




Speech by

John Hathaway

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Hansard Wednesday, 30 May 2012

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr HATHAWAY** (Townsville—LNP) (4.29 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, I offer you my personal and hearty congratulations on your appointment to that position and ask if you would you be kind enough to relay the same to Madam Speaker. At the outset of my first speech, I acknowledge how I welcomed the Governor's message to us as members of this parliament and for me as part of the new government. I am humbled and honoured to be able to provide my reply in response. Her Excellency clearly outlined her expectations of her government. They are many and they are important to getting Queensland back on track. Clearly, the Governor and the people of Queensland have great expectations for this government. While there are challenges, I recognise that those will be overcome with the very strong leadership of our Premier and his executive. For my part, I willingly commit myself to this team and accept this challenge for the people of Townsville and North Queensland.

I was also very humbled and honoured to be able to take my oath in front of you all. It was a little over three decades ago that, as a younger and slimmer 17-year-old, I made a very similar oath to my sovereign and nation and since that time I have guided my life and work in accordance with that original commitment. It was with pleasure that I was able to re-state my oath in this chamber to our sovereign and our nation, and, on this occasion, to the great state of Queensland and the people of Townsville. Rather than reflect on my own 30 years of service with the Army, I acknowledge those amongst us for their service to their nation: the Royal Australian Navy—the member for Ferny Grove; the Australian Army—our Premier and member for Ashgrove, the Minister for Housing and Public Works and member for Moggill, the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and member for Aspley, the member for Warrego, the member for Gympie and the member for Rockhampton; the Royal Australian Air Force—the member for Kallangur; the United States Marine Corps—the member for Logan. If I have missed anybody I sincerely apologise. However, let it serve as a reminder to update your bio details on the parliamentary website.

At this point I would like to introduce to the chamber a reflection from an old soldier. Some in this chamber would have heard of him and many of us from the north would know him. Brigadier 'Warrie' George Mansford AM is a soldier's soldier, author and resident of North Queensland. He enlisted in the Australian Army in 1951 and served for 40 years as an infantryman. His service included Korea, Malaya, Vietnam, New Guinea and Singapore. He was commissioned from the ranks in the year that I was born, 1964. He raised and commanded the Army's battle school and jungle training centre at Tully, the 11th Brigade based in Townsville and the reconnaissance and surveillance force in Far North Queensland. To this day a sign hangs outside the entrance to the Land Warfare Centre in Tully that carries a quote from Brigadier George. It states—

The oath to serve your country as a soldier did not include a contract for the normal luxuries and comfort enjoyed within our society. On the contrary it implied hardship, loyalty and devotion to duty regardless of rank. This place is here to remind you of that oath.

Such a sign fills soldiers who pass it with trepidation—not a fear of the hardships to which it refers but a fear of not being up to the challenge and a fear of personal failure. It is that fear of failure that drives those diggers to achieve mission success. My purpose for quoting this soldier and commander is not to lecture the honourable members of this chamber, but merely to reflect the personal import and conviction

that I place on my oath to our sovereign and nation, Queensland and the good people of Townsville. For me, it will provide my guidance each and every day by focusing my efforts simply: how can I make Townsville and Queensland a better place for today and tomorrow? Simply put, our oath made in this House puts to us service before self.

For those in the House today who know Townsville and its people, they will know that it is a city of diversity both in geography and economy. While as a seat of the north it is often referred to as a regional seat, it is largely metropolitan in its nature. For example, we enjoy being the home of one of the nation's leading universities which is arguably, in certain faculties, a world leader, and that is the James Cook University. Townsville's development gives rise to some of the benefits of being a city, but, likewise, it suffers from many of the growing pains that one would expect are commonplace in more heavily urbanised seats such as those of the south-east.

My seat encompasses a growing CBD, which still has significant potential for future growth through well planned and targeted development. All of this is set adjacent to an extremely beautiful, scenic and fortunately underdeveloped tropical coastline. Ringing the CBD are the well-established suburbs of South Townsville, Railway Estate, Rosslea, Hyde Park, my own suburb of Hermit Park, West End, Belgian Gardens, Rowes Bay, Pallarenda, Pimlico, Garbutt and Mount Louisa. Unlike the metropolitan seats in the south-east, we are also blessed with a number of tropical paradise islands, including both Palm Island and Magnetic Island. Those islands are important to the make-up and flavour of Townsville and North Queensland.

Our people are robust, innovative and friendly. However, over the past two decades they have been hamstrung by successive Labor governments that have played lip-service to Queensland's 'second capital'. For too long the people of Townsville have not been heard, let alone listened to. They simply seek a fair hearing and a commitment for action. Local Townsville small business owners like Pearl Smith from Jap Motors or Graham Both from Both Transport want to lose the millstone of regulation, red tape and job-destroying taxes that act as a disincentive to do or grow business in the north. Our businesses do not want the government as a compulsory partner. They simply wish their government to assist—yes, assist; not to do and not to make, but to assist—with establishing and setting the conditions for success. In Townsville we also recognise that such a government needs to be delicately poised to ensure that it governs with compassion and gives a fair go to all. We understand there will always be those within our communities who require assistance. We need a government that sets clear policies and then, by its actions, provides the opportunity for ongoing renewal and growth, a government that catalyses the disadvantaged to overcome and a government that will protect those who cannot.

As a military logistician I am well trained in the importance of strategic assets such as airports, railheads, seaports and highways. Those are always the key assets that a commander seeks to secure and develop in order for him or her to protect their force and to have the freedom of manoeuvre to achieve their mission. Accordingly, Townsville provides North Queensland with its strategic gateway to bring our natural resources, value-added, to world markets, to service the massive pastoral industry. And all this is set within our magnificent natural environment. With the recent expansion of our northern military presence, Townsville lies at the forefront of the Newman government's four pillars, ready and able to get Queensland back on track. However, the residents of Townsville and, indeed, as we have heard many times, those of North Queensland for that matter are only too well aware of what happens to their livelihoods and existence when vital infrastructure is cut as frequently as they are in the north. The Newman government's commitment to the Bruce Highway is clearly welcomed by the people of the north as, indeed, is our government's commitment to improving the flow of traffic in and out of the northern suburbs and businesses of our city through the remediation of Blakey's Crossing and the upgrade of the Woolcock-Mather streets intersection.

I acknowledge that this week is National Reconciliation Week. On Saturday I was fortunate to attend the launch of the thesis of Professor Gracelyn Smallwood AM, titled *Human rights and first Australians' well-being*. The thesis of Professor Smallwood is a very personal account and I know it will be received by some as controversial. However, it is designed to invoke a broad awareness and to promote debate and discussion. I was honoured to meet with Gracelyn and I look forward to continuing to seek her opinion on many issues that impact on the Townsville community.

There are many amongst the Townsville and northern Indigenous community who see the change in government as providing a new level of Indigenous opportunity. This was clearly evidenced by winning the Palm Island booth—the first time a conservative party has ever won Palm Island. I did not win Palm Island; rather, the can-do attitude of a team for change won Palm Island. The residents of Palm want to be masters of their own destiny. They are tired of the failed, demeaning and paternalistic policies of the last two decades. They desire change and they have spoken to me at length about seeking ownership of the outcome.

We need to work with this community of First Australians rather than do things to or for them. There were welcome words to this community from our Premier when visiting Townsville prior to the election. He outlined a strong belief in the right of everybody to have a job, to own their own home and, if they choose it, to have a beer on their front porch after a hard day's work. Premier, I can't begin to tell you how well this statement was received by Townsville's Indigenous community.

As the honourable members of this parliament know, the journey to a seat in this House is difficult and always very much a team effort. It was no different in the case of Townsville. Accordingly, there are many people whom I should acknowledge for their advice, support and encouragement throughout the very long campaign period and before.

Firstly to my parents, Tony and Maureen, who clearly gave me the opportunity and life tools for me to choose my own destiny. Their love, their strong family Catholic values and their commitment to service before self have stood me in good stead in all that I have chosen to do. For that I am indebted and truly thankful.

To those who have been more intimately involved with the campaign: the success across our great city is all yours. To Senator Ian Macdonald, who is with us today, and Ewen Jones, the federal member for Herbert: your advice and support was invaluable. To our local state members, Rosemary Menkens and Andrew Cripps: likewise, your advice and genuine encouragement at all times very much demonstrated our state team approach across greater Townsville.

To my close campaign team—Gordon Terry, Max Tomlinson, Calum Kippin, Sandra Richards, Chris Mills, Peg and Melinda Holborn, Marie McMullen, Matt Crossley and Julia Dixon—I say thank you. I say thank you for your advice, your support and your encouragement, which at times—and probably rightly so—almost verged on harassment, but most importantly your friendship. To Delena, Steve and the crew on Palm Island, I say thank you. To Jim, Dot, Ron and Col on 'Maggie', I say thank you. There are many more on the mainland. To Martin Gordon and Laura Sinclair for the many kilometres you drove doing all those odd jobs, I say thank you. To Frank Probert—a finer gentleman you will never meet—who sat with me or for me on many listening posts, market stalls and every day at prepoll: I will never grow tired of your flying stories.

To Norm—my man in Garbutt: thank you for your friendship and encouragement. To Diane Bowen, for your absolute faith in me and your ability to sell ice to eskimos, I thank you. To John Dwyer, who sits in the gallery this afternoon: thank you for your advice and the encouragement to stand and, despite your distance from Townsville, your ability to remotely rally the troops at those critical times.

To some of my former commanders and comrades in the profession of arms who, through your tutelage and example, have done more to shape my character than you will ever know—Lieutenant General David Morrison; Major Generals Stuart Smith and Mark Kelly; Brigadiers Michael Paramor, Neil Weekes and David Saul—thank you.

To my good friend of 37 years James Purtill and his wife, Ann-Maree: thank you for your support, the many trips up to Townsville throughout the campaign and the safe haven you provided for my family and me in Brisbane. To Peter Lindsay, who coordinated the campaign across Townsville and who has developed campaigning into an artform: thank you. To my campaigning colleagues Sam and David, who now sit with me in this House: thank you for your friendship, cooperation and sharing the trip with me and the community of Townsville to this destination.

To my family, who could not be here today but who I know at this moment are watching the chamber broadcast live: thank you. To Simone: thank you for your support and love throughout the ups and downs of the campaign and the manner in which it was given freely and in spades. To my beautiful daughters, Jemma and Victoria: it is you for whom I dedicate my efforts in all I do, to give you the best city and state that will sustain and grow you and your subsequent generations. At this juncture on family, I should also acknowledge the strength that my family drew from the example of our Premier's family. Premier, not for a moment can I begin to imagine the pressure that Labor's scandalous campaign of personal and family attack placed on your wife, Lisa, and your daughters. However, I do recognise the absolute grace and poise with which they weathered it.

Finally, to the people of Townsville: thank you for your trust, faith, friendship and sense of community. This is a community that has embraced soldiers, airmen and their families as their own and truly made them feel at home. I have been commemorating Anzac Days for as long as I can remember. For 35 of those I was in uniform, initially as a school cadet and then as a serviceman. I have been fortunate to commemorate Anzac Days all across this great country of ours and indeed overseas in Canada, Egypt and Gallipoli. While each of those commemorations has been unique in some special way, nowhere has there been a turnout for its veterans and service personnel quite like in Townsville. The Townsville community's

respect for, engagement with and support of its troops have to be seen to be believed. Our city shares the successes of its troops and equally feels the pain and grief for its fallen.

Recently I was fortunate enough to attend the 'welcome home from operations parade' for 1,100 of Townsville's service personnel. Not all amongst their number who departed our shores a year ago were on that parade. A number of them will never again answer the rollcall. Not all of them were able to stand with their digger mates as a result of their injuries. The Townsville community genuinely embraced their return and acclaimed their sacrifices and shared their loss. Not a week later, I was attending the farewell parade of another 350 of the city's finest soldiers, shortly to deploy to Afghanistan. I know that these soldiers will give their all and best. They are well equipped and well trained. They take great comfort in knowing that when they leave behind their families they will be well looked after by the Townsville community.

The city and people of Townsville provide safe and comforting harbour to all our service personnel and their families. They truly are a garrison city, and I feel humbled and honoured that they would take a soldier to represent them. I say thank you to them and, in doing so, I commit to the people of Townsville to serve them, to secure their needs and, where I can, to pave the pathway for their aspirations. I recognise that at times this may require me to argue the case for an issue that I may not personally agree with but which the majority seek me to argue. There may also be occasions on which my upbringing and principles will not permit me to bend and, while I expect that these occasions will be very rare, I hope that those few who may not agree with my position will recognise and perhaps understand my conviction. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for the indulgence of the House this afternoon. I now resume my seat and look forward to serving Townsville.