




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (9.31 pm): In the electorate of Woodridge there is a road named Defiance. It runs through the heart of the suburb of Woodridge itself. In many ways, defiance lies at the heart of the people of the electorate of Woodridge. Woodridge is a strong and defiant community. It is also a community that is welcoming and generous. It is hardworking and determined. It is loyal, compassionate and kind. Woodridge is a welcoming and generous community. I know this to be true as I have felt welcomed and embraced by the Woodridge electorate following my endorsement in March 2014 as the Australian Labor Party candidate for Woodridge for the 2015 state election.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Grace): Order! Just a moment, Minister. I am sorry, members, but there is too much audible conversation. I am struggling to hear the member. The minister has the call.

Mr DICK: In 1885, the suburb now known as Woodridge was a timber reserve. It was divided for settlement, with the first families arriving in 1888. Those first settlers were hardy and created a new community with their hands and their hearts. While some families have lived in our community for many generations, the Woodridge electorate has also welcomed many people from around the globe who now call our community home. Our community is one of the most multicultural electorates in Australia. Almost one-third of the residents of Woodridge were born outside Australia. More than 50 per cent of our residents speak a language other than English in their homes. Of the 200 nationalities and ethnicities who call Logan City home, most have a presence in the electorate either through residence or through one of the many multicultural community organisations based in Woodridge.

While the diversity of our vibrant multicultural community brings strength to the Woodridge electorate, I acknowledge and pay tribute to the traditional owners of the land that constitutes the Woodridge electorate, in particular, the Jagera and the Yugambah-speaking people. I have been privileged to form friendships with many of the Indigenous elders and leaders of Logan City. In the spirit of reconciliation and in the home of our state's democracy, I acknowledge the first Queenslanders and formally acknowledge the past, present and emerging Indigenous elders of the Woodridge electorate. I look forward to my relationship with the Indigenous communities of Woodridge deepening during my period of service as their elected representative in this parliament.

Woodridge is a community that values hard work. I have seen firsthand how hard the people of the Woodridge electorate work. This includes our dynamic business community in Underwood and our hardworking tradies in Marsden and Crestmead; our small business owners on Station Road and Railway Parade, Woodridge; those residents with professional qualifications who work across the electorate; the stallholders at the Logan Central markets and Croydon Road markets; the doctors, nurses and allied health workers who work in our great Logan Hospital; and the teachers and childcare workers who work in our schools, our childcare centres and our kindergartens.

Woodridge is a community of service and goodwill. Our community is one where people strive to look after and to look out for one another. Wherever I go in the Woodridge electorate, I am inspired by those individuals and organisations that work so hard to make our community a better place. They are organisations that work tirelessly to strengthen and support our community. Many of those organisations also promote and foster cultural understanding. It has been my privilege to meet and work alongside many organisations, such as Access Community Services; Boystown; YFS Ltd, including its amazing Substation 33 social enterprise; the Kingston East Neighbourhood Group; the Crestmead 40 Plus Club; the Working Against Violence Support Service; the Logan and District RSL Subbranch; the Logan City and the Crestmead PCYCs; our dedicated Neighbourhood Watch groups, Parents & Citizens and Parents & Friends organisations; and sporting groups such as the mighty Logan Brothers Junior Rugby League Club and the Logan City Netball Association. I look forward to working with and for local community groups during my period of service as the state member for Woodridge.

Woodridge is a community that has generously and faithfully supported the Australian Labor Party for many decades. The electorate of Woodridge is a community that has consistently returned a Labor member to this parliament since the electorate was first declared in 1977. In the 38 years that the electorate of Woodridge has existed, I am only its fourth member. The support that my community has provided to the Australian Labor Party is something that I will never take for granted. I am honoured to be the first member for Woodridge to serve as a Queensland cabinet minister. When I enter the cabinet room, I enter that room first and foremost as the member for Woodridge.

Serving as member for Woodridge and as a cabinet minister, I recognise the very great challenges that lie ahead for my cabinet and state parliamentary Labor Party colleagues because, like so many Queensland communities, the Woodridge community was the sort of community that the Newman LNP government left behind. The LNP's ideological approach to government, their disrespect for the institution of parliament and other institutions of state such as our judiciary, their cuts to public sector jobs and services, their appalling treatment of public servants and the silencing of civil society organisations all speak for themselves. But worst of all, it was people such as the people whom I represent, the people of electorates such as Woodridge, who suffered the most because of the Newman Liberal National Party government. People in my electorate continued to lose their jobs as the Newman government careered out of control and continued its ideologically driven programs, even in the face of strong and defiant community resistance. Young people were particularly vulnerable.

On the change of government, our government inherited a situation where almost one in four young people were unemployed in the Woodridge electorate. Job training and employment programs such as the highly successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work program were axed from our community. Skilling Queenslanders for Work began as a Labor initiative designed to support young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with a disability, mature aged jobseekers and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. People who would otherwise have benefitted from those programs, such as the people of Woodridge, were consigned to the scrap heap by the LNP. But the Woodridge community remained defiant in the face of the worst excesses of the Newman government.

During the election campaign, I made it clear that I would support any pathway that created education, employment, training, investment and job opportunities for Woodridge and its people. Axing the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program was a devastating blow for our community, but I am proud to say that the Palaszczuk Labor government has reinstated the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. In the first round of projects allocated under the reinstated program, Woodridge was the most successful electorate in Queensland, receiving funding of \$2.6 million, which will fund eight organisations to deliver 18 projects that will create 660 jobs. That is the difference that Labor governments can make. In our first budget, our government has allocated over \$2 million for a new transport logistics trade training centre at the Woodridge State High School, which will create more employment pathways for the young people of our community. Those are real and tangible commitments delivered by Labor governments, which are designed to help young people in my electorate obtain employment.

That is what Labor governments are about—empowering individuals to improve themselves so they can develop lives of hope, aspiration and success through the dignity of work. As I am supported by the Woodridge community, I have the privilege of serving as our state's Minister for Health and our state's inaugural Minister for Ambulance Services. In the Health portfolio the Newman government removed over 4,000 health workers from our state's public health system, including nurses, midwives and allied health professionals, increasing the pressure and stress on our remaining staff.

The former minister for health, the now Leader of the Opposition, also abolished the school nursing services which served the people of Woodridge and other communities and which provided vital health screening and education programs for Queensland children. As health minister I will deliver

on Labor's election commitment to restore the school nurse program—a program that will help young people and their families in Woodridge, amongst many others.

Our government has already taken action to improve health outcomes in the Woodridge electorate. I was very proud in my role as member for the Woodridge and health minister to announce earlier this year at the Logan Hospital \$30 million in new funding for additional ear, nose and throat treatment services over the next two years. This funding will help address the backlog of patients waiting beyond the clinically recommended time for an outpatient appointment and treatment at Queensland public hospitals, including Logan Hospital—patients that were left behind by the former LNP government.

Importantly, some of this additional funding will be used to train local general practitioners to deliver ear, nose and throat procedures so that some people can have their medical needs addressed by their local general practitioner without having to go to hospital. This will also be a hallmark of this Labor government: working with our Public Service and with community and private sector leaders to find new ways to address old problems. We will listen to the people of Queensland rather than denigrate, demean and deride those with contrary views—something that was the hallmark of the Newman LNP government.

The people of Woodridge remained defiant in the face of this assault by the LNP. So much so that at the election held on 31 January 2015 there was a swing to the Australian Labor Party in the state electorate of Woodridge of over 20 per cent on a two-party preferred basis against the LNP. In the electorate of Woodridge the Australian Labor Party returned the largest two-party preferred vote of any party in any electorate in Queensland, being 75.95 per cent.

I and the party that I represent in this place are incredibly humbled to receive such significant support from the Woodridge community. This electoral result reflects the outstanding grassroots community campaign run by local ALP branch members, trade unionists and local community activists. To all of those in the Woodridge community who worked tirelessly on my campaign, I thank you. If not for you, I would not be standing here today. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to serve the people of Woodridge.

In particular, I would like to thank my campaign director, Stewart Dalley, and his wife, Logan City councillor Cherie Dalley, John and Judy Wilson, Tilly Tillgren, Jeanette and Kevin Condren, Therese and Crystell Lane, Lisa Banyard and Nelson Reed-Banyard, Leif Bremmerman, Dolly and Anton Chang, amongst so many others—in fact, all of the branch members in the Woodridge ALP branches. I wish to make special mention of Jon Raven, Josef Chick and John Bosco Ngendakurio who worked tirelessly for me from my endorsement right through until election day. Like so many of my campaign workers, you did not falter or flinch when it came to the hard work that was required to achieve victory in Woodridge. I also thank Jim Chalmers MP, federal member for Rankin, and his staff for their encouragement and support.

I wish to acknowledge and thank community leaders like Josephine Aufai and her husband, Pastor Tala Aufai, Jamal El-Kholed, Mauala Timoteo, Sovannary Uk, Sarat Son, Than Thach and so many others who pledged their support to me and assisted me during the campaign. I also wish to acknowledge and thank Hussein Ahmed from the Somali community; Kamal from the South Sudanese community and who is also a local small business owner; Payam Mahaki from the Iranian community; Muktar Ali from the Pakistani community; Girmay Gebremedhin from the Eritrean community; Deo Nahimana, Joseline Ilumva, Happiness Munezero and Prosper Munezero from the Burundian community; Emmanuel Karekezi from the Rwandan community; Allierey Iremeyiwaci; Alain Hobabantu; Nezia Irakoze; Belise and her sister Yvette from the suburb of Woodridge; Freznelle Abbas; Moseka Atanani; Bomedien Ndayishimiye; Odette Tewfik; Eric Irabaruta; Aimee Gikundi; Besta Batamuriza; Alexis Serugo; Patricia Welsby; Xin Zhang; Teng-Hoay Murray; Anthony Lin and so many others.

I also wish to thank my electorate office staff, Kylie Slater and Peter Wood. They are passionate about helping the people of Woodridge. Kylie is an outstanding campaigner and contributed enormously to my electoral success. Peter is one of our true believers, and has provided unstinting encouragement to me since I first joined the ALP more than a quarter of a century ago. I express my heartfelt thanks to both of them for their friendship and support.

I thank my LNP opponent—in fact, all candidates who ran in the election. Each of them ran decent, community minded campaigns, and I thank them for the fair and generous way that they conducted themselves during the campaign.

I also want to pay tribute to my predecessor, Desley Scott, for her work and her commitment to the Woodridge electorate. Desley served for 14 years as the state member for Woodridge and, prior to her election, she worked for 16 years in the Woodridge electorate office. Very few people in this place could ever boast of 30 years continuous involvement with the one electorate. Desley believed in a fair

go and advocated strongly and passionately for the people of Woodridge—a path I intend to follow. As has often been mentioned to me, Desley Scott's shoes will be very big shoes indeed to fill.

I also want to acknowledge a number of members of the current state parliamentary Labor Party with whom I served in the 53rd Parliament and who fought with passion and genuine commitment to secure re-election to the Queensland parliament following their defeat at the 2012 state election. They represent what is best about the fighting spirit and the tenacity of the Australian Labor Party. Those members include my good friend the Leader of the House, assistant minister and member for Sandgate, Stirling Hinchliffe, who is in the chamber this evening; my cabinet colleague and member for Ashgrove, Kate Jones; the member for Bulimba, Di Farmer; the member for Morayfield, Mark Ryan; and the member for Brisbane Central, Madam Deputy Speaker Grace Grace.

It is rare in politics that one is given a second chance, but that is the gift that has been given to me by the electors of Woodridge and the Australian Labor Party. I am extremely grateful to both the electors of Woodridge and the Australian Labor Party for enabling this to happen. In particular I thank state campaign director and now candidate for election to the Australian Senate, Anthony Chisholm—he will make a fine Australian senator—for his support, along with my friends in the trade union movement, including Ben Swan, Peter Biaginni, Scott Connolly, Chris Gazenbeek, Troy Spence, Charis Mullen, Mark Raguse and Sarah Mawhiney, as well as the Australian Workers' Union, the Transport Workers' Union and the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees' Association for their support.

Each one of us in this House are volunteers in the cause of public service, none of us are conscripts, yet it is so often our own loved ones who have to face the burden associated with what we do. To my mother, Joan, to my brother, Milton, to my sister, Susan, to my brother-in-law, Dermot, and to my extended family, you never lost faith in me.

My late father, Allan, in particular was delighted that I was re-elected at the 2015 state election. I feel so blessed that at the end of his long and worthy life he could see me re-elected to the Queensland parliament. His first words to me after my election were, 'Good on you, Cam. At least you are on steady money now.' So speaks the voice of a boy who grew up in the Great Depression.

The people of Woodridge will be pleased to know that the only question he ever asked me following the election was, 'How is the electorate?' My father knew that, for each of us in this place, unless we have the ongoing support of our communities, we can achieve nothing as members of parliament.

I wish to make special mention of my wife Therese's family. To Rol, Bev, June, Suzanne, Billy, Cathy, Steve, David, Wonita, Dorothea and Brett, you have been incredibly supportive of our family. This day would not have come without your help, for which I express my profound thanks.

To my wife Therese and my sons, Samuel and Jonathan, words cannot express how I feel in my heart about you. Six years ago in this chamber I said of Sam and Jonny that they represent the future that all of us who serve in this place dedicate ourselves to improving. They are, and remain, my greatest achievement and inspiration. To Therese, your belief that I should return to public life in Queensland was unshakable. Words cannot express how I feel about you and all that you have done to make this day come to pass.

In conclusion, I reach back into history as I did in my first speech in this chamber six years ago. This year marks 100 years since TJ Ryan was elected premier of Queensland. Thomas Joseph Ryan led a transformative government, becoming premier just as the First World War started and serving until just after the Great War finished. At a time when society was changing, Ryan, a classics teacher and a barrister before entering parliament, led Queensland through a period of social and economic change which laid the foundation for almost 40 years of unbroken Labor governments in this state.

Ryan's government passed legislation which gave women the right to stand for parliament, while his government also introduced equitable workers' rights. This included creating Queensland's first compulsory workers compensation scheme that was extended to almost every worker in the state. While he challenged the power of big business, he was also supportive of business, particularly farmers and rural businesses. Ryan had a consultative style. He took people with him. Everyone knew where he stood and he was unafraid to take on vested interests.

Ryan set the standard for reforming Labor governments. Progressive Labor administrations in recent times, led by Labor premiers Wayne Goss, Peter Beattie, Anna Bligh and now Annastacia Palaszczuk, have risen to the challenge of matching that legacy. In the century since the 1915 election, Labor has been and remains the transforming, modernising, progressive and reforming force in Queensland politics and public administration. So it should remain for Labor.

The example of Ryan and his government speaks to us to this day. After Ryan's premature death in Barcaldine at the age of 45 years, Charles Bernays, a former clerk of this parliament, described Ryan

as a 'generous, big hearted fighter' and a man 'broad-minded and big, and out of the common'. All of us in this place should aspire to be generous and big hearted fighters who are broad-minded and out of the common.

In reflecting on my journey through public life, the journey that brought me to this moment, I reflect in particular on all of the people whom I have met and who have supported me and helped me in so many ways, big and small, on that journey. During my campaign for Woodridge, I recall meeting three young people whose own life journeys began in Africa and who are now very proud to call Queensland their home. Their names are Justice, Happiness and Prosperity. Those three words—justice, happiness and prosperity—are my hope for all the citizens of Woodridge. My pledge to the people of Woodridge is that I will do my utmost to deliver justice, happiness and prosperity for our community during my period of service in this House.