




Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (3.06 pm): I acknowledge the Governor as the Queen's representative and the address that he provided at the opening of this session of parliament. I am humbled at the opportunity to again serve the people of Glass House, albeit a slightly different Glass House from the one I have served for the previous nine years. Sadly, with the redistribution I farewelled the community of Palmwoods to my good colleague the member for Nicklin, and the community of Caboolture North to the newly elected LNP member for Pumicestone, Simone Wilson, and welcomed the communities of Mooloolah Valley, Ocean View, Upper Caboolture, Rocksberg and Moorina.

The last election campaign was tough. It was a tough campaign locally. For the first time ever the gloves came off in the electorate of Glass House and we saw a level of negativity that we had not seen before. In one night every political sign that I had erected from Mount Mee in the south to Mapleton in the north was destroyed through graffiti in what can only be described as a considered and coordinated attack. As much as that disappointed me, I was more disappointed for the volunteers who had put so much effort into raising the funds required to put up those signs. I am appalled that it has come to that. I will speak on that a little bit later.

We did have local successes. I acknowledge my new colleagues: the member for Nicklin, Marty Hunt; the member for Ninderry, Dan Purdie, the member for Buderim, Brent Mickelberg; and the member for Pumicestone, Simone Wilson. Locally on the coast it was a very successful election for the LNP.

The campaign was tough on Taryn and my kids. For the first time it really took a toll on them. I want to thank them for their love and their support and, in particular, their patience with me. I took a photo on Sunday—during the brief seven hours that I had with my family in between flying back from North Queensland and turning around and driving back here for parliament—and I just cannot believe how much my family has grown and how much they have changed over the time I have been a member of parliament. To Taryn, Daniel, Erin, Brielle, Benjamin and Rohanna, I love you dearly. Thanks so much for your support.

It was tough on my campaign team and I have a fantastic campaign team who have stood alongside me for four elections. I would love to mention them all, but they know who they are. I particularly single out Chris Sang, my new campaign director, who did an unreal job.

I acknowledge Joyce Newton. Sadly, Joyce was diagnosed with motor neurone disease at the start of 2017. The prognosis that she was given was that she would not see Christmas, which made it incredibly likely that she was not going to see the election. No-one was going to stop her, though! Not only did she see the election; she continued to do the amazing job she does in organising rosters at the various booths, coordinating sign sites and emailing members. Just think about someone with motor neurone disease, who is deteriorating day by day, doing all of those things.

At the start I acknowledged the Governor and I want to acknowledge him again. Earlier this year, Joyce received the Medal of the Order of Australia in the general division. Because of the nature of her disease, she was not able to travel to Government House to receive it. Instead, His Excellency came to the Newton's residence in Maleny and personally delivered the medal to Mrs Newton. I want to read out why Joyce received the OAM. The citation states—

For service to the community of Maleny, particularly in the area of sport as president, secretary and life member of a number of Maleny sporting clubs and in the areas of education, health, youth development and the Liberal National Party.

Joyce, thank you so much for what you have done for the LNP locally and for what you have done for me personally. Please keep it up for as long as you can.

It was tough on my electorate officers. I acknowledge Jenny Adermann and Megan Harkin who have both moved on to bigger and better things. Jenny now works in Kingaroy with a disability service provider as they transition to the NDIS and Megan was stolen by the member for Nicklin. I acknowledge my new electorate staff, Lee and Lauren. I also acknowledge young Eden, from Caloundra City Private School, who is currently with me on work experience and is sitting in the chamber today.

It was a tough campaign statewide. I acknowledge the leadership of Tim Nicholls. I acknowledge the work that he did throughout the last term in opposition and policies that he helped us take to the 2017 election. It was the most outstanding election in terms of policies, in terms of what we as candidates offered to local communities and what we offered to Queensland more broadly. Therefore, it was tough to see that Tim was not successful and has not had the opportunity to become premier of this state.

It was tough on me. It makes you wonder sometimes why you do this. I would not be telling the truth if I did not acknowledge that four elections and entering my fourth term is taking its toll on me. After the 2015 election, I felt similar sentiments and Taryn found me a quote that, funnily enough, six months later Joyce had framed and presented to me. It now hangs on my parliamentary office wall. Many would have heard it before. It is an excerpt from a speech by US President Theodore Roosevelt titled 'Citizenship in a republic', which he delivered at the Sorbonne in Paris, France on 23 April 1910. President Roosevelt stated—

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.

It is tough. I think one of the reasons it is so tough is that there is a huge sense of disillusionment across the state and in the electorate, and the people of Glass House and Queensland are looking for another way. I have reflected on this and realised two things. One is that there is a cause for this disillusionment and, secondly, that I personally have a choice. Let us talk about disillusionment.

Heck, I am disillusioned. What politics is becoming and what politicians have to do to win elections is not what I want to be or what I want to do. I am concerned at the state of democracy. I am concerned at the state of democracy in this state of Queensland, across this nation of Australia and, indeed, across the world. Voters are losing faith in their representatives, because increasingly their representatives are becoming self-serving to win elections. Where does it stop? No political party is immune to it, but the smug backroom operatives of the Labor Party believe that, by changing the electoral rules to suit themselves, it makes them somehow good at their jobs.

They changed the electoral boundaries, they changed the way we vote and they changed the donation laws, not to create a better democracy or to create better public debate but to deliver them one thing: government. However, they have forgotten that when it is about us as individuals, we fail the voters. When it is about winning by any means, we fail the voters. Ironically, we end up failing ourselves because I like to believe that none of us are in this place to fail the voters. Failing ourselves is bad, but failing the voters is catastrophic, as we end up failing the whole democratic structure on which we base so many of our hopes. Guess what? Over time that strategy is not sustainable, because the voters know and they look elsewhere, as they are now.

Sadly, the minor parties are no better. I had a conversation with a couple of constituents whose friendship I really value. They were once members of my party and they questioned why we did not get closer to the One Nation party in the lead-up to the last election. I can tell the House that, despite the One Nation candidate in Glass House openly admitting that the only reason they were running was to keep Labor and the Greens out and despite many of the 22 per cent in Glass House who voted for One Nation being what I considered disillusioned conservative voters, One Nation used a how-to-vote card to put Labor ahead of the LNP. In the seat of Glass House I hung on, because the vast majority of those

22 per cent who voted for One Nation ignored that how-to-vote card and put a second preference against the LNP. In seats such as Mansfield, Mount Ommaney and Redlands, One Nation handed the seat to Labor and we now have a majority Labor government because of that.

To the disillusioned conservative voters, we need to have a conversation. I know you are frustrated. I know you feel mistreated, neglected and forgotten, but the solution is not to vote in populist politicians who are more interested in media stunts, headline grabs or selfies of their semi-naked selves. To such voters, particularly in the north and west of Queensland, I say: as hard as it is, you get more for your part of Queensland when you have sensible, intelligent, hardworking individuals such as Lawrence Springborg, Andrew Cripps and the leader of the LNP, Deb Frecklington, who can sit around a cabinet or shadow cabinet table and have the tough hard conversations about delivering what is best for rural and regional Queensland—indeed, all of Queensland—and then, guess what? Actually delivering it! What have Katter's Australian Party and One Nation delivered other than headlines? Nothing but Labor state governments! You need only look at the bills on the current parliamentary *Notice Paper* and those that have already passed this session of parliament to see how that is going to destroy rural and regional Queensland.

There is disillusionment, but the results of it only create more disillusionment. Once I considered the causes of that disillusionment I realised that I had a choice and it is a choice that we all have. I could follow this path with the justification that that is the way things are done, that the end justifies the means or that there is no point having the best policy and being in opposition. Maybe I just needed to swallow my medicine and do some things that make me feel uncomfortable and, hopefully, tomorrow I would feel better. The alternative was that I could call it out. I could fight it, knowing that fighting it would be hard. As I have said, I have a family that need me and they do not need me wasting my time sitting in opposition criticising the choices other people make.

Then I remembered why I entered politics in the first place and why I joined a political party in the first place. At the time, I worked for the department of child safety under then premier Peter Beattie. That system was broken. Premier Beattie said, 'I know it's broken. Give me a chance to fix it. I'm going to fix it.' We had the Forde inquiry, but Mr Beattie's solution to fixing the department of child safety was only to make it worse. That system deteriorated more and more. I joined a party to write social policy for that party to offer an alternative to what I was seeing offered by the then Labor government.

Why did I run for the seat of Glass House? It was not an easy decision. As many know, I have a personal faith. I was concerned and still remain concerned that to be in politics one has to sell their soul to the devil. At the time I read a book by former deputy prime minister John Anderson entitled *Faith & Duty*. My wife, Taryn, read it as well. We were both convinced that one does not have to do that to make a difference through politics.

One does have to aspire to a higher ideal; otherwise it will simply be a race to the bottom. Politicians across the political spectrum need to make a choice. Recently I discussed with participants at the Queensland Servant Leadership Forum and with members of the parliamentary media team that, sure, politicians need to step up and need to do more. To our friends in the media, we need you to be there with us. For that to happen, we need the people of Queensland demanding more, demanding better, demanding considered and rational debate and discussion, not polarisation and put-downs and reality television type performances. The people of Queensland need to demand detail in their policy not just four-second grabs. The people of Queensland need to help create a space for us, their elected representatives, to think through decisions in a considered and reasonable way and not require a decision instantaneously.

To paraphrase Sir Robert Menzies, I want us to reject the false wars that divide Australians. It is the bonds that bind us that is the essence of Australians. It is the bonds that bind us that is the essence of Queensland. I do not want to race to the bottom. I want us to unify for the betterment of all of Queensland. Guess what? That may look and sound different in north and west Queensland from what it does in inner Brisbane or on the Sunshine Coast or Gold Coast. That is okay. That is healthy. That recognises our diversity.

I mentioned aspiring to a higher ideal—to taking up a challenge. As I battled through this assessment and this dilemma at the end of last year, like the nine years before it, I had the privilege, alongside you, Mr Deputy Speaker McArdle, of attending the senior awards night for the Glasshouse Christian College. I was struck by the conclusion of the evening. Before I relay this to the House, I must point out that what I am about to share is copyrighted to Glasshouse Christian College. If anyone intends to use it, please make sure you seek their permission, and reference it accordingly, as I have. It reads—

Back in 2013 the College leaders developed a set of ideals that they have sought to live by as they led the Student body. These ideals form the Glasshouse Christian College Student Leader's Charter. This charter is a reminder of the aspirations of the students, both past and present.

Each year the graduating class leave a physical legacy at the school to remind those students who follow what our College represents.

The original graduating class of GCC had as their theme Matthew 5:16—"Let your light shine."

As our leaders move from the College, it is fitting they pass on a legacy to the leaders who follow.

At this point, the college captains for the coming school year are invited onto the stage along with the current captains to perform the ceremony of the charter. It continues—

Jesus said "Let your light shine." We, the graduating class of Glasshouse Christian College have sought to reveal this light and we have aspired to these standards:

To work hard yet take time to be still.

To live the truth while respecting differences in others.

To follow what is right while remembering to stay close to those who stumble.

To act justly but not condemn.

To speak yet listen to others.

To celebrate success without conceit.

To take risks yet respect tradition.

To act humbly and with integrity, serve God and follow Jesus, contributing where we can and becoming the best that we can.

It finishes with this—

We now pass this light to you. Do you accept this challenge?

I found this inspiring. I realised that, although I have been tempted from the last tough campaign to either walk away or take up the race to the bottom, I would resist these easy paths and actually try to be a better version of myself. I am far from perfect. You just have to ask my wife, Taryn, that. I have made mistakes and I will make mistakes. I am human. That is not going to stop me trying to attain something more than what I currently am and offer to the people of Glass House.

I have made my choice. Even though the fight is unfair and it involves a huge uphill battle and even though I could lose, I realise that deep within me I cannot give in to the cheaters. I will not use those who are willing to sacrifice democracy for personal gain as my role models. I will not be succumbed by the promise of power. I will not toy with the laws of our democracy for my personal gain. I will not cheat. I will find a way where ethics and power can exist together. I will not sacrifice my marriage, my family, my faith or myself. I will fight, and I hope to win, not for myself but for the sake of those who come after us—to show that there is a different way. I will fight, and I hope to win, not for myself but for the democracy that I serve.

For those in this chamber I say now, as the students of Glasshouse Christian College said, 'I now pass this light to you. Do you accept this challenge?' I believe if 16- to 18-year-olds can accept that challenge then it is beholden on us to do the same. Do members accept that challenge? I do.