



Speech By
Duncan Pegg

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

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PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Member for Stretton, Resignation

 **Mr PEGG** (Stretton—ALP) (3.00 pm): Unlimited time on the clock—this could be dangerous! Mr Speaker, I rise to inform the House that, in the coming weeks, I intend to formally submit to you my resignation as the member for Stretton. It was actually exactly seven years ago today that I was formally announced as the state Labor candidate for Stretton for the 2015 election. It was almost six years ago I gave my first speech in this House. Now it is time for my final speech here.

As honourable members know, I have been fighting cancer since 2019. I have been fighting this fight alongside the 30,000 Queenslanders and 130,000 Australians who are diagnosed each year with this insidious disease. Up until this point, I have been able to effectively represent my local area while fighting against cancer. Based on my most recent medical advice, I will no longer be able to continue to both fight cancer and fight for my local area in the manner in which my community deserves.

I make this announcement with the heaviest of hearts. I do not want to leave this place and cease representing the community that I love, but I know that the decision to resign is the right one. Indeed, it is the only decision that is faithful to my values and work ethic. While I am sad to soon be leaving this place, I am grateful to have forged so many fantastic memories and achieved so much both locally and statewide. Before parting, I will take the opportunity to indulge the House with a few memories and offer some ideas for the future. Most of all, I have so many people to thank for supporting me on this journey.

I first contested the seat of Stretton at the 2012 state election. To run as a party candidate you need preselection. In the case of Stretton, the sitting member retired. Many party members encouraged me to nominate for preselection. Obviously the party has to adopt a process and timetable for such matters, as all honourable members would know. One challenge for me was that I booked some leave from my job and was travelling to the United States with my friend Troy, who is here today. We had a packed itinerary from coast to coast.

Almost as soon as our trip had begun I got a call from the then state secretary and now senator, Anthony Chisholm. He told me that everyone was looking for me in Brisbane and asked where I was. I replied, 'Las Vegas.' Let's just say we agreed it might be a good idea to return home on the next available flight. I did get to enjoy Las Vegas somewhat, drafting my first preselection email to party members at the TI—the Treasure Island Hotel—shortly before heading home. My brother Graham was generous enough to pick me up and as we were driving away from the airport asked me why I had returned a week early. 'I'm going to try to run for parliament,' I told him.

Of course, a successful preselection is no guarantee of an election win. While I was successful in gaining preselection for the 2012 election, I would not enter parliament for another three years. Being a new MP was one of the most exciting times in my life and three events in that period stick out in my mind: my first party room meeting; my first night sitting in parliament; and my first and, I promise, only filibuster speech.

I had been to the Queensland parliament a few times but had never worked directly in politics so at first I was not quite sure where everything was. I was walking to my first party room meeting with a group of MPs when I dashed off to the bathroom. When I came out the group was gone and I was unsure where to go. I called my friend the member for Logan, Linus Power, to ask where everyone was. Linus's response was, 'Somewhere on level 5.'

Government members interjected.

Mr Power: I was probably wrong about that.

Mr PEGG: I take all those interjections. Thanks, Linus, you were a big help that day, mate.

I eventually knew I had found the right place because of the massive media pack. The pack was surrounding two different doors to two different rooms. One led to the caucus room. The other led to who knows where. None of my colleagues were in sight. They were already in the room. I had no idea which one to take. The reporters turned to me. 'Congratulations, Mr Pegg,' one said, with the cameras rolling. I looked back at the doors and realised I was in danger of making the nightly news. The headline 'New MP loses his way' flashed through my mind alongside footage of me fumbling with different doors. I steeled myself, said a brief prayer and decided that confidence was my best strategy—something I have continued to employ since then. I smiled and walked through the door to my left. With a lot of relief, the door opened into a room of my colleagues. Crisis averted—although, in hindsight, maybe any coverage is good coverage, as they say.

I remember my first night sitting in this place. The 2015 parliament was a minority government. During my first night in parliament we debated a confidence motion. The early party room meeting at 7 am was very exciting. As an aside, I can confidently state that I no longer find 7 am meetings very exciting at all. The opposition was keen for the debate to continue as long as possible. I recall looking at the speaking list and seeing my name. After doing some rough calculations I realised I could potentially be giving my first speech at around 4 am or 5 am the next day. After going into the very early hours of the morning, I may have just drifted off during the final speech from the Premier. I am fairly sure I got a simultaneous elbow from both the member for Pine Rivers and the member for Morayfield sitting beside me. Premier, I confess it was only for a few seconds and I can assure you it was the only time I fell asleep during one of your speeches.

An early introduction to the art of the filibuster came for me during the debate on the Farm Business Debt Mediation Bill. I was on the speaking list but was assured by the whip, the member for Bancroft at the time, that there were plenty of speakers and I would not have to speak on that particular bill. The minister was the legendary Bill Byrne, a fellow Rocky boy. Debate continued long into the night. I was in the member's bar drinking a coffee—or perhaps something a bit stronger—when Bill burst in shouting 'Peggy'. He seemed really happy to see me. He had found out I was on the committee and therefore could speak for 20 minutes on his bill.

Employing the skills I had developed as a legal advocate, I made the case to Bill that I was only briefly on the committee and had not prepared a speech as the whip had told me I could be off the speaking list. I thought this was a really convincing argument. Because we were a minority government negotiations were ongoing. Bill needed me to speak, but assured me that I would not have to do the full 20 minutes. He just needed me to start speaking and he would signal when I could cut the speech.

I did ask Bill if he could arrange some notes and he said yes, so I got up to speak. As it turned out, Bill's notes amounted to bits and pieces he was finding from previous speeches, which he would periodically place on my lectern as I was speaking. Every time I looked at him, instead of giving me the wind-up signal he nodded his head in encouragement. The opposition members worked out what was going on, cheering me and even shouting to give me an extension after 20 interminable minutes. As I finished, Bill said, 'You're a legend Peggy,' and I briefly thought the speech was not actually too bad. When I walked past the adviser's box, my friend Fiona McNamara let me know in no uncertain terms her assessment of my speech. Let's just say her view was diametrically opposed to the minister's.

Parliamentary committees are important to scrutinise legislation, visit rural and regional communities and make the parliament accessible to all Queenslanders. They also do help you to get to know some opposition members better. I always seemed to be on the same committee as the member for Scenic Rim and shared some enjoyable times with those opposite. I think he was following me rather than the other way round. To the member for Condamine I say that I still have photographs of your musical performance on one particularly memorable trip to Alice Springs. Do not worry, I will not be tabling those; your secret is safe with me.

One of the biggest ever committee inquiries was for the Stradbroke island bill, and rightly so. There was a huge number of stakeholders, and we had hearings from morning until late into the evening. We visited in the low season and, after one night's hearings, the other committee members and I expressed disappointment that there was not a beer or other beverage accessible after a very long day of hearings.

The next night, after another long day of hearings, Brett Nutley, the former liaison officer of this parliament, told me some very good news. When we got into the van to return to the accommodation, he proudly said he had managed to source some beers. I could not see them anywhere in the van and asked where he had put them. 'In the seafood boxes,' he said. When we arrived let's just say it was the foulest smelling beer I have ever had, and that is coming from someone whose father was and still is a very keen fisherman. I have to say that they still tasted bloody good though!

Mr Speaker, I thank you for indulging me in sharing a few memories of this place. I would ask for your continuing indulgence to reflect on some of my proudest achievements both locally and as a part of the Palaszczuk Labor government.

In my maiden speech I spoke about the transformational power of education and I reflected on that in my own life. I am a proud product of state schooling, both primary and secondary. I have four brothers who are all here today—three of whom are triplets. Unfortunately, I am not a special triplet. I have managed to get over that through the years! Before I was elected to parliament, I was fortunate enough to work as a lawyer. I have one brother who is a doctor, one who is an accountant, one who is a journalist and one who serves in the Air Force and in fact recently served in Egypt.

State schooling has been a very important part of my life. I think it is a very important component of what we do as a state government. In the electorate of Stretton we have seen a huge investment in our local schools. I am extremely proud of the tens of millions of dollars in extra funding for local schools that I have secured during my time as the member for Stretton. We have a new performing arts centre at Stretton State College. We have new school buildings at Sunnybank Hills State School, Stretton State College and Runcorn Heights State School. We have a new op shop at Kuraby Special School. We have had a new learning centre and upgraded facilities at Kuraby State School. We have also had major upgrades at Runcorn State High School. I could go on, but what is important is what these investments really mean. What they mean is better learning outcomes and opportunities for our young people so they can achieve the best outcomes in life, because young people are our future.

I am also very proud to have helped deliver the biggest road project in the history of our local area when we improved local access to the Gateway and Logan Motorway and upgrades to Beaudesert and Wembley roads, which I know you were involved in as treasurer, Mr Speaker. I am also very proud to have achieved a much needed dedicated left turn from Macquarie Way onto Wembley Road in Drewvale. I know locals really value that.

The good news for locals is that I have been working on improving our local roads and public transport even further. There will be new and upgraded bus stops on Gowan Road in the near future and we have also committed to improve the intersection between Beaudesert Road and Illaweenah Street. What do these projects mean? First and foremost, they enhance safety and save lives. Also, very importantly, they help locals get to where they need to go more efficiently so they can spend more time with loved ones.

Speaking of roads, I was really proud, as honourable members would know, to stand beside locals as we fought the ridiculous decision of the BCC to close Illaweenah Street back in 2017. It was a tough fight, but we prevailed against the odds.

When local Kuraby father Hazem Hamouda was thrown into prison in Egypt on no charges, I worked with his family and his lawyers to help secure his release. After a year of fighting, we reunited Hazem with his family and our community.

Most important of all though, I am proud of our community. I have lived in the electorate of Stretton almost my entire adult life. It is a very unique part of Queensland. The usual conventions and rules do not always apply in my local area, but that is what I think makes it special. It is the most multicultural electorate in the state and that energy and drive shines through in our community. We are fortunate in our local area to have so many community minded people, and I value the friendships I have made with so many. I am proud we have worked together through the good times and the challenging times to make our fantastic community even better.

Statewide, I am proud to have been part of a Palaszczuk Labor government that has made Queensland a better place—increased funding for our schools, more hospitals, more frontline workers, supporting jobs, protecting the environment, improving workers compensation and supporting our multicultural communities.

I think there are two key factors in the success of the Palaszczuk government both electorally and in continuing to make our state a better place. Firstly is the leadership of the Premier. Having watched her at close quarters and in the community for over six years, I can say she has an extraordinary ability to connect with Queenslanders. The Premier does it in a way that is different from her predecessors. She does it in a modern way, and I have been very proud to have served under her leadership.

The other key factor is that this is a government that says what it is going to do and then does it. That sounds pretty simple in theory, but in practice few governments have been able to stick to this principle. I believe that with these two factors this government can continue to work with Queenslanders to make our state even better and will continue to achieve electoral success.

Mr Speaker, I am sure by this point it is obvious that I am incredibly proud to be a part of this government. I am proud of all we have achieved. As part of my final contribution to this place, I would like to sketch out some ideas that I hope will provide inspiration for the future.

The voluntary assisted dying debate will come up this year and there will be a conscience vote. I would very much have liked to have been a part of this debate but unfortunately that is not going to happen. I speak as someone who has been fighting cancer for 18 months, regularly attends a cancer centre and speaks to cancer patients with a terminal illness. Let us be very clear. People with terminal illnesses do not want to die; they want to live. They fight to live every day. I personally fight to live every day. There are so many positive stories of people successfully fighting cancer.

However, if you are diagnosed as terminal then ultimately you are going to face death. People with terminal illnesses want to have an option. I will not tell members how to make a conscience vote, but before making a decision I encourage every MP in this place to make sure they speak to, and listen to, people with terminal illnesses and their families. I think if you do that you will get a clear consensus view.

Having experienced cancer, I realise how important it is for patients and their families to have support. We do well in Queensland, but there is always room to improve. We need to continue to invest in research and do everything we can to fight this insidious disease. Despite many treatments for cancer being covered by Medicare and the public health system, there are still treatments that are not covered and therefore result in out-of-pocket expenses. These include genomic testing, non-PBS medications and other treatments. For instance, genomic testing is \$6,000 to \$7,000 out of pocket and not normally covered by the public system or by Medicare. This testing can uncover treatment that can save and also prolong lives. Bill Shorten was on the right track at the last election when he talked about these issues. I have told Bill that and encouraged him and federal Labor to continue with this fight.

The other issue I wanted to mention is in relation to superannuation insurance. For most people with terminal illnesses, their insurance comes from their superannuation policy. Most of us have benefits for income protection, total permanent disability and death. Let's face it: most people who have those policies probably do not look at them in detail. The standard policy means that those diagnosed with a terminal illness generally have no access to TPD and income protection and can simply just access the death benefit early. Most people want to preserve this to support their families which is understandable. Clearly, people need to know this in advance and have other insurance options flagged with them. I think this is vitally important.

As all members of this House are aware, we are in the midst of an unprecedented challenge that will have long-lasting health, economic and social effects. While the recovery is underway, the road ahead is long. It will take patience, bipartisanship and new ideas. It is the biggest policy challenge we face. I encourage all members of this House to apply themselves to this task. I will be cheering you on. If everyone in this place is committed to the best interests of Queenslanders, I am sure we can get through—and I know the recovery is underway.

Finally, I want to speak about the perceptions of parliament and politicians. I know that is an issue close to home for everybody sitting here in this House. I think all of us in this place realise that the public is increasingly cynical about politics. I get that and it is justified in some respects. Despite this, I know that there are many people here who work very hard in this place. There is a great deal of bipartisan work on committees as we argue over what is best for the state.

All of the members I know are passionate about their communities. We always need to work to respect the institution of parliament and resist the temptation to buy into this cynicism. We need people engaged in politics and public life because it leads to better outcomes. Everyone needs to keep that in mind in everything they do.

I have saved the thankyou's until last for obvious reasons. First and foremost I want to thank my family: my Mum and Dad and my brothers Grant, Graham, Cameron and Lachlan, who are here today. I also want to thank my extended family who have stepped in and supported particularly my parents to enable them to support me. Can I say to my family members that I could not ask for better support. Thank you so much. I also want to thank Reena Augustine for all the support you have given me during such a challenging time.

I want to thank members of this House: first and foremost the Premier, for her support both as the member for Stretton and personally while I have been undergoing this terrible fight. Premier, your support has been unbelievable and I thank you from the bottom my heart. Mr Speaker, I also want to

thank you for your advice, friendship and support. I know that your family has experienced the challenges of cancer firsthand, and I really appreciate our discussions and the fact that I knew I could contact you at any time.

To the Deputy Premier, whom I have known since I was 17: thank you for your friendship over many years. To Minister Furner, Minister Grace and Minister Dick, who were friends of mine before I entered parliament: thank you. I do want to thank my great mate, the member for Capalaba. I hope he is not crying over there. Not only did he step in to take over some of my committee work this parliament but he has been a great mate and such a great support. I also want to thank the member for Bancroft, who quietly took over some of my committee work during the last parliament. He got in and got the job done, and that meant a lot to me.

To the members for Pine Rivers, Maryborough, Cook and Logan: thank you for your support. I also want to thank all of my colleagues from this side of the House. You have given me unbelievable and tremendous support.

On the other side of the House—just foreshadowing that I am about to say something good about the member for Nanango—I do want to thank both the member for Nanango and the member for Broadwater for making it clear that pairs would be offered when needed for treatment. You both made that really clear to me at the outset and it really set my mind at ease. I thank you both personally for that.

To all those on the other side of the House: you have generously given me words of encouragement and support, sometimes quietly. I want you to know how much that has meant to me as well. It has really given me a lot of encouragement, and I thank you sincerely for that. Thank you to my local federal MPs, Jim Chalmers and Graham Perrett.

I want to thank my current staff: James Martin, Reem Al-Qahtani and Snow Duan. Hopefully I have not been too difficult for you over the years. I want to thank my former staff: Emily Kim, Edward Lei, Emily Hansell, Khiraan Kumar, Jessica Pugh and Ruby Chen—one of the highlights of the member for Mount Ommaney's career, no doubt. We welcome you back any time.

I want to thank Clinton DeBruyn, Merric Foley, Jacques Develder and Monique Biealanowski—the gang from the Griffith Uni Labor Club days. They remain fantastic friends and supporters of mine. I also want to thank Nicole Fitzgibbon, Kevin Court and Troy Reeves. A big thank you to Greg Moran, my biggest mentor in politics.

I also want to thank the doctors, nurses and staff at the Cyril Gilbert Cancer Centre, Greenslopes Hospital and the PA Hospital. I particularly want to thank my oncologist, Dr Warren Joubert, for everything he has done for me and his good humour while doing so. It always helps that he is also a cricket fan.

Thank you to Usman Khawaja and Dave Nilsson—otherwise known as 'Dingo'—two Queensland sporting legends and even better blokes who have provided me with personal support when I have needed it.

Thank you to everyone who has supported my election over the course of four campaigns. I particularly want to thank Labor members and supporters: David Pass, Lewis Lee OAM, Johnson Chen, Andrew Soter, Chris and Judy Hardy, Navneeta Hinz, Meripa and David Weir, Teng and Michael Murray, Jason MacAulay, Vince Kartelo, Sam Sciacca, Ganesh Selva, the Glaros family—too many to mention—Helena Langton, Ali Kadri, Deb Hodder, David Kelly, Ryan and Adam Chappell—my new favourite Chappell brothers—Manting Chen, Fahima Ahmadi, Neha Pauly, the La Maccia family, Prakruthi Guraj, Victor Yang, Angelo Economou and Jamal El-Kholed.

In conclusion, I am really going to miss this place. I am very lucky to have been able to work on so many important things and develop so many important friendships with people in this House. While I will no longer be here in person, rest assured I will always be here in spirit supporting good ideas that benefit the great people of Queensland. To paraphrase one of our late, great premiers—who was also one of my inspirations for getting interested in politics—a big thank you to the people of Stretton and the members of this House. You have been good to me. I hope I have left you a better place. I am really going to miss everyone. Thank you.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, given the last speech by the member for Stretton, I will excuse all of you for not being quiet while I stood up. Member for Stretton, this place will miss you too.