



Speech by

Ian Walker

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Hansard Wednesday, 30 May 2012

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr WALKER** (Mansfield—LNP) (8.32 pm): I congratulate and thank my good friend and colleague the member for Greenslopes, who preceded me, on a wonderful speech. I thank Her Excellency the Governor for her speech and I welcome this opportunity to respond. I pledge my allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and I am particularly pleased to do so in this, her jubilee year. I thank the electors of Mansfield for the great honour they have paid me by electing me as their representative in this place. I pay tribute to my predecessor, Mr Phil Reeves, who served the people of Mansfield for some 13 years. While speaking of former members, I also pay tribute to his immediate predecessor, Mr Frank Carroll, who last represented Mansfield from the non-Labor side of politics from 1995 to 1998 and who was an active supporter during my campaign.

As you come out of the city along Logan Road you get to where, in my youth, the tram used to stop. Now called Mount Gravatt Central, it marks the entry into the electorate of Mansfield. You can continue down Logan Road, past the showgrounds and through to the Garden City intersection. If you turn left you can complete your journey through the electorate along Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road and then along Mount Cotton Road to just beyond the border of Brisbane city into the suburb of Sheldon and Redland City. My forebears held political office in what is now that great city and I am pleased to be continuing that tradition. My maternal great-grandfather, William Davidson Ross, was four times chairman of the Cleveland Divisional Board, the predecessor to our local councils, concluding his term on his death in July 1895. He was a colourful figure who had been to the gold rushes in Gympie and made his fortune there. He had a significant hand in getting the railway extended to Cleveland in 1889—all the way to Cleveland Point in fact. He purchased the former police lockup there and converted it to his residence. Many in this house would know it today as the Courthouse Restaurant. My grandmother Winifred Ross was his last child, born when he was 72 years old. He was the can-do man of his time in more ways than one!

Another maternal great-great grandfather, Hans Heinrich Heinemann, was an early prominent settler at Mount Cotton in the mid-1800s. His family had immigrated to Queensland from Schleswig-Holstein with many other German families. They grew sugar at Mount Cotton, supplying the Palms chutney factory in East Brisbane. His son Henry Heinemann was a member of the Tingalpa Divisional Board and had much to do with the creation of Mount Cotton Road, which, as I said, now runs through the electorate of Mansfield. The next few generations of my family were not particularly politically involved and, if anything, I suspect had a political sympathy towards the Labor side. I remember my parents saying to me, however, in the early 1970s that the Labor politicians of today are not what they used to be.

My father, Jack, was born in Ashgrove and had his first job at the T&G Insurance company. There he met my mother, Val. They were to have a very happy marriage until my mother's untimely death at age 50. My dad played the saxophone in dance bands around Brisbane at venues including the famous Cloudland. When he and mum moved to Sydney in 1954, he joined a dance band with a pianist by the name of Kevin Jacobsen and a drummer by the name of Johnny Bogie. Kevin's brother Colin often came along and strummed guitar with the band. Colin Jacobsen was to become Col Joye, but my dad returned to Brisbane before he could officially become a 'Joy Boy'.

Dad worked in the insurance industry in Brisbane with National Mutual and mum fulfilled the classically underrated role of domestic duties in the sixties and seventies, devoting herself to the welfare of my two sisters, who are in the gallery tonight, and me. My parents were both instrumental in instilling in me values of personal effort and reward combined with community service through P&Cs, service clubs and church. They gave me a great start in life—seeing my education through Camp Hill State School; dad's alma mater Churchie, with which I have had a strong and continuing relationship over the years; and the University of Queensland, with the aid of a Commonwealth scholarship.

It was at the University of Queensland that I started studying politics. The first subject I encountered was modern political ideologies, the first instalment taking us from Plato to Machiavelli and the second instalment to the present day. The liberalism of John Stuart Mill immediately appealed to me and remains my starting point in any political debate. In my final decision about a political life, however, I was commendably thorough about it. I asked our local ALP councillor, Alderman Joe Bradfield, and our local Liberal state member for Chatsworth, Bill Hewitt, each to call at our house with their respective party platforms. Joe called around with a little grey book on Labor Party platform and principles and Bill had a slimmer booklet with a beautiful light-blue cover containing the Liberal state platform. Bill won the day and I joined the Young Liberals.

I subsequently became president of the Young Liberals in 1979. There I met my wife, Heather Appleton, who had been the movement's branch development officer. We married in 1979 and are coming up to our 33rd wedding anniversary. Heather has been instrumental in raising our two children but, in doing so, has carved out significant achievements of her own, particularly in the area of tutoring Aboriginal children, lengthy service as chair of a refugee resettlement group and now has a significant role chairing one of Brisbane's larger Anglican schools. Our children cannot escape the political blood line. Both are members of the Young LNP and indeed both work in political offices, although at another level of government. I think as was said in this House yesterday, the apple does not fall far from the tree. I thank my family for their strong support of my campaign. I have continued to play a role in the organisational side of my party. In 1983 I was a member of the state executive of the Liberal Party when tension between the coalition members reached breaking point. Although always supporting the view that a cooperative coalition was the best form of government for Queensland, when the tough times came I was a strong supporter of the Liberal cause.

As the years passed, however, and as government in this state eluded my side of politics for all but fleeting periods, it became quite apparent that a single party was needed. I had experienced very positive times as a member of the coalition policy committee during the Borbidge-Sheldon years and came to believe that the two parties could really work together well as one. I was a strong supporter then when the Minister for Health and former leaders Borbidge and Sheldon began promoting the idea of the Liberal National Party. This caused tension with some of my Liberal colleagues and long-time friends, but I think it is hard now to find anybody who disagrees with the success story that is the LNP. We have seen impressive results at federal, state and local levels over just four years. I commend our party president, Bruce McIver, and vice-president, Gary Spence, for their determined, clear-headed and forthright leadership of the organisation.

In the recent state campaign, director James McGrath ran a campaign the quality of which I have not seen matched in my 35 years within the political organisation. The Premier himself was also, of course, an essential ingredient in that success. I have had the privilege of knowing and supporting him since he first ran for office in Brisbane City. His vision and his determination impressed me from day one. Those qualities could not better be displayed than through his courageous decision to leave his role as Lord Mayor of Brisbane, where he was riding high, and to spend 12 months around this place carrying a visitor's pass and working tirelessly in a risky quest to become Premier. He prevailed, and his story will deservedly become one of Queensland's political heroic legends.

In mid-2010 I decided that I wanted to represent our party in the state parliament. The triggering signals for me were frequent independent reviews of the Queensland government's economic position showing it lagging in the field of the Australian states time after time. My early political experience had been in times when if our state's finances fell to second or third in the country that would be cause for concern, and here we were trailing the field with our AAA rating lost. Some would see this economic analysis as a long way from grassroots politics, but I soon found in my discussions with the residents of Mansfield at shopping centres, at school fetes and on doorsteps that this was of overarching concern to them as well.

Mansfield boasts a broad centre of solid Australians who work hard to progress their lives and rely on government to assist only when they really do need help. We have a large number of local businesses centred in Mansfield. I knew from talking to them that every time the Queensland economy took a hit they also suffered. I am an unashamed advocate for entrepreneurship. I believe that our society can function best when those who are prepared to take a risk, to borrow money, to have family help in their business

and to provide jobs for those around them are given the opportunity to do just that. They are the sort of people who will provide the wealth that our community needs, and that wealth can in turn provide a source of assistance to those who need a hand up from time to time. It will be the hardworking people in our community who I want to see succeed, because when they succeed everyone in the community succeeds.

This focus on getting the economy back on track resonated in the contract I entered into with the people of Mansfield before the election. I promised to support a government that would grow a four-pillar economy based on tourism, agriculture, resources and construction that would lower the cost of living for families by cutting waste, that would deliver better infrastructure and planning, that would revitalise front-line services for families and that would restore accountability in government. Having been elected as the member for Mansfield I remain more committed than ever to this pledge to my constituents, and I feel heartened with the steps that the government has already taken in these crucial areas.

While this is the big picture for the people of Mansfield, there are a number of local issues of great importance to me and to my community. The Mount Gravatt Showgrounds stand on Logan Road as proud evidence that this suburban community hosts an annual show—not only for the benefit of our own residents but also for many others on the south side of Brisbane. The show pulls record crowds and, being held close to RNA show time, it can provide a lower cost alternative for those who find the cost of the Ekka a bit steep. Mansfield residents will know that the site has been the scene of many battles, the first led by the legendary Arthur Scurr when the Brisbane City Council proposed to sell the site in the 1970s. The resulting legal case went all the way to the Privy Council, the last case from Australia to be heard by that judicial body. Arthur Scurr and the community won. The trust requiring the land to be held for show purposes was enshrined in state legislation. But, as with all legislation, 'enshrined' is never guaranteed as permanent. The latest battle was waged by many local residents when the management of the showgrounds became a political issue just last year. Options were under consideration by the previous government that could have taken away the community input into the appointment of the ground's trustees. Our showgrounds is a continually-buzzing centre of activity through the year—not only at show time—and I will be a determined advocate of it remaining in community control and free from political interference.

Local traffic issues are of concern to Mansfield residents. It is interesting to see that my predecessor's maiden speech in 1998 referred to the need to fix up the traffic problems experienced on Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road. What is new? Many of the problems associated with that road remain unresolved. I am even more aware of them now that my office is only metres away from the thundering trucks that roar past every day. The upgrade of the Kessels and Main roads intersection, while a great step forward, will put more pressure on Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road and its intersection with Logan Road at Garden City. I have committed to fight for an upgrade of this intersection. It is a major undertaking and an enormously expensive one, but we must start planning for that upgrade.

Mount Cotton Road continues to carry heavy traffic loads and has not been, as promised by my predecessor, duplicated from Mount Gravatt-Capalaba Road through to Tingalpa Creek. Further road infrastructure pressures are likely to arise as parts of Rochedale are developed for residential use. The former government has left us in a dire financial situation and it will simply not be possible to deal with all of these pressing issues in the short term, but I will continually represent to the government as to the priority needed for these projects to the best of my ability.

The degree to which community involvement at a voluntary level enhances the life of the residents of Mansfield is immense. In addition to the P&Cs, Meals on Wheels, Neighbourhood Watch and sporting groups—go the Vultures—are groups like the Mount Gravatt Environment Group, which does a magnificent job looking after Mount Gravatt and its environs; the Mount District Community Centre, which provides programs of great social benefit to the residents of Mansfield and beyond; and the Mount Gravatt Men's Shed, which sets an extraordinary standard in reaching out to the men of our district. There are many others besides. I know from my five years as trustee of the Lord Mayor's Community Trust that our Premier appreciates that a dollar given to a well-managed community group goes many times further than that dollar spent by the government itself. I trust that, even though tough budgetary times are no doubt upon us, I can advocate strongly for continued support for these groups. They provide wonderful assistance and enrichment to our community which we often take for granted. Our Caring for our Community grants program will be a great start in this policy area.

I have been honoured to be appointed Assistant Minister for Planning Reform. Although I have no illusions that any career outside politics can prepare one for a career within it, I have had the opportunity to gain some experience in my chosen profession within the property and planning areas. As a former lawyer, I know that the government's good intentions in legislating do not always help. In my former life my spirits always rose when I heard the phrase, 'We are going to simplify the legislation.' This invariably meant that the legislation became more complex and the need for people to consult their lawyers only increased. This

government has a commitment to streamlining the planning system and cutting red tape. I know that those words are easily said yet much more difficult to implement, but we will do what we say.

Our financial position as a state does not allow for much room in the way of handouts or grants. What we can do, however, is remove as many of the unnecessary roadblocks to development of our state as possible to ensure that the economy is freed to tick over much more quickly. In doing so, of course, we will never abandon the need to have first-class community and environmental outcomes.

I wish to thank the team of great supporters who were crucial to my party's success in Mansfield on 24 March. I take as the embodiment of a great team, many of whom are in the gallery tonight, my campaign director Malcolm Cole. He and they never tired for nearly 18 months in taking our cause forward. The LNP branches in Mansfield and Upper Cavendish Road were a continuing source of physical and moral support and I will never forget it. Local councillor Krista Adams was always there to help. Her knowledge of the Wishart ward, which coincides with a large part of the Mansfield electorate, is second to none and her advice to me on issues and personalities was of huge assistance. She was rightfully rewarded with a wonderful increase in her vote at the recent Brisbane City Council elections. I also pay tribute to my former partners and staff members at Norton Rose Australia for their willingness to allow me to move to a part-time role in the last year of my time with the firm, allowing me more time to campaign.

Perhaps to an extent that is without precedent in our political history, this parliament has new members who bring a rich diversity of work and life experience. I believe that that will not only enhance the capacity of the Newman government to deliver on our clear and bold policy commitments but also enable us to be a government and a parliament that more genuinely and accurately reflects the rich diversity of our state itself. We who have been elected here for the first time as a part of the first ever LNP government—and there is a great camaraderie amongst us—understand the enormity of the challenge and the responsibility that the people of Queensland have given us. We understand that this also encompasses tremendous trust. In whatever capacity I serve, and especially as the member for Mansfield, I will never neglect, forget or abuse the trust the people have placed in me as a local member and in the government in which I am privileged to serve. I say with all the confidence I can command that we will not let down the people who voted for us, and many of those did that for the first time in their lives.

As I conclude my first speech in this parliament, I want to put in the most simple terms what I see as summarising and encapsulating the goal of the government, a goal I wholeheartedly embrace—that is, a return to good government for the people of Queensland. Simple but refreshingly achievable. I thank the House.