Speech by

# Glen Elmes

**MEMBER FOR NOOSA**

Hansard Thursday, 21 May 2009

## ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

**Mr ELMES** (Noosa—LNP) (8.27 pm): I am very happy to be able to stand here before the House tonight and deliver this speech to the address-in-reply. The fact that I am standing here means that the Noosa community, which I represent, has seen fit to honour me for a second term as their representative in the Queensland parliament. It is a huge honour and privilege made more so this time by the fact that once the dust had settled and the last votes were counted I was able to attain just under 70 per cent of the two-party preferred vote. The challenge for me now in this second term is to continue to address the needs of my community and reflect their views in what I say both here and elsewhere, and try to achieve a similar result in the next election campaign.

It would be very remiss of me not to thank my campaign team headed by Nick Dondas and Matt Collins, and ably assisted by Barry Elms, Earle Bailey, David Peel, Jeff Nuske, Dean Williams and Karla Hobson. These wonderful people formed the core of the campaign team. In the lead-up to election day at prepolling, at declared institutions and on election day at the polling booths, something like 160 volunteers came out to support not just me but also the ideals and the policies of the Liberal National Party. I would like to make special mention of Lyn Parker and Barb Hannon in my office; my wonderful wife, Lesleigh, and my children, Teigan and Kristin, for their help, support and encouragement along the way.

The people of Noosa have rewarded me, and now it is up to me to reward them with a further three years of hard work and dedication on their behalf. While it is certainly better to come back into the parliament and see the numbers evened out somewhat, it is of course a disappointment not to be able to sit on the government benches. Nevertheless, Lawrence Springborg and Mark McArdle have an enormous amount to be proud of in opening the way for the creation of a new political party and to have given so much of themselves to achieve a great result on 21 March.

The fact that there are now 18 Labor seats with margins of less than five per cent means that the election due in March 2012 is within our grasp provided that we develop and articulate the policies and prove to Queenslanders that we have the energy and drive to see them out of the financial mess made much worse by the incompetence of Labor governments at both state and federal levels. It is fair that I should congratulate the Premier on the re-election of the Labor government and to also offer my congratulations to the members of her ministry.

I would like to single out the member for Ashgrove, the Minister for Climate Change and Sustainability. I know that the minister is passionate about the environment and I give her my undertaking that whenever possible I will work with her in a cooperative way when good ideas and good policies are put before the parliament.

It would also be remiss of me not to offer my congratulations to the Speaker upon his election. I trust he will use his time in this most important position to uphold the traditions and procedures that I value very highly in the parliament of Queensland.

During the election campaign my local campaign focused on three central policy planks. The first was the Noosa Hospital. This outstanding facility is the only hospital in Queensland that operates as a

public-private partnership. It is an asset not only to the people of Noosa but also to the clients of the hospital who come from a catchment area stretching from Hervey Bay to Kawana.

Upon his appoint as Minister for Health, just two days after the election, I wrote to the Deputy Premier and reminded him of the importance of this hospital and the role that it can play in minimising waiting lists on the Sunshine Coast and beyond. There is room right now for this hospital to undertake an additional 700 public procedures a year. The hospital has a full roster of surgeons, doctors and allied health professionals, nurses and auxiliary staff. What it lacks is a commitment from the government to provide an extra $3 million per year in recurrent funding that will allow the Noosa Hospital to operate at capacity.

What is also urgently required is for negotiations to commence with Ramsey Health, the owners, to extend the agreement under which the hospital operates out beyond 2019. The Deputy Premier has received my correspondence and I publicly issue the same invitation that I privately offered to him. That is to come to Noosa, visit the hospital, meet the staff and our community advisory board and he will see for himself the outstanding contribution that Noosa Hospital can increasingly make to Queensland Health.

**Mr Wellington:** It is a great hospital.

**Mr ELMES:** Yes, it is. The second plank of my campaign, and it is as important to Noosa as it is to the electorate of Gympie, was the proposal to build the Traveston Crossing Dam. I was very pleased to celebrate, not mourn, the third anniversary of the decision to build what cannot and must never, ever be built. The number of locals and visitors who attended on the day was considerably higher than last year. The fire in the belly and the determination to see the fight through to the end is just as strong as it was back in the days when Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh went to Gympie to try to sell something that could only have been thought up by a snake-oil salesman.

I have a photograph which hangs in my office here in parliament of me and my colleagues David Gibson, the member for Gympie, and Scott Emerson, the member for Indooroopilly. Beside the sign that reads 'Traveston Crossing Bridge' David Gibson provided another sign which we hung from this masterpiece of Mains Road engineering and gave the bridge a further name, that is, the 'Ronan Lee Memorial Bridge'. In smaller letters below that is, 'Brought to you by Labor and the Queensland Greens'.

It is that preference deal and the breaking of a promise given separately by Senator Bob Brown and Ronan Lee to the people of the Mary Valley and then callously disregarded that allowed this government to slink back into office on the back of broken promises. My colleagues and I will not forget the people of the Mary Valley. We do not want to see and will never agree to the building of the Traveston Crossing Dam. Instead, we want to see the Mary Valley remain part of the food bowl that serves not just the Sunshine Coast but South-East Queensland. Plentiful water from the Mary River together with fertile farming land and the protection of endangered species should have meant that this project was never given more than a moment's passing thought.

The third part of my campaign was the forced amalgamation of the Noosa shire into what is now the Sunshine Coast Regional Council. It is all right for some to say that the battle is lost, move on and accept your fate. I am here today to advise that the community of Noosa will never, under any circumstances, give up the fight to reinstate what should never have been taken from them in the first place.

If the Labor government had respected the legislation that existed in this parliament and allowed the people of Noosa and elsewhere in Queensland to determine their own future at the ballot box then the Noosa council would still exist. The determination of Noosa residents can best be illustrated by looking at the election result itself. With the exception of an Independent who stood in 2006 and only attracted about 200 votes, the political parties and in some instances the candidates who contested the 2009 battle were the same as before. Four of the five candidates campaigned on the central promise of restoring the Noosa council.

In the 2006 election the Labor Party achieved just 24 per cent of the primary vote—an all-time record low. On 21 March 2009 Labor managed just 20 per cent of the primary vote—a new downward spiralling record. Some 80 per cent of the people who voted in Noosa voted for candidates whose central policy was to uphold the values that we have built as a community over the past 30 years and restore a greater and sustainable Noosa shire.

There are some who call people who live in Noosa elitist. Nothing could be further from the truth. This is a community determined to plot its own future and it does not need the help of a dictatorial government imposing some fool of an idea called the iconic places legislation that at the time the Labor government asked the Noosa council to help write, such was the understanding of the government's own proposed legislation. I recommit myself to doing everything in my power to see that the residents of Noosa are given a democratic say in determining their own future.

For me personally the outstanding highlight of being re-elected for a second term has been my appointment as the shadow minister for climate change and sustainability. I would like to thank my leader, John-Paul Langbroek, for the confidence and faith that he has placed in me.

I come from a constituency that values its environmental credentials and that has carefully planned a future that includes a population cap based on the sustainable carrying capacity of the land on which we live. I want to use the time that I have in this portfolio to reflect those values and ideals. As I travel throughout the state I will adopt common-sense strategies that reward the environment and at the same time give certainty to the people who are prepared to work it and nourish it.

The world financial crisis has meant that the thoughts of many people have moved away from the environment and its protection. As a nation we have gone through these trials before. In time our economy and that of the world will improve. With a lot of hard work and sacrifice we may even pay off the enormous debt that will be left by the current state and federal Labor government. But for those of us who are interested and those who value the environment, we need to maintain our enthusiasm and commitment and promote what all levels of government can do through the framework of policy and legislation. Just as importantly, we need to promote the actions of what each individual Queenslander can do to reduce their carbon footprint.

In the short time that has passed since I was appointed as the environmental spokesman I have been developing some ideas that I know will complement the views held in my own electorate. I hope that by example we can engender those same values in the people of Queensland.

Every political party in the federal parliament has a view as to the types of targets and conditions that Australia should adopt as part of an emissions trading scheme. We see constant references, plans, ideals and legislation being put forward around the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Nine separate bills and over a thousand pages in explanation were presented to the federal parliament last week. It is an issue of unbelievable complexity and seeks to prepare Australia for the conference that will take place in Copenhagen in December this year which hopefully will set new, meaningful limits on carbon emissions worldwide.

Federal Labor seeks to rush through these bills and set targets prior to the conference in December. If the legislation is not due to commence until 1 July 2011, why in heaven's name would we rush through legislation so complex that it is doomed to fail when we have over two years to get it right? Australia should—and I am sure it will—play a leading and constructive role in the conference in December and we should be prepared to match the targets agreed to by the world's other developed economies.

With 1.4 per cent of the planet's emissions, it is not Australia's place to be out in front of the rest of the developed world. But we must reduce our emissions in line with the targets set and do it in such a way that it does not export Australian and Queensland jobs offshore. For my part, I do not want to lose sight of what each individual Queenslander can do in their own small way to reduce their carbon footprint and play a personal role as part of the overall collective solution.

I look forward to playing a very constructive part in the 53rd Parliament and I wish not only the members of this parliament who have been elected for more than one or two terms but also those who are here for their first term the very best in the coming three years.