




Speech By
Anthony Lynham

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Record of Proceedings, 7 August 2014

MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Member for Stafford, First Speech

 **Dr LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (11.20 am): I acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of this land on which this parliament meets. It is an immense honour for me to rise in this people's house for the first time as the member for Stafford to deliver my inaugural speech. I am truly humbled by the faith and trust that the people of Stafford have afforded me. I assure members of this House that I will work hard every day to fulfil my duty to the people of Stafford. It is an honour that I embrace wholeheartedly.

The Stafford electorate was formed in 1972. I am pleased that, having been originally won by Labor, Stafford was retained by Labor on its re-establishment in 2001. It has been my privilege to return Stafford to its Labor home at the recent by-election. Stafford is a vibrant, diverse, largely residential community bisected by Kedron Brook, which meanders past our major sporting clubs and recreational facilities. In its early years Stafford hosted a mixture of rural and industrial activities with tanneries, quarries, dairying, a wool scour and brickworks. From the 1940s to the 1960s Stafford saw a massive expansion of housing, both private and public. While most of these industries have disappeared, Stafford has now become a retail, small business and services hub for families in the area.

The Stafford electorate also boasts a centre of innovation, with world-leading research taking place at the Prince Charles Hospital. It is an electorate where education and health are paramount. Parents of the inner northern suburbs of Brisbane have always wanted their children to have access to a very high standard of education. Schools in the Stafford electorate, both government and non-government, have catered for the needs of our families and have become an integral part of our community. With the Prince Charles Hospital in the heart of the electorate and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital close by, Stafford has one of the highest concentrations of health workers of any electorate.

I have come to this place by way of a career. I have cherished being part of the surgical and trauma team at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. I have operated on one unsuspecting teenager after another who was just out for a good night but ended up in my care after a senseless assault. This constant exposure to trauma and violence caused me to consider how this mindless behaviour can and should be stopped. For over 12 years I have campaigned tirelessly for prevention of violence in our community.

Prevention of violence has usually been bipartisan in parliaments across Australia. We can all recall the strong initiative of John Howard and Kim Beazley in 1996. Australia's bipartisan gun control legislation has been one of the most effective violence prevention measures anywhere in this world. I have been appalled and angered by the feeble and ineffective response by the current LNP government to sensible violence prevention measures. It is easy to watch the nightclub brawls on the TV news and think that you know the answer, but my team and I were the ones who had to pick up

the pieces on a weekly basis. As a surgeon, I could only keep operating on more and more distressing cases. As an elected representative of the people of Stafford, I aim to do more. Alongside others, I will be working hard to bring common sense to the debate, to provide solutions as to how we can prevent these attacks. Preventing violence surely is more worthwhile than trying to mop up the aftermath.

I grew up in my early years with my parents and my nan in a typical postwar housing commission home. Like many families, we came from humble beginnings and we would have been lost without the visionary, compassionate response by the then government to provide affordable housing to those who are struggling. Housing just like my childhood home continues to provide homes to many people in my electorate.

After some time and through hard work and persistence, my parents were fortunate enough to secure a housing commission loan and move to their own home. I attended Murarrie State School and then Iona College—two wonderful educational institutions which enabled me to achieve my potential. Like many kids, both then and now, my opportunity for advancement came through education—education that was affordable and accessible. That revolution in tertiary education came with the Whitlam Labor government in 1972. Prior to that, tertiary education was only for the privileged few.

Today, there is a growing concern in our community that this LNP government will follow the lead of its federal LNP colleagues, who are intent on making further education accessible to only those who can afford it. I do not want to return to a time when how much money and influence your parents had determined your entry to university rather than your academic ability and your commitment.

I am immensely proud of my parents, Clarrie and Marie. They came from humble beginnings to achieve so much in their respective careers. My dad was a council worker, well respected and liked by all at work and in the community. He was head of the school P&C association and the best dad one could ever hope for. My mum, like many others of her era, was forced to leave school at an early age in order to help support her family but, realising the value and empowerment of a good education, she returned as a mature-age student firstly to high school and then to university. She became a leading social worker in the Logan area, devoting her life to needy and underprivileged families.

One of the luckiest days of my life was when I met a beautiful young lady at a local dance. That wonderful person, Pam, has been my darling, tolerant wife for 34 years. We are proud parents of four loving and loved sons. Brayton, Rohan, Sean and Eamon have made an integral part of their lives the strong social conscious that was instilled in me by my parents. All of them are serving their respective communities in a productive and compassionate manner. Brayton is a teacher, Rohan a paramedic who is now attending medical school, Sean is a police officer and Eamon is a student at QUT. I also have a beautiful grandson, Darcy, who is spoilt rotten by his grandmother—and rightly so. It is to Darcy that I dedicate my commitment here to work to ensure that in his life he, along with all other children, will have access to affordable, high-quality education. As an MP, I will do my best to ensure that he and all children of his and future generations will have access to opportunity irrespective of their social or economic situation.

I wish to sincerely thank two former Labor members for Stafford: Terry Sullivan, my guide and mentor to whom I owe so much, and Stirling Hinchliffe, who has provided such wise counsel. I thank them both for their friendship, guidance and support as I enter the challenging world of state politics. I also want to thank those within the Labor movement who guided and supported me through this journey. My formative years in the party were influenced by two very distinguished politicians: Jim Fouras, a former Speaker of this House, and Tim Quinn, a former Lord Mayor of Brisbane and a teacher of mine at Iona College. Throughout the recent by-election, party president Dick Williams and state secretary Anthony Chisholm have been pillars of support. My now parliamentary leader, Annastacia Palaszczuk, gave me confidence, faith and guidance throughout the campaign. Without her encouragement and the assistance of my fellow caucus MPs I would not be here today.

I also thank those federal and council colleagues who worked tirelessly on the campaign, offering me immeasurable assistance. There are a great many campaign workers whom I wish to thank and to whom I owe so much: the people who were campaigning on my behalf—walking the streets, handing out leaflets, staffing polling booths—all helping in their own special way. Support came from all sections of the community. There were mums and dads, grandparents, students, small business owners, teachers, nurses, doctors and lawyers all working to assist in sending a strong message of protest against this government's arrogant and callous attitude to the people of Queensland. Some stand out for their unfailing enthusiasm and steadfastness: Theresa, Krish, Jaime and Ellie—volunteers who were out in the community almost every single day. I thank those many

union members who gave their support in so many ways: the cleaners, the bus drivers, the firefighters and the electrical trade workers. They are the backbone of our community yet they have come under relentless attack from this government. They deserve to be treated with respect and they deserve to be listened to. This by-election gave them the chance to be heard.

Together with local branch members, affiliated unions form the core of the ALP. Members of trade unions are only too aware of the pain caused to thousands of Queensland families by this LNP government's sacking of dedicated loyal public servants. I assure all government workers that I will listen to you, I will respect you and I will fight for your working conditions, as I will for workers across the state. I want to particularly thank my campaign team: Jimmy, Bruce, Peter, Ian, Mark, Brenton, Jamie, David, Terry, Trish, Helena, Dylan and James. We worked tirelessly; usually up before dawn every day. Most of our days were spent simply out meeting and listening to the people of Stafford; to the hardworking mums and dads who were not being heard by this government. They were not from the big end of town, they did not give large electoral donations, so their concerns were not considered important by this government.

As representatives we all share a bond of wanting to do good for our communities. What is sometimes forgotten is that as a representative we also reflect our community. We must represent all those in the electorate with diverse but significant interests and concerns: the families, students, businesspeople, pensioners and community groups to name a few. The responsibility of representation demands an MP understands what makes up the lives of the people and the way issues might impact on them. The community deserves to be served responsibly and I commit myself to stand up for them, show respect for them, not just in the community or in the electorate but also in this House where laws that affect people's lives and issues of concern are made and debated.

However good the intentions of MPs in this House, I am concerned—very concerned—that our parliament is losing the trust and respect of the people of Queensland. Respect—the due regard for the rights, wishes and feelings of others—is sadly seen as being lost in today's society. As a 17th century Spanish philosopher stated, 'Respect yourself if you would have others respect you.' How can we members of parliament gain the respect of the people we serve and represent if our behaviour inside and outside of this House is such that it would not be tolerated in our communities? Tony Fitzgerald, the man who brought integrity and accountability back to Queensland after the rampant corruption of the Bjelke-Petersen years, has made strong comments regarding poor parliamentary behaviour. My immediate predecessor, Dr Chris Davis, paid the ultimate political price by speaking out against the lack of accountability and changes to electoral funding laws. He too was subjected to appalling behaviour by his colleagues who should have been supporting him.

Many constituents ask why so many children do not give up their seats for the elderly on the bus or why does there seem to be less respect for our teachers and why do paramedics who go out to help people get attacked by others? There are undoubtedly many children and parents who do show respect for their elders and their teachers, but a fair and general observation could be that it is a custom in decline. How can we expect the general public to show respect for each other when members of parliaments, the highest representative bodies in the land, show such little respect for their fellow parliamentarians or for the general public? If we are to bring greater respect back into our community, we must start here with our behaviour both in and outside of parliament.

I will be active in the parliament, not only as the elected representative of the people of Stafford but also in my roles as opposition spokesman on education, primary industries, fisheries, science and information technology. Education is the foundation stone on which lives and careers are built. It provides opportunity for all and is the path towards a successful society. As Labor's portfolio spokesman, I will not only be a champion for our students but also a champion for our teachers. I want to see teachers restored to their rightful and historical place as pillars of our society: teachers who are well educated, resourced and respected, not only by the pupils under their care but also by the whole community. Teachers are sometimes our last line of defence when families are unable to cope. Teachers should be thanked every single day for what they achieve in our state.

Science and information technology go hand in hand. The Smart State is one of the great achievements of Labor governments past. It has provided the backbone, the springboard from which current initiatives in technology and innovation have grown—initiatives that I indeed have been involved with as part of university research teams, including QUT's research facility at the Prince Charles Hospital.

It is with great pride that I will serve in the primary industries portfolio. I am passionate about the rural sector, not just the important role it plays in our economy but about protecting the quality of life for those in the bush. I will pay particular personal attention to this important and vital area.

I intend to work hard as the representative for Stafford and as a shadow minister, but I will always be first and foremost a Queenslander who cares about my community and is determined to make it even better. Along with many fellow Queenslanders, I hold concerns as to the path this government is taking, a path of pandering to vested interest groups, of listening only to those who have the resources to donate and of adhering to the politics of the lowest standards. I see Queensland as a strong and vibrant state which is economically sound, encourages the gaining of skills and provides the opportunity of employment. I see a Queensland that strives to conserve its precious natural and pristine areas and does not sell the rights to these areas to the highest bidder. I see a Queensland that protects its reef and nurtures its rich natural heritage. I do not see a Queensland where we sell off our precious economic assets for a mere temporary return. I also see a beautiful northside community, a community that pulls together in good times and in bad, individuals and families who have concerns and who want to be heard.

Madam Speaker, I wish to finish by once again thanking the people of Stafford, that diverse community from Newmarket to Stafford Heights, from Kedron to Alderley, for putting their trust in me. I promise to work hard and to be a strong voice in the community and in the parliament for them. Most importantly, as a husband, a dad and a worker with a broad range of life experience, I will be a voice that stands proudly for a community that deserves strong representation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.