



Speech By  
**Duncan Pegg**

**MEMBER FOR STRETTON**

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### MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr PEGG** (Stretton—ALP) (9.17 pm): I would like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners and pay my respects to elders past, present and future. I want to place on record my thanks to the people of Stretton for their support. I promise that I will always be your faithful servant. I also congratulate all members of the 55th Parliament who were successful at the election and have the privilege of representing their respective electorates.

I rise today as a very proud member of the Palaszczuk Labor government in this great state of Queensland. Now, more than ever, Queensland needs a Labor government. Now, more than ever, my local area needs a Labor government. Seventeen years ago I made our local area my home, and I have lived in and around our local area for most of my life since then. I can remember dropping my triplet brothers off to work at Sunnybank Hills Shoppingtown back when the Calamvale Central Shopping Centre was still a grassy field. From those beginnings, I have seen Stretton grow into a modern, diverse, multicultural area. I always say you can eat your way around the world if you live in my local area. It truly is a place where you can have a diversity of experiences.

We have many fantastic and hardworking people in my local community throughout so many different community groups. I saw this quite clearly at my official office opening back in March. Present we had representatives of local P&Cs, Meals on Wheels, the Karawatha Forest Protection Society, the Men's Shed, and, of course, representatives of the many multicultural groups we have in our local area. I also want to thank the Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services and Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games for being in attendance.

My electorate of Stretton has the highest proportion of people born overseas in the state. It has the highest proportion of people speaking a language other than English at home of any electorate in this state. It is a place where Chinese Lunar New Year, Eid al-Fitr and Diwali are celebrated in the community along with Easter and Christmas. It truly is a fantastic place to live with so much cultural celebration. When discussing multiculturalism, I think the words of the late prime minister Malcolm Fraser in his speech to the Institute of Multicultural Affairs on 30 November 1981 are particularly appropriate. He said—

Multiculturalism is concerned with far more than the passive toleration of diversity. It sees diversity as a quality to be actively embraced, a source of social wealth and dynamism. It encourages groups to be open and to interact, so that all Australians may learn and benefit from each other's heritages. Multiculturalism is about diversity, not division—it is about interaction not isolation.

I see the practical manifestation of these sentiments every day in my local area and will continue to work hard to ensure that we continue to embrace diversity. I am very proud to be part of a Labor government that has a clear commitment to the advancement of multicultural principles in Queensland. I am proud to be part of a government that has a clear commitment to making sure that state government service delivery and state government policy better meets the needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities in this state and, in particular, in my local area.

I am very proud to be part of a government that will introduce a multicultural Queensland charter and establish a Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council. This Multicultural Queensland Advisory Council will serve to both advise and provide recommendations to the minister in the development and implementation of government policies in relation to multiculturalism. Those policies will entrench Queensland as a welcoming place and an inclusive place for all people—no matter what cultural background they are from, no matter what linguistic background they have, no matter what religious beliefs they hold.

My support for a multicultural agenda has been a guiding light in my political life. I joined the Labor party in 1998, when I was 17 years old. One of the main reasons I chose to join Labor was that I wanted to provide a voice against the rise of Hansonism. The rise of Hansonism and One Nation saw a very different, and a very ugly, side of Queensland begin to emerge. Queenslanders deserved better than that ugly type of politics, and Queenslanders deserved better than the Borbidge led National Party government that pandered to it. Queenslanders are fundamentally decent, tolerant people. They deserved better from their politicians.

In the Queensland I knew, as long as you enjoyed a barbeque, a sunny day outdoors and did not take yourself too seriously, you were part of the family. At university I had many friends from a huge diversity of backgrounds. They were good, hardworking, decent people. They deserved better than Hanson's ignorant, anti-immigration attacks.

Labor has had a longstanding position that it will place One Nation and other like-minded parties last on how-to-vote cards. Labor was the first party that took this principled position. This was one of the key reasons I joined the Labor Party: to provide a voice against this type of politics. It was also a bit personal. My mother was also a migrant—from Scotland. Like so many members of my local area, she chose to move to Australia to make a life for herself.

I spoke earlier about my electorate having the highest proportion of people born overseas and the highest proportion of people speaking a language other than English at home in the state. The seat of Stretton also has the highest proportion of Queenslanders identifying Islam as their religion in this state. Over time I have got to know local Islamic leaders well. With people of the calibre of Ismail Cajee, President of the Islamic Council of Queensland, providing strong leadership in this state, I know that there is community minded leadership in place. However, despite the support for multiculturalism and diversity in this state, it cannot be denied that there are still challenges to be faced. Unfortunately, there have been two attacks on mosques in Queensland in recent times. It is vitally important that all of us in this place, both inside and outside the chamber, condemn such attacks on places of worship and continue to defend the right of all Queenslanders to practise their religion peacefully. In this regard, I commend the member for Toowoomba South for the remarks he made in his adjournment speech yesterday evening.

Our local area has a great tradition of engagement and a great sense of community. In addition to our strong local multicultural communities, I would also like to acknowledge the work of the local Lions Clubs, the many P&Cs, Multicap and the Kyabra Community Association. Talking to my friends and colleagues from across Brisbane, I am often struck by a sense of what a great, close-knit community we have in Stretton. I can honestly say that I do not think you see the same level of community activity anywhere else in our state. It is these local organisations that provide the glue to hold our community together.

I would like to single out the Karawatha Forest Protection Society. The area that I represent not only has fantastic community minded people but also is an area of natural beauty. Karawatha Forest is an important part of my local environment. It is a place of rugged beauty and, as one of the largest areas of remnant bushland in Brisbane, needs to be protected. Protecting our natural resources and the environment is important now more than ever when we see threats to great natural resources such as the Great Barrier Reef.

Having a great natural resource like the forest in your backyard really reminds you of how important it is to conserve these natural wonders. It does not matter whether it is the Daintree, Kakadu, the Great Barrier Reef, the Murray-Darling or Karawatha Forest: they all add their piece to our national environment. The members of the Karawatha Forest Protection Society do a fantastic job in protecting this important natural resource and bringing relevant issues and concerns to the attention of the government, the Brisbane City Council and the broader public. The Karawatha Forest Protection Society also organises some fantastic bush walks, and I look forward to participating in more of them in the future.

My local area needs Labor values: the Labor value that says that all people who work hard and play by the rules deserve to get ahead in life and the Labor value that says that education is an investment, not something to be cut at will. Labor has a proud history of delivering opportunity to

families, particularly in the areas of health and education. These policies provide the platform for generations of keen minds to study and obtain a tertiary education, enabling world-class discoveries to occur, the platform for families to save and plan for retirement, and the most important platform of all, free and equal access to the best health system in the world. These are values that say, 'If you come from a working middle-class family but you study and work hard you can have the same opportunity as anyone else.'

I believe in these values, because I know them from my own life. I am one of five boys, so you can imagine growing up would have been interesting in our household. We were a working-class family, but we had parents who knew the value of education. I am sure my mother, who is here tonight, would tell you that it is not easy getting five teenage boys to do their homework each night. But they showed that with sacrifice comes success, so we all studied and worked hard, with our family eventually producing a doctor, lawyer, accountant, soldier and marketing specialist.

I believe in the transformational power of education. I want others to have the opportunity I had. I believe that everyone who is willing to work hard and play by the rules should have a fair go in life. But it is not enough to just say that. Education is an investment. It is an investment by the child, the parents, the local community and the country.

I am a proud product of state schooling, and I am very happy to see the clear commitment that this government has made to employing more teachers in state schools between 2016 and 2018 and ensuring that class sizes are returned to a more manageable level. I know from my own experience and that of my family and friends that these policies will support our students, support our young children and help ensure that others have had the opportunities that I have had.

The other key component in a fair society is providing employment opportunities. The level of unemployment under the previous government was unacceptably high and youth unemployment is unacceptably high in my local area. If someone is willing to work, able to work, and wants a job, we should help them find one. I am very proud to be part of a government that has a clear focus on jobs. To achieve this necessitates job creation by identifying the growth industries of the future and making sure that we have a skilled workforce in order to meet this demand.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work has been proven to deliver real opportunities for Queenslanders. An independent evaluation has demonstrated that each dollar spent on Skilling Queenslanders for Work generated nearly \$8 in return. That is a great return in anyone's language. Young people and the long-term unemployed need access to real jobs as well as the support and training to get there. Skilling Queenslanders for Work will provide the opportunity for a pathway for work.

There is a lot of talk about jobs in politics these days. But when politicians talk about jobs, what are they talking about? Let us think about this for a moment. It is a fact of life in Australia these days that many people have a casual job where at around 5 pm every day they get a phone call, a text message or an email telling them whether they have a shift the next day. This is a fact of life for many Australian families, living day to day and waiting around every night for that phone call or email. There is no certainty in their life and they can only plan one day ahead.

Talking about jobs is more than just statistics. It is more than a number on a sheet of paper. It is more than a headline. When Labor talks about job creation, we mean good jobs, we mean jobs that come with permanency, fair pay, security and rights. We mean jobs that allow you to plan for your family's future and jobs that are underpinned by a system that protects your rights at work and looks after you if you get hurt at work.

It was while working as a solicitor that I came to fully realise the importance of having an effective system of workers compensation in this state. The previous government introduced thresholds that have restricted the ability of those who are injured at work to make common law damages claims. We are talking about people who have been injured at work through no fault of their own who have had their access to compensation severely curtailed. Of course, those most likely to suffer an injury at work are those workers who are in manual occupations. I know from my professional background that suffering an injury at work can be devastating at both a professional and a personal level.

It is devastating at a professional level because an injury can mean that an injured worker is unable to undertake the job they have performed for many years. It may mean they have to change jobs to a lesser role or, worse, it may mean that they have no job at all they can fulfil with their employer. Workplace injuries can also be devastating at a personal level for the injured person and their family. This is particularly the case where there are dependent children. It can cause a great deal of financial and emotional distress to the injured person and their family.

During the 2012 election campaign, I got a call from one of my former clients who lived in the local area. A few years earlier, he was at work and suffered a back injury. He came to our firm and we worked together to manage his case and help him get compensation for his injury. The injury was serious enough that he was barred from continuing in that type of work. After he received compensation, my role as his solicitor ended.

I had not seen or heard from him in many years. Until he called me that day, I did not realise how much that support and the compensation at that time had helped. It gave him and his family some financial breathing room so he could retrain into a new occupation. He could support his family while he retrained, and then he found employment in a new field. Because he had that breathing space, he was once again at a point where he could support his family, earn a decent living and make a contribution to his local area. The injury was not assessed at being above the five per cent impairment threshold so under the current scheme he would have lost that support. I do not know what would have happened—maybe he would have worked on in pain every day; maybe he would have given up. Every Queenslander benefits from effective workplace compensation because every Queenslander can go to work knowing that there is a safety net if they get hurt.

I find it unbelievable that currently in this state we have a situation where a person who is injured at work through no fault of their own can find themselves unable to work due to their injury yet not be able to make a common law claim if they do not meet the thresholds introduced by the previous government. I know from my background representing injured people on workers compensation matters how devastating this can be. I very much look forward to these changes being reversed and fairness being restored for injured workers in this state.

It would not be a first speech if I did not end with a round of thanks. I spoke earlier about what a strong community we have locally and I want to personally thank my friend Lewis Lee OAM for always being such a strong source of support. Lewis is a fixture in our local community and does a tremendous amount of community work. I would like to thank the Hon. Con Sciacca for not only being my first employer on a full-time basis but also being such a tremendous source of advice and support over so many years. I also want to put on record my thanks to Sam Roberts, Greg Moran, Ben Swan and Peter Biagini. I also want to congratulate Anthony Chisholm and Evan Moorhead on the successful state campaign.

Local supporters work so hard in campaigns letterboxing, doorknocking, phoning local residents and handing out how-to-vote cards. The heat then storms and then hail on election day proved their commitment beyond doubt. I would like to particularly recognise James Martin, Merric Foley, Clinton DeBruyn, Chris and Judy Hardy, Khiraan Kumar, David Pass, David Shaw, Monique Bielanowski, Annette Curry, Elliott Thornton, David and Mirepa Weir, Jacques Develder, Tim Van Der Laan, Andrew and his family, Mark Mitchell, Adrienne Cremin, Sam Catanzariti-Smith, Sam Killorn, Eddie Lei, Shan Ju Lin, Stephanie Kameric, Joe Chick and Deb Hodder for all their hard work on the campaign. Thanks also to Marcus Feaver and Carl Melkonian, Annie and Richard.

I have been very fortunate to have two local federal members who have been great supporters and advisors. I have known Dr Jim Chalmers, the federal member for Rankin, since we were at Griffith University together 17 years ago. He has done a tremendous amount of work for the community in the short time he has been in the federal parliament thus far, and I look forward to working with him into the future. Graham Perrett, the federal member for Moreton, is a fantastic member who is truly in touch with our local community and has provided me with invaluable advice over many years. I also want to put on record my appreciation to the former councillor for Karawatha, Gail MacPherson, the former member for Capalaba, Michael Choi, and the former Speaker and member for Logan, John Mickel, for their advice and support. It is great to see former elected representatives who continue to be engaged in community issues and willing to assist so many.

I spoke earlier about my family and I am truly fortunate to have such a tremendous family who have provided me with such great support during the course of my life. I know that, unfortunately, not everyone is as lucky as me in that respect. Thanks, mum and dad, and brothers Cameron, Graham, Grant and Lachlan. Also, to my granny and Aunt Islay, thank you for supporting me so strongly. Speaking of my family, I got a fairly early experience of the importance of this government to the people of Queensland. It was a personal experience as my family were in the path of Cyclone Marcia. I want to thank the Premier for the fantastic work she has done for the repair and reconstruction and I thank all those who assisted in this effort.

As members would know, our partners make a lot of sacrifices to support the work that we do. I actually met my partner, Nicole, for the first time at Parliament House nine years ago up on level 7, so this will always be a very special place for me. Finally, I want to once again thank the people of Stretton for their support. I will always be your humble servant. You are my boss. I will not hesitate to stand up for you on important issues in this place.