



Speech by


# Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Hansard Tuesday, 29 May 2012

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## MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (3.03 pm): It is with pleasure that today I rise in this 54th parliament as the member for Nanango to deliver my maiden speech. Madam Deputy Speaker, please pass on my congratulations to the Speaker on the momentous occasion of her election to such high and important office. I congratulate the honourable Premier for his hard work and dedication. I am proud to be a member of his team for Queensland. I feel deeply honoured to be able to address the parliament as the member for Nanango. It is a great privilege and one afforded to only five members before me in the past 100 years.

Queensland's longest serving member and longest serving Premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, served as this seat's member from 1947 to 1987. It is thanks to the foresight and determination of my predecessor and his government that we were able to build Queensland into an economic powerhouse of its time. For every story about Sir Joh as a great Premier, there are many more about him as a great local member. During the campaign, I heard many first-hand accounts of Sir Joh's close relationships with the local community. I have no doubt that that was the foundation on which his political achievements were built. I also acknowledge the hard work and dedication to the state and the South Burnett of Lady Florence Bjelke-Petersen. It was lovely to see Lady Flo at the opening of the 54th Parliament and I thank her for her words of wisdom. I acknowledge the Hon. Russell Cooper, who was the member for Crows Nest, an area encompassed by the Nanango electorate after the redistribution. Russell has provided me with invaluable advice and offered support for which I am sincerely grateful. The federal member for Maranoa, the Hon. Bruce Scott, has been a tower of support and encouragement. His hard work and dedication for the betterment of our region is appreciated. I also acknowledge the support of my federal colleagues Barnaby Joyce and Wyatt Roy for the time and effort they have spent within the Nanango electorate.

It is my goal to represent the people of Nanango with the same vision and enthusiasm as my predecessors. In delivering this speech today, I am conscious of the hard work ahead of the newly elected Newman government and the role that I will play in it. I have a vision for Queensland. My vision is for a state that is prosperous, not a state that is riddled with debt; a state that is a world leader in trade and industry; a state that utilises its prime agricultural, grazing and cropping land to provide food security and feed its people; a state that provides steady economic growth and low unemployment; a state that allows us to enjoy a good quality of life by utilising our natural wonders and environment; and a state that our children are pleased to call their home. Although this vision is broad, it is for these ideals that I stand here today. As a member of the Newman government, I have pledged to build a four-pillar economy based on agriculture, tourism, resources and construction. I have pledged to lower the cost of living for families by cutting waste, delivering better infrastructure and better planning, revitalising front-line services for families and restoring accountability in government.

I was born in Miles and raised on a beef cattle property. I attended Guluguba State School, a small one-teacher school that can boast producing two members present in this House today. I acknowledge my colleague the member for Maryborough, Anne Maddern. Time precludes me from explaining the years of community and local government service that my parents have dedicated to that wonderful local community, but I thank them for it. My husband Jason and I have been fortunate to experience the highs

and lows of family farming and corporate farming, managing beef and cropping properties in King Island, New South Wales and Queensland. We have experienced the heartbreak of droughts and storms and the diversity and strength that is required to make the land your home. From this, coupled with my experiences establishing businesses in Kingaroy, I understand the challenges of creating jobs, balancing the books, how government decisions can impact on the viability of business and how important it is for one to have a say in the decision-making processes that affect our society. I have practised law in Coolamon, New South Wales and Kingaroy, Queensland. To reach this goal, I undertook a law degree externally through QUT whilst having my three daughters and living hours away from the closest university and library. That experience taught me that no challenge should be considered too great or too far away.

The Nanango electorate covers some 31 towns and 31 communities, 28 primary schools and six high schools. It covers four regional local government areas: Somerset, Western Downs, Toowoomba and the South Burnett. Our local councils are battered and bruised leftover shells from the horrendous Labor administration that was responsible for the forced amalgamations. I look forward to our can-do government's plan to reinstate the power to this vital level of government. This morning in the House I was very pleased to hear the honourable member for Mundingburra and Minister for Local Government state that we will 'make changes to the Local Government Act to put mayors and councillors back in charge, to ensure that local communities control their own destiny'. Statements such as this explain why we are a government for the people and a government that is in touch with our communities.

The Nanango electorate covers some 13,800 square kilometres and from Brisbane it is the inland gateway to the rest of Queensland. I believe the Nanango electorate is able to strongly support the Newman government's plan to build a four-pillar economy. It encompasses three key agricultural areas: the Somerset region from Kilcoy to the small cropping districts on the border of the Lockyer Valley including the townships of Coominya, Somerset, Esk and Toogoolawah; the South Burnett where the finest peanuts are grown in the unique rich, red soils—and the South Burnett also can boast that it is Queensland's largest wine region—and the region around Crows Nest and Goombungee extending to the fine cropping soils of the Darling Downs. Whilst all these areas produce fine crops, the electorate also produces some of the state's best beef and pork.

The people who reside in my electorate are, in my unbiassed opinion, the luckiest in the state. We live in a region that is blessed with some of the finest prime agricultural lands, abundant tourism opportunities, natural resources and industry, but, most importantly, resilient and easygoing people. During the campaign I met many of these people and what struck me was that everyone was hurting. They were sick of the waste and the stranglehold that government had placed on their lives. For too long the people of the Nanango electorate have given more than they have received in return. People choose to live in this region as it provides so much by way of lifestyle and opportunity. However, I was constantly faced with the question of why should we live with a lower standard of services because we have chosen to live outside the boundaries of Brisbane? I am pleased to say that the Newman government has a plan to change this perception and deliver for the whole of Queensland.

The electors of Nanango are the people who have helped me reach this chamber. I have doorknocked, walked the streets and visited many rural property owners. I met many small business owners, be they farmers, mechanics, builders, plumbers, real estate agents—the list could go on. They were all strangled with government policy and red tape. I also met with many different community groups, and the red tape is strangling them as well. I speak, for example, of groups such as the rural fire volunteers who are finding that volunteers are discouraged from joining due to the red tape. I also met the lady in her eighties who runs the historical society of Crows Nest. She has been told that she should not work in a volunteer position and keep the doors of the historical society open as she is too old for the volunteer insurance policy.

It is for these reasons that I look forward to the challenge of being the Assistant Minister for Finance, Administration and Regulatory Reform. I am fortunate to be working with the Treasurer, the Hon. Tim Nicholls, in this role and I wish to acknowledge his professionalism that has allowed us all to be in the chamber today. I thank him for sharing his experience and I look forward to him being my mentor. I am also pleased that the Treasurer has already tabled legislation to reduce red tape that will assist in lowering the cost of living for all Queenslanders.

Living in a rural community is challenging. However, I do not believe the answers to the issues we face in the regions lie in living in the past. The oversimplistic solutions of the far Right would see many of us worse off in a very short period. The expansion of the coal seam gas and mining industries is altering our outlook for the future. However, we must work hard to get the balance right including implementing a better system of regional planning to provide improved security for our landholders and the Queensland communities alike.

In my electorate of Nanango I have seen firsthand the failure to plan and manage. Like other residents of the electorate, I question why we do not have adequate health services and why the three major highways that traverse the electorate—the D'Aguiar Highway, the Brisbane Valley Highway and the

New England Highway—are in such poor condition. I will be working hard to ensure that the Nanango electorate gets its fair share of road upgrades. I look forward to the building of the \$10 million worth of passing lanes on the Brisbane Valley Highway and the D'Aguiar Highway.

I thank the education minister for the announcement of the new high school for Highfields. The member for Toowoomba North and I have fought hard for this much needed resource. It will be a school that shall benefit many rural children and save hours for some schoolchildren.

As living in the regions is wonderful, it is not always easy when faced with these lack of services. It is essential that health needs are our top priority. The staff at the Kingaroy Hospital, or the South Burnett Regional Hospital, must be thanked for the work they do in such difficult conditions. Over 400 babies are born each year in that substandard hospital birthing suite. That is more than one per day. The suite is in a different section, up two floors, across the way and a long walking distance from the maternity ward. Due to staffing numbers, mothers are sometimes left alone in these birthing suites a long way away whilst staff are required on the wards. This is a terrible situation for both the staff and the patients.

The region needs better access to specialist medical services. Our government will act to improve access by increasing the provision of financial assistance for those who need to travel as the current level of assistance is entirely inadequate. I will be fighting hard to ensure the region gets its fair share of health services and I look forward to the establishment of the regional health boards as a positive initiative of our new government.

Today I was pleased to hear the Minister for Health state that he intends to rebuild the capacity of health services in rural and regional Queensland. As a member of the South Burnett suicide prevention group, I am constantly astounded by the number of deaths in our region from suicide. Mental health is a growing area and the number of men from rural areas taking their lives is growing at an alarming rate. Our group estimates there is approximately one death a week from suicide within the South Burnett. Our local hospital does not have the facilities to handle mental health patients as we do not have a safe room. I will be fighting hard for the provision of a safe room in our hospital.

Agriculture is the lifeblood of this electorate. In order for it to survive, agriculture needs to see an increase in efficiencies and productivity to enable it to compete with any other industry. This can be achieved through important research institutes like the Bjelke-Petersen Research Station at Kingaroy, supported by the Department of Agriculture and federally by the GRDC. Education, therefore, needs to be promoted in areas surrounding agriculture, sciences and natural resources to encourage our next generation into the field of agriculture. The loss of the Dalby agricultural college facility has unfortunately encouraged the gradual decline of education of the next generation of farmers as the agricultural colleges were the breeding ground for the next generation—providing innovative ideas that were often coupled with the passing down of traditional methods from previous generations.

We must, however, acknowledge the current difficulty primary producers face when finding employees. While primary industry remains a major export earner and a major contributor to the economy, the industry faces severe labour competition from the resource sector. We, therefore, need to encourage a balance between the two industries to achieve sustainability for the future of food production.

Tourism is a high growth component of the electorate's economy. We live in an economy in which every family is struggling with the rising cost of living. However, the electorate of Nanango provides a low-cost holiday destination with an abundance of tourism opportunities, be it fishing, camping, game hunting, four-wheel driving at Jimna, water sports, wineries, bush walking, gold panning—an activity our Premier and his family enjoys—or farm stays. The electorate must continue to be a family friendly destination within easy reach of Brisbane.

The Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, when completed, will be a 148 kilometre recreation trail which follows the old Brisbane Valley railway line and provides walkers, cyclists and horse riders with a wonderful opportunity to see the countryside from a different perspective. We have several key water storages: Wivenhoe, Somerset, Gordonbrook and Atkinsons Dam. Currently, Somerset Dam is a water lovers' paradise with thousands of people taking the opportunity to get out and about and into water sports such as skiing, fishing and sailing. Somerset has played a major part in the increasing tourism enjoyed by this region and, therefore, the economic opportunities that flow. Wivenhoe needs to be assessed for the opening up to water sports in this same fashion.

My communities also thrive on events. One of these is the country race day. However, the racing industry day has been stripped bare under the previous Labor government. I will be working hard to ensure our country race days are reinstated. Our local communities can benefit from being a training ground for our trotters, race horses, trainers and jockeys and country race days ensure that local communities like Esk, Kilcoy and Nanango can enjoy the flow-on economic benefits. At this juncture I would like to thank Con and Jenny Searle, Dr Tony Fitzgerald, Ian McCauley, Kev Purcell, John Lee and Brian Lenihan for their hard work and dedication to this vital industry within our electorate. Country racing is a passion of mine. My mother was the Wandoan race club secretary/treasurer for more years than she can recall, and

my father was the starter and involved in the same club for many more years. I grew up attending race meets and I understand why country racing is essential for the regions.

I believe that Queenslanders want a government that respects the individual, that respects free enterprise and free society without unrealistic and undue influence. They expect their government to plan for the future, be economically responsible and manage the state in a clear and effective manner. I look forward to these challenges for the time that the electors of Nanango will allow me to be in this place.

I would like to thank many people. Firstly, my small but effective campaign team was amazing. Llew O'Brien, who is here today, my campaign manager and director, upheld an unwavering belief that we could win Nanango back into the LNP fold. His support, patience and friendship was invaluable. Jack Delaney should go down in history as the world's best campaign treasurer. Jack retired from his business on 1 January and went into full-time campaigning on the 2nd and ran the campaign office and budget without complaint. Thank you.

To Chris Anderson, Lorraine Blades, Col Keim, Wendy Tully, Viv Lethbridge, Mitch Redford and Rachel Power, Murray, Linda and Maree Frecklington and the team of blue workers too many to name: thank you for your help and support. Thank you to Neville Shannon of Hampton, Ivan Vonhoff of Crows Nest, Beven Kahler of Geham, Alan Grieve of Colinton and Errol Luck of Merringdam for introducing me to the people of your wonderful districts.

The seat of Nanango is unique and one in which the members of the LNP worked very hard to bring back into the fold. Whilst too many to mention, it is important that the parliament records my thanks to the hardworking and dedicated branch members: thank you for hanging in there. Thank you to Bruce McIver, Barry O'Sullivan, Michael O'Dwyer, James McGrath, Mitch Redford and Gerard Benedet for your encouragement and faith.

The seat of Nanango has not been represented by an LNP member for years and I thank my neighbouring members—in particular, the member for Callide, Jeff Seeney; the member for Condamine, Ray Hopper; the member for Glass House, Andrew Powell; and the member for Lockyer, Ian Rickuss—for the support you have provided to the people of the Nanango electorate for many years.

To our Deputy Premier, the Hon. Jeff Seeney: thank you for your assistance throughout the past two years. Your guidance and leadership and hard work have paid off for our members. Thank you. Thank you to all of the then opposition members who visited the Nanango electorate, as together we were able to show the people of this district that an LNP government would be proud to represent them.

I would like to thank two ladies who reside in my electorate—both of whom are former members of parliament—the Hon. Di McCauley and the Hon. Beryce Nelson, whom I am very pleased to have here today. Both Di and Beryce gave me great support and encouragement to undertake this role. I can only hope that I can follow in your footsteps for it is women such as yourselves who have allowed women like me to be accepted as an equal in this chamber.

To my sister and brother-in-law, Jackie and John, and our good friends Kate and Peter Hay, who worked endlessly for the campaign: I cannot thank you enough for your time and effort. To my parents, Don and Robyn Stiller, who provided me with a grounding of honesty, hard work and the value of community service: your guidance and help towards Jason and the girls was invaluable and I stand here proud as your daughter.

I would like to thank my husband, Jason. Whilst I tell my three daughters that anything in this world is possible, it is my husband who has allowed anything to be possible for me. His support and sacrifice has enabled me to be here today. To our three daughters—Isabella, Lucy and Elke—thank you for wearing the T-shirts, attending the endless market days and the endless meetings. I take the guidance of many of my colleagues that being a member of parliament is not a job but a lifestyle. My three daughters now understand that there is no such thing as a quick meeting and the joys of attending a country show each weekend is not a chore but a practice in good budgeting.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the people of the Nanango electorate for giving me the honour of being their representative in parliament. For those who voted for me, I hope my efforts over the next years will reward your faith. For those who chose otherwise, I will be working hard to earn your support. In either case, I am here to serve you.