



Speech By
Daniel Purdie

MEMBER FOR NINDERRY

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MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr PURDIE** (Ninderry—LNP) (3.20 pm): I deliver this speech today under no illusion as to the weight of history that has been created in this chamber across the previous 55 parliaments and 158 years. I will, so long as I am here, respect and uphold this institution and what it represents—both the right of a government duly elected to govern and an opposition to hold them to account. I will be loyal to our party, to our leader, to the Governor of the state and to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

As the inaugural member for the new electorate of Ninderry, I appreciate the enormity of the role and the great privilege that has been bestowed upon me. While there are no former members to acknowledge, the area has been well served by numerous members. Representatives like Fiona Simpson, Glen Elmes and Peter Wellington have left their mark in this House and on our local area.

The electorate truly encompasses the golden beaches and green hinterland that make the Sunshine Coast special—from Eumundi, with its famous markets, to the once sleepy surfing village of Coolumb, to the rapidly expanding Bli Bli and Peregian Springs, each town having its own vibrant charm and appeal while sharing the climate, culture and character of the Sunshine Coast.

In many ways Ninderry is a reflection of everything we hold dear in this great state—our wide open spaces, our beaches, our climate and of course good hardworking people who appreciate that they are fortunate enough to live in an amazing part of our country. It is certainly not difficult to be passionate about representing this electorate.

Like all members who have stood where I stand now, I can look back to the path that led me here. I grew up in Zillmere on Brisbane's north side. My father, Rick, was a cabinet-maker but walked away from his career to follow his passion for music. It was a bold decision to say the least for a father with a young family—a decision that he would not have been able to make without the support of his wife, my mum, Margaret Joan, who gave up her job to stay home and care for my brother and me while Dad worked seven days a week to put food on the table and send us to a good school.

Although we did not have much in the way of material things, we were surrounded by love, loyalty and strong family values. One of the greatest blessings I ever received was loving, selfless parents committed to providing us with the opportunity to have a better life than they had for themselves. My brother, David, and I could not help but profit from that. David went on to be the dux of the school and become an associate professor of epidemiology, while all I ever wanted to be was a policeman.

I do not know what it was that nurtured the vocation of policing, but I have never doubted that youthful career choice. Over more than 20 years I have sought to serve and protect our community, working as a detective in areas like the Drug Squad, the Covert Unit, the Australian Crime Commission and the Homicide Squad. For almost a decade I worked across the Sunshine Coast in the Child Protection and Investigation Unit, where my role was predominantly dealing with children, families and vulnerable people in our community.

I worked with these people not just to investigate child abuse matters but to address surrounding issues like domestic and family violence, ice and other insidious drugs, unemployment, household debt and other social issues that have a direct impact on crime and the lives of all people in our community, particularly the vulnerable. This accumulated experience has exposed me to measures of despair and hope, devastation and rehabilitation, frailty and cowardice, as well as resilience and courage. I have seen both happy and horrible endings. Some of them stay with me.

In North Buderim in my new electorate I saw a mother, bashed to death by her partner in front of their two-year-old girl, her degradation compounded by having her body thrown in the boot of a car that was set alight. In Beerburrum a baby died in putrid squalor from acute neglect. In the Noosa Hinterland I arrested a person for the prolonged torture and murder of a defenceless toddler. I bring all of those experiences with me into this place. I bring them here not because I cannot let go but because it is important that I do not let go. Their stories, those experiences, will drive me to rattle the cage for issues that many see as too hard or too remote.

Infinite circumstances collide to have us all arrive where we are. Some of it is luck, some of it is circumstance and a decent amount of it is personal decision-making and responsibility which, when neglected, can compound and create a downward spiral. My experience assisting and protecting vulnerable Queenslanders is an asset in this place. It is an asset because I have a full appreciation of how the work that is done here can both help and hinder their plight, how politics serves little purpose in their lives and how we must always remember those we are trying to help. We all think that victims should be our priority over criminals. We all think that where children are not being afforded love and protection from their own families they should be protected by the state, but we need to think harder, do better at developing and implementing policies that achieve those undisputed ideals.

As I kissed my family goodbye each morning there was the potential that somewhere something horrible was happening, something horrible that I would attend to later that day. When I came home from attending it, just how good I have it was put into perspective. Sadly, collectively, we are losing that perspective. On the nightly news we see debates over Christmas carols, gender pronouns or people seeking and finding offence, yet there are far greater priorities than these trivialities—trivialities that mean nothing once you have seen the devastated lives that exist right now in our community. For example, fighting over changing the date of Australia Day does nothing for the over 15,000 Indigenous children currently living in out-of-home care in this country.

So I have made the decision to move from catching law-breakers to join the lawmakers, not because of a lifelong dream to be a politician but as a further step in service to my community—to remember what really matters and to devote my time and energy to defending and protecting that. In that endeavour I will surely be educated about the art of politics and legislating, and in return I hope to influence members about the meaningful ways we can improve the lives of Queenslanders who are struggling.

My wife, Andrea, is a schoolteacher and together we have two beautiful young girls—Emelia, who just turned seven, and Chloe, who is five. They are a strong motivating force and are part of the reason why I am standing here today. I want my girls to grow up in a society where they do not live in fear of being a victim of crime. I want them to be able to enjoy our pristine environment, to surf at our stunning beaches. Most importantly, I want to see my girls live the entirety of their lives in our beautiful regions—get a world-class education, gain meaningful employment, pursue a career and to start a family of their own, should they choose to do so.

To achieve that, there are some priorities I will fight for as long as I am here. I joined and ran for the LNP because the upbringing I had and the beliefs that I hold most closely accord with this party. It is the party that is custodian and defenders of the philosophical traditions of liberalism and conservatism. It is the party that has its highest priorities as the security and prosperity of society. I am obviously passionate about the security side of that equation, establishing law and order and ensuring we have safe and livable communities.

It was then prime minister John Howard who championed the notion that a government's highest priority should be the security of its citizens. I am a firm believer that crime should be punished and when governments are perceived as, or actually are, too soft on crime an inch given leads to a mile taken. There are probably thousands of separate crime indicators, but there are some that stand out to me. Unlike popular culture would have us believe, organised crime is not some seedy underbelly with wars confined to areas that ordinary, law-abiding folk do not go. This construction recklessly minimises the impact of organised crime on the whole community. When organised crime increases, the flow-on impacts are devastating. Other crimes become more prevalent and the social impact of drugs rises too.

A good indicator of organised crime activity, unsurprisingly, is the number of drive-by shootings. Drive-by shootings have jumped by almost 20 per cent in Queensland in the last 12 months, an offence in this state that attracts a maximum penalty of four years imprisonment compared to 14 years in other states like New South Wales. I believe, and I will continue to argue, that we must not give criminal organisations an inch as we constantly seek to provide Queenslanders with a safe and secure community.

One of the most devastating links between organised crime and ordinary Queenslanders is the drug ice. Criminals, particularly criminal motorcycle gangs, generate their profits from this and other evil substances, and their customers are often Queenslanders who may have grown up in or been raising loving, law-abiding families. In my duties as a detective I have taken kids out of the harm, filth and neglect of a house where the parents are addicted to ice. Through no fault of their own, that child has been given an almost insurmountable handicap in life. I have also comforted parents who have lost a child to ice—parents who nurtured their children like any other family and who had them ripped away by this evil drug. As families are torn apart by ice, the community begins to tear apart, and regional communities are bearing the brunt of this epidemic. We have to do more. We have to do better.

We are, however, not just the party of security; we are also the party of prosperity. There are over 4½ thousand small businesses in Ninderry, the large majority of which are family owned and operated. I talked of my mum and dad before, their selflessness and the values they instilled in me. Queensland is largely made up of stories like these. It is made up of tens of thousands of small businesses working hard, making sacrifices to improve their lot, to employ people and to give back to the community. We need to do more for them.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. If we can support small business, sometimes just by getting out of the way, they will do the heavy lifting by driving employment and economic growth. On coming into this place I was given the role of shadow assistant minister for Treasury, and it is my intention, along with my LNP team, to do what we can to ensure that this government is fostering the economic conditions in which small business can thrive. This means dealing with debt. This means building vital infrastructure. This means responsibly reducing fees, levies and charges. This means slashing red tape and refining legislation. This means making responsible decisions in the interests of the long-term economic conditions of the state, not populist decisions in the short-term interests of the government.

Of this list of economic imperatives, infrastructure is an absolute priority for the Sunshine Coast. The Sunshine Coast has outgrown its infrastructure and did so a long time ago. From the major arterial clot en route to Brisbane to local logjams like the Coolum roundabout, residents rightly demand better. We need to look at the economic benefit of particular projects and spend our infrastructure dollars wisely. Instead of multibillion dollar projects for the inner city, let us lift our eyes to growing regions and the economic benefit that can be unlocked by prudent, timely investment.

For the Sunshine Coast the wish list is long and well rehearsed: upgrading the Bruce Highway for those who drive to Brisbane while encouraging people not to drive by increasing capacity on the Sunshine Coast rail line. We must also leverage the Sunshine Coast Airport expansion and improve intracity connectivity so business, visitors and locals can move around safely and with ease. I am sure all members could make a case for better infrastructure and the available dollars are not infinite. I do believe the case for Sunshine Coast members is very strong and deserves closer attention and action.

The opportunity to use this platform as best I can to improve our community is one I cherish and will not waste. This opportunity would not be possible without a long list of people who deserve my thanks placed on the record. I would like to acknowledge our LNP senior leadership team and my colleagues. In my view, we have the right team to write the next chapter for the LNP, to hold this government to account and to provide Queenslanders with a better alternative in 2020.

There is also a long list of people back home whom I need to thank, too many to mention all by name, and I acknowledge a number of them have travelled down and are here this afternoon in the gallery. I was overwhelmed by the support I received from the hardworking local LNP members, from friends, family, police colleagues and the wider community. I particularly thank my campaign team—my campaign chairman and former member for Mansfield Frank Carroll and my campaign manager, Michael Negrevich—my good friend, former work colleague and trusted lieutenant Anthony Green, along with Tony Philbrick, Denis Moore, Jenny Somalyay, Fran Matlock, Lance Barrett and Karin Mogg. I would like to thank our party's inaugural president, Bruce McIver, for his friendship, support and counsel.

There is one person who planted the seed of this possibly long before I appreciated it—someone who encouraged me to back myself; a lifelong friend who first sparked my interest in politics as I watched him make a successful transition from policing to parliament; someone whom I respected and admired when we worked together as junior police officers; and someone I respect and admire now in his role as federal Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon. Peter Dutton. I have absolutely no doubt that I would not be standing here today if not for his belief, encouragement and loyal friendship.

As I said earlier, my mum devoted her life and made many personal sacrifices so my brother and I did not go without. She dedicated her entire being to loving and supporting her family. She has always been very proud of me until the day I told her I wanted to become a politician. She initially threatened to disown me but, like she always has in the past, got fully behind me once she realised I was passionate about my decision and that I was doing it for the right reasons. Now I am sure she is proud of me looking down from the gallery today, and I am sure dad is too, although he is looking down from higher up.

Just like my mum backed my dad when he walked away from his career to pursue his dream, Andrea has backed me to pursue this higher calling for service, and I love her and my two girls more deeply than words can explain. Of all the people who have got me here and of all the people who will sustain me on the journey, these three girls are the most important.

In closing, I believe that the words that are said here matter. The deeds that are done here matter. All of us must never forget that. Though the hours may be long and the work sometimes thankless, few get the opportunity to improve our community like we do. I believe that, when you are elected, you represent all those who could have voted for you, not just those who did. That is what I will do to the best of my ability, so help me God.