



Speech by

Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Hansard Wednesday, 11 October 2006

MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr NICHOLLS (Clayfield—Lib) (7.50 pm): This is now the second inaugural address I have delivered in a representative chamber. The first, as some honourable members may be aware, was delivered a little over six years ago and a little less than one kilometre away in the chamber of the Brisbane City Council. I can report to members present that the experience does not evoke any less emotion or anticipation the second time round. In fact, this is not the first time today I have risen from a warm seat clutching a damp set of papers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, would you please pass on to the Speaker my congratulations on his election as Speaker, as other members have done. At the induction for new members, we heard much about the respect due to the office of Speaker. We have also heard and seen some comment in the local media about question time and its proper use and the role of Speaker. I am sure respect for the office of Speaker will be all the more readily given by honourable members when the principles of fairness, equity and impartiality are displayed, as no doubt they will be during the Speaker's term. I will have no hesitation in abiding by rulings that meet these requirements.

Clayfield is an electorate of diverse attributes. It encompasses some of Brisbane's most desirable residential property and runs the full gamut of land uses including Brisbane's major waste water treatment plant at Luggage Point, an installation I am familiar with from my time as a local councillor.

In my role as local councillor for the Hamilton ward, firstly under the Soorley regime and then in the enlightened Newman Liberal administration, I have got to know large parts of my electorate. Perhaps uniquely, I also shared part of my then council electorate with the member for Brisbane Central, and there are still some issues he needs to look after.

I want to acknowledge and thank those people who helped me reach this chamber and to be here today. The electors of Clayfield are those people. As I doorknocked my electorate, I walked streets and visited suburbs named after previous generations of Australian heroes, streets such as Gordon Street in Hendra and suburbs such as Wavell Heights. In those streets and suburbs I ran across a new generation of heroes—the unsung, unheralded heroes of our time. These are the people in families with dad working and often mum working, both putting in long hours to make a contribution to the wealth of our state, and not just the economic wealth, as important as that might be, but, most importantly, the human wealth.

I met a great variety of people—plumbers, painters, teachers, nurses, police officers, chippies, public servants, builders and mechanics, all ages, sexes and political persuasions. As I listened to the stories they told and the events that they recounted and, most importantly, the aspirations they shared with me, I was humbled and encouraged in my desire to represent those unsung heroes in this place. Those unsung heroes go about their business seeking neither publicity nor praise. They ask no special favour, no unjust reward and they look for no special deal. They work hard and they expect their government to provide leadership and to work honestly and hard for them. They want the government to uphold its side of the great social compact between the citizen and the state.

If there was one message that came through when I listened to these residents, those unsung heroes, it was that many of them felt let down on the big issues such as making sure we have enough

drinking water, health care, education services, building for the future—not only for themselves but for their children and their grandchildren.

When asked to describe the most important qualities required in a politician, Winston Churchill answered—

The ability to foretell what will happen tomorrow, next month and next year and to explain afterwards why it did not happen.

I suspect that was said by the great man with his tongue very firmly in his cheek but, sadly, these days it seems that those are the qualifications of government in Queensland. Excuses and the political art of the mea culpa are not good enough and never should be good enough. In a state with all the advantages of ours, we must deliver the best possible outcomes to our people.

I will fight to make sure this government lives up to its side of that great social compact; that government, whether it be this one or any other one, does deliver on its promises; that it does care for those who need caring for; that it does build and provide for the future; and that excuses are a thing of the past. This means getting on with building the Nundah Community Health Centre, a project promised for more than five years and still waiting for the first sod to be turned. This means looking after the residents of Pinkenba, who are being affected by dust and debris from a Queensland Rail site leased out for commercial profit and now being used as a waste transfer station to the detriment of that 130-year-old community. This is where local residents like Darryl and Joanne Bertwistle, Sandy Spadotto and Alice and David Smith are leading the community fight.

I look, too, at the sell-off of the Kitchener Road children's centre, a local community operation ably led by Amanda Butler and her volunteer team. It costs the state next to nothing to run this valuable community service, but its very first existence is under threat because of this government's policy to exit 'non-core' businesses.

I want to make sure that the airport link project is carried out to the highest standards of air and pollution minimisation, and that those who might be affected are treated fairly and compassionately. This is a visionary project instigated by my good friend, and until recently colleague, Lord Mayor Campbell Newman.

To properly protect the interests of local residents, a member of the community must be involved in the reference design group for the airport link project. On the existing Gateway Motorway, sound barriers are needed. George Hood and Gavin and Loretta Duffy have been asking for years for this simple solution to something that stops them sleeping through the night. All they have had so far are excuses.

The racing industry has been cruelly ignored by this government. I will be working to help the racing industry in its efforts to get on-course stabling as a matter of priority and will fight to improve the prize money to support the owners and trainers who struggle day after day to keep this great industry alive and who are such a part of the history of this state and such a part of the history and heritage of Hendra and the Clayfield electorate.

In recent times I had reason to check the outcomes achieved in the Clayfield electorate over the last few years. I know the Nundah cut and cover tunnel was a project initiated by the last Liberal member for the electorate, as was the Hendra Police Station and the fire station, as were the repairs to the Ascot State School assembly hall, the new teaching block at Eagle Junction State School and the changing rooms at Nundah State School Swimming Pool. However, since 2001, despite the promises and rhetoric, the budget papers have been remarkably light on for Clayfield. That situation is not good enough.

Clayfield is the gateway to Brisbane with three arterial roads, Queensland's major airport, the seaport, the Hamilton northshore development, the Gateway Motorway and bridge, the Albion transit oriented development, the new cruise ship terminal and airport link as well as the second runway. Clayfield's community interests must be protected and enhanced. I will be fighting to make sure that this development leads to improvements in our local lifestyle. I will be standing up and protecting the local interest where the community receives no benefit. I will be doing so constructively but always with a critical eye to unashamedly getting the best for the Clayfield community.

Brisbane is a boom town, Queensland is a boom state and Australia is enjoying a boom economy. Our responsibility in this place is to make sure that we secure this prosperity not just for ourselves and not just for our children but for generations to come.

When government has a responsibility to deliver services they must be the best possible services. Mediocrity is unacceptable. We should strive for the best and government must get out of the way when those services can be better delivered by private enterprise. We must allow and we must encourage the small business operators of Queensland to go about doing what they do best, innovate and compete, without the cold hard hand of government regulating them out of existence. These then are the challenges I look forward to and the spirit in which I will act for whatever time the people of Clayfield allow me in this place.

As well as the electors of Clayfield some other people helped me reach this point today. My campaign team was outstanding. There were many who contributed. Some are even here tonight. My

campaign manager, Daryl Fennel, in the lead-up to the election and with a less than two-month-old baby had only one request, only one demand and that was that we win. Daryl and his wife, Rachel, have learnt in the cauldron of political battle the demands placed on family and I thank them both for their friendship and support.

My parents, who are here tonight and who have never failed me, have a bone to pick with the Premier for calling the election early—what a surprise—while they were overseas on a three-week holiday. In particular, my father Peter called from Mainz in Germany while I was doorknocking in Wavell Heights with a message from my mother, Barbara, to remind me to make sure my nomination was in on time. My sisters, Sandie and Sophie, and their partners helped on election day and in all sorts of other ways. My uncle and aunt David and Paddy Nicholls travelled from Toowoomba to hand out how-to-vote cards on election day and help scrutineer.

Many people today have spoken of family. Without my family none of my achievements would have been possible. I can never thank them enough. There are other people from my campaign team to thank such as Annie Reid, my office manager and organiser extraordinaire. Thanks also to Marlene Cameron, my inveterate 4BC fanatic and effective receptionist. I thank Mark and Deb Taylor for all the photographs which I hesitate to claim as being flattering.

I thank Stan Bakac, the campaign gopher. If there was a crook, late, last-minute job and it was raining, Stan got it. He did it cheerfully and consistently. Former Senator Bill O'Chee, the youngest senator ever elected to the Australian parliament, came along and gave us a few tips along the way. He also gave us the campaign song, and to Bill, who is out curling tonight and I know would love to be here, I say, 'I love this bar.'

Campbell Newman supported me enthusiastically and also gave me great opportunities to learn, not just politics but also leadership. Mark 'the Hitman' Hyrcek, Ben Myers and Francis Quinlivan, despite avoiding the limelight, helped in all sorts of ways, including the ever popular booth manning on election day.

I thank Michael Caltabiano, a great elected representative, a great member and a great friend whom I am sure we have not heard the last of and who still has much to give the Liberal Party and the people of Queensland. John White and Chris Wiltshire every morning manned the booths on the streets in peak hour with me and some others to get my name out there. I thank Tony Marshall, the signs man and booth captain at Hendra State School. Tony and Ernie Ginn and Robin Rogers worked like Trojans. I just know we will win that booth next time, just like we did in council.

I thank Roslyn, Nina and George, who all worked beyond the call of duty—and certainly beyond the pay they received—and who kept my reputation up in the Hamilton ward office and the wider electorate. I thank Milesy, friend for over a quarter of a century and my perennial campaign chairman, and my best man, Doug, who is also here tonight. I thank Darren Barlow the Treasurer and my great friend Santo Santoro, who served Clayfield so well and who continues to serve Queenslanders as a senator for Queensland and as a minister in the best federal government this country has had. Reports of his demise were greatly exaggerated!

Thanks also go to John Greenhalgh from the Lilley FEC and Geoff Greene and the team at Liberal Party headquarters for their help and assistance. I thank David and Nicole McLachlan. David helped with the message and got so enthused he is now the Liberal candidate for the Hamilton ward. I look forward to reporting back to the House on his success after the 28 October by-election. I am sure he will succeed although he does have an Herculean task in trying to fill his predecessors shoes!

Finally, and most importantly, I thank my wife, Mary, and my children, Jeremy, Duncan and Kate. Mary little expected that I would choose to enter the political world when we first started seeing each other almost 20 years ago. But her support, level-headedness and sacrifice have enabled me to be here today. My three kids have only known political life. They know I am often not there in the evenings, on weekends and at their special events. But despite that, I do this for them, and their future.

But it is not just my children's future in which I am interested. It is the future of all the unsung heroes of Clayfield and their children and their children's children to whom I intend to dedicate the next three years. Let us never forget that truly great government is the servant of its citizens and takes its measure from the way in which it advances their aspirations. In so doing we can serve our constituents and the people of Queensland to the best of our abilities.