving the people of the Hinchinbrook electorate. Leisa, Jess and Lorraine are fantastic staff and I am truly fortunate to have them. They put up with a lot in their demanding jobs. Indeed, they put up with me—as indeed all of my colleagues do. I also look forward to working with my new ministerial staff, led by my chief of staff, Susan MacDonald, and the many staff and officers of the newly re-established Department of Natural Resources and Mines, led by director-general Dan Hunt. On that note, I ought to say how much of an honour and a privilege it is to have been asked to join the first Newman LNP cabinet as the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines and I thank the Premier for that opportunity to accept his invitation to join his cabinet.

I was pleased to listen to Her Excellency the Governor touch on the importance of issues concerning my portfolio in her speech to open the 54th Queensland Parliament. As the Governor mentioned, the resources sector is a cornerstone of the state's economy, particularly in regional areas. As minister, I am indeed determined to ensure that Queensland benefits from growth in the resources sector and that it develops in a responsible and orderly fashion. The LNP recognises the need for sustainable growth in this sector and the importance of it being a safe place to work. The priorities in this area for the LNP are indeed to address pressing skills shortages, improve the efficiency of regulatory and approval processes, restore confidence in the sector's social licence to operate and restore Queensland's reputation as a preferred destination for investment. I will seek to address these priorities by working with my ministerial colleagues where we share areas of mutual interest.

The Governor was right to observe that land and water are the fundamental building blocks of our environment, communities and economy. As the responsible minister, I am determined that the natural resource management policies of this government will plan for the prudent conservation and utilisation of land and water resources. Most importantly, I am determined to ensure that my department will manage our natural resources in a transparent and accountable way based on science and equity. I see as a matter of urgency the need for the management of our natural resources to return to a more balanced approach that affords some respect for private property rights as we pursue our sustainability objectives in parallel.

Perhaps more than in any other area of public policy, the approach of the LNP with respect to land and water management will be in stark contrast to the ideological, politically driven agenda of the former Beattie and Bligh Labor governments and their disgraceful alliance with the extreme Greens. Over the past 14 years the Labor-Greens alliance has waged a relentless and often fanatical assault on the private property rights of Queenslanders who, for over 150 years, have utilised our natural resources to support their families, create jobs, build communities and generate wealth for Queensland. That alliance has undermined confidence and created great uncertainty for industry but, more concerning, has caused great pain, frustration and anger in the lives of good, honest, hardworking Queenslanders. I would note that this has been most keenly felt in rural and regional communities. The Labor-Greens alliance has hammered the bush and I for one have had enough of it. I am looking forward to being part of a new government that will work to heal these wounds.

I share the concerns of the Deputy Premier, the member for Callide, which he expressed during his contribution to this debate, for the welfare of country towns and country people across Queensland. However, it will be no surprise whatsoever to continuing members of this House that I have a significant bias towards, a particular concern for and a major preoccupation with the welfare and circumstances of the towns and people of North Queensland. I was born and raised in the mighty sugar and banana farming town of Tully and for several years now I have lived in the wonderful town of Ingham in the heart of the Herbert River district. Both sides of my family have lived in North Queensland for several generations. I am passionate about the people, the communities and the industries of North Queensland. From the Bohle River and the northern beaches of Townsville in the south to the Johnstone River in Innisfail in the north,

the Hinchinbrook electorate and North Queensland is my home; it is the place that I love and it is the place that I will always fight for.

On the evening of 2 February and in the morning of 3 February last year category 5 tropical Cyclone Yasi slammed into the Queensland Coast in the heart of my electorate, with the eye crossing just after midnight at Mission Beach, making its way over the town of Tully before moving out over the Great Dividing Range and further west. Wind gusts of up to 285 kilometres an hour punished these communities. Rainfall totals of almost half a metre in 24 hours were recorded in the same area, compounding the misery of people left without roofs, windows or doors. The town of Cardwell endured the wrath of a five-metre storm surge which caused enormous damage, devastating this wonderful, peaceful, close-knit little community. As I mentioned earlier, I live in Ingham and I spent the evening in my home hoping for the best but fearing the worst. What we experienced that night is something that we never want to experience again. As I stated last year in this place during the condolence motion debate, I was scared. It has been a truly upsetting and difficult experience to endure this period of response, recovery and reconstruction with my own community. I have witnessed, endured and struggled on with my constituents while they have valiantly held their heads up, helped each other and done everything they can to rebuild their lives. Undoubtedly it has been the most difficult year of my life. I thank in particular the Deputy Premier and the member for Burdekin who have taken an interest in my welfare and circumstances during this time. It has been a harrowing personal experience to witness the violence that was done to the place where I grew up, the sporting grounds that I played on, the creeks and rivers that I swam in and, perhaps the most difficult of all, the schools that I attended. The beautiful rainforests that are a feature of my electorate were stripped bare of vegetation and 15 months later they are only now taking steps towards reestablishing themselves. It is a most welcome development for the local community in my electorate.

I confess that I have regularly felt inadequate and sometimes powerless when faced with what seemed to be insurmountable challenges facing my community in the wake of Cyclone Yasi. The clean-up process and the recovery process, the insurance issues and the countless other challenges have combined together to create a heavy burden on the people of the Hinchinbrook electorate. I offer my sincere apologies to the people of my electorate if I have not been everything that they think I should have been as their local member over the last 15 months. I can fully accept that there may have been things that they wanted me to do or wanted me to say that I could not do or I did not do. And I say to them with all sincerity that it was not for want of trying and working for and fighting for you. I can after 15 months say that I have done my best.

My election as the member for Hinchinbrook in 2006 was a humbling experience. I was equally humbled and grateful to the people of the Hinchinbrook electorate when they returned me in 2009 and for the faith they have placed in me to represent them again in this place following the election in March this year. As I have always acknowledged during address-in-reply debates, while the Hinchinbrook electorate has been held by the LNP since 1960 it has never been a safe seat, with the margin at times being healthy while at others the margin has been wafer thin. The most recent election demonstrated once again that the Hinchinbrook electorate is not a safe seat for the LNP. The people of Hinchinbrook expect strong and effective representation and as such it continues to be my challenge to demonstrate to my constituents that I am worthy of their support. I have never taken their support for granted in the past and I will not take it for granted in the future.

The people of Queensland have elected a new LNP government. I will work hard to be an effective voice in this place for the people of Hinchinbrook. I take this opportunity to reaffirm my undertaking that I will do my best to further their interests and to provide them with the strong representation that they deserve. The new parliament is a very different place from the previous two that I have been a member of. I offer my congratulations to the Premier on his election as the member for Ashgrove for which he campaigned strongly and diligently as a local candidate against what were particularly vicious personal attacks by Labor and the extreme Greens. I note that in defeating the former member for Ashgrove the Premier dispatched a former Labor minister who did much to harm farming families and rural industries in my electorate and in North Queensland and I thank him in that regard. I offer my congratulations to my friend the Deputy Premier, the member for Callide, recognising that the election result has been particularly satisfying for him after 14 continuous years on the wrong side of this chamber, a sense of satisfaction which he understandably has failed miserably to mask since polling day. I compliment the Deputy Premier on his role in that success. I congratulate the Treasurer, the member for Clayfield, on his appointment to that important role and acknowledge the serious burden that he carries to provide leadership within the government, supported by his fellow cabinet ministers, to address the serious financial challenge confronting the Newman LNP government, a legacy of the disgraceful mismanagement, waste and reckless spending of the former Bligh Labor government.

I must say that it is a wonderful thing to have more LNP voices in the parliament from North Queensland to support advocacy for that region of this state. My friends, the member for Burdekin and the member for Mirani, have been carrying that burden in this place, along with myself, for some time. I offer a

particularly warm welcome to the members for Cook, Barron River, Cairns, Townsville, Thuringowa, Mundingburra and Whitsunday. Members who know me well will also be aware that I would be being less than honest if I did not express a particular satisfaction with the arrival in this House of the new members for Beaudesert, Nanango, Maryborough and Burnett and the reasons for that particular satisfaction. I also offer these new members a warm welcome. Lastly, I offer a special welcome to the new member for Pumicestone, who is also the Assistant Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. The assistant minister has already proven herself to be a great asset to me as the minister and to the Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

Mr Johnson: She's better looking than the minister.

Mr CRIPPS: I take the interjection from the member for Gregory. She is indeed better looking than the minister. The member for Pumicestone will take a particular interest in matters concerning the coal seam gas industry and the state government's interests and responsibilities in respect of abandoned mine sites. In conclusion, I say to all new LNP members of the 54th Parliament: you are first and foremost representatives of your electorate. That principle is the foundation of our representative democracy. I would say to you also that you have allowed yourself to be identified with the values and the policies of the LNP in the course of being elected, and your constituents have endorsed those values and policies at the recent state election. You are part of a team that has outlined a vision for this state. Let us set about this hard work as a team to clean up Labor's appalling mess and get Queensland back on track.