



Speech by

## Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Wednesday, 22 April 2009

---

### MAIDEN SPEECH

**Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (3.25 pm): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Firstly, I thank the people of Glass House. It is an amazing privilege to represent such a diverse group of communities and so many wonderful individuals. I humbly accept the trust that was placed in me on election day just over a month ago. From the outset, I must also thank my family. To my wife, Taryn, not only are you the love of my life and the mother of our four beautiful children but you are my inspiration and support in so many ways. Now you are also my 'level'—ensuring the grandeur of this House and the responsibilities of this office do not go to my head.

Taryn, I know you take very seriously your role as a volunteer counsellor with the Australian Breastfeeding Association, and I stand by my commitment to you and to the association to make my electorate office an accredited 'breastfeeding friendly workplace'. To Daniel, Erin, Brielle and Benjamin, thanks for loving dad even though he has had to spend a lot of time at 'meetings'. Daniel, happy birthday, mate. I know it is a little bit early but I know turning eight next Tuesday is going to be very exciting. Perhaps we can take a cake to share with your soccer team-mates at training. Thanks for being mum's 'big helper' while dad's away. I love you heaps, buddy.

Erin, I know dad got pretty busy during the election campaign—so much so that you had to resort to hugging my corflutes in the neighbour's yard. Something tells me, what with all the political questions you ask, that you might just be gunning for my job if I am fortunate enough to still be serving in this role when you reach adulthood in a dozen or so years. Brielle, my little princess, dad will be home for tickles and wrestles soon. In the meantime, I will blow you a kiss each morning and evening. Be sure to catch them, sweetheart. Ben, mate, you are too young to comprehend what is going on but know, my little boy, I love you and that beautiful smile of yours.

If you have not worked out already, I am pretty sold on my family. In fact, I am a big fan of the whole concept of family. I come from a very large and loving family, and I was able to share the opening of parliament yesterday with my mother and father. I do not know who was more excited—me or my mum. My wife also comes from a large and incredibly close-knit family, and I have a wonderful relationship with my father-in-law and mother-in-law. Both Taryn and I have had brilliant role models to learn from and have the continual support and encouragement of our extended families.

But my recent career in the Department of Child Safety has shown me that, whilst that love, support, fun and adventure might be the norm for most, it is only a dream for some. Too many of Queensland's children and young people continue to grow up in fear of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or grow up neglected. But I do not point the finger at the families, at the mums and dads that perpetrate the abuse and neglect. I point the finger at myself and at the rest of us in broader society who know this is occurring and do nothing to offer assistance and support to these families when they need it most.

My mother and grandmother share stories from their generations. I will not be so naive to believe for one minute that abuse and neglect did not occur or was not covered up in those generations, but there was a sense of community that meant when a family in your street, in your neighbourhood, was in trouble you pitched in and helped. I lament that my generation and others have become fixated with self and have lost this sense of community. I am concerned that our reliance on technology and cars has taken us away from

our local community so that we no longer know who our neighbours are. I do not have any miracle solutions but I do know it starts with the family—with my family and with your family. For that reason, I will always look for ways to strengthen and support the family unit in Queensland.

On a lighter note, my parliamentary colleagues will quickly realise I love my sport. As I have already mentioned, I will try to continue coaching my son's soccer team—the Palmwoods under-8 Crusaders. I particularly love team sports, so it should come as no surprise that my recent victory in Glass House was the end result of a concerted team effort. I sincerely thank my team.

In the halves were the dynamic duo of Greg and Joyce Newton. Their combined strategic nous, determination, leadership and commitment to the cause can only be compared to Lewis and Langer. In the centres were Winston Johnston and Margaret Moss, the power and ball-running visionaries of the team. You will never meet a more honourable and true individual than Winston Johnston. Winston came second at our preselection but was the first to sign on to my campaign team. That kind of commitment in the face of individual disappointment is unbelievable. Margaret was our astute and tireless Treasurer. Margaret, I owe you a huge debt of gratitude. The back line was completed by our young speed merchants in Hadrian Davenport, Alaina Megson and Brett Stone—men and women like these are the future of our fine party.

When it comes to forwards, I know many of my LNP colleagues wish they had the strength and experience of my pack—players like John Power and John Waldron from the Woodford-Wamuran branch; Byron Moss and Sherry Wright from Maleny; Geoff Littler and Bryan Kemp from Palmwoods; Gerry Clarke from Beerwah; and a group of wonderful and faithful women I have come to affectionately refer to as 'Andrew's Angels', Annette Brodie, Mavis Robb, Marlene Lewis, Coral McClintock, Ethel Burgess, Florence Woods and Olive Hockings.

Of course no team is complete without experienced advisers and coaching staff, and our team had some of the best. There was the Hon. Peter Slipper MP, the federal member for Fisher—Peter, thank you for your wisdom and time—and the Hon. Alex Somlyay MP, the federal member, my federal member, for Fairfax. I also acknowledge and thank Ms Fiona Simpson, the member for Maroochydore, for her mentoring. Fiona, you have taught me a lot and given me a lot of your time, for which I am extraordinarily grateful.

As well as being a lover of sport, I am a student of geography, having studied it for four years at the University of Queensland. I therefore consider it a double honour to be representing one of South-East Queensland's most geographically, agriculturally and environmentally diverse electorates. Chances are that many of you in this esteemed chamber and many throughout Queensland have experienced Glass House perhaps without even realising it. If you have sampled a strawberry grown in Wamuran or Chevallum, a pineapple from Glass House Mountains or macadamia nuts from Peachester, you have sampled Glass House, with the electorate being one of the state's largest producers of each.

Agriculturally, the electorate is also home to dairy, poultry, beef, buffalo and alpaca farms. It is home to fruit orchards, and it is also home to one of South-East Queensland's largest exotic pine and hardwood plantations. If you have roped a steer at the Conondale Rodeo, danced and sung along at the Woodford Folk Festival or been privileged to share in the rich, Indigenous heritage of the Bunya Dreaming Festival, then you have experienced Glass House. If you have driven the Blackall Range stopping for a coffee in Montville or hiked into the Kondalilla Falls, you have experienced Glass House. If you have stood on Mount Tibrogargan and watched the sun rise in the east, not only have you witnessed one of our nation's most extraordinary views you have also experienced Glass House.

To the people of Glass House, know that I am committed to protecting the natural beauty and the rich agricultural productivity of our stunning part of the world. As the Mary River has its headwaters in the electorate of Glass House, I cannot be clear enough that this includes standing alongside my colleague the member for Gympie in continuing the fight to stop the travesty that is Traveston Crossing Dam.

Many families, including mine, have sampled Glass House and have decided they want to call it home. Like much of South-East Queensland, the population in Glass House is booming. New estates are opening at regular intervals in Wamuran, D'Aguilar, Woodford, Glass House Mountains and Palmwoods. The problems arise when population growth is not being matched by the delivery of key infrastructure. It is clear that this government can write wonderful glossy publications and speeches on what it plans to do. I should know; I have written a few in my time in the Queensland Public Service. My concerns are derived from the fact that this government appears to have trouble delivering on its plans and promises and that has been enough to drive a frustrated career public servant to stand for public office.

If by luck, more so than careful project management, the infrastructure is delivered, it is regularly delivered late and over budget. Poor project management has contributed to the fact that we here in Queensland were well on the way to \$74 billion in public debt long before anyone had ever heard of the phrase 'global financial crisis'. This is what \$74 billion in debt looks like: it is the equivalent of \$6.6 million in interest every day, rising to \$11.2 million per day in 2011, and that does not even touch the principal. That is debt that my generation and those younger than me will be paying off. For how long, who knows.

Now, do not get me wrong. I am happy to pay interest on debt; I am even more happy to pay off interest and principal combined. I am happy to do so when I can see where the money has been spent. I am doing that just now with my own mortgage, but I can see the roof over my head every night. In the case of this \$74 billion in debt, I struggle to see what value the spending has created.

In Glass House, the D'Aguilar Highway is still considered to be one of the state's most dangerous highways. In April last year, the RACQ rated the stretch between Caboolture and Woodford in the top nine killer highways. Yes, there may be commitments to repave sections of the highway, but to truly address safety concerns could cost \$40 million. But where then would we find the interest payments for six days? Unfortunately, it is not the only road in Glass House with significant safety issues. The Maleny-Kenilworth Road between Conondale and Kenilworth is an accident waiting to happen, an accident that could be averted for less than two days of interest payments. I fear that it will take the catastrophic news of a school bus rollover for this government to deliver the much needed widening of this vital link in the upper reaches of the Mary River Valley.

Moving away from roads, Glass House locals have shared their concerns about the on-again, off-again northern rail corridor duplication—another project shelved for the sake of making interest payments, I suspect. Most of the house and landholders in the corridor genuinely accept the need for this improvement in rail services and that their properties will need to be resumed. All they ask in return is for a bit of decent and regular communication, fair compensation and a smattering of good old respect.

Our schools are in desperate need of maintenance. The \$45 million allocated each year is simply not enough to meet the needs of ageing infrastructure. Many Glass House schools, as a result of the population growth, not only need maintenance but they need new and expanded buildings. Many dedicated principals and P&C volunteers in Glass House wait with bated breath to hear whether their schools will be successful under round 2 of the State Schools of Tomorrow program. I suspect though that improving our schools is always going to have to wait when we are busy making interest payments. I will be part of a team that holds the government to account for this debt binge and for its poor spending priorities.

I have mentioned I love my sport and that I am a student of geography. I am also a student of history and politics, and Glass House has had its fair share of both. I had the great pleasure of inviting Mrs Joan Adermann to the opening of parliament yesterday. Joan's late husband, Evan, and her father-in-law, Charles, represented the people of Glass House at the federal level for a combined total of some 41 years as the members for Fisher and Fairfax.

Of similar historic note is that the town I now call home, Palmwoods, was also home to Sir Francis Nicklin, this state's Premier from 1957 to 1968. Following his service during the First World War with the Australian Imperial Force, Nicklin purchased a 20-acre pineapple farm at Palmwoods as part of a soldier settlement.

Nicklin is renowned for many things, including the fact that he lost five elections as opposition leader before eventually becoming Premier in 1957. But once in leadership Nicklin came to be synonymous with what the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* describes as 'trustworthiness and honesty'. It goes on to describe that at various stages he demonstrated resilience, conciliation, assertiveness and sternness—all qualities I see as beneficial in representing Glass House. Perhaps it is no surprise that he is credited with presiding over the most tranquil 10 years of Queensland politics in the 20th century. Clearly, like the honourable member for Mulgrave, I, too, have very large shoes to fill.

When you consider esteemed forebears such as Sir Francis, and as you look around this magnificent chamber, you cannot help but be inspired to greatness. Yesterday I swore an oath on the Bible. In it Jesus says—

Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. That is what the son of man has done. He came to serve, not be served.

Let me give you just one example of what this kind of greatness looks like in reality. I am a huge supporter of the school chaplaincy program. These individuals do so much for so little. Talk to any principal, teacher or student and they will tell you just how indispensable their chaplain is, and yet even with some government funding and the hard work of local fundraising committees our local chaplains take home very little in their pay packets. So why do they do it? Because they understand what it is to serve and that serving often requires sacrifice. They sit alongside the kids of their school, providing a listening ear and a shoulder to cry on when times get tough, or a word of encouragement when times are good. We members of parliament can learn from these great individuals.

Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. As a Christian, those words become my creed. They become my direction for how I perform my duties as the member for Glass House. Ultimately that is my goal: to serve. After the faith shown in me, it is the least I can do for the people of Glass House.