




Speech by

Steve Davies

MEMBER FOR CAPALABA

Hansard Wednesday, 30 May 2012

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr DAVIES** (Capalaba—LNP) (3.32 pm): I, like all those who have given their maiden speeches over the past few weeks, would like to express my sense of humility in being part of this, the 54th Parliament of Queensland. To walk down these hallowed halls and to follow in the footsteps of the great men and women of governments past—leaders who have shaped Queensland into the great state that it is—gives me a sense of immense responsibility and gravity of purpose. To be entrusted by the residents of the Capalaba electorate to be their voice in this place is indeed humbling, but it is a task I intend to prosecute with all that is within me.

Having had the privilege of hearing many of the new members deliver their speeches, I must say the quality and diversity of the members who have been elected to this place is without peer—men and women who bring a vast amount of experience to this parliament. We have footy refs, company CEOs, doctors, councillors and mayors, tradies, retired Army officers on both sides of the House, farmers, businesspeople, a former US marine and, for better or worse, even a couple of lawyers and a journalist or two.

I recently read in one of the newspapers that this is one of the most inexperienced parliaments ever. This may be true as far as parliamentary procedure is concerned, but I believe these new members bring a vast wealth of real-world wisdom and experience that in the coming years will hold this state well and truly in good stead. After all, parliaments should be a representation of the wider community, and I dare say there would not be too many past Queensland parliaments with the diversity and depth of character that this one has been blessed with. Given this wealth of talent and character that the current House has been endowed with, I must say I feel a little out of my league. Hearing the vast array of wonderful political and family heritage of the other new members, it is easy for me to question my own pedigree to be here.

Mr Deputy Speaker, each of us can point to watershed moments in our lives—those moments that have been pivotal, life-defining experiences, experiences that truly shape and determine the direction of our lives. For me, those moments have included meeting Simone, a pretty young girl, when I was 20—a girl who was silly enough to say yes to my clumsy boyish marriage proposal some 26 years ago—and the subsequent birth of my two beautiful daughters who have been and are the absolute joy of my life. And, without being too melodramatic, equally momentous is being entrusted by the voters of Capalaba to represent them in this place.

I would love to be able to stand before this House and tell my story—the tale of a young boy who grew up well and made all the right choices. Unfortunately that is not the story I can tell. Mine is a somewhat darker tale—a father with too many gambling debts who took his own life, a heartbroken mother coping the best she could to bring up two boys alone, financial hardship and a stormy and sometimes violent relationship with my new stepdad. All this led to a young man that was me, making some seriously silly and life-destroying choices—choices unfortunately that have become very much the norm amongst the young and not so young today. If I could change the choices that that lost young man made all those years ago, I surely would. If there was some sort of Harry Potter magic wand that I could avail myself of, I would use it in a flash. Unfortunately we cannot change our past—only our today.

For me, that change came when I was 20 and, like the Victor Hugo character Jean Valjean in the amazing story of redemption *Les Mis*, an act of grace by a stranger—in my case not a bishop but a humble cleaning lady in a pub in Townsville—introduced me to a loving God and gave me a sense of hope and purpose. This one act was the catalyst and turning point in rebuilding what could only be called a train wreck of a life. This rebuilding was not an undertaking I had to do alone, but with the support of many I began the long journey from brokenness to wholeness. Often on this journey it seemed I would take two steps back for a feeble step forward, but persistence and the love and support of friends and family have enabled me to become the man I am today.

It is often said that we are the sum of our life experiences and I believe that to be very true. The hard times in our lives can either make us bitter or make us better, and I have chosen 'better'. For the last 20 years I have committed myself to working with young people who, like me, have fallen through life's cracks and are looking for love in all the wrong places. It troubles me dearly that the broken world I inhabited as a youth is becoming more and more prevalent today. The importance of strong, healthy homes and families is today more pressing than ever.

The early years of my marriage with Simone were, as they say in the classics, 'interesting'—one job, two kids and a housing commission home in Kingston. Money was tight—at times very tight—and we both worked hard to make the most of life for our kids. We sacrificed family holidays and many a luxury in those early years to give our girls both a great education and the life skills that have seen them become the amazing young women they are today. Ultimately, as most parents in this room can attest, these sacrifices were not really sacrifices at all but an investment.

Our family would be what I imagine a sociologist might call 'aspirational', hoping to better ourselves and to give our kids better opportunities than we had. My work history spans everything from being a cleaner at Expo '88 to working with my hands in the construction industry—in fact, I was even a paid-up member of the BLF, much to my shame—to sales management and management in not-for-profit organisations and, lastly, to owning and operating my own business in the financial sector. And during the last few years I have had the privilege of undertaking tertiary studies at QUT, an opportunity not afforded to me in my youth, culminating in a Masters of Business.

I come to this parliament with a very diverse background of employment and life experiences. So why politics and why now? Well, one word: frustration. It is a word a number of other members have used during their maiden speeches. As a businessperson, I simply became more and more frustrated at what was and, more importantly, what was not happening in the great state of Queensland. When he addressed the parliament during our first sitting week the member for Gympie said it wonderfully—that Labor was not a bad government but an incompetent government. I probably would like to add another descriptor to this—a profligate government: dams without pipelines, pipelines without dams, payroll without pays, resumptions without development, promises given and promises shamelessly broken, and waste, waste, waste and more waste.

As I would watch the evening news and continually see blunder after blunder and the litany of failures and waste that the ALP was inflicting on both our state and our nation, I could almost hear the famous Benny Hill chase soundtrack accompanying the TV images I was watching. The history of financial illiteracy and mismanagement by the former Labor regime is no more evident than in the electorate of Capalaba, a working-class electorate that spans the suburbs of Alexandra Hills, Birkdale, Thorneside and its namesake, Capalaba. These suburbs, like many others throughout Queensland, have been at the pointy end of the financial and planning ineptitude of Labor.

As I doorknocked and spoke to people while campaigning throughout the electorate, I was continually reminded by them of the impact the cost of living was having on their homes and their families. The unprecedented rises in rego, water, electricity and public transport, the sneaky new levy here and the extra surcharge there were a constant source of angst amongst those I spoke with. Labor's incremental, all-pervasive cost-of-living rises were best described to me as 'like being pecked to death by a duck'. That is exactly the net effect of those increases on many in the Capalaba electorate who have slowly been financially weighed down by price rise after price rise, many to the point of breaking. This is why I chose to run as the member for Capalaba, to be a voice for those in my electorate who have been let down and who deserve better.

I am currently having framed a sign which will hang on my wall. It simply says '44 years'. It might sound like an unusual message, but for me that sign will be a daily reminder of the great trust the people of Capalaba have placed in me to represent them in this House. That message of 44 years was given to me on polling day. An elderly gentleman introduced himself at the polling booth and shook my hand. Holding on to my hand he looked me in the eye and said, 'Forty-four years, Steve.' I must have looked a bit confused because he squeezed my hand a little harder and repeated the same thing: 'Forty-four years, Steve. For 44 years I have voted for Labor and I just can't do it anymore. Please do not disappoint me. You have my vote.'

That one short message should be a salient reminder to those of us here in this place: we cannot and must not stop listening to those whom we are entrusted to serve. So this is my pledge to the mums and dads, the families, the hardworking tradies, the businesspeople and all the people whom I represent, regardless of their political persuasion: I will do all that I can not to disappoint you. I am not afraid of hard work, and I commit to having a listening ear, a strong local voice and an open door to you.

It has been said that the moral test of a government is how it treats those who are at the dawn of life, the children; those who are at the twilight of their life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadow of life, the sick, the needy and the disabled. Those opposite proclaim to be the party of social justice, but I am afraid that Labor's bad economics has resulted in very poor social justice outcomes. Queensland and seats like Capalaba need more than just social justice rhetoric; they need outcomes.

We are unfortunate enough to have been bequeathed by the former government a record debt that equates to some \$600,000 an hour in interest—every hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. How many hospital beds could that provide? How many respite days would that provide for the family of a disabled child? How many homes would it provide to the most needy in our community? It beggars belief. The only way we can deliver on positive social justice outcomes is by delivering fiscal prudence. We must get our budget back into the black and get our AAA credit rating back, and I truly believe that we have the right economic plan, leader and team to do this. As we do this, however, we must continue to strengthen the pillar of our front-line services. One of the most pressing issues that came across my path from day one of the campaign has been the need to improve services for the disabled in the Capalaba electorate and the broader Redlands. As a result, I commit now to being a voice for the marginalised in my community and to seeing these services delivered.

In wrapping up, I would like to take a few minutes to thank some people. Before I do that, though, I would like to acknowledge the former member for Capalaba, Michael Choi. Michael is a man of integrity who because of his conviction crossed the floor on a number of key issues, no doubt to the detriment of his political career. I would also like to put on the record that Michael ran a clean and honest campaign, which I respect. This is in contrast to the broader state campaign that certainly stooped to some new lows.

I would like to thank my God, who is my shepherd, and my family, especially my wife, Simone, who during the nearly 12 months of campaigning did not get to see a whole lot of me and had to pick up a lot of slack around the home. To my daughters, Tanielle and Brooke: thanks for being there for your dad and sending out numerous shout-outs to your friends on Facebook to help on election day. Having 15 seriously attractive 20-something-year-old girls manning my booths certainly did not hurt my chances of winning!

To Josh, my son-in-law, and his dad, Trevor: your family's help on the booths on the day was awesome. Thank you. To my brother Brett, who is in the gallery: you are more than a brother; you are my best friend. Your support over the years and in this year especially has been something else.

To my fellow bayside MPs, both state and federal—Mark Robinson, Peter Dowling, Andrew Laming and Ross Vasta: your wisdom and encouragement around politics and campaigning was invaluable. What a team we now make. To the crew at LNP HQ, especially the finance team: you made my life so easy. I was so new to campaigning but your grace and patience was incredible. I would like to make special mention of a few people: Kepa Andrews, James Mackay, Mitch Redford, Barry O'Sullivan and Bruce McIver. They were real encouragers for this new guy in politics.

To my campaign team: there are so many of you to mention so I will simply name a few of the team who, rain, hail or shine, made an effort to fly the LNP flag—John Aderman, Barry Dwyer, John Colvin, John and Anne Titman, Chanade Brandon, Courtney Dore, Mark Neville and many, many more.

In any campaign there are those for whom, if they did not come on board, the win would have been highly dubious. For the Capalaba campaign of 2012, there were three such people. The first is my shield bearer, Ed Barclay, who was there whenever needed. You believed when many others doubted. Mate, I couldn't have done it without you. Daryl Home, your support and encouragement are without equal. Whenever we needed a hand, you were always there. You have waited a long time to see this day. This win is for you, champ. To my campaign manager, Lachlan Crane: you went way above the call of duty, deferring your uni degree, roping in your girlfriend, friends and family and—I know this was the big one—getting up at 5 am to do roadsides. It was tough, I know. Your character and integrity combined with your talents bode well for your future, and I am proud to call you my friend.

My final thankyou is to the Premier. Premier, your courage in running in a seat like Ashgrove with no guarantee of a win certainly inspired me. You led from the front and you led by example. I am extremely proud to be part of the government you lead.

In closing, I would like to thank the residents of Capalaba for their trust and support. As I mentioned earlier, I commit myself to serving them diligently and being their representative in this House. Mr Deputy Speaker and members, I thank you for this opportunity to speak this afternoon.