




Speech By
Adam Baillie

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr BAILLIE** (Townsville—LNP) (3.23 pm): It is with great pleasure that I rise today in this 58th Parliament as the member for Townsville to deliver my maiden speech. Congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on your election to such high and important office. Your leadership will ensure that our parliamentary proceedings are conducted with the utmost respect and fairness.

It is a tremendous privilege to represent the proud people of Townsville, Magnetic Island and Palm Island. I am deeply honoured and humbled to address this parliament as the member for Townsville. Although I never anticipated I would ever be a member of parliament, the honour is not lost on me. Townsville is a proud electorate that believes in a fair go and that hard work leads to success. These are beliefs I share wholeheartedly.

I grew up in a small country town in Victoria with a close-knit population of 1,200 people. While Townsville's population is significantly larger, it retains the charm and spirit of a small country town. The residents are welcoming and polite and form a passionate and proud community. I have been part of the Townsville community through drought, flood and cyclone. In every instance, when we have been tested our community spirit has shone through.

I have been fortunate to be exposed to many different industries and skill sets from a young age. I acknowledge my father, his willingness to have a go and his guidance. From age 12, I was manufacturing electrical test equipment, an invention of my father's, at home. I took on tasks such as marking, etching and drilling circuit board, soldering and installing the components, applying decals, testing and packing for shipment. Over the years, I worked on cars with my father for pocket money and, once I was old enough, I gained employment at a local pasta factory.

Later, I moved to Melbourne and worked at a fast-food store in a busy shopping centre while completing my university degree. I studied and earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. After graduating, I embarked on my career with Caterpillar in their product marketing department. For the next decade, I worked for a global manufacturing company in their building construction products division serving local contractors and collaborating closely with the manufacturing team, dealers and end-user customers.

Our division was dedicated to seeking opportunities to improve efficiency and effectiveness while growing market share. In our department, we constantly challenged the status quo by implementing new or improved solutions and processes. I learned the importance of not making assumptions when diagnosing a problem and that to resolve symptoms one must at first identify and address the root cause. I look forward to applying this same mindset while contributing in this role.

During my tenure at Caterpillar, I travelled extensively both domestically and internationally. Over the years, my wife and I started our family, however the demands of frequent and long trips were becoming incompatible with our desires for our young family. I vividly remember a specific instance when our eldest was two years old and we had just welcomed our second child, who was one month

old. I departed for a month-long trip to the US. Although Skype allowed us to stay in touch, it could not alleviate the challenges my wife faced at home with two children under three. Upon my return, I found my eldest playing with blocks while my wife watched over her while preparing dinner. As I peered through the glass sliding doors and knocked, my wife asked, 'Charlotte, where's daddy?' Our two-year-old dropped her blocks and ran off. We did not know where she had gone until I found her in the study excitedly pointing at the blank commuter screen, saying, 'Daddy. Daddy.' It was that moment that we decided it was time for change.

My parents had moved to Cardwell several years earlier, located two hours north of Townsville, where they operated an electrical and refrigeration contracting business. During one of their visits to Melbourne, we discussed the future. I was seeking an opportunity to do something different while the kids were young allowing me to be home every night. My father, on the other hand, was looking to eventually relocate to Townsville for closer proximity to entertainment and medical care.

I always liked the idea of working for myself although, due to earlier career choices, I thought it would likely be in a consulting capacity. However, during that visit, we decided to go into partnership—I would build a business in Townsville and my father would take me on as an apprentice. I resigned from Caterpillar and relocated to Townsville within the next few months. My wife and I knew it was going to get harder before it got easier. All our customers and work were in Cardwell while my family and home were in Townsville. For the next two years, I would either commute or stay away, gaining the necessary hours and experience to complete my electrical apprenticeship. It was a tough couple of years with me working away every week.

Once I gained my qualifications as an electrician, I began marketing in Townsville. We designed a brand, printed business cards and started doorknocking on Charters Towers Road. That was the beginning of Elec-Air Townsville. Today we still serve several customers from that first day of doorknocking and over time the business has grown, as have my trade qualifications. We built a reputation for doing what we said we would do when we were going to do it and ensuring it works at the end. We proudly serve hundreds of local homeowners and businesses.

As a small business owner, I know how many unpaid hours hide behind each billable hour. Early mornings are spent quoting and scheduling followed by client visits, completing jobs during business hours and then restocking and invoicing at the end of the day as the sun goes down. I understand that when material prices and overheads increase small business owners often absorb those costs, reducing their profit margins until it becomes absolutely necessary to pass on the increase to their customers.

Just like many other small business owners, I have grown accustomed to the uncertainty of having visibility for only another week or two of income. I have gained the confidence that the phone will always ring and, regardless of the circumstances, I will find a way to pay the mortgage and to put food on the table. As a business operator, I do not consider it success merely to win or start a job but to see it through to completion and ensure the end result is as intended. When our customers engage us, they expect the project to be completed on time every time and on budget. We strive to meet that expectation. However, we live in the real world and sometimes the unexpected happens. When unexpected complications arise, we pause, discuss options with the impacted parties and move forward with a modified plan. I know the importance of communication and transparency.

As a tradie, customers only call when something is wrong and they need help. We often get a call to a job with a brief description of an issue and no idea what the root cause is. There is an expectation that we will be able to fix it, and if we cannot fix it ourselves then we are expected to know who can or at the very least provide advice on the best options moving forward. We enter this situation willingly multiple times a day.

Serving our community as a trade contractor has been extremely fulfilling. However, while on site other common issues began being raised with me. I would be at a customer's home or place of work and while addressing the issue I was called there to resolve they would talk about other issues that were impacting their lives. I have been present when a customer received a call from a distraught daughter who had her car stolen, wondering how she was going to get to work and her daughter—my customer's granddaughter—to day care. We would often be amongst the first to get called after a street had been impacted by youth crime, with customers wanting additional lighting or security cameras.

I have seen the city change over the last 10 years. When I started building the business in Townsville I would call a customer and advise I was on my way, and it was not uncommon for them to respond by saying, 'Thank you. Nobody's home but the door is unlocked so just let yourself in.' Contrast that with today, where I arrive onsite to hear the door locks unlocking while I wait to be greeted by the customer. Once invited in, the door is locked behind me. Residents are living in fear.

After sharing their stories, customers would say to me, 'Somebody needs to do something about this,' and I would agree. Eventually, I began looking for who that person could be and thought, 'Why not me?' All my working life I have made a living by improving or fixing things so I made some inquiries and put my hand up to run as a candidate for the seat of Townsville. During the campaign I knocked on thousands of doors across every residential suburb in Townsville. I heard the same complaints. This was in line with what I had heard from my customers for years.

During the campaign I learned just how diverse the electorate of Townsville is—from the port to the Bohle industrial precinct, the Strand to the stadium, hospitals, schools, retail centres and, of course, the CBD. Adding to the diversity is the inclusion of Magnetic Island and Palm Island, each with their own wants and needs. While Townsville is suffering from a crisis of youth crime, both Magnetic Island and Palm Island are more concerned with other issues.

Magnetic Island residents feel forgotten. Key infrastructure is run down. We must first focus on the basics with a view toward the future to see Magnetic Island reach its full potential. Palm Island residents want the opportunity to own their own homes. I look forward to working with the Palm Island council to find a solution that will enable residents to purchase the homes they grew up in. To support home ownership there needs to be a thriving economy—one that brings money and opportunities to the island, one that facilitates skills growth and training on the island rather than requiring residents to leave for the mainland.

Palm Island is blessed with natural beauty, much like Magnetic Island and other stunning parts of the world. What sets Palm Island apart is its rich history. By embracing and sharing its history, we can attract visitors who want to hear these stories firsthand. Developing ecotourism assets such as walking tracks will give visitors a reason to stay longer and support local jobs. Visitors will come to hear stories, stay to see the island and immerse themselves in its rich culture. By working successfully with the community we can build a unique tourism offering found nowhere else in the world.

The entire Townsville electorate has immense potential, with no shortage of opportunities. I look forward to working with the community, aligning efforts across all levels of government as well as private industry and investors to deliver for our electorate. Over the last seven months since I was endorsed as the candidate for Townsville we have done a lot of talking, the entire time offering solutions. Now I am honoured to be in a position to help deliver. The residents of Townsville have voiced their concerns about youth crime, housing availability, energy prices, insurance increases and the state of the healthcare system, and we listened. Put in contractor terms, we visited site, provided a quote with a scope of work, detailed our plans and the costs involved, and the Townsville electorate gave us the contract. Now we can get to work and deliver solutions.

It will not be easy. As with any large job, I expect there will be variations required as we go, but, just like my previous career, we will continue calmly and methodically, maintaining a healthy respect for the budget with a focus to achieve the end goal. The campaign was a valuable experience—a form of training; an apprenticeship—but we were not in a position to implement change directly. Now the Townsville electorate has awarded us the job and I intend to deliver.

I am only in this position to deliver our commitments due to the support of those around me. I want to say thank you to the people who believed in me and to the party members who supported my endorsement as their candidate. Thank you to my campaign manager, Paul. Your calm approach, dedication and leadership provided our campaign team the ability to focus on what was important. We would have been lost without you. Thank you for all the hours and sleepless nights you put in to getting us over the line. Thank you also to my incredible campaign team who met early every week for the duration of the campaign—Nate, John, David and Artie. Thank you to all of our volunteers who helped during this campaign, whether it be on the roadside, market stalls, letterbox drops, pre-polling and on election day. I want to particularly thank Dino, Brandan, Sandra, Gay, Kent, Jenny, Laura, Judy, Shane, Christian and Barry, who turned up every week during the campaign. Sincere apologies if I have missed anyone.

In addition, I would like to thank my fellow candidates for Thuringowa and Mundingburra and our coordination team led by Drew. We set out to win all three seats and to do that took communication, discipline and teamwork. We got to know each other extremely well during the campaign and I look forward to continuing our close working relationship now that we are in government and can focus on doing what is best across our electoral boundaries.

To my mother, Luran, and father, Darryl, who join us here today: thank you for all the support over the years. Your support, love and constant encouragement have shaped me into the person I am today. The guidance and opportunities you have provided have been instrumental in our family finding its way to Townsville and ultimately to this new role.

To my wife, Joanne: thank you for your unwavering support and love. Your encouragement and belief in me have been my greatest source of strength. Thank you for standing by my side through every challenge and triumph. Your patience, understanding and kindness mean the world to me. I am incredibly lucky to have you as my wife and I am grateful for every moment we share together. Your support has made all the difference and I could not have done it without you.

To my daughters, Charlotte, Annabelle and Sienna: everything I do is for you. Your kindness, creativity and resilience inspire me every day to strive to be a better person. I am so proud of each of you and the unique individuals you are becoming. Thank you for being such wonderful helpers during the campaign, roadsiding every weekend and understanding that sometimes dad was not available for you when you needed. I know that what we are entering as a family is not going to be easy and will require more sacrifice from all of us, but know that I will be doing my best to provide you and generations to come with a more prosperous and safer city in a Queensland with more opportunities than we have today.

Lastly, to the constituents of the Townsville electorate: thank you for electing me as your representative. Throughout the campaign, I had the privilege of meeting many of you, listening to your concerns and visions for our future. Your stories have inspired me and will guide my actions in this parliament. The role of a member of parliament is to represent their community, and to do that one must be available to the community for feedback. I will continue to make myself available during my time as your representative, and I will work tirelessly on your behalf, listen to your voice and advocate for the issues that matter most to you. Together, we will strive to build a better, more inclusive and prosperous future for all.