



Speech By
Matthew McEachan

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

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MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr McEACHAN** (Redlands—LNP) (4.46 pm): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Congratulations on your ascension to the role. It is a great honour and privilege to be here in this place. The people of Redlands have put their faith in me and the LNP, and it is with deep respect that I undertake this responsibility as their representative in the 55th Parliament of Queensland. When my great-great-grandfather, Thomas Kirk, drove the first steam engine on the brand-new Cleveland line from Brisbane to Redlands on 1 November 1889 he could never have known that his descendants would still be living in the Redlands 126 years later. Thomas Kirk was reported to be passionately political and was praised by his contemporaries for not forcing the disembarkation of those at variance with his own views at some dark remote location between Brisbane and Cleveland—probably Birkdale, still dark and remote by some accounts; no offence to the member for Cleveland.

The political passion has burned through the generations to reside in me. Politics to me is about relationships—relationships built on trust, not necessarily in agreeance but acknowledging differences if they exist and then working together for the betterment of our community. Redlands is populated by a great many people who work together for the betterment of the community. In fact, Redlands has been populated for at least 23,000 years. I acknowledge the Quandamooka, the first peoples of the Redlands, the Noonuccal, Gorenpul and Koobenpul elders past and present.

The electorate of Redlands encompasses bush, farmland, suburbs, industry, coastal fringe and Moreton Bay islands. It is rich in natural beauty—from its very own extinct volcano, Mount Cotton, which gave us the vibrant fertile soil from which we draw our name, to Moreton Bay, which has a profusion of marine life, internationally important wetlands and is our marine playground. Indeed, I, like thousands of Redlanders, can be found on the water fishing, prawning, crabbing or just paddling around the mangroves of Erapah Creek. The natural heritage we have inherited we must manage and care for. This is one of the challenges that face us now. People want to move to the Redlands and enjoy the lifestyle and location, and that puts pressure on infrastructure, services and the environment.

Managing growth is never easy and there are some things we need to do. Nearly 70 per cent of working Redlanders travel outside the electorate to go to work. This puts immense pressure on our arterial roads. As a consequence, road infrastructure needs to be upgraded including Cleveland-Redland Bay Road and Mount Cotton Road. I campaigned on this issue during the election. Redlands has a population of 50,000 people and two single lane roads for access. I committed to upgrading Cleveland-Redland Bay Road if an LNP government were elected, and I urge the Labor government to address this infrastructure need.

The island communities of Coochiemudlo, Macleay, Lamb, Karragarra and Russell have infrastructure needs also, with the Victoria Point and particularly Weinam Creek ferry terminal car parks brimming to overflowing every day. I am working closely with Mayor Karen Williams to address this issue.

Redlands has the history, people, natural and built environment to draw visitors, and this presents an opportunity for us to build the tourism industry. With investment, certainty and cooperation between governments and local business, we can create local jobs and opportunities and make our home an even better place to live. Redlands has a unique place in Queensland's aviation history. For the benefit of those in the House, Redland Bay was Queensland's only international airport from the 1950s to 1973.

Mr Hart: Seriously?

Mr McEACHAN: Seriously. The Redland Bay Hotel doubled as the Qantas lounge. My cousin vividly recalls the thunderous roar of the Sunderland flying boats coming in to land at about 11.30 at night, refuelling and taking off for Vanuatu on their five-day journey to London.

Redlands has wonderful schools and has earned a reputation for excellence in education in both private and state. I was delighted with the program of maintenance embarked upon by the previous government that has enabled our schools to repair and build after a long period of neglect. I will continue to work hard in fighting for the resources and support Redlands students need.

Similarly, Redlands Hospital staff have flourished in the last three years, earning their place as one of the top performers in their class in Australasia, a beacon of excellence and an example of what can be achieved when you have dedicated professionals with the mandate and budget to manage the provision of health services. As with schools, I will continue to fight for the resources our Redlands Hospital staff require to keep delivering world-class health care.

It was a different story years ago. It was in the Redlands Hospital that I became determined to try and create a better future for my daughter through politics. I carried her into Redlands Hospital with a broken leg. There were no emergency beds available, and as the ink was drying on a contract with IBM that would cost Queenslanders \$1.2 billion, for nearly two hours I held my little girl in my arms with her leg broken just below the knee. I knew that the abject failure to provide policy leadership and resources and a political attitude of indifference had led directly to this situation. I made a silent promise to my daughter to do whatever I could to fix it. Shortly after my preselection, it was an honour to announce 10 short-stay beds with friends and colleagues Steve Davies and Mark Robinson.

I grew up in an environment where political views were encouraged, especially if they were left-wing views. My dad, born in the Gorbals of World War II Glasgow and schooled in the shipyards of the Clyde, is about as union as you can get. In fact, workers' rights and industrial relations has been an enduring passion throughout his life. My mum too is left wing on social justice and was a workplace union representative. So in a political sense I am the black sheep of the family, the one that got away from Jackie Howe. From my dad, I learned that you hold to your beliefs, I learned a great reverence for history and I learned to love the Celtic team. From mum I have learned about courage, humour and integrity.

Mum and dad separated when I was eight. Mum, my sister and I moved to Queensland, leaving dad in Western Australia. It was a tough time for the three of us, and it is fortuitous that I am now on a committee that is looking at domestic and family violence. For a number of years after we moved back to Queensland, mum suffered physical and mental abuse at the hands of her new partner, and I was witness to it. The effects of this were far reaching and long term, but with grim determination she got us out of there.

We moved to a gritty one-bedroom shack that my grandfather built in a tiny fishing village. Mum thought she was doing the wrong thing by us and was sick with worry, but my sister and I knew this shack was healing us. It was a place of refuge. It was a place that we could be a family. It was much more than a shack; it was our home. For mum, with limited means, to have the courage to get herself and us out of an abusive life, she is to be admired. I love you, mum.

As a child, my work experience affirmed reward for effort. I started my first job, a paper run, at age 10. I sold home-grown oranges to the local corner store, thrashed sugar cane and washed dishes. I did a tucker trip on a scallop trawler. Later I went to university and studied ecosystems and cultural anthropology. After two years I deferred and went to the Northern Territory. Over the two years there I became a qualified motorcycle riding instructor and licensing officer with the Department of Transport and Works. Back in Redlands I became a business owner, teaching people to ride. Riding motorcycles and sharing the unmitigated joy of riding is an enduring passion of mine. In a profound way, the reward for effort was even more pronounced—for the better you teach, the less likely that people will get hurt and the more they enjoy their riding.

Redlanders are hard workers. They are aspirational, not only in their personal and family life but also for the community as a whole. Redlanders are a parochial lot and fiercely proud of their local area. We support each other and there is an abundance of community groups, service groups, sporting clubs and volunteer organisations dedicated to Redlanders. There is a strong sense of community in Redlands, a social conscience.

Left-wing philosophy does not have proprietary rights over the social conscience. Often left-wing philosophy is manifest in a well-meaning, paternalistic, nanny state outlook. At worst, it is a myopic, ideological view that blinds true believers to the rights and aspirations of individuals, small business and those that disagree. In doing so, the rights of those less fortunate in our society are elevated above others to the point that a disparity is imposed.

Likewise, left-wing collectivism has a propensity to move past a helping hand to welfarism. Welfare without reciprocal responsibility quickly becomes a pedestal too daunting to climb down from, creating dependence, entitlement and negative stigma. Welfarism is not bound by social standing, ethnicity or context. It is anathema to the human spirit, corrosive to social cohesion. This is one of the fundamental reasons I have a differing political view. The collective thinking that takes us down this road is fraught. Noel Pearson wrote—

Collectives cannot motivate action to improve life in the way that individual choice can: this is the great contribution of liberal thought to the understanding of human behaviour.

I believe that as LNP members we hold to a simple and powerful political philosophy—one that holds dear the rights of the individual; it frames our pursuit of fairness, egalitarianism and the common good. Nor do we seek an enemy to justify our political world view. We have no need of political foes when our efforts are in concert for the good of all Queenslanders.

The LNP combines head and heart in our effort to create the best future for all Queenslanders. It takes political courage to hold to a position which is for the greater good but may be politically unpopular. It is to the detriment of our society to have politicians who make safe political decisions that just pull at the heartstrings at the expense of good governance.

I want to acknowledge Campbell Newman, whom I worked with for four years. His passion and determination in leading the LNP team saw improvements in law and order, health and education, to name a few. His legacy is one of action and dedication to his fellow Queenslanders. Campbell has the courage of his convictions and it was an honour working with him.

It is an even greater honour to serve the people of Redlands and I acknowledge those who have served the Redlands electorate before me—Edgar Baldwin, the indomitable Paul Clauson, Darryl Briskey, John Budd, John Hegarty, John English, my predecessor Peter Dowling, and last but not least John Goleby, survived by Betty Goleby, and in his honour I wear his tie today.

I have wonderful staff in Katie, Sam and Amy who are dedicated to helping me serve the local community. It was only a matter of weeks from my preselection until the election was called. I will always owe a debt of gratitude to the people who gave up their time, expertise and sound advice during the campaign.

Indeed, this time was given over the Christmas-New Year break, even meeting on Christmas Eve. I thank the honourable Bob Harper, legendary political warhorse, whose first campaign was back in the mists of time—back in 1969 if I recall correctly. I thank Craig Luxton, who threw himself into the job with infectious enthusiasm and a booming laugh; Scott Lewis, who worked like a drover's dog and kept nipping at my heels to keep going; federal member Andrew Laming, the last word in grassroots campaigning; Dennis Head, whose mastery behind the Nikon knows no bounds, and his better half, Susan, who was a steady hand in everything that happened; Betty Goleby, who charmed voters on a daily basis; Dot Cheney, who organised 200 volunteers on election day with military precision; Darryl, who kept the books balanced; Adrienne Verco—and who she does not know is not worth knowing—and Uday, fellow road warrior. I also say thank you to Don, Sandy, Stephanie, Esther, Col and Kay, Whyn and Jennie, John and Kay, Barry and Beverley, Trevor and Myrtle, Hannah, my old mate Shane Goodwin, who drove non-stop from West Wyalong to hand out, and all the volunteers. I would like to acknowledge and thank the LNP headquarters team—Bruce McIver, Brad Henderson and Mark Highfield—and my former colleagues Mitch Redford, Katie, Aaron, Matthew, Jamie, Tristan, Kylie and Heidi. They are a wonderful team.

Finally, I would like to thank my mum, who worked her heart out, and my daughter, Indi, for without their unconditional support and love none of this getting elected business would have happened. For however long I am their local member, I commit to serving the people of Redlands by listening, by being accessible and by working for the betterment of the Redlands community. It may

come as a surprise to some that I am a keen amateur poet, having subjected friends, family and staff to my musings. In conclusion, this brings me to some advice from Shakespeare that is pertinent to all of us here as we argue and debate for the communities we love—

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments. Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove:

O no; it is an ever-fixed mark,

That looks on tempests, and is never shaken;

It is the star to every wandering bark,

Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks

Within his bending sickle's compass come;

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error and upon me proved,

I never writ, nor no man ever loved.