



Speech By  
**Hon. Anastacia Palaszcuk**


**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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## **MOTION OF CONDOLENCE**

**Goss, Mr WK**

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.43 am): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to be the leader of the parliamentary Labor Party and stand here today to pay tribute to one of Queensland's great Labor premiers, Wayne Goss.

Last Friday I attended the public memorial service for Wayne Goss. That service, organised by the Goss family, touched on the many aspects of Wayne's life. It was a fitting and loving tribute from friends, family and associates that gave us insights into his three careers—the law, politics and business—as well as his life dedicated to his family. It says a lot about Wayne, his talents and application that he was able to build three careers and to leave a record of achievement in each.

Wayne Goss was born in Mundubbera in 1951 where his parents, Allan and Norma, had moved to from Brisbane to run a barber's shop they had bought. The family spent 18 months there before moving to Maryborough and then back to Brisbane. Allan opened a barber shop on the Gold Coast and later one at Annerley. The family secured a housing commission home at Inala and moved there at the end of 1955. Allan later opened a barber shop in the local Inala Civic Centre.

For many reasons Wayne Goss became an inspiration to me as he was to many others who grew up in Inala and Durack or nearby. As the member for Inala, I have often told local children of Wayne's life in our community and the things he went on to achieve. Wayne grew up there in vastly different times, with vastly different services and opportunities—more correctly, a lack of services and opportunities. His story is truly inspirational and many locals look to it as an example for themselves and their children. The idea of a young boy growing up in Inala, going to local state primary and high schools and later studying and practising law then sitting in state parliament and leading our state holds lessons for all Queenslanders.

Wayne became an articled clerk after high school with a Brisbane law firm and began studying law part-time at the University of Queensland. This was the start of his first career—the law. He went on to work for other firms and to become a partner in his own firm. He helped form the Aboriginal Legal Service and regularly gave free advice to its clients. His legal career and devotion to social justice set him on a collision course with the autocratic governments of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Sir Joh's attacks on civil liberties, trade unions, Indigenous Australians and even churches marked and marred our state's reputation on the national and international stage during the 1970s and 1980s.

For someone with such a well-developed social conscience, Wayne's progression from lawyer to politician was a logical step. At Inala, Wayne's father had been involved in the Labor Party and that interest naturally coloured Wayne's outlook as a child growing up in a community with few government services. In his book *Goss: A Political Biography*, journalist Jamie Walker quotes Wayne as saying, 'Inala was Labor and we were Labor and that was it.'

Wayne grew up in a family that lived and breathed Labor values. Central to that was the dignity of work. In a 1994 interview with the ABC he stated that in the area that he grew up there was nothing more important to working people than the dignity of having a job and being able to support yourself and your own family. He added that having a job was 'a very important form of social justice'. That was a view that helped shape him as a youth and helped shape the government that he led. His outlook was one of self-reliance and hard work, but it was also one that recognised the need for a helping hand when people needed it.

His father worked hard to build a business to support his large family and to widen the opportunities available to them. Jamie Walker's book notes that when the Goss children came home from school their mother, Norma, would point them to their bedrooms and direct them to do their homework before playing. That attitude was clearly reflected in Wayne's own approach to life. Those who knew Wayne knew he could play hard, but he worked even harder.

At the 1983 state election he worked hard to be elected as the member for Salisbury—a seat then held by the Liberal Party. Despite that election being fought in the wake of the coalition split, the result in Salisbury was close and the count was not finalised for several weeks. But once he arrived in this House his talent was recognised and he went straight to the opposition front bench as shadow minister for police. In that role he used his legal knowledge and contacts within and outside the profession to maintain constant pressure on the Bjelke-Petersen government and various ministers.

In this House in opposition, just as in government, Wayne Goss showed a respect for standards of accountability that were then missing from the government in this state. His attacks on certain ministers often revolved around pecuniary interests, shady deals, favoured treatment for cronies and other forms of injustice. When he set out to pursue a particular minister he mounted logical, well-researched and evidence based arguments. It was those standards that he applied to his work in opposition and later in government.

In this House Wayne Goss showed the same hard work and dedication that was evident in his other careers. He also demonstrated as both opposition leader and Premier a mastery of the theatre of parliament, helped along by his youthful interest and involvement in amateur dramatics. Just as a maestro conducts an orchestra, Wayne conducted this parliament. He had an unmistakable presence and commanded this place, both inside this chamber and in the corridors outside.

At the 1986 election Wayne ran for the seat of Logan and in March 1988, fewer than five years after arriving here, was elected opposition leader. When Wayne took over as leader, Labor was far from certain to win the election due in 1989. While the Fitzgerald inquiry played a role in turning people off the ruling party, nothing was certain and Wayne took nothing for granted. Daily replays of the sordid evidence presented to Commissioner Tony Fitzgerald alarmed Queenslanders but could have only so much political impact. Labor still had to get its own house in order to present itself as a viable alternative government. It also faced the handicap of a rorted electoral system.

It is difficult for those who were not there to understand the political climate at the time. In Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, the Labor Party had for many years been up against a government and a Premier who had grown arrogant from their lengthy time in office, aided and abetted by a warped electoral system. We had a government that was constantly on the attack—attacking those who disagreed with it, attacking unions for standing up for their members, attacking Canberra, attacking environmentalists, civil libertarians and even religious leaders.

Labor's victory in 1989 was largely the result of the hard work of Wayne Goss and the team he put together. For that victory alone he has every right to be regarded as a genuine Labor hero. Those of us who were there will always remember that historic win. We will always recall the elation that victory caused across the Queensland community, not just in Labor ranks. Queenslanders recognised change was needed and they trusted Wayne to deliver that change.

Labor's win under Wayne Goss represented a new start for our state, with the sweeping away of the complacency, corruption, low standards, and shoddy practices that had become the norm for government in our state. That victory was due in large part to Wayne's leadership that was built on innovative policies, hard work and the thoughtful yet disciplined approach to everything he did. Wayne took Labor into government after our party had spent 32 years on the opposition benches. He did it by inspiring a coalition of voters broad enough to overcome the handicap of the rorted electoral boundaries that had previously held Labor back. As he himself put it that night, Labor's victory meant 'the end of the Bjelke-Petersen era'.

His governments set about implementing a wide range of reforms and changed Queensland to become a state that was vibrant, productive, and respected throughout Australia and overseas. But leading our party out of the wilderness at the 1989 election after 32 years on the opposition benches

is just part of his political legacy. His governments were marked by a dedication to fairness and to helping those who needed a hand.

Wayne's own experience at school in Inala shaped his dedication to improving our state's education system and delivering more and better resources. At Inala State High School, he joined the basketball team. Last Friday his daughter, Caitlin, related a story to me of how Wayne's team had once won a major game. In any other school that would not have been remarked upon, except that at Inala State High School in those days there was no basketball hoop let alone a basketball court. This no doubt led to his desire to improve the facilities at state schools across our state, and not just academic facilities. He believed that what young Queenslanders learned on the sports field played an important part in shaping their lives just as much as what they learned in the classroom. Indeed, as Premier he scuttled a plan for a new government office block. If there were spare dollars to spend, he said, they should be spent on junior sport.

Wayne was well known for his love of rugby league, the Broncos and the Queensland Maroons. He was often seen at Lang Park for the big clashes, sitting in the outer and barracking along with other Queenslanders. Many of his government's achievements in education as well as health, the arts, and the environment were ground breaking. In addition to reforms and initiatives in a range of portfolio areas, Wayne Goss also had an unwavering commitment to accountability and transparency in the dealings of government. This was a refreshing change after decades of maladministration.

After taking Labor into office by winning 24 seats to hold 54 of 89 in this House, Wayne said Labor's message to voters had been a simple one: 'We basically said that we can as a community build a better society, one that is based on a commitment to honest standards and higher integrity in public life.' Those are the basic, simple standards all of us in this House should, and must, abide by.

Wayne Goss himself acknowledged the blueprint for reform delivered by the Fitzgerald inquiry. But it is easy to implement structures or empty gestures to give the impression of accountability. It is another thing altogether to demand and adhere to strict standards—standards imposed for one reason: that they are the right thing to do. Wayne Goss enjoyed two full terms in office as Premier, but in that time he helped change our state forever and for the better. At his farewell news conference as Premier, Wayne said he hoped he had left Queensland a better place. His record in office answers that question.

Wayne Goss left behind a long list of achievements. Other members in the House will mention some of those, but I want to mention his concern for our state's natural environment. Goss governments implemented a raft of protections to safeguard our environment including the creation of many national parks, increased heritage protections and stronger antipollution laws. He also played a role in establishing the Wet Tropics Management Authority in the Far North. Wayne once told a friend that one of his proudest achievements had been to end logging on Fraser Island and to see it listed on the World Heritage register.

At last Friday's memorial service we heard from people who were both his friends and political colleagues: people such as QUT Vice-Chancellor Peter Coaldrake, University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor Glyn Davis and former minister Matt Foley. Business colleague Giam Swiegers reminded us of Wayne's third career in the business world—as national chair of Deloitte, chair of engineering firm Ausenco, chair of Free TV Australia and other directorships. It was very fitting for the service to be held at the Gallery of Modern Art given Wayne's role in its development as chair of the Queensland Art Gallery Board of Trustees.

In the time I have occupied this seat in this chamber there are many times I have drawn inspiration from Wayne and the governments he led and from his time as opposition leader. I was very pleased Wayne made time after the 2012 election to meet me and discuss the way forward for our party after such a shattering defeat. As always, his mind was on the future and was not dwelling on the past. As always, he had very clear ideas and expressed them simply and directly. As always, he wanted to help others and sought no recognition or return for himself.

My meeting with Wayne as party leader in 2012 was a far cry from one of my first encounters back in 1990, six months after he became Premier. Then as President of Queensland Young Labor I attended a barbecue here on level 7 of the Annexe. Wayne was hosting the event, and as we waited in the foyer we were amazed to see him jog past in his running gear and into the lift. It was not something we had expected to see and certainly something we would never have seen from previous premiers like Russell Cooper or Mike Ahern, let alone Sir Joh.

With the passing of Wayne Goss, the Labor Party has lost a true hero and Queensland has lost one of its truly great leaders. Next week on 2 December Labor Party supporters will mark the 25th anniversary of the election of the Goss government. We will also mark the anniversary of the election

of the Whitlam government in 1972. Gough Whitlam and Wayne Goss were elected to lead their governments 17 years apart. It is sad to note that both died this year within weeks of each other. While Gough almost made a century, tragically, Wayne's life was cut short at just 63.

Those who knew him are in no doubt that in other circumstances he would have had much more to do and much more to give to our community, our state and our nation. But what he did for us was to lift the standards of government and to lift the standards Queenslanders expect of their governments. He set benchmarks that endure and by which subsequent governments have been, and will continue to be, measured. As former Deputy Prime Minister Wayne Swan has remarked, Wayne Goss was a breakthrough political leader who dragged Queensland into the sunlight after 32 years in the darkness. Wayne Goss and the governments he led changed our state forever and for the better. Current and future generations of Queenslanders will reap the rewards.

As we walk the halls of Parliament House, let us remember those who walked them before us. Let us remember those like Wayne Goss, who gave us hope, opportunity, and inspiration, who returned sunshine to the moonlight state and who built a modern and confident Queensland. Today is our chance to answer Wayne's own question and to thank him for leaving Queensland a better place. On behalf of all members of the House, the Queensland parliamentary Labor Party, the broader Labor movement and all Queenslanders, Wayne Goss, we thank you. We thank you for your legacy. We thank you for what you have provided to our state. Our thoughts and condolences are to Roisin, Ryan, Caitlin, Wayne's mother, Norma, and their families.