



Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.31 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker, can I begin by congratulating you on your appointment and also acknowledge Annastacia Palaszczuk as the Premier of Queensland and the success that she and her government achieved on 31 January.

In our democracy there is no greater privilege than to be elected by a community as its political representative. I wish to thank the people of Moggill for entrusting me to be their representative in the 55th Queensland Parliament. I would like to thank my wife, Jane, and my four children, Nicholas, Charley, Angus and Lucie, for the commitment and sacrifices they have made prior to, as well as during, the election campaign. My wife, Jane, as a journalist, business owner and mother, is an inspiration to me and many others—not only for the family and business work roles she undertakes but also given that she manages the daily challenges of type 1 insulin dependent diabetes, a condition she has had for over 30 years.

Jane's parents, Parker and Wendy Nelson, are much cherished grandparents and stalwarts of the Chapel Hill community. Their love, friendship and guidance are treasured by both Jane and me. I acknowledge my former wife, Elisabetta, and her extended family overseas who enrich Nicholas's life. I also need to make mention of the wonderful efforts of my campaign director, Leigh Warren, and the many members of the Moggill campaign committee, as well as booth captains, local branch members and colleagues who assisted with the successful campaign in Moggill. I would also like to acknowledge the encouragement, thoughtful words of wisdom and strong support given to me by the federal member for Ryan, Jane Prentice MP, and her husband, Ian. I would also not be standing here today without the loyal friendship, encouragement and political insights of Councillor Julian Simmonds and his wife, Madeline. I am also fortunate to have an excellent collegiate and professional working relationship with Councillor Margaret de Wit.

As we all know, achievement in life often requires a stable and happy upbringing as a child. I acknowledge the late Martha 'Hennie' Henriksen, my godmother Kim Nicoll and godfather Peter Carpenter, the Edmonds, the Burtons, Gilchrists, Bodmans, Martins, Kings, the Pohios, my Aunt Sue and her three boys, Jonathan, Robert and Duncan, my Aunt Christine, Sean Rothwell, Caroline Nelson, Dominic and Anna Katter, Sean Crosbie and the many other family members and friends who have provided guidance and who have been of great support to me and my family over many years.

I was raised by my mother in a single income household. I always knew my parents loved me unconditionally, despite their divorce and the fractured family relationships that often result as a consequence. My father, John Andrew Rowan, is a retired small business owner and qualified gas fitter. He lives in regional Queensland where my sister, Edwina, brother-in-law, Nick, and my brother, Thomas, are also residing with their respective families, including my nieces and nephews. My mother, Virginia Carr Rowan, is a retired schoolteacher and educator. She holds dual degrees from the University of Queensland: a Bachelor of Arts with Second Degree Honours in Government as well as a Bachelor of Educational Studies. Unfortunately, my mother now suffers with severe end-stage Parkinson's disease. I offer my gratitude, respect and admiration to the staff at Reid Court in

Sinamon Village whose compassion, empathy and care is a testament to the quality of residential aged-care staff right across Queensland. My mother taught me the societal value of evidence based public policy. She educated me via a strong, well-rounded liberal arts education in political ideology and philosophy and the processes of democratic government. Regular discussions around the dinner table would reference British philosophers John Locke and John Stuart Mill, as well as the views and policies of former US presidents Woodrow Wilson, Ronald Reagan and Dwight D Eisenhower. Family friends of my mother, including former Menzies government minister the late Sir Reginald Swartz, have all provided inspiration for serving in public office.

My father, my grandfather, the late Andrew Rowan, and I all attended the Anglican Church Grammar School. My grandfather was the first elected president of the Churchie Old Boys' Association in 1949. My former teachers, including historian James Mason, housemaster Bill Cowlshaw and Anglican chaplain Father Theodore Woods, all instilled in me the importance and value of service and duty. Our family connection continues with the school to this day with my eldest son, Nicholas, currently at Churchie in year 10 and my youngest son, Angus, due to commence his secondary schooling there in the next few years. Jane's father, Parker, is also an old boy.

I am very fortunate to have my father's cousin, Steve Rowan, who has researched my family's lineage all the way back to 1477. My great-grandfather was James Stephen Rowan. He owned the property Talleyrand at Longreach where my grandfather was born. My great-great-uncle, Andrew Percival Rowan, served in the Boer War with the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles. He then enlisted in the 10th Regiment 3rd Light Horse Brigade and was killed in action on 7 August 1915 having just been promoted to captain. He is buried at Anzac Cove. My great-great-grandfather, also an Andrew Rowan, arrived in Australia from County Down, Ireland and settled in Melbourne in 1861. He was a merchant, company director, pastoralist and winemaker with Hubert de Castella at the St Hubert Vineyard in Victoria. He also invested in several pastoral properties in Queensland, including Darrwater and Darr River Downs in the Mitchell district, Weribone and Talavera in the Maranoa district and Malvern Downs and Echo Hills in the Leichhardt district.

I offer the aforementioned information not to espouse the virtues of my family or connections but to emphasise the importance with which I view rural and regional Queensland as well the value I place on family, educational opportunity, public service, duty and loyalty. I have been afforded incredible personal and professional experiences until now, many of which have led me to reflect on both the great Australian writer Albert 'Bert' Facey's autobiographical work *A Fortunate Life* and the American poet Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken* poem, which reads—

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

I hope these comments will provide some insight into the perspectives I will bring to this parliament.

I believe in politics with principle. I believe in fostering a society where the rights and freedoms of individuals come with mandatory responsibilities. I believe in an educational system that recognises that both personal fulfilment and social responsibility are compatible and that the pursuit of excellence is not in conflict with equal opportunity for all. I believe that young people who value learning, who are taught how to learn, desire to become productive and in doing so advance our economy. As a humane society, we need to do more to address the growing disparity between the wealthy and the poor.

If you combine social, educational and economic disadvantage with geographical isolation you create the ideal conditions for mental health disorders to develop and potentially illicit drug use to flourish. I believe that the best form of welfare is to create economic opportunity, to grow jobs and empower individuals to become productive. This builds self-esteem, resilience and self-reliance, all of which are very important individual qualities in a complex and challenging world. In western, industrialised parts of the globe we will face further social cohesive challenges and increasing security threats if we fail to engage the disenfranchised, the disaffected and those who are marginalised and, in turn, lack both educational and economic opportunity.

As the Roman philosopher Cicero once said—

To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born, is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?

In my electorate of Moggill, in recent times a number of issues that need addressing have had local bipartisan support. Road and transport infrastructure issues, particularly in view of the growing population in Bellbowrie and Moggill, need to be addressed as matters of urgency. A coordinated road

and public transport plan for the electorate is about not just additional roads but also the widening of some existing ones, fixing the Kenmore roundabout and, following extensive community consultation, examining what is possible in relation to rail and bridge access. The paucity of public transport is also a major issue for residents of Lake Manchester, Karana Downs and Mt Crosby.

Cost-of-living pressures for ordinary families and, in fact, all residents in the Moggill electorate are becoming more problematic despite the perceived wealth of the area. In many of the suburbs of the electorate, an increasing population requires an investment in community services and an appropriate allocation of the state's resources. The Kenmore State High School requires urgent further investment in its strategic infrastructure master plan as enrolments at the school now exceed 1,800. An additional high school established via a public-private-partnership model needs to be seriously considered given projected demographic and population changes over the next few decades.

The electorate of Moggill also has many small business owners. Trevor Dixon, who is the Chairman of the Australian Small Business Foundation, President of the local Kenmore-Moggill RSL Sub-branch and owner of a horticulture entity, is but one example. Small business is a significant contributor to the success of our economy. The decentralisation of public policy decision-making for small business is a critical enabler for sustainability and expansion. Allowing small businesses to flourish free from unfair or excessive competitive advantage by government, individuals or large corporations is in the interests of my constituents and our state.

Ensuring that we have environmental sustainability via rigorous assessment processes and that a balance is achieved when it comes to economic development and environmental protection is a principle that I will always adhere to. As the father of four children, I care deeply about our natural environment and local heritage.

I now turn my attention to the issue of leadership in public life. I regard leadership by all political representatives at all levels of government as critically important given the uncertainty and plethora of issues many local communities face. Leadership is not just about the vision you espouse; leadership is the courage to stand by your beliefs in times of adversity. Leadership is also about the values you articulate. For me, those values are respect, justice, empathy, compassion, fairness, equality and the highest standards of public accountability.

I am very fortunate to have served as the president of both the Australian Medical Association of Queensland and the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland. The sustainability of our health system requires productivity, efficiency, accountability, transparency and the ongoing measurement and public reporting of the effectiveness of government investment. Unfortunately, often in health-care individuals and sectional interest groups pursue conflicted agendas related to power, profit and prestige with little regard to the interests of patients, despite the public protestations of those individuals and sectional interest groups to the contrary. That was evident during the recent public sector medical contracts dispute in Queensland.

I have not provided public media commentary on those matters since early last year. Whilst I could submit into the public domain additional information and facts that would fundamentally alter the public record on the events and decisions that took place during my tenure as President of the Australian Medical Association, I do not believe it is in the public interest to do so. However, I do believe it is important to state the following: those individuals who have and, in some cases, continue to harass and intimidate via social media forums and in other written contexts are cowards and bullies. Their actions have no place in a civilised society, let alone as individual registered professionals. With the right of freedom of expression comes a great individual responsibility to ensure due diligence with an accurate factual basis to what is said, to act with manners, courtesy and respect, and to ensure a fair and reasonable approach is achieved when matters of contentious public policy are debated and implemented. I will exercise my right of parliamentary privilege to its fullest in the future to specifically address these aforementioned matters should it become necessary.

As a former president of both the AMA Queensland and RDAQ, I have also had the opportunity to be briefed by many health professionals on a number of population health challenges that will have to be dealt with not only now but also for many years to come. Those include a steady growth in chronic complex health conditions, emerging new infectious diseases, antibiotic resistant bacteria and growing obesity and eating disorder rates in children and adults, as well as an increasing prevalence of mental health and substance dependency disorders. As an addiction medicine specialist, I have assisted some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community, as well as those from higher socio-economic backgrounds.

Whilst alcohol and tobacco consumption represent the greatest costs to our community in terms of morbidity, mortality and financial cost, I wish to highlight the public policy issues of illicit substance dependency, over-the-counter codeine misuse and the emergence of new synthetic drugs.

Illicit drug use is associated with a range of physical, psychological, legal, economic and social impacts not only for individuals but also for their families and the community in general. Premature deaths, accidents, violence and family disruption can all be consequences of substance dependency. In Queensland, likely cost impacts based on a population approximation method suggest that drug use costs our state in excess of \$1.6 billion per year. We must ensure that there is balanced state public investment in demand reduction and supply reduction strategies, as well as adequate availability and access to treatment services and harm-minimisation strategies to continue to reduce blood borne virus transmission such as of hepatitis C, hepatitis B and HIV, and address other individual and community harms.

In relation to over-the-counter codeine-containing products and prescription analgesic medications, health professionals are assessing and treating increasing numbers of patients with dependency conditions necessitating a range of solutions, including an agreed cross-jurisdictional real-time electronic monitoring system recording the prescribing, supply and distribution of those products. The emergence of new synthetic drugs that mimic the effects of illicit drugs is of great concern to health professionals, parents, teachers, law enforcement officers and the community generally. The resultant physical and mental sequelae, including loss of life in some cases, as a result of the use of those substances requires a coordinated and multifaceted approach by government. Unfortunately, the internet has revolutionised access and availability and the exploitation of many young people.

Investing in our rural and regional health workforce and ensuring timely access and sustainable models of care need to be ongoing priorities of successive governments in Queensland. The extensive community role played by this workforce not only in delivering clinical services, but also by implementing public health strategies, facilitating broader economic development and maintaining social infrastructure is vitally important and cost effective. The significant efforts of many within the rural doctor movement such as doctors Col Owen, Bruce Chatter, Tony Balston, Denis Lennox, Dan Manahan, John Hall, Les Woollard, Pat Giddings, Cameron Bardsley and Jim Finn, as well as various administrative support people, including Natalie Taylor and Deanne Bond, have led to a robust rural generalist training framework being implemented.

When I was 25 years of age, I was fortunate enough to be appointed the medical superintendent of Mungindi Hospital, which was a sole-doctor position. The formative professional experiences and the knowledge and skills I gained there dealing with the complexity of social and health issues affecting rural and remote Aboriginal communities also motivated me to seek public office. Over the years, I have been very fortunate to be a recipient of the leadership and mentorship of Uniting Care Queensland Chief Executive Officer Anne Cross, Executive Director Richard Royle and other colleagues: Dr Luis Prado, Sue McKean and Cheryl O'Brien. I also acknowledge the executive and staff of St Andrew's War Memorial Hospital, including personal assistant Lisa Aitken and Kathy McCallum.

I am proud to be part of a political party where fellow elected representatives believe in and adhere to the great philosophies, principles and ideals espoused by our broader grassroots membership. The organisational wing of any political party is also fundamental to its sustainability and I acknowledge the work and dedication of the many Liberal National Party member volunteers, those employed in LNP headquarters and our party president, Bruce McIver, and his executive team.

I also acknowledge the service of the former member for Moggill, Dr Bruce Flegg, and his achievements during his tenure in public office as an elected representative within this place. Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the members here for allowing me the opportunity to make this, my first speech. I conclude by quoting the 17th century English metaphysical poet John Donne—

No man is an Iland, intire of it selfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.

As a member of the LNP opposition, I will hold this government to account. In my view the Palaszczuk government has no vision and no plan and this is clearly apparent to all.