



Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (4.59 pm): I would like to thank the many people who were involved in my recent election success that sees me standing here today as a member of the 55th Parliament of Queensland—first and foremost, my beautiful wife, Theresa, who is here today in the gallery, and my two wonderful children, Taylor and Blake. Without their unfailing support and confidence in me over the last 21 years, including a decade of shiftwork, endless ALP and Rugby League commitments at an executive level, and two election campaigns, I would not be standing here today. A million thanks would not be enough. You are my world.

I would also like to make special mention of my mother and father, Annette and Neville Butcher, and my only sibling, my twin brother, Wayne. Throughout the campaign I was blessed with their total support and assistance. Many days on the campaign trail were from daylight to dark and their dedication to me was steadfast, helping wherever they were needed in my quest to represent the wonderful electorate of Gladstone. Also, to my mother- and father-in-law, Dave and Joanne Gourley, who are here today as well, I offer sincere thanks and gratitude for their full support in our personal lives over many, many years, as well as during the hectic days of the political campaigns. I have a huge extended family as well and each one of them played some part in the final election results on 31 January. I offer my sincere thanks to each and every one of them.

As all members know, there are many who add to the success of campaigns and I would like to take this opportunity to make special mention of some who have supported me, never doubted me and helped me win the election and the respect of my electorate. From the bottom of my heart, I thank Shelly Holzheimer and Matt Burnett for their contributions over many, many years—and Matt, the Deputy Mayor of Gladstone, is here with me today. Their dedication and support for me in my campaigns to become the member for Gladstone will never, ever be forgotten. The tireless hours that they both spent ensuring that even the finest details were addressed will always be remembered and greatly appreciated.

To my campaign team of Mel Gourley, Josh Milroy, Michael Quirk and Craig Giddins: I thank them for all their hard work and dedication. I was humbled by the huge number of willing and motivated volunteers who campaigned in the community including prepolling, election day, doorknocking, roadside stalls and community forums. Many thanks to the unions, and particularly the Not4Sale team, for their total dedication to the campaign in rail, hail and shine.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the voters of the Gladstone electorate for their confidence and support, and I take this opportunity to wish my predecessor, Liz Cunningham, all the best in her retirement after 20 years as the state member for Gladstone. It is of note that the Gladstone Regional Council has recognised Mrs Cunningham with the naming of a multipurpose sports facility in her honour.

The Gladstone electorate overwhelmingly rejected the Liberal National Party at the 31 January state election, with the LNP achieving just on 15 per cent of the primary vote. I feel humbled at the extent to which the electorate supported me and the Australian Labor Party, by winning the election on the primary vote. The electors of Gladstone sent a loud and clear message to the Queensland parliament that only a Labor Party can represent their views, and that message was delivered with a resounding 25.9 per cent swing in the Gladstone electorate.

The overwhelming issue that resonated with the Gladstone electors was the fact that they did not want their assets sold. I make particular reference to the Gladstone port and the land that was set aside for a high school in the Calliope area. There can be no doubt that the 2015 election was a referendum on asset sales. The previous government was seeking a mandate to privatise the Port of Gladstone, sell the land set aside for a high school at Calliope and privatise our electricity assets.

I wish to make reference to the stark difference between the attitude of previous Labor governments over two decades and that of the Newman LNP government towards the creation of jobs in and the enhancement of the economy of the Gladstone region. Successive Labor governments led by Wayne Goss, Peter Beattie and Anna Bligh all focused on helping Gladstone become Australia's 21st century industrial city, an industrial powerhouse on the east coast of Australia.

The first responsibility of any state government is to create the economic conditions to ensure all men and women seeking employment can find a decent full-time job. As former premier Wayne Goss frequently stated, 'The best form of welfare a government can provide is a full-time job.' Labor governments understand just how difficult it is to create sustainable regional economies in Queensland. Accordingly, they worked closely and in harmony with the Gladstone community over more than two decades not only to create those job opportunities but also to put sustainable strategic plans in place to ensure continued growth and prosperity.

When the Goss government facilitated and established the massive Gladstone State Development Area during the 1990s, it also committed to the establishment of a board to both promote and facilitate major industry in the Gladstone area. It had to wait until the Beattie government was elected, after the intervening Borbidge government, before the Gladstone Economic and Industry Development Board was set up as a statutory authority under the Coordinator-General. The board was hugely successful, working closely with the Queensland government and industry to attract and facilitate over \$40 billion of major industry development in Gladstone. The Newman LNP government dismantled the board in 2012. As a result, major industrial development, other than those approvals facilitated and committed under the leadership of Anna Bligh, has been practically non-existent.

However, the worst decision by far of the Newman government was to commit to the sale of the Gladstone port. Gladstone Harbour is the best commercial deepwater natural harbour in Australia. It is currently handling approximately 100 million tonnes per annum of cargo—over three times the cargo of 25 years ago. The Gladstone Ports Corporation is a highly successful and profitable government owned corporation, which is delivering over \$1 billion in dividends and tax equivalent payments to the Queensland government every decade. This is in addition to the \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion of coal and LNG royalties it will be providing to the state coffers each year, and that figure will continue to increase.

With the commencement of the LNG export industry and the new Wiggins Island Coal Export Terminal, trade is expected to rise to around 150 million tonnes per annum by 2020. The three LNG plants and the Wiggins Island Coal Export Terminal were all facilitated under previous Labor governments, as was the \$800 million expansion of the RG Tanna Coal Terminal. The LNG plants facilitated by Labor have provided construction jobs for over 5,000 Gladstone locals as well as 10,000 others from throughout Australia and beyond.

Unfortunately, nothing new has been facilitated since the election of the previous Newman government. As the LNG construction workforce starts to decline and with the Wiggins Island Coal Export Terminal now in operation, many locals are extremely concerned about their employment prospects. The Newman government failed the Gladstone community in that very vital aspect of future job creation that I talked about.

How could anything positive happen with the Gladstone Economic and Industry Development Board disbanded and the entire focus of the Gladstone Ports Corporation distracted by preparing for the sale of the port? Thankfully, that distraction has now been removed with the election of the Palaszczuk government. The Gladstone Ports Corporation can once again focus on growing the economy of the Gladstone region. Only by working with the community in a structured and

coordinated manner can the future of the Gladstone region be put back on a path of consistent job creation and generation of economic and social prosperity, and that is exactly what the Palaszczuk government is intent on doing.

The Gladstone Hospital in my electorate needs urgent attention, including the reinstatement of front-line services that have declined over the years. The electorate of Gladstone has had to manage the impact of the LNG industry boom without corresponding infrastructure and staffing levels in health services and care. With the massive industrialisation of Gladstone, the hospital must better reflect sufficient services to ensure acceptable levels of patient safety and care.

Frustrations are often understandably but unfairly levelled at front-line staff at the hospital. Our hospital has lost many full-time equivalent healthcare professionals since the previous government was in office. These staff losses have impacted on service delivery in oncology, emergency, intensive care, peri-operative and infection control departments. Critical staff losses have placed additional pressure on our health system which in turn sometimes causes negative responses from local patients and their families.

I look forward to the return of sufficient staffing levels at our hospital which will engender a positive impact all around my electorate. I also look forward to working very closely with the health minister and the Premier to give the Gladstone electorate what it desperately needs—that is, major upgrades to the Gladstone Hospital infrastructure, including a new accident and emergency department and a dedicated intensive care unit as the first step to a long-term vision of a modern new facility that we so badly need.

The growing community of Calliope in the Gladstone electorate strongly opposed the previous government's intention to sell critical land which for many years had been earmarked for a high school. Governments should be investing in our children's future and preparing our growing regions for increased attendance, not cutting teacher numbers and selling strategic land needed for future educational use. Not only did the previous government try selling the land that had been put aside for a high school; but they forced the local council to rezone the land from community use to residential use to make way for a quick fire sale. I thank the Palaszczuk government for supporting the Calliope community and reversing that dreadful decision that was made by the previous government, ensuring the property is available for educational purposes into the future.

I would like to talk about the great Gladstone region now—home of the traditional owners the Gooreng Gooreng, the Gurang and the Bailai people. Gladstone is a dynamic modern city boasting a subtropical climate with islands, waterways and beaches providing year-round boating, fishing and swimming opportunities. Gladstone is famous for our mud crabs and our fresh seafood. It boasts one of the highest boat ownerships per capita in the country and is home to one of Australia's largest fishing competitions—the Boyne Tannum HookUp, which is a fabulous week of fishing.

Gladstone is the destination for competitors in the bluewater classic, the Brisbane to Gladstone Yacht Race. In true Gladstone form, our community through Gladstone Festivals and Events, welcomes the yachts with fireworks, live music and entertainment at the iconic Harbour Festival, an Easter time event that should not be missed. Each yacht that comes in is greeted with a cold carton of beer and a commemorative medallion. This year the tradition continued, with Mayor Gail Sellers, councillors and the Gladstone Volunteer Marine Rescue personnel welcoming crews on their arrival into Gladstone.

From March 2016, P&O cruise ships will dock in the Gladstone port, with thousands of tourists disembarking to explore the region—and who could blame them. As the gateway to the majestic and vibrant southern end of the Great Barrier Reef, Gladstone offers direct access to Heron Island, Wilson Island and uninhabited coral cays. Heron Island is an important nesting ground for green turtles, black noddy terns and wedge-tailed shearwaters.

The Gladstone Marina is home to a great waterfront recreation area, one of many that marks our wonderful city. Included in the marina setting is the award-winning Spinnaker Park on Leo Zussino Drive, a huge expanse of parkland ideal for families, with picnic areas, native walking tracks and a beached cove which is very popular with children. I know this for a fact because I have spent many weekends in this area with my family having a barbecue and a great time on special occasions.

On the other side of the marina and Spinnaker Park is the recently opened East Shores precinct—a welcome addition to the Gladstone waterfront. Planning for this facility began many years ago, with the construction of the dedicated Port Access Road removing trucks from Flinders Parade, paving the way for this East Shores project to continue. The Port Access Road is appropriately named after the former state member for Port Curtis, Mr Bill Prest.

Visible from East Shores and in most corners of the electorate is the prominent and distinctive peak of Mount Larcom, with its summit 632 metres above sea level. Tourists wanting to venture out of the city area can enjoy some genuine country hospitality and historically significant sites in the beautiful Boyne Valley, an hour's drive away through peaceful and tranquil countryside.

Millennium Esplanade at Tannum Sands beach is well known for its stone pitched architecture and it is another popular destination for families in our area. The Tannum Sands Surf Lifesaving Club patrols the beach from September to May each year. With the exception of January, Councillor Maxine Brushe and the volunteers from the Boyne Tannum Arts Business and Community Association host the free community event called Beach Arts Music, commonly known as BAM, in the Millennium Esplanade parklands. Back in the city, the 83-hectare Tondoon Botanic Gardens are home to an impressive variety of plants from the Port Curtis region and tropical North Queensland.

Gladstone is home to many of the world's industrial giants. My former workplace of 21 years, Queensland Alumina, is still one of the world's largest alumina refineries. QAL is joined by Rio Tinto Yarwun, Boyne smelter and the NRG power station as long-term investors in Gladstone's economy. Other major industries proud to call Gladstone home include Orica, Cement Australia and, more recently, Northern Oil. It goes without saying that industry would not survive in Gladstone without a dedicated team of railway workers. The Callemondah shunting yards has provided the arrival point for the coal trains, the backbone of Gladstone and Queensland's economy for many years. With the arrival of the three LNG industries on Curtis Island, the Queensland government will start to reap huge benefits from the royalties that this new industry brings.

My electorate was deserted by the former government, with insufficient financial assistance offered to support the community during this time of unprecedented industrial growth. The Gladstone Foundation was initiated to help ease the burden of social infrastructure requirements during this construction phase. Unfortunately, only a small portion of this fund has been allocated so far. Social infrastructure is still lacking to this day and the funds held in that Gladstone Foundation trust need to be immediately released.

Agriculture continues to play an important role in the Gladstone economy. While acknowledging the fact that Gladstone is the most industrialised electorate in the state, I also acknowledge that primary producers are a very important sector, contributing some of the state's finest fare to our tables. The Boyne Valley, Yarwun and Mount Larcom areas particularly are dotted with farming enterprises. Grazing, dairying, fruit and vegetable growers all contribute economic wealth, employment and diversity to our region. In fact many visitors to the area leave with a case of famous Yarwun pawpaws.

As in every electorate, primary producers are at the mercy of Mother Nature and it is important that these areas are supported by government outside times of crisis. While we continue to develop access to the port for new industries, we need to ensure agriculture and primary industry exports are included as part of any future development of the Gladstone port. To ensure viability of both the state and local economy into the future, we need to continue to diversify. Any financial support for infrastructure from the Queensland government towards an inland highway or rail corridor in the future must include direct links into Gladstone and its port.

For many years, the transport and main roads department has avoided the upgrade to the Kin Kora roundabout. This intersection of two main roads is by far the busiest and most dangerous intersection in my electorate. I am pleased to advise the parliament that on behalf of the Minister for Main Roads, Mark Bailey, I officially turned the soil on this long overdue project on Monday. Although long overdue, this is great news for Gladstone. It is my intention to ensure that this is the first of many infrastructure projects in the Gladstone region.

I stand here today steadfast in my promise to the Gladstone electorate that we will no longer be ignored. We are not just a cash cow for the Queensland economy. We deserve quality infrastructure and services, and this government must support my community in the same way that my community supports this state. I am excited at the prospect of being a member of a government that will not only listen to, respect and appreciate the huge wealth generated in my electorate but also acknowledge the beauty of tourist attractions and every other aspect of the many reasons we choose to call the diverse Gladstone electorate our home.