




Speech by

Michael Hart

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

Hansard Tuesday, 29 May 2012

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (8.30 pm): Today I rise to give thanks to the Governor for her address on the opening day of parliament and to pledge my allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and the people of Queensland, and most of all to the residents of Burleigh Heads, Palm Beach, Varsity Lakes and Miami, the suburbs that make up the electorate of Burleigh. I rise a very humble man, fully aware of the faith the good people of Burleigh have placed in me as their local representative, their local issues champion. Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I add my congratulations to the member for Maroochydore for taking her place as the first female Speaker of this House, an honour that is well deserved. My best wishes go out to the former member for Burleigh, Christine Smith, as she moves into retirement and full-time enjoyment of her grandchildren. If I can be remembered in the electorate with similar fondness as that with which Christine is held, I will be a happy man.

As I stand here, I am reminded of the words of Ronald Reagan when he spoke to the surgeons who were about to operate on him after he was wounded in an assassination attempt. He is quoted as saying, 'Please assure me you are all Republicans'. As I look around this chamber today, I am heartened to note that most of the critics who will judge my speech tonight are friends. My commitment to the people of Burleigh, to the people of Queensland and to members here present is to participate constructively in this place and to act in an honest, forthright manner, always keeping in mind the best interests of the people of the electorate of Burleigh and the people of this great state of Queensland.

With your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I will give those present an insight into who I am and what I stand for. I was born in Bega, New South Wales, the first born of Jim, a banker, and Marie, a nurse. I have younger siblings, Chris and Joanne. Honourable members will be surprised to know that I met my wife, Sally, in Goulburn, New South Wales, around 45 years ago. We were next door neighbours and found ourselves walking to school together when we were about six years old. To this day I am still blamed for exposing the reality of the tooth fairy and Father Christmas to an innocent six-year-old, who has now been my wife for over 30 years. We have three children: Timothy and Jessica, who are 26, and our son Hayden turns 21 this Sunday. I know members will think I am too young, but Tim and his partner Aimee have provided Sally and I with a grandson, Joshua, who is heading towards his second birthday. I encourage all present to look forward to the grandparenting stage. That is the stage when you can say, 'Enough!' and hand them back. Joshua is wonderful and we truly adore him.

A few weeks ago I watched Q&A and an audience member asked Joe Hockey about living on the north shore of Sydney and how he would best promote the Australian egalitarian ethos. That made me think about how I would respond to that question. If I were to be totally honest, I would have to say that my philosophy of life does not support egalitarianism. While I believe we are all born equal, I have to say that, from then on, the decisions our parents make in our early lives, followed by our decisions, determine where we sit in society. My parents taught me about aspirations and how to strive for a better life. Those are important lessons that I have passed on to my children. They are lessons that have carried me through life and that have contributed to the person I am now. Undoubtedly, there will be members in this chamber and visitors in the gallery above who will ridicule me for this attitude, but I place on the record my overriding philosophies of life. The opinions and decisions I make in this place will reflect those philosophies.

I believe in the right of people to make their own choices in life. Regardless of whether or not I agree with them, they have a right to their own opinion and their own choices. I believe in small government with minimal regulation. I believe in a hand up from government, not a handout. In basic terms, I believe good government needs to ensure the population is secure from interference from the action of others. If a government does just that one thing, I believe it succeeds.

One of the key choices I believe a person should be free to make is to work hard, earn a good living and improve the living standard of their family. I do not believe that they should be made to feel ashamed or, indeed, ridiculed because of that choice. I believe this great country of ours is in danger of becoming a nanny state. Presently, too many people rely on the government for handouts for survival. Previous governments have encouraged this attitude and for many people it has now become a way of life. Our ageing population cannot afford for this to continue. If we are not careful, there will not be enough taxpayers left to fund our ongoing social responsibilities.

On 24 March I was elected as the new member for Burleigh and I will always be eternally grateful to the people of Burleigh for the honour they have bestowed upon me. The electorate of Burleigh is made up of Burleigh Heads and sections of Palm Beach, Varsity Lakes and Miami. We are blessed with some of the best beaches and parks in Queensland. To educate the young people of Burleigh we have nine schools. To protect the people of Burleigh we have one fire station, one ambulance station and one CIB station. We have 13 active community groups in the local area and to care for our citizens and visitors on our beaches we have six surf clubs. Burleigh is the home to Surf Life Saving's Surfcom and the Gold Coast City Council's lifeguard headquarters. Surf Life Saving is an association that is dear to my heart, having been a lifesaver for more years than I can remember. Until recently, I was the president of the Pacific Surf Life Saving Club in Palm Beach, a position I have relinquished with great sadness.

When I think about surf-lifesaving, I start to think about volunteers in general. I hope that during my time in this place I might be able to promote the concept of volunteering. With that in mind, this new government, a government of which I am part, needs to consider how it is that we treat volunteers. Over the past few years I have volunteered in a number of community roles and the greatest frustration I have felt is with the restrictions put on me as a volunteer by all levels of government bureaucracy. In my opinion, it is time to return to the situation where personal responsibility is paramount. It should not be the role of government to protect ourselves from ourselves. We need to be free to make our own decisions and, literally, to sink or swim with those decisions. Red tape is getting in the way of our volunteers and, if we want to keep those people doing the job they are doing, it is time we set them free. Let personal responsibility be the defining rule, not red tape.

The seat of Burleigh has a village atmosphere to it and that village atmosphere needs to stay as the defining feature of the area. With that concept fully in mind, there are a number of issues I will strive to solve during my time in this place. Firstly, the Tallebudgera boardwalk from Fleay's Fauna Reserve to the coast has recently had a very expensive makeover and yet it does not seem to go anywhere. It has been the victim of government's uncompromising regulation overcoming good sense and personal responsibility. I intend to do all I can over the next few months to see that the Tallebudgera boardwalk is reopened to the public from Fleay's fauna park to the beach.

Secondly, petty vandalism in the form of break and enters is out of control, with one local example being a tennis club that is within walking distance of my office being broken into eight times in the last two and a bit weeks—twice this past weekend and apparently again last night. Thieves are breaking in doing thousands of dollars worth of damage to the facility just to steal a few cans of alcohol, and they are doing this night after night. The police do not have the resources to deal with these crimes. Their response times are unacceptable and I am angry about that. It is not the police officers' fault; it is ours. We urgently need to give them the resources they need do their job properly.

A cruise ship terminal on the Gold Coast would seem to me to be a no-brainer. Public transport is of course another big issue in my electorate, as it is in the whole of Queensland. I am a firm believer in the KISS principle—keep it simple stupid. To work, public transport must take you from where you are to where you want to go, be reasonably priced and convenient. If it is not, it does not get used and it may as well not be there. That leads me to the much discussed rapid transit system under construction on the Gold Coast.

To meet the criteria I have just discussed it is clear to me that the rapid transit system must cover the Gold Coast from one end to the other, not a small section in the middle. It must connect to other forms of transport and therefore must be linked to heavy rail and the airport. This concept can be delivered by extending the rapid transit system from Broadbeach, where it is scheduled to terminate under stage 1, to Burleigh and then out to Varsity train station. This could be stage 2, with stage 3 being the replacement of the proposed heavy rail with light rail from Varsity station to the airport using the rail corridor already designated.

Mr Deputy Speaker, now is the time to act. Queenslanders have given our government a clear mandate to do so. We have a mountain of problems ahead of us—everything from cost-of-living pressures

to the safety and security of our families and properties, unemployment, a declining tourism industry and lots more. These problems are not isolated. They impact all electorates, not just my own.

I am a passionate man and might I say I have the tissues to prove it. I want to be part of a government that brings this state back to being a leading force not only in this country but also that contributes to the advancement of the world. From our dedicated police, ambulance and fire departments across our state to the teachers who develop the youth of tomorrow, to all the volunteers who willingly give their time to support many of our charities and not-for-profit organisations, we can and we must all play our part in making this happen because the alternative is something we dare not think about, nor should we accept.

The constituents of Queensland have spoken loud and clear. They did not just simply tick a box on election day. They, I believe, made a profound statement to all levels of government that a change was needed. The electorate of Burleigh has been neglected for too long by the past government. Crime has increased, unemployment has risen and many small businesses have closed their doors. Trades men and women are making the daily trek up the M1 to find employment.

My electorate has many wonderful assets that can be better utilised. Better utilisation of our existing infrastructure can assist in creating environments where our youth can have fun in a safe environment, provide small business with an opportunity to be successful and provide a beating hub for the community to gather and be social.

Winning the seat of Burleigh came at considerable personal cost to my family and myself both financially and emotionally—six years of my life, three elections, numerous pairs of shoes worn out doorknocking and the people of Burleigh having to put up with my ugly mug being constantly seen on cars, corflutes, flyers and even billboards around the electorate. There is a long list of people I would like to thank for their support, hard work and encouragement over the last six years.

First and foremost, to my family—my wife, Sally, who has put up with a grumpy husband for the last six years mostly, I must say, with good grace—mostly, I said. My children—Timothy, Jessica and Hayden and their partners Aimie, Simon and Anna, and our gorgeous grandson Joshua—have endured the ups and downs of political campaigning for six long years. They have been with me in rain, hail or shine, on the side of the road, hand-folding and stuffing letters, out in the middle of the night setting up polling booths—they have done it all. To my parents, Jim and Marie, for standing with me at prepoll—full-time for two elections and part-time for this one. To my siblings, Joanne and Chris and their families, for the hours spent on polling booths and their continued love and support.

A big thank you to Mark Henry, my campaign manager for the 2006 and 2009 election campaigns. Mark was right by my side every step of the way during those two campaigns and can justly take a large part of the credit for our success in this campaign. Mark, thank you. To Darren Macintosh, my campaign manager at this election: mate, you're a legend and I will never forget what you have done for me. Darren was always there keeping me going just when I needed that extra shove along. Darren has a future in politics himself, and I can't wait to repay the favour when his time comes. To Darren and his wife, Jessica, thank you for the time you sacrificed for me.

To Gloria Johnson, Corali and Peter Stevenson, and Norman Dunstan who all worked in my office during the campaign: I can never repay you for the effort you put in. Thank you. To my mates Ray Skalski, Ken Clark and Jon Ingall who all constantly said to me, 'I can't understand why you would want to be a politician,' yet they helped me out constantly because they were my mates. Guys, thank you. To my booth captains, booth workers, prepoll workers—over 150 in all—thank you for your support. I would not be here today without your help.

I would like to thank the returning MPs on the Gold Coast for their encouragement and support over the last three elections, and can I particularly single out Jann Stuckey, my close friend and mentor. Jann has always given me sound, often blunt, advice—something I am most grateful for.

To the LNP campaign team, led by James McGrath, Michael O'Dwyer and specifically Mitch Redford, who looked after my campaign directly: all of us here owe you a very big thank you. To Mr Bruce Duncan, regional chair of the Gold Coast LNP: your support and organisational skills have played a large part in the success of all members of the Gold Coast team.

The members of the Young LNP amazed me during the state campaign with their vitality and enthusiasm. Ably led on the Gold Coast by Hermann Vorster, these wonderful young people were seen everywhere—in every electorate on the coast and in their spare time, which there was not much of, in Brisbane. To the visionaries of the LNP, Bruce McIver and Gary Spence: your vision of a united Liberal and National Party and forethought to bring us a leader like Campbell Newman have got us here today, and to Lawrence Springborg for your determination in forming the LNP, I salute you.

Lastly to my best friend, Lisa Stoov'e, who was with me right from the start. Even though she fundamentally does not believe in politics, she supported me because she believed in me. She was with me for the first two campaigns and with me in spirit for this one. She then came over from Western Australia for a month to help set up my electoral office. Lisa, thanks for your love and support. Your friends here miss you and it is time to come home.

Mr Deputy Speaker and honourable members, Queensland is open for business again and it is time for all our lost friends to come home. Mr Deputy Speaker, may I say via you to the Premier: Premier, I am aware that many of us are here today in great part because of you. You deserve our faith, our friendship, our support and, above all, our loyalty. You have mine unconditionally.

Mr Deputy Speaker, may I finish with a quote from Benjamin Disraeli, 'Though I sit down now, the time will come when you will hear me.'