



Speech by

# Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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## MAIDEN SPEECH

**Mr HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (5.44 pm): Rising in this place allows me to explore and serve my passions. Setting aside the obvious love for my own family, there are three ideas that I am truly passionate about: my local community, the Australian Labor Party and our democracy. Joining the 52nd Parliament as the Labor member for Stafford permits me the opportunity to serve those three passions and I sincerely thank the electors of Stafford for affording me this great privilege.

Mr Deputy Speaker, please extend my congratulations to the Speaker on being elected to his high and honoured office. As the 33rd Speaker, he will undoubtedly add a new chapter to the 146-year story of this House. My original training and my great personal interest in history provides me with what I regard as an extraordinary tool. History engenders an understanding that change is the normal state of affairs.

The Stafford electorate is at the heart of Brisbane's north side. Based on the suburbs of Stafford, Chermside and Kedron, it also includes Gordon Park, Stafford Heights and parts of West Chermside, Wavell Heights, Lutwyche, Wooloowin and Albion. Living in this part of the north side since I was four, I have come to appreciate that its history is one of continuing change drawn together by some fundamental elements of continuity.

Gympie Road has been the primary artery for the north side since its beginnings as the route for miners heading to the Gympie goldfields. Tram lines to Lutwyche, then later to Chermside and Stafford created commuter communities. Gympie Road's future is as a corridor where public transport has regained a primacy lost since the tram tracks were torn up. The Beattie government's northern busway and the TransLink system are a great start. Local retailers originally focused on provisioning Gympie miners and local farmers. The emergence of local suburbia led to the development of Australia's first American style shopping mall. Allan and Stark's Chermside drive-in was opened by then Premier Vince Gair in 1957.

Its future is already growing with an expanding Westfield Chermside. The Beattie government's South East Queensland Regional Plan recognises this commercial core as the north side's principal activity centre. Most early employment in the Stafford electorate was in noxious industries dotted around the district. This era ended with the closure of Gibson's Tannery and the redevelopment of that site as Stafford City Shopping Centre as late as 1982. A former member for Stafford and former lord mayor of Brisbane, Roy Harvey worked at the tannery. As those honourable members who knew him would confirm, the late Roy Harvey epitomised the work ethic and solidarity of a proud local working-class community. The ongoing future challenge is to promote local employment which will sustain such a community and culture. The Beattie government's nation-leading record on job creation and economic management sets the platform.

The postwar boom in local housing was underwritten by government. In the late 1940s, the Queensland Housing Commission began developing a large number of quality family homes in Stafford, Kedron and Chermside. Across the whole north side, many families achieved security and stability as public housing tenants. Many more were able to purchase their own homes through the Housing Commission loan scheme. Indeed, my parents-in-law, Bill and Shirley Clarke, were able to obtain a home

at Chermside and raise five fine children there. Population pressures on the whole of south-east Queensland raise acute concerns for maintaining housing affordability on the north side.

While not the only player in affordable housing, the Queensland government remains an important contributor through the Department of Housing's provision of a range of housing options; not just the traditional postwar family homes but also high-quality townhouses and units. The Beattie government's community renewal program in Stafford has indeed been particularly successful and I congratulate my predecessor and the honourable minister for housing on this program.

Since that housing boom of the 1950s, a number of institutions have arisen to meet the needs of the local community. Some have been government institutions enjoying significant community support such as the Prince Charles Hospital and the local state schools. Others have arisen from the community itself. During this current year, Kedron State High and the popular Franciscan colleges of Padua and Mount Alvernia have celebrated 50 years of schooling. Chermside Guides have also passed this milestone in 2006, with credit owed to Peggy Campbell and her team of leaders at Bradbury Park. Next year, in 2007, we will celebrate 50 years since the opening of Wavell State High School. At this point, I would like to pay tribute to the contribution of Cec Anstey, the first principal of Wavell High, whose home is still next door to the school. Cec has quietly made a significant mark on education and sport on the north side and throughout Queensland via various professional and volunteer roles.

The Prince Charles Hospital began in 1954 as the Chermside Chest Hospital. Today it is an internationally renowned beacon of modern medicine. It is a tertiary public hospital which, thanks to the Beattie Labor government's \$9.7 billion Health Action Plan, will next year begin to provide the full range of general hospital services to the north side community. As one of many hundreds who have contributed to this important institution, I acknowledge Professor Col Brennan, who not only began his medical training at the old Chest Hospital in 1954 but today continues to serve on the Prince Charles Hospital Foundation.

Of course, the Kedron-Wavell RSL Sub-Branch was established with a large number of returned men and women settling locally after the Second World War. Today the subbranch's associated services club—established in 1968—has a membership of over 25,000 and truly acts as a central hub for the local community. Significant credit is owed to Fraser Allom and Ken Mogg as drivers of this success. Similarly, over 1,500 members of the Burnie Brae Senior Citizens Centre access an array of services and activities thanks to a terrific band of workers and volunteers led by President Al Fielding. My own involvement in local organisations has given me the chance to work with genuine community contributors too numerous to name here but including Beverley Isdale, the Chermside and Districts Historical Society archivist, and Jack Pool, Chair of the Stafford Community Forum and President of the Stafford Meals On Wheels.

Many of the local success stories where government has played a key role can be directly attributed to my predecessor as the member for Stafford. Terry Sullivan contributed to the north side fully as an advisor and advocate for local community groups and institutions. After 15 years service to this parliament and to his constituents, there is much for him to be proud of. I will highlight three achievements. Firstly, the new Stafford Police Station, along with its new policing district, is a much-needed modern, responsive facility. Secondly, the redevelopment of the Prince Charles Hospital as a general hospital was something that Terry advocated doggedly for over 10 years. Thirdly, Terry's commitment to supporting and promoting public housing has resulted in better housing outcomes for local northsiders. For all of these things, on behalf of the community, I thank him.

However, I also need to thank Terry Sullivan for his efforts as my campaign director at the recent state election. As honourable members will understand, his tenacity and organisation provided terrific leadership to a campaign team which enjoyed a mixture of experience and enthusiasm. Drawing on the wonderful commitment of hundreds of members in five supportive local ALP branches, our team produced a faultless campaign. I extend my specific thanks to Judith Morgan-Dudley, Dave Mortleman, Mark Hopsick, Jane Fischer, Megan Dixon, Eileen Wood, Jim Sullivan, Melissa Thomas, Tom Houston and Ken Storey. I thank these supporters and the many others who assisted the Stafford campaign with the express aim of retaining a Labor member and re-electing a Labor government.

Over 17 years of my Labor Party membership, there are a number of people who have been tremendously encouraging and supportive. I want to place on record my appreciation for that support. I also want to reassure them that rising here today will be but a beginning in a continued effort to live up to their example, expectations and exaltations. In no particular order, I thank Paul Martyn, Wayne Swan, Mike Kaiser, Chris Simpson, Michael Wales, Cameron Milner, Joan Budd, Terry Hampson, Con Sciacca, Jim Soorley, Ray Hollis, Warren Pitt, Stacia Palaszczuk, Ken Macpherson, Jim Elder, Milton Dick, Victoria Newton, the late Bernie Green, Paul Lucas, Maureen Hayes, John Hogg, John Mickel, Faith Hopkins, Anthony Chisholm, Rosemary Hume, Mark Wellard, Bonny Barry, Gavin Brady, Anna Bligh, Peter Beattie and Bill Ludwig variously for their counsel, confidence and often comradeship.

It is no coincidence that all of these people were associated with me through the Labor Party. My passion for the Labor movement and the great Australian Labor Party is the link between my own community and the lofty abstract of democracy. Fundamentally, Labor is about protecting and improving

the life, conditions and opportunities for Queenslanders. Put plainly, that is good jobs, excellent education and support for families. The Australian Labor Party itself is an outstanding institution which has contributed greatly to our nation and our state. I see it as part of my task to contribute to it remaining ever so. I will bring my community and corporate experience to bear on this important task.

At the Property Council of Australia and more recently as an independent analyst I worked alongside leaders in the private sector facing the commercial and social challenges of south-east Queensland's booming population. As the Beattie government's South East Queensland Regional Plan recognises, there is an ongoing need to ensure our infrastructure and governance arrangements meet the demands of our dynamic economy and community. Before working in the private sector, I enjoyed extensive opportunities through serving Labor administrations at three levels of government. In these roles I was involved in three programs which were very successful because they truly engaged their target community. The unifying feature of these programs was that they were deeply rooted in history, especially social history.

While a previous member for Stafford, Dr Denis Murphy, was an eminent historian, the only superlative that I could claim is 'enthusiastic'. But my experience as an enthusiastic historian shaped my involvement in these significant projects. With the Commonwealth government I worked on the 'Australia Remembers' program commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. With the Brisbane City Council I managed a program to acknowledge the pain and dislocation of the stolen generation of Indigenous Australians under the title 'The Journey Home'. While working for this parliament in the Speaker's office I assisted in the planning and management of the historic first regional sitting of the parliament in north Queensland.

In the 21st century our understanding of democracy is challenged by a rapidly changing economy and cultural setting. Indeed, our whole polity appears to be undermined by shifting sands. Globalisation, or as writer Thomas Friedman calls it 'the flattening of the world', is affecting every aspect of our society. There is no time to stand back and shake our heads in dismay. We need to be involved in this process of globalisation and harness it—harness it for civic responsibility and community building. One of the hallmarks of globalisation is an open exchange of ideas. Doomsayers will tell you that we are flat-footed and unprepared for this world. I would contend the opposite. We are in fact well tooled with political institutions that have stood the test of time. Our style of parliament where freedom of speech is paramount but responsibility enjoys an equal place with rights is the unsurpassed model.

In the 1990s Francis Fukuyama wrote that history is over. He was referring to the end of the Cold War and the supposed victory of liberal democracy. Unfortunately, no-one told the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Fundamentalism of any brand is anathema to our pluralist democracy. We need to continue this historic debate and establish within our own community the success of our democracy. We need to remind our constituents and fellow citizens that our society's success is based on the willingness to entertain and explore new ideas. To this end, government needs to recommit to genuine engagement with its citizenry: genuine engagement, not consultation where citizens are asked their opinion only to see decision makers plough on with their long-held plans; genuine engagement, where citizens are invited to understand the depth of the challenges and creatively collaborate on solutions.

To sustain a successful democracy, we need to promote a skilled and knowledgeable workforce to engage in the world economy. The Smart State Strategy is the necessary road. The Howard government record of undervaluing and underfunding education and training and then steering us down the road of lower wages and conditions fails our future. These are issues and ideas which we will all need to address, and I look forward to discussing and indeed debating these concepts in this House.

I had the tremendous fortune to be born into an excellent family. It is our first order here in this parliament to do whatever is needed to create, encourage and support better families. My parents, Bruce and Janice, have instilled in me the value of hands-on community service, an appreciation of thrift and a healthy disdain for impractical ideas. They also instinctively provided for their sons. My brothers Craig, eight years my senior, and Russell, six years older, were both in their respective ways my idols as a child. I was drawn up by their example, their capability and their strength. The pain of Russell's sudden death five years ago will never fade for my family. However, Russell is with us wherever we go and he is most certainly with me now.

It would be remiss of me at this point not to mention the person who most inspired me to stand here as a member of this House. My maternal grandmother, Alice Reddy, was a very ordinary Queenslander. Yet, like so many others of her generation, she achieved extraordinary things upon which our state is built. Grandma contributed as a mother of nine children. While her husband worked for Queensland Railways, she managed a bustling home for the family, including caring for my Uncle Cliff, who lives with Down syndrome, right up until her death.

Grandma also contributed as a community volunteer through the trinity of Rockhampton organisations that she attended and baked for: the Mothers' Union, the CWA and the Women's Branch of the ALP. But first and foremost, she was a loving, resourceful and giving matriarch. Grandma contributed

as grandparent to 28 kids and as surrogate grandma to hundreds more. Her home was a combination of holiday base camp and canteen for footballers and netballers. Alice Reddy did not think of herself as important or special; however, she remains special to many and her views on life have influenced me greatly, especially on the role of government to assist and promote working families.

As honourable members would understand, friends are important. I want to acknowledge a couple of longstanding friends, Matthew Low and Graeme Currie, who, despite distance and other distractions, have always been supportive and consistent. To paraphrase Groucho Marx: Matt and Cuz may talk like idiots and may look like idiots, but don't let that fool you: they really are idiots.

Of course, my best friend and my wisest political and personal counsellor is my wife, Megan. There are no words capable of encapsulating her achievements in life. I am just thankful to share it. As part of that life, we share three delightful children. Even at their tender ages, Jack, Tom and May are bright and intelligent, providing me with many ideas and a mountain of inspiration to build a sustainable and sustaining future for our state.

Before my family, before my new colleagues and before all Queenslanders, I want to reaffirm the commitment that I made to my local community before the election. I promise to work hard for my community. I promise to work hard for continued economic prosperity. I promise to work hard for everyone to enjoy a fair share of that prosperity. I promise to work hard for opportunities for everyone, young and old, to better their lives and the lives of their families.