




Speech By
Bryson Head

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CALLIDE

First Speech

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (5.12 pm): What powers Queensland and what keeps Queensland moving forward? If you are looking for the answer then look no further than Callide. After all, Callide is the true powerhouse of Queensland and I am lucky enough to call it home. It is a large and diverse electorate. It covers almost 75,000 square kilometres, which for context is bigger than the state of Tasmanian and bigger than 79 countries.

There are close to 15,000 kilometres of roads in Callide, which is about the same as a full lap of Australia. It intersects eight river catchments, including those of the Fitzroy, Burnett and Condamine-Balonne rivers. There are two major coal-fired power stations, seven major coalmines, five major dams, several hard-rock mines and numerous quarries. We also have 60 schools, which provides a challenge should I attempt to attend even one P&C meeting at each school in a year.

We have many towns dispersed throughout the electorate that all have their own economies, their own issues and their own qualities that make them both terrific and unique. They have one thing in common and that is the fact that they are all built on agriculture, forestry, mining and heavy industry. You could say that primary industry is Callide's bread and butter. If you take this away then there is not a whole lot left.

I was born and raised on my family farm north of Brigalow, not too far from Chinchilla and, yes, I do mean to say I was born there. My school holidays were spent working for local melon growers. I went to Queensland's University of Technology here in Brisbane and studied a Bachelor of Science, majoring in earth science. I have worked in the oilfields of Canada and the coalfields of the Bowen Basin and Hunter Valley.

When I lived overseas many asked me if I was going to stay. I would have loved to but, at the end of the day, the Darling Downs and Queensland are always home. The Australian bush is something special. It calls you. It fills a place in your soul that simply cannot be described. Whether it is the Darling Downs, the hills of the North Burnett or the distant horizons in the Channel Country, this vast land of droughts and flooding rains speaks to you. The connection to this country is real for anyone who wishes to take a moment to appreciate its beauty.

When I lived here in the big smoke I would start to go mad if I was not able to get away briefly every couple of months. I would head bush to clear my head and reset so I could come back and focus on the task at hand. If any of you ever find the concrete jungle a little overwhelming, I offer you an invite to come to Callide and clear your head.

I count my blessings for the fact that I grew up in a household with a loving family. I had a full stomach, a warm bed and a roof over my head. I have siblings who kept me on my toes and, for the most part, we got on. We did not have as many gadgets and gizmos as some kids who grew up in the early 2000s, much to my dismay at the time, but in reality, as much as I thought I needed them, 'want' was about as close to 'need' as it got. Mum and Dad always lived within their means. They were frugal

and worked hard to manage their budget. This served us well and got my family to where they are today. Mum is also a great cook and can turn basic ingredients into a terrific meal by anyone's standards.

Growing up I was taught the basics of hard work and how far you can go in a world where you are rewarded for your effort. I was taught that life was not going to be given to me on a platter. If I wanted to make something of myself, I had to work for it. All of this has got me to where I am today. I do not put my hand up for a task and not give it my all. A job worth doing is a job done well.

There are many things I question in this world and many things I believe we are far from getting right. We tell a generation of kids that they will never succeed in life because of man who came before them. We install intergenerational hatred towards all things that made our country what it is today. We should instead focus on the opportunities that this great nation presents. You can achieve anything that is on par with how hard you are willing to work.

People scream down stereotypes and yet those very same people are some of the most prejudiced of all. Two people can say the exact same sentence with the exact same intent. One of those people may be cheered on by their fellow associates while the other is screamed down as a raging bigot. The truth in words and their intent are no longer what makes or breaks someone in the modern day but it is the perception of their political persuasions and whether they might come from a position of perceived privilege, regardless of how hard they worked to get themselves there.

This is something that has well and truly been on my mind as a new member of parliament and public life. A significant portion of society has already written me off as no good thanks to who I am and where I come from and thanks to me being a proud member of the LNP. I hope that in the years to come I can be one of many who help show a modern society that the intent of what someone says is more important than how another individual chooses to interpret it.

A functioning society is not one where we are at each other's throats. It is one where we can have a respectful conversation and talk about all options and solutions, and not just those decided by a core group of the elite. It is one where we can talk about facts without the need to tiptoe around important points that are the fundamental cause of the whole problem. We love saying, 'I take advice from the experts,' but then we pick and choose not only what experts we listen to but also the statements, facts and figures from those very same cherry-picked experts.

When I was at university my lecturers drilled into me the basic principles of good science. One day in class I gave a presentation. To reach my hypothesis I relied upon what was very much an accepted geological theory at the time. At the end my lecturer asked me, 'And what makes you think that the geological community has the first theory correct?'

His point was that if scientists always assumed that the person who walked before them was right then we would be living in a world where science is nothing but a sham and the earth is still flat. Question and be questioned. Do not be insulted by the fact that someone is sceptical of your theory, for they themselves are only living up to the fundamentals of good science by testing every angle.

Data and science can be used and manipulated to show many various points of view. When those opposite were running around trying to justify their draconian vegetation management legislation, they were relying on data from the Statewide Landcover and Trees Study suggesting that tree clearing in Queensland was at an all-time high. What they failed to mention was that that very same report indicated that total tree cover had increased across the state for years on end. Of course, this bit of information did not fit an agenda or win votes from a public who are removed from our reality in the bush. I say 'our reality' because I do not mean to insult those of the metropolitan regions who, by no fault of their own, have never lived in the bush to understand the intricacies of our landscapes. They view life through a different lens than I. We now live in a state where we have a one-size-fits-all rule for an area that would rank as the 17th largest country if it were on its own. Queensland has 13 bioregions, all with unique soils, vegetation, ecosystems and waterways. I ask: do you treat your tomatoes and your roses the same way you treat your lawn? This is what the Queensland government and these laws are enforcing upon rural Australia.

Our state forests were once well managed by volunteer fire crews, recreational pest controllers and private grader operators. These men and women just so happened to work at the many local sawmills. Over time we have regulated our logging industry to a shadow of its former self. In doing so, we have not only lost our royalties from a valuable and renewable resource but have added a cost to the taxpayer. The state now pays to do a job that not only was once done for us but funnelled money into our coffers at the same time.

Just this week it has been reported that Monash University in Melbourne is not letting students graduate unless they undertake mandatory cultural training modules. I am sure that a number of people may be cheering at such prospect, given the modules are promoting nothing other than sheer wokeism,

but to those who are cheering at such an insult to our education system: firstly, remember what these students signed up for and remember what they are paying for when they go to university; and, secondly, consider the precedent this sets and the ramifications into the future. Heaven forbid if someone else took this idea and wanted to teach the principles of biology and the realities of Mother Nature. I am sure you would not be cheering if you were forced to watch a feral pig eat a screaming lamb alive just so you can graduate from your political science and gender studies degree. Forcing something down someone's throat does not make them listen and learn. If what you are promoting is really so righteous, force would not be necessary.

Australia is a smart nation—a nation of inventors, a nation of doers. Over the decades we have always managed to tackle the task at hand and soldier on through a bit of ingenuity and problem-solving. We also seem to love our red tape. When it comes to politics, we often manage to miss the mark. A number of years ago, the first fast-food chain opened in Chinchilla at around seven o'clock one morning. By around 11 am that very same day up the road from our house was garbage from that very same outlet—within four hours of its opening. For context, we live 25 minutes from town. The next closest outlet is over an hour away. This, ladies and gentlemen, is not a material problem or a plastic problem; it is a human problem. In principle I do not like taxes, including the Containers for Change tax that the average punter may not yet realise is another new and fancy tax. We now have people out risking their lives picking up cans and bottles from the side of highways and roads, all to reclaim 10 cents thanks to the many grubs who left them there.

When plastics first started being widely used, remember they were meant to save the trees? Now we have forgotten about the trees for the turtles need saving instead! For the record, I find the amount of waste and litter that ends up in our natural environment absolutely appalling. I am merely mocking the irony of the situation we have found ourselves in, all because we did not want to consider both the pros and cons of the innovation of the time. This was not any one person's fault but the collective fault of the consumer, the politician and enterprise. The latest clean and green technology might seem fashionable, just as the plastic bag did at the time.

I want to take a moment to thank the people of Callide who have instilled their faith in me and given me this opportunity to represent them as the sixth member for Callide in the Queensland parliament. I want to thank the membership, the staff and the executive of the LNP. To the many who backed up after a long federal campaign to help me on my by-election, who wrote letters, made phone calls and manned booths: thank you. To the state parliamentary team and the member for Broadwater: thank you for your efforts and for welcoming me to this House.

I thank the former member for Callide, Colin Boyce, for his service to the electorate and wish him well as the new federal member for Flynn. I also thank two great men who are no longer with us today—Scott Sargood and Jaimie Varcoe. I did not have the privilege of knowing these men for long. They were both taken from us too soon. To Adma, Mitch and Bonnie: Scott was a true champion of the bush. He was true to his word and did not sit back when there was work to be done. To Deb, Lilly and Ella: Jaimie was a bloke who wore his heart on his sleeve and fought hard for what he believed in. If there was a rabbit to chase up a hole, he would be there with bells and whistles on. Without these two men and their influence on my life in the short time I knew them, I doubt I would be standing here today.

I also thank the current and former politicians and community leaders who have always been a sounding ear. To my good mates from school and university, some of whom are in the gallery today: thanks for always being there for me and always having my back. To everyone else who has been an influence on my life and helped me along the way: I thank you. To my late granddad Len and grandma Maggie: I hope I am doing you proud. To grandma Fay and to Pop: thank you for everything you have taught me. To my siblings for offering me their fashion advice and for putting me in my place every once in a while: I thank you. To Mum and Dad: thank you for everything you have done for me over my life so far and for all the sacrifices you have made to get me here today.

I want to take a moment to highlight some of the issues for me to consider into the future to help guide me in serving the people of Callide. I will never please everyone. There is always someone on the wrong side of every decision. I can only help so many at a time. If I am nervous about asking a question, maybe that is because it is a question that needs to be asked. Never forget the fundamentals and the founding principles of science. An individual is and can only be responsible for their own actions. Governments should foster independence and personal freedoms. Dependence does not serve anyone well. If I have not stopped for a moment to consider if I may be wrong, then I have not yet earned the right to be right. Most importantly, never take myself too seriously. A big head does not serve anyone well.

To those in positions of power, who think they know what is best for my community, I offer them some warning. Do not ever turn up and pretend you care about my electorate and my people if your very next breath is about shutting down our towns. Do not claim that there will be alternate jobs for them

into the future unless they are real and exist today. Do not insult us by offering us jobs that fall well short on skill and even shorter on pay. I will not accept a raw deal for my electorate. Remember the wealth that my community has created for you and your own backyard. Remember the taxation and the royalties that built your schools, your roads and your hospitals. Do not think you can take us for granted for there is only so much we will take.

My community is a proud one and we have earned that right through blood, sweat, tears and sheer hard work. Do not think you can take that away from us. Do not treat my community with disdain for they grow the cotton on your back, they grow the food on your plate and they produce the energy, both through renewables and fossil fuels, that keep your lights on. For this we do not need thanks. We simply want you to consider this before you skin us for everything we have. If you fail to keep this in mind, you have made an enemy of me and my people. If you think you can take my community for fools then more fool you.

I am not naive enough to think that I have signed up for an easy task. I came here to work hard in serving my community and to fight for a better future not only for myself, my family and my generation but also for all of my people and all of Queensland.