




Speech By
Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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INAUGURAL SPEECH

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (12.02 pm): I rise in this House today humbled by the privilege afforded to me by the good people of Whitsunday to represent, advocate and be a voice for our beautiful region. It is more so an honour to serve in this 57th Parliament in the first four-year fixed term as the member for Whitsunday. Today, I commit to the people of Whitsunday and Queensland, with my parliamentary colleagues here as my witness, that I will serve this House, the electorate of Whitsunday and the people of Queensland with humility, integrity, hard work, courage and passion.

These attributes have been gained through my raising and lived experience as a canefarmer's daughter, a mother and sister, through the many lessons you learn from 20-plus years of working life—starting as a sugar chemist, spending almost a decade in the travel industry, a rewarding role as professional philanthropic fundraiser through to executive and board roles across the not-for-profit and private sectors, as a former canefarmer myself and most recently as deputy mayor. It is this diversity of experience and career journey that has contributed in part to my standing before you here today. It is also in part the commitment and passion to my community. It is also the hard work of others during my campaign. It is more broadly the hard work and resilience gained over the journey that is my life thus far. It is a culmination of these things that has contributed to the trust that has been placed in me to represent the people of Whitsunday, in particular during a year that will be known generationally as one of the most challenging years in our state's and nation's history.

I grew up on cane farms and cattle properties from the O'Connell River, near our hometown of Proserpine, to Manila outside of Tamworth in New South Wales and Pleystowe in the Pioneer Valley. Our family was always invested in cattle and sugar. It is part of my family's heritage and it was smart business as when one was up the other was down. Being raised on the land, it is part of who I am and why I am so passionate about rural and regional Queensland. The beef and sugar industries continue as a great love and legacy of our extended family today, which I am much proud of. As the eldest of four children, my role was to support my brothers and sisters while Mum and Dad worked our farm. As we grew up, it was expected of us too, whether it was helping plant cane—and that was stick cane, the old way—or setting up irrigation. It is where my work ethic was established.

There are moments in life that define you and build your character. Experiences where my world view was challenged and as a result altered forever was at the age of 16 when I had the privilege of being an exchange student in Nepal. I had never been confronted with such poverty or adversity. This was one of those defining moments. Returning to year 12, it was through public speaking that I found a way to articulate my experience and seek to understand the role and recognition of diversity and resilience and the importance of culture.

Finishing year 12, I studied at sugar school and entered the workforce in the industry I loved and understood most as a sugar chemist with Mackay Sugar. It was after the wettest season in a decade, 1998—one of the most challenging seasons for growers who had to leave cane in the paddock—that I questioned the career path I was taking.

I reflect on the stories of my Nonno—Giusspe Carrello, my mother's father, born to Sicilian migrants in Innisfail—who from the age of 13 was cutting cane around Proserpine. He started with nothing in an industry that was good to him and he has shared with me regularly his greatest learned lesson of hard work, hard work and more hard work. 'No-one is going to do it for you,' he said. Still today I admire his work ethic at the age of 87.

I decided to follow my passion of travel and for the next decade, whilst having my family, I worked in the travel industry in various roles. While over that time I experienced the challenges of 9/11 and the collapse of Ansett, it was all but a drop in the ocean compared to the challenges brought about by the pandemic that we see today and that the travel and tourism sector, both within my seat of Whitsunday as well as more broadly across our state and nation, are now facing. Grit and resilience will be acquired through these times of challenge. The industry was good to me, teaching me many skills and building my networks across many industries that I continue to work with today.

During my career I have had the rewarding pleasure of raising much needed funds for medical research and working with community groups and not for profits as a community development practitioner. Through growth, experience and opportunity I went on to work more broadly in executive roles in local government and regional economic development where I developed industry insights from working closely with the resources, METS, tourism, agriculture and service sectors.

I am proud of the strategic leadership I have contributed in volunteer board positions and the value of the learnings I have gained from the people I have worked alongside, including those at the Mackay Combined Women Services, Connect Housing, the Research Industry Network, the Coral Sea Clinical Research Institute, Regional Development Australia and Whitsunday Communities. It is through these positions that I have greater appreciation of placed based solutions, an insight into the challenges of individual industries, the value of collaboration and the recognition that profit for purpose is a transformative process that many regional organisations need to adopt to survive. It is no surprise that regional economic development became a passion and the concepts of regional equity, opportunity and harnessing our natural resources to create prosperity resonated to my core.

I believe in the role that smaller government can play to connect, facilitate and regulate. This ideology was introduced to me growing up as the great niece of Ron Camm. Ronald Ernst Camm is still the longest serving member for the seat of Whitsunday. Our family is proud of his contribution to the state. We are proud and humbled by his reputation as a distinguished member who entered this House in 1961. During his time in politics, he held the following ministerial portfolios from 1965 to 1980: minister for mines and main roads; minister for mines, main roads and electricity; minister for mines and energy and minister assisting the premier on matters concerning northern development; and minister for mines, energy and police. He was the deputy leader of the parliamentary National Party from 1968 until 1980.

For 15 years as minister for mines he worked tirelessly to promote the mining industry. The Bowen Basin and the communities that make up the coalfields and the townships are a testament to his legacy. In particular, the development of Goonyella and the coal that it produces today delivers prosperity for this state through the creation of jobs and royalties.

He was responsible for the coordination of rescue work on the ground as a result of Cyclone Ada in 1970. During my campaign I was humbled to hear from a woman who says she owes her life to his efforts on the ground.

My great-uncle Ron fought for equity with a historic filibuster in this House. In 1976, the equalisation provision of the electricity tariff legislation was introduced. He believed North Queenslanders should not be paying 40 per cent more for their electricity than the rest of the state when Queensland went on to the common grid system. When he commenced he did not have the numbers in this House to support the bill, but after 13 hours on this floor the vote was won by two votes.

He was known to fight formidably for injustice, and I take inspiration from that piece of parliamentary history—where we are reminded that the debates and decisions that are made in this House impact people's everyday lives, at times their hearts and at times their hip pockets. I am proud to be representing a regional seat where members before me have stood up in this House for inequity and I will be proud to do so as a regional Queensland and for all of Queensland.

My grandmother Coral Camm, along with my grandfather Stanley Camm—Ron's younger brother—spent much time with him and his family throughout his parliamentary service. She has shared with me experiences and recounts of Queensland's political history. They started out at Bloomsbury and over their lifetime invested in sugar and beef cattle. I am very grateful for their ongoing support as it is what gave my parents a start. They have also contributed so much to our local community in the Whitsundays, including the establishment of a respite service for participants of all abilities in Proserpine which my aunty to this day still continues to participate in, along with many others across the Whitsunday community.

I will indulge the House in a personal moment with her. Earlier this month after the seat of Whitsunday was declared, she said in jest, 'Congratulations. You are the first Camm in opposition.' She was stating the obvious. I paused and replied, 'Yes, Grandma. I believe that I have big shoes to fill.' Her quick wit and political prowess is a gift that she has passed on to me. My grandfather, who had the highest standing of integrity, gave me the greatest advice: work hard and be true to yourself as you are the only one who has to look yourself in the mirror every single day. History is our biggest teacher, and I am proud and honoured to have the opportunity to serve the people of Whitsunday and Queensland with a goal to fill those shoes with honour and integrity like my great-uncle Ron did.

Prior to my father's passing over a decade ago, his words to me were, 'You can be anything that you set your mind to. You could be mayor one day.' Some six years after that statement I was called to serve in local government and in 2016 was sworn in as a councillor and elected as deputy mayor of Mackay Regional Council. I had always professed that I was not there for a long time but a good time, to support a community that lacked leadership and was battling the impacts of a delayed GFC, and to support cultural change that was desperately needed to support council staff and elected members who needed to engage and lead our community to a standard that the ratepayers expected. Throughout those four years my world view was altered ever so slightly through residents' experiences and challenges.

My proudest achievements throughout my local government service was the adoption of the Mackay Region Planning Scheme 2017—the first scheme to be adopted since the 2008 amalgamation. As chair of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, I was unashamedly an advocate for quality strategic planning and development, as without it there is no housing, commercial precincts, quality open space or clearly defined plans for growth. The result of that means that there would be no community, no identity and no social fabric that defines a region from another. The Mackay region was not in a good place. It was losing private and public investment to other regions. I am proud of my contribution to the scheme's adoption.

After a visit from Dame Quentin Bryce, the idea formed between the mayor and me to lead a community-led domestic violence task force. This task force is now recognised as a model of inclusive leadership that other regions are adopting to raise awareness and work towards the elimination of domestic violence in our communities. We all have a role to play no longer as bystanders. In 2017 we adopted the domestic and family violence policy included in our workplace agreement, and this policy has been a model for other local governments and for private enterprise.

The experience gained in leading through disaster as deputy chair of our local disaster management group and in leading our community alongside the mayor through Cyclone Debbie and the bushfires of Eungella, Finch Hatton and Cathu State Forest was that the response and recovery effort was challenging, emotional and exhausting for all. However, our communities proved their resilience and ability to come together stronger. Local government is the closest form of government to the people, and I thank my former colleagues and staff. You have my utmost respect. May it always remain apolitical to work in the interests of our communities.

My vision for the Whitsunday electorate is made up of so many valued industries: that our children now and into the future can see and experience opportunities; that our grazing and sugar milling industries are respected and valued as they embrace new technologies, innovation in farming practices and recognise the value-add that they can harness; that farmers are respected as custodians of their land and waterways and are recognised for this contribution; and that the tourism industry is a key pillar in our state's economy and experiential identity—the reefs, the beaches, the islands and national parks are accessible—and that the natural environment is sustainably managed and harnessed to create unique experiences that drive visitation and create a year-round prosperous and sustainable sector. My vision for 'brand Whitsundays' is that the operators and the experiences that they deliver are respected, elevated and never to be overlooked or taken for granted.

I commend the ongoing work of our volunteer organisations—disability, social and human services—that deliver a locally-led place based model. I will ensure they are respected and valued. It is their localised knowledge, care and expertise that will always have my support, as it is these grassroots services that contribute to our community fabric.

I will always be a fierce advocate for the resources and the METS sector. Whilst there are no coalmines in my region, the workforce that drives in and out to the Bowen Basin resides across the electorate from the northern beaches of Mackay to Proserpine, Cannonvale and everywhere in between. My mother, sister and brother all work in the mining industry and I have a personal insight into the hard work and family sacrifice that they and their colleagues make day in and day out.

I have come to know this to be true: economic prosperity requires a holistic lens of the social and economic. Our system of government is a contest of ideas. I believe in smaller government whose role it is to facilitate and regulate with a consultative approach. I recognise that industry and community do

not always speak the same language, and it is through leadership that government can play a role to bridge that gap.

I believe that real success can be achieved when all levels of government can identify opportunities and facilitate policy and good decision-making. I believe that economic and social infrastructure must be strategic in nature and need, be planned and developed with sustainable principles, and deliver value that is in the interest of Queenslanders, not just for today but for future generations.

I commit to being a member who will do my best to ensure that good working relationships are upheld both across my electorate and this parliament and its members. As I only stand here today at the grace of the people of the Whitsundays, I will work alongside them and the office I hold will never be taken for granted.

To my neighbouring electorate and the member for Burdekin, like so many in our party we share the values of rural and regional Central and North Queensland. I look forward to working with him so that our great North Queensland is recognised for their contribution to our state and that the unique challenges that they face are voiced in this House.

Whilst I thank the people of Whitsunday who have elected me to this House, I also thank important people across my electorate who believed, like I did, that we deserved better. I acknowledge the hard work and commitment to the campaign of Shelley and Phil Argent and their children—Ramy, Levi and Millie. You worked tirelessly and I am so proud of what we achieved and the way we achieved it. To Bill and Tolma Camm, Sophie and Lawson Camm, and your families: I am honoured to serve and continue our family's contribution to the political representation of our region and our state. Your belief and support are overwhelming and will always be treasured. To Kristy Camm, Shane Newell, Stan and Merewyn Wright, Dominic McCarthy, Ari Oliver, Jack Johnston, Cody Vella, Rick Fisher, Debbie Muscat, Evelyn Vassallo and Flynn Bushell: thank you for your hard work and for your efforts.

Thank you to Jules and Peter Thompson from the Broken Ballerina Foundation. Keep your vision front and centre. Every day you are making a difference. A personal thanks goes to Karen May, Nick Bennett and Jade McAuley, who always reminded me to trust myself; to my mother, who has taught me resilience and has encouraged me to forge my own path; and to my siblings—Kristy, Tracy and Josh—who keep me grounded and encouraged by their pride.

To Trinity and Tara, my stepdaughters, you are smart, young women who have forged your path and continue to teach me. To my children—Lachlan, Abigail and Braithan—your unconditional love, support and endless encouragement has helped me to achieve not just this milestone but many before and many more to come. I love you more than you know and I am so very proud of the young adults you are growing to be.

To my husband, Brendan, who is here today, I could not follow my heart and take up opportunities when they have presented without your support and unconditional love. Your respect and encouragement for me to be the best I can be is unwavering, and there is no doubt in my mind that I would not be standing here today had it not been for your equal partnership and recognition of our individualism. For this I love you.

To the people of the Whitsunday electorate and to the people of Queensland, I commit to being a member who will make a positive contribution every day with the values of humility, integrity, hard work, courage and passion. Mr Speaker, I will respect this House, the history and present day it represents and the important role it plays in the lives and livelihoods of all Queenslanders now and into the future.