



Speech by

**Hon. John Mickel**

**MEMBER FOR LOGAN**

Hansard Tuesday, 21 April 2009

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## **ELECTION OF SPEAKER**

**Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I thank the House for the honour it has extended to me by electing me as the Speaker of the 53rd Parliament of the state of Queensland. I also want to thank the Premier and the Deputy Premier for the generous remarks they have made.

In assuming the office of Speaker, I am conscious of the fact that I have a duty to the House and to the people of Queensland to discharge the duties I am now assuming with fairness and with impartiality. I also want to thank the outgoing Speaker, Mike Reynolds, for his courtesy, his inclusiveness and his determination to improve the work/life balance for members. The period between when I was stood aside as a minister and my election to this House today has given me the opportunity to reflect on how I can define this role. Undeniably, I was elected to the House as a member of the Australian Labor Party. In that time I have asked for no quarter and most certainly have given none in participating in the robust debates that take place here. For myself that must change from today onwards, and it will.

**Honourable members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr SPEAKER:** The House—or sections of it—will be greatly relieved to know that this may well be my last speech during the parliament, so I intend to make the most of it!

I note that the member for Callide has been appointed Leader of Opposition Business. Over the last 11 years he and I have engaged in vigorous exchanges across the chamber more than most. What has impressed me about the honourable member is that he has never complained and he always gave as good as he got. Whilst I look forward to now actually working cooperatively with him and of course the Leader of the House for the good management of the business of the House, I think new members can learn from his example that robust debate does not have to descend into personal enmity.

Honourable members, humour has its place in this chamber. I can recall my good friend the Deputy Leader of the Opposition speaking in a health debate. In describing a series of meetings he had had with the medical fraternity he declared to the House, 'I've been to four doctors in a week.' The honourable member for Southport, now the Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading, interjected, 'Four doctors? In a week? Jeez, you must have been sick!' Then there was the condolence motion in which the former Rockhampton mayor was being spoken about by the member for Rockhampton, describing how the late mayor had travelled around in a boat door to door during a flood enjoining people to evacuate their houses. He happened upon one old anxious dear who questioned him and said, 'But, Alderman Pilbeam, I can't come out. I'm under the doctor,' and 'Pilly' said, 'Well, you better bring him with you. We don't want to lose anyone.' What I am saying, honourable members, is that the parliament is vibrant and richer for those interchanges and many more like them.

My hope for the 19 new members who have joined us is this: as you find your feet you find also a voice for yourselves on behalf of the people you represent. I ask that all members of parliament extend the courtesies of the House to the newly elected members for their maiden speech, which of course is a defining moment for all members—both the new and the seasoned.

In the public gallery today I am joined, as I always have been, by my wife and my family and by my friends of longstanding, but I have also asked special people to join with us today to share this occasion with us. I have asked Auntie Valda Coolwell, acknowledging that Aboriginal people are the traditional owners who cared for this land for thousands of years before European settlement. I have asked Mr Daniel 'Zingi'—as I know him—the Executive Director in Logan of ACCES Services Inc. I have asked Daniel because he represents the wonderful opportunity that Queensland provides to refugees and to migrants to build new lives based on freedom, tolerance and opportunity. I have also asked Mr Doug Formby, the President of the Queensland RSL, representing Queenslanders who paid the supreme sacrifice to protect the liberty we enjoy and those who served and continue to serve in our defence forces. Above all, I want those who have come to our nation seeking freedom, and those of us fortunate to be raised in Australia, to know that this House is not just a symbol of our freedom but also a place that belongs to everyone. I know the House will join me in extending to our special guests a very warm welcome.

Later this year we will celebrate 150 years of statehood and next year will mark the 150th anniversary of the election of the first parliament. Because of these significant historical events, I have invited three distinguished former members to witness the start of this the 53rd Parliament. I have asked Mr Pat Hanlon and his wife. Mr Hanlon is the son of a former Premier of Queensland, the Hon. Edward 'Ned' Michael Hanlon, who served as Labor member for Ithaca and subsequently for Barooka from 1956 until his retirement in 1974. For much of his service Pat Hanlon was opposition Treasury spokesman. I have asked Mr David Cory, who served as the Country Party and then National Party member for Warwick from 1963 until his retirement in 1977 and who also served as chair of a number of parliamentary committees during that period. I have also asked Mr Bill Hewitt, who served as the Liberal Party member for Chatsworth and subsequently for Greenslopes from 1966 until 1983 and who also held the position of Deputy Speaker and served as a minister.

These three gentlemen—Mr Hanlon, Mr Cory and Mr Hewitt—with whom I had the pleasure of reminiscing about their old times here earlier, are three different members, from three different political parties, with three different career paths, and with three different experiences. But all are united by a common commitment to improving the parliament and its role in our democracy. I am sure all honourable members will join with me—and I hope with them—in welcoming our special guests here today.

Now, as in the past, there are and will be differences that motivate us and divide us. While the tensions and anxieties that challenge Queensland will resound in this House, it is imperative that parliament, as the focus for freedom of speech, expresses the hopes and aspirations of all Queenslanders. In tough and uncertain economic times we all need to work together to uphold the standing not only of parliament but also of our democratic fabric.

In tough times some people question the relevance and effectiveness of our democratic system and the institutions that deliver democratic, representative government. Our collective task—and it does not matter whether members sit to my right or my left—is to ensure that our parliamentary system and representative government helps maintain community confidence and trust. I hope all honourable members share this commitment by the way we behave here and by the way we contribute constructively, even if critically, to the proceedings of the House during the 53rd Parliament of Queensland.

We must all remember that this is not only a parliament for 89 elected members; it is also the workplace for the staff who loyally serve the parliament and members. Just as I want to see a harmonious working relationship between members, I also want this to be a harmonious environment for staff—an environment that maintains respect for staff at all times.

Honourable members, I embark upon the duties and challenges associated with this position mindful of the rich history of the office of Speaker and of this parliament itself over the past 149 years. I do so in a spirit of goodwill to all honourable members and to all who hold office on either side of the chamber.