




Speech by

Lisa France

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

Hansard Tuesday, 29 May 2012

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mrs FRANCE** (Pumicestone—LNP) (4.00 pm): It is an honour to be standing before you today as a member of the 54th Parliament of Queensland to deliver my first speech. Today I stand here proudly as a member of the Liberal National Party, a party that has led the way. Indeed, it was from the conservatives that the first federal female MP, Dame Enid Lyons, and the first state female MP, Irene Longman, were elected. These achievements were won not via a quota, these positions were earned by hard work and on merit. The first Indigenous parliamentarian, Neville Bonner, was a member of the Liberal Party and my federal member of parliament, Wyatt Roy, was the youngest elected federal member of parliament. He is also, like me, a proud member of the LNP.

I stand here today as only the second person to be chosen to represent the electorate of Pumicestone since its formation in 2001. I would like to acknowledge my predecessor and her 11 years of service to the parliament. Before Pumicestone was created it was part of both the Caboolture and Glass House electorates back in the eighties and I would like to pay a special tribute to Mr Bill Newton who was one of the hardest working parliamentarians I have ever met. Bill is a wonderful man who still to this day has his community at heart in everything he does. I first met Bill when I was a rookie environmental scientist providing a briefing to him in his role as member for Glass House. At the conclusion of our meeting he said to me, 'Have you ever thought about going into politics? You should consider it'. Well, Bill, I thought about it for over a decade and I finally took your advice. Thank you.

My electorate of Pumicestone is a mixture of seaside communities, agricultural pockets, industrial and commercial precincts and fast-growing residential areas. These residential areas with the largest population bases are the tight-knit communities of Caboolture in the west and Bribie Island to the east. The electorate is crisscrossed by a number of streams, creeks and rivers that all flow towards our beautiful Pumicestone Passage which separates Bribie Island from the mainland. The electorate is only 293 square kilometres, of which 120 are national and state parks. Those two great arteries of Queensland commerce, the Bruce Highway and the electric rail line, pass through the electorate servicing both the residents of my electorate and commuters and tourists travelling to and from the Sunshine Coast and Brisbane.

There are just over 50,000 people in the Pumicestone electorate and our residential growth is almost 50 per cent faster than Queensland's growth. We have approximately 3,500 businesses, with the major employment areas being retail, construction, manufacturing, and health care and social assistance. Our unemployment rate sits around 8.6 per cent and has no doubt contributed to almost 40 per cent of our people being classified as being in the most disadvantaged quintile. This results in a high demand for community services in our area. However, it is our strong sense of community and wonderful natural attributes that have provided the electorate of Pumicestone with some of the most desirable real estate, attracting retirees who flock to areas like Bribie Island. This has resulted in 21 per cent of the electorate being over the age of 65, which is about 70 per cent higher than the state average. I have lived in the electorate of Pumicestone since I was 15 years old and my husband Chad and I are now raising our three children in the Pumicestone electorate. As parents and small business owners, we share many of the concerns of our fellow community members both on Bribie and across the electorate. There are big issues facing our community, many of which stem from the neglect of the former state government.

The reason I joined the Liberal National Party of Queensland was because of its philosophy that government should be smaller, government should facilitate and support prosperity and that it should not overtax or overregulate. When I was doorknocking throughout the campaign, the message was clear. When I was attending community meetings the message was clear. When I was meeting people outside Centrelink the message was clear. The message was clear and it was always the same: stop the rising cost of living. Business owner after business owner has told me that the big inhibitors to them growing their businesses are overregulation, increasing costs and lack of confidence. They know that small business is the engine room of the economy, that this is the sector that will create the jobs in my electorate and other electorates across our state. Excessive regulation is killing small business and without small business there are not enough jobs to provide employment for local families. It is the high taxes and the increased cost-of-living pressures that are taking families to the brink.

Unfortunately these higher taxes have not resulted in better services in our local area. In my electorate infrastructure needs have been neglected. Small business has borne the brunt of a lazy government willing only to take the easy road on decisions. The Caboolture Hospital is a case in point. The hardworking medical staff at the hospital are underresourced. There are not enough beds, there are not enough doctors and there are not enough nurses. People are waiting too long to be seen and many families have lost faith in a system that leaves them waiting several hours in the early hours of the morning with a sick baby to see a doctor. Our ambulance officers do a wonderful job, but they cannot keep up with the demand in our local area. I look forward to being part of a government that seeks to deliver better health services to my community.

Bribie Island has gone from being a sleepy hamlet to a thriving, growing community. Clearly the old bridge that was built in 1963 and links the island to the mainland is not going to last forever and it requires some future planning for its upgrade. During the floods of 2011 Caboolture was left isolated by the flooding of the Bruce Highway. In our community we were lucky to be spared the truly dreadful consequences of the flooding which many in Queensland experienced, but it became obvious that something needs to be done to flood proof the very artery of our community, the Bruce Highway.

Another casualty of this rapid growth was the provision of vital services in our local communities. My electorate looks forward to seeing the benefits of our government's commitment to increasing police numbers. The police have made it clear that they need better resources and support in order to make our communities safer. I also look forward to working with our hardworking police and our community groups to help address antisocial behaviour in the community.

It is my privilege to have been appointed Assistant Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. Queensland resources, together with tourism, agriculture and construction are the four pillars that make our state great. According to the Queensland Resources Council, based on the 2009-10 prices, Queensland's minerals and energy sector could be valued at more than \$92 billion a year by 2019-20. Last financial year it was worth \$36.5 billion, spending more than \$21 billion in Queensland on goods, services and salaries. Sadly, the Fraser Institute Annual Survey of Mining Companies 2010-11 showed that the Queensland sovereign risk ranking has fallen from eighth in the world in 2006-07 to 38 last year. This government will ensure that Queensland's infrastructure is up to the task and we will close the gaps in skills shortage that are hampering growth and eroding confidence. This government is committed to supporting the resource sector so it continues to play its part in powering the growth of our great state. Importantly, this government acknowledges the responsibility it has to ensure that growth in the mining sector occurs in a responsible way. This government is fully cognisant of the nexus between development and preservation of the environment. The beauty of our environment is one of the great drivers for our tourism industry that, together with the mining industry, provides employment and prosperity for many Queenslanders.

I believe my background holds me in very good stead to provide assistance to the honourable minister, the member for Hinchinbrook, in this important portfolio. I am an environmental scientist who has worked in the mining industry ensuring that development occurs sustainably and not at the expense of the environment or communities. My work has taken me around Australia and around the world and I look forward to utilising my skills and knowledge in this area for the benefit of Queensland.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the people of Pumicestone for electing me to represent them in this place. I won every booth in my electorate and I am fully aware of the responsibility that such a show of faith bestows on me. I am proud of the campaign that I ran in Pumicestone. It was focused on the issues of concern to our community and not on personalities, gossip or innuendo. I intend to continue in the same vein and I look forward to being part of a government that restores accountability and good government to Queensland. I have met some absolutely wonderful people in the past 18 months. I will never forget the selfless volunteers I met while I was helping out at the flood refuge run by the local churches and community groups during the 2011 floods. The Ross family and the volunteers at the Bribie Christian Outreach Centre do an amazing job and I thank them for welcoming me into their team to make vegemite on toast to feed the school kids. I thank groups such as Family Haven who took the time to make

sure that I well and truly understood the issues facing those in need of crisis care. To the many volunteers who give their time to help others, your service to our community gives hope to so many and it has been a privilege to spend time with you all during the campaign.

I met many wonderful people while doorknocking and at community events during my campaign. They are the backbone of our community and they make us stronger. I will not pretend that the 18 months of my campaign were all plain sailing. There have been times that have been really tough. The campaign that the Labor Party ran was appalling with its misinformation and its unsubstantiated attacks on Campbell and Lisa Newman, their family, other candidates and members of parliament.

On a local level, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my tireless campaign manager, Beth Harris, and our wonderful team of volunteers. Beth has been a towering source of encouragement, strength, logistical and moral support and I am grateful for the unflinching faith she showed in me. Thank you to my campaign team who, together with Beth, worked tirelessly to deliver such an extraordinary result on election day. While it is always risky to start naming people, I make special mention of the people who worked side by side with Beth and I for the majority of the campaign. This group consists of Sandy Miller and Rhonwyn McSweeney, Jill Young, Graeme and Maureen Jones, Von Furner and Rita Cobbe, Sid and Barb Sweeney, Ray and Gayle Kriedemann, Val Potier, Sharon Johnson, Sharon Parsons, Karen Schloss and family, Janet Norquay, Simon Prasad, Gail Torrens, Col and Bev Seis, Darryl Brown and Vic Abbey.

During the election it was wonderful to see the volume of non-party members working alongside our branch members, wanting to get involved in the campaign. I was encouraged by this groundswell of people who had decided to stand up and demand that they be listened to. There were hundreds of people who were active in my campaign, so I will summarise by saying a big 'thank you' to Tim and Denise, Bernie and Stella, Greg and Julie, Bud and Alice, and Mum, Dad and Chad for letting me sign-write their vehicles. I thank the wonderful team at Sign Crafters that produced the bumper stickers that now adorn about 300 cars, bikes, shop windows and mobility scooters in my electorate. I thank the business community that supported me strongly. I thank the pram pushers, the kindy mums and dads and the supportive parents and grandparents who were very encouraging and also very understanding when they saw me racing through the front doors of kindy trying to set a new record for the fastest drop-off, only to find that my children just wanted to stop and cuddle for a while. As a parent, how can you walk away from that? I thank all the lovely people who attended my fundraisers, bought raffle tickets and frequently dined at our sausage sizzles. I say a big 'thank you' to Annette for opening up her home to us.

I thank my wonderful friends Anissa, Lola and Jules, who kept me sane and gave great advice. I thank them for forgiving me for not returning their calls or attending their gatherings, and for not being around to celebrate my brother Scott's 40th birthday, my sister-in-law Chantelle's 40th birthday and parents' 40th wedding anniversary. I promise that I will make it up to you. I thank my mentors Greg Newton, Con Galtos, Ray Sinclair and Alex Mackay: our chats were therapeutic and kept me focused. I congratulate Gary Parsons, my Division 1 councillor, on his deserved re-election. I look forward to working with him to deliver more for our area. My federal member of parliament, Wyatt Roy, is an exceptional person, an inspiration, a wonderful asset to our electorate and a great friend to my family and I.

I thank the people of the Toorbul, Donnybrook and Meldale communities. Their regular home cooked community dinners fast became a favourite campaigning activity in our family. I look forward to many more evenings sitting around, talking about fishing. To my colleagues at our R&W office on Bribe Island, I thank you for having to put up with all the joys of being part of the unofficial campaign office. I thank my extended family across Queensland: the Freshwaters of Brisbane and Glasshouse, the Cornelius family of Palmwoods, the Franceses of Pittsworth and the Chivertons of Dalby. I thank the wonderful team at LNP headquarters. To Bruce McIver, James McGrath, Barry O'Sullivan, Michael O'Dwyer, Mitch Redford and Gerrard Benadette and all the band at HQ I say this: your guidance, assistance and friendship is greatly appreciated. I also thank the Premier, Campbell Newman, and my colleagues for their advice and support during the campaign. I look forward to working with you to take our great state forward.

I have saved my most important 'thank yous' until last and they are to my family. My parents raised my brother Scott and I to have a strong commitment to community service and hard work and to lead by example. They both worked day jobs and night jobs and, in his spare time, dad was also in the Army Reserve. As kids, my brother and I loved the adventures that resulted, such as sleeping in the ticket booth at the Maroochy drive-in while they sold tickets, swimming in the pools of the houses mum used to clean to make extra money, playing with the coin counter at the Commonwealth Bank where dad worked and spending our weekends at the surf club with all the other nippers while mum and dad did the patrols, helped with the carnivals and the running of the club.

When I broke the news to my parents that I was thinking of standing for the state seat of Pumicestone, my mother's response was, 'You've got to be joking? If you do, I won't talk to you!' She could not believe that a mother of a one-year-old and a two-year-old, who was pregnant with her third child and who, with her husband, ran a seven-day-a-week real estate business, thought that she could fit in a

campaign. I am happy to say that mum and dad ended up being my biggest supporters. Her concern was more about how much babysitting her and dad would have to do, as opposed to my being able to do the job. Over 18 months both of my parents campaigned tirelessly. I am sure that they are happy that the campaign is over and that they do not have to wear my campaign shirts anymore. Now they can do their grocery shopping, attend Rotary meetings or have a drink at the local bowls club without having to explain what a four-pillar economy is. I will never be able to thank my parents for everything they have done and continue to do for me, but I can confidently say that they have been the best parents anyone could ask for and that I am proud to be their daughter.

To my husband, Chad, I say this: you have been an amazing support, a constant motivator and you make a great First Lady of Pumicestone! It amazes me how he juggles our family business and our three boys, and makes it look so easy. He is a brilliant husband and a loving dad. Our boys, Jordy, Bailey and Kenton, have been my strength and my inspiration. Wanting to deliver a better Queensland for them and to make them proud of me has been a powerful motivation. I thank them for their patience, support, good behaviour, understanding and belief in me. I only hope that one day they will reflect kindly on the experiences they had when mummy was a pollie.

I take up my responsibilities in this place full of optimism that, as a member of the state government, we can deliver a better future for Queensland. I will be a strong voice for my community. I pledge to listen and to faithfully represent the concerns of my electorate. I promise to work hard each and every day to make lives better. In my role as assistant minister, I look forward to working with a team that will restore Queensland's strong economy, see people back in work and see this great state restored to its rightful place as Australia's leading state. I thank my colleagues in parliament for their support during my campaign and here today. I wish them all the best for their term in office. It is an honour to represent the people of the Pumicestone electorate and I will not let them down.