



25 March 2009

QUEENSLAND STATE ELECTION

My sincere congratulations to all the LNP team for a gutsy performance on Saturday.

Taking government from the ALP was always going to be a tough job, but we are certainly in a much better position going into the next State election.

I would like to recognise the wonderful new State Members - Tracy Davis in Aspley, Ros Bates in Mudgeeraba, Scott Emerson in Indooroopilly, Ted Sorensen in Hervey Bay, Michael Crandon in Coomera, Jarrod Bleijie in Kawana, Andrew Powell in Glasshouse and Aidan McLindon in Beaudesert.

I've written elsewhere that our lack of a solid State base has been an impediment to winning federal seats. Our new State members are a good start, especially those like Tracy in Aspley, Andrew Powell in Glasshouse, and Aidan McLindon in Beaudesert who hold seats within federal Labor-held electorates.

There are a few seats still to be decided, so hopefully we'll also welcome Peter Dowling in Redlands, Andrea Caltabiano in Chatsworth, Alex Douglas in Gaven, Troy Knox in Everton and Mark Robinson in Cleveland.

I'd also particularly like to thank all the other LNP candidates, to wish them success in the future and to encourage them to stand again.

In Federal terms, we can win the next election and that must be our only focus. It's pretty clear from the State results that we need to spell out the different roots of the LNP as the Liberal and National parties so that we can maximise the vote at the Federal level.

Although the LNP is a State division of the Liberal Party, we need to recognise that the Liberal and National parties are separate entities in other States and that the 87 Liberals and 14 Nationals (including 1 CLP senator from the NT) meet as separate parties at the Federal level.



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THE BOYCE DEBATES

As part of the celebrations for Queensland's 150th anniversary this year, I'm holding the first of "The Boyce Debates" on Friday, March 27.

The topic of the first debate is *"Making Inclusive Education Work - is it the Skill, the Will, or what's in the Till?"* - a public forum on issues and barriers surrounding inclusive education for all children.

Queensland's special education system has changed little in the 20th century, I want to push the debate forward in the 21st century.

The forum will be facilitated by John Miller from Radio 4BC with:

- Keynote Speaker: Dr Bob Jackson B.Econ, Dip. Ed., PhD (WA), Australia's leading proponent of inclusive education.
- Professor Suzanne Carrington Head of School, School of Learning and Professional Studies, QUT.
- Dr Rhonda Faragher Senior Lecturer, School of Education, ACU Canberra.



Please join me on Friday March 27 at 6.30pm for 7pm, at the Rooftop Terrace, Brisbane Powerhouse, Lamington St, New Farm. Tickets are \$25, and a light supper will be provided.

Tickets can be purchased from the Powerhouse Box Office - 3358 8600 or book online at <http://www.brisbanepowerhouse.org/events/view/the-boyce-debates-making-inclusive-education-work/>



Profits raised on the night will go to Glenleighden School, Autism Qld and DSAQ.

For further information please contact (07) 3862 4044 or go to <http://www.sueboyce.com.au/media/Boyce%20Debates.pdf>

OFFICIALLY OPEN

I was delighted to have the senior Liberal woman in Australia, Julie Bishop, open my electorate office at Albion recently. Julie is Deputy Leader, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Member for the WA seat of Curtin.

We're now well established in the electorate office - the old Post Office at Albion on Sandgate Road - and we look forward to seeing constituents and supporters.



WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

March 21 - the 21st day of the third month - marked World Down Syndrome Day.

2009 also marks the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the cause of Down syndrome by Professor Jerome Lejeune.

Down syndrome, the world's most common cause of intellectual disability is also the oldest known intellectual disability. It's caused by the presence of three chromosomes 21, instead of the usual pair.

With modern medical and social developments, most of the reasons for people with Down syndrome 'dying young'- heart and respiratory problems - have been overcome. The vast majority of people with Down syndrome can be expected to live well into their late 60s, attend a mainstream school and hold down a job.

FLOODING CONTINUES IN QUEENSLAND

While the Queensland flooding may be a natural disaster, the lack of infrastructure provided by the Beattie-Bligh government has exacerbated the problem.

The condition of the Peninsula Developmental Road which crosses the Laura River in Northern Queensland is a classic example.

The Bligh government has underfunded construction of the Road by \$15 million, according to figures that the Mayor of Cook Shire Council, Peter Scott, has sent me.

Flooding in the Laura River during the wet season leaves residents of the northern communities in the Cook area isolated from Cooktown, Mareeba and Cairns.



The affected towns include Weipa, Pormpuraaw, Aurukun, Napranum, Mapoon, Lockhart River and the Northern Peninsula area, as well as the Cook Shire towns of Coen and Portland Roads. These towns have been isolated for more than 31 days already this year and Emergency Queensland have been forced to drop supplies to the town of Coen.

The Peninsula Developmental Road is the major tourist access to the tip of Cape York, threatening the region's \$2.4 billion tourism industry and the jobs of more than 20,000 people working in tourism in FNQ.

A \$15 million causeway would fix the problem, but the PDR is a State road and the Bligh and Rudd governments are both ignoring pleas from the council.

IN PARLIAMENT

The so-called *Fair Work Bill* dominated proceedings with nearly 20 hours spent on debate in the Senate last week.

The Coalition did its best to improve this legislation so that it was less unfair on employers and less biased in favour of unions. Bemusingly, the Government moved more than 100 amendments in the Senate to its own legislation which had been "unchangeable" in the House of Representatives.

In the Senate, we worked with the independents to improve protection on union right of entry to workplaces and the privacy of employee records; to restrict union involvement in negotiations for greenfields sites to unions that might actually represent potential workers; to assist owners trying to sell their businesses by putting some flexibility into the 'transition of business' provision; and to better protect independent contractors from union pressure.

The threshold for some exemption for small business from unfair dismissal provisions provoked most debate. I argued that the bloodless Ms Gillard should just come clean and confess that she didn't want to make any concessions to small business. In the end, Senator Steve Fielding's last minute capitulation to Labor will simply mean more red tape, not less, for small business.

During the debate, Minister Joe Ludwig added patronising insult to injury by suggesting that small business owners would find it "easier" to count individuals than to have to "work out" 15 or 20 fulltime equivalent positions.

Earlier in the week, the Coalition overturned the Government's tax-grab alcopop tax legislation. Hypocritically the Government refused our offer to support legislation to ensure the \$290 million in tax already collected was used for an alcohol and drug education and prevention program.

Also, Prime Minister Rudd's bizarre legislation to turn the Federal Government into a property developer, the *Australian Business Investment Partnership Bill*, has been postponed until May. The Bill will provide Australia's four major banks with the funding to lend money to commercial building projects considered commercially viable. Our objection to the bill is that Australian taxpayers should not be forced to provide up to \$26 billion to our already profitable banks. If the projects are commercially viable, why can't the banks just lend to them?

INQUIRIES AND COMMITTEES

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON THE AUSTRALIAN CRIME COMMISSION

I'm delighted to have been appointed Deputy Chair of the [Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Australian Crime Commission](#). This appointment gives me the opportunity to further use my interest in corporate governance and fraud to improve our society. In my view, we need more legislative tools to assist our police and intelligence forces to break down "legitimate" business fronts used by organised crime.

The activities of Australia's Outlawed Motor Cycle Gangs (OMCGs) are part of an inquiry into serious and organised crime that the Committee is conducting. And once again Australia's Federal system - with inconsistent legislation between States - only assists the lawbreakers.

The Committee recently had the opportunity to have a private briefing with the newly appointed CEO of the ACC, John Lawler.

PETROL SNIFFING

My [Senate Community Affairs Committee](#) has just released our report, [Grasping the Opportunity of Opal](#), inquiring into the success of the Howard Government's Petrol Sniffing Strategy. Standard petrol can produce a "high" when sniffed but leads to illness and brain damage. Petrol sniffing, primarily by teenagers and young adults, was destroying many remote Aboriginal communities in NT, WA and SA until BP developed a 'non-sniffable' fuel called Opal which has now been rolled out to many affected communities.

Our inquiry found that the Petrol Sniffing Strategy has been an outstanding success with numbers dropping significantly and commensurate improvement in the social functioning of these communities. It's crucial to remember that petrol sniffing is a symptom of lives that are boring and hopeless and our original Petrol Sniffing Strategy included development of youth programs and other measures to tackle the cause. There is anecdotal evidence that some 'sniffers' have turned to cannabis and other drugs so, in my view, the Rudd Labor Government must renew its commitment to these programs.

Unfortunately, the Senate Committee has no control over the NT Government. My visit to [Hoppy's Town Camp](#) in Alice Springs is something I constantly remember with deep, deep shame. It should be inconceivable that older Australians of any race live in these disgusting conditions.

INQUIRY INTO FINANCIAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES IN AUSTRALIA

The Joint Parliamentary Committee on Corporations & Financial Services, of which I'm a very active member, has announced an [Inquiry into Financial Products and Services in Australia](#), following the collapse of Opes and Storm Financial. Please note that submissions to this Inquiry close on July 31, 2009, but the Committee is encouraging early submissions so we can begin witness hearings as soon as possible.

I've received dozens and dozens of letters and emails from Queenslanders who have lost everything—and still have debts they do not know how they can repay—in the recent collapse of Storm. Whilst I've written to all these people suggesting they make a submission to our Inquiry, please encourage anyone you know who has been affected to submit. A submission does not need to be long or complex, just a simple letter setting out the individual's story will be helpful.

OTHER SENATE INQUIRIES THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST

- [Community Affairs Gene Patents](#)
- [Finance and Public Administration Cost of Residential Aged Care](#)
- [Economics Australian Business Investment Partnership Bill](#)
- [Finance and Public Administration Plebiscite on the Republic](#)
- [Community Affairs Support for Carers](#)

LULU MITSHABU AT UNIFEM BREAKFAST

I felt privileged to hear the story of a truly inspiring woman, Lulu Mitshabu, at Brisbane's Unifem breakfast to mark International Women's Day in early March.

Lulu now works for Caritas Australia, but 20 years ago she was forced to flee her homeland of Zaire as dictator Joseph Mobutu's reign of terror presaged the emergence of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a regime responsible for an estimated 5.4 million deaths since 1998.

Lulu told the 1200 women at the Unifem breakfast that rape has been systematically used as an instrument of state oppression. In one province, in one month, there were over 2,000 reported rapes, with thousands more unreported.

In the DRC, the activities of the government amount to a war on women. For more information, go to Caritas website at www.caritas.org.au.

SENIORS LOSE HEALTH CARE CARD BENEFITS

The Government's changes to seniors health care with the introduction of the *Social Security and Veteran's Entitlements Amendment (Commonwealth Seniors Health Card) Bill 2009* cuts spending at the expense of seniors - at a time when the Government is planning to put the budget into deficit by \$35.5 billion in 2009-10 and \$34.2 billion in 2010-11.

For the first time income from gross superannuation and income salary sacrificed to superannuation will be included in assessing eligibility for a seniors health card. Given that the number of Queenslanders over 55 is estimated to reach more than 1.14 million by 2011, this policy will penalise those who have made an effort to save for their own retirement.

Immediately, the Bill will cut health card benefits to 22,000 people across Australia.

For younger Australians, the Government's *Higher Education Legislation Amendment (Student Services and Amenities, and other measures) Bill 2009*, will effectively tax university students an additional \$250 per year to attend university.

What is the point of splashing cash at Australians then taking it back again through legislation, effectively establishing new taxes?

MARCH SHOPSMART



The latest ShopSmart figures for March are on the website at www.shopsmart.sueboyce.com.au.

Two Brisbane supermarkets less than 15 kilometres apart had the highest and lowest prices in the March ShopSmart survey. The cheapest basket of goods in March was at Woolworths in Woodridge, with a price of \$61.95, down \$3.55 on February prices. Just 15 kilometres away, the highest priced basket of goods was at Coles, Upper Mt Gravatt, which came in at \$67.65. This was even dearer than the Brisbane CBD stores.

The average cost of the ShopSmart basket went down by 61 cents, with Coles Toombul recording a large drop of \$4.70.

Torres Strait consumers are still experiencing much higher prices than mainland Queensland. This month we saw prices jump in the Torres Strait to \$97.06 for our basket of goods, a price difference of nearly \$32 on the average price on the mainland. The people of the Torres Strait need some urgent help to get reasonably priced food. The Senate Inquiry, of which I am a member, will visit the Torres Strait in the next few months, to investigate this issue.

UNEMPLOYMENT, DEPRESSION AND MENTAL HEALTH

With floods, bushfires, financial collapse and the threat of unemployment, it's important to be aware of the number of support services available for family or friends experiencing depression or other mental health issues.

Unemployment is a particular concern. In February we saw the the biggest increase in unemployment in Australia since the last recession 18 years ago. In Queensland, more than 3,500 people lost their jobs.

Research undertaken by Mission Australia and the NSW Health Department indicate that unemployment is a stressor for depression, mental illness and sickness.

Crisis Support Services (CSS) provides a National Suicide Call Back Service, Mensline Australia and the Beyondblue Info Line. CSS is an independent, not for profit organisation and employs 128 health professionals. This includes 80 professionally qualified counsellors. Whilst Mensline and Beyondblue are structured to provide advice to men, they are also able to refer women to appropriate services.

If you or someone you know needs help, the CSS offers:

- Mensline Australia 1300 78 99 78
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467
- Beyondblue Info Line 1300 22 4636

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