



Speech by  
**Tracy Davis**

**MEMBER FOR ASPLEY**

Hansard Wednesday, 20 May 2009

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### **MAIDEN SPEECH**

**Ms DAVIS** (Aspley—LNP) (8.18 pm): Mr Speaker, Winston Churchill once said, 'We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.' It is on that note that I thank the people of Aspley for according me the very great honour of representing them in Queensland's parliament. I know that others have said it before, but standing here reinforces just how humbling that honour is. Like many locals in Aspley I have worked hard and have had a good living. However, I hope to be measured not on what I have received or worked for to date, but, as Churchill said, to make a life by what I can give, in this job, in the future.

Mr Speaker, I will come back to some people I would like to thank, but I want to particularly devote my first speech in this place to my local area, which is a great area with great people but facing increased challenges. In discussing my plan for my time in this place I want to cover two broad themes—the importance of listening and the need to place more value on the lifestyle of people who live in many of our suburbs. I believe there is a strong link between these two things and how I come to be standing in this place today.

Politicians and commentators sometimes reflect on election-defining issues. There were several in Aspley. Many of our local issues reflect a concern of many people that they were not being listened to and that their lifestyle and aspirations were not being valued. The fight to save the Royal Children's Hospital at Herston is one such issue. It was said by one of my new colleagues in this place that the fight over the Royal Children's Hospital was based on deception. Nothing could be further from the truth. It reflects, with great respect to him, a continued failure to listen to people in our local communities.

When mothers, fathers, grandparents, professionals and other concerned citizens from places like Chermside West, McDowall and Bald Hills came to me and said, 'We believe that the best option for a well-resourced, world's best practice Children's Hospital is to keep it at Herston,' that is exactly what they meant and that is exactly what they wanted. These parents and residents were not being deceptive at all. I listened, I heard them and I thought about it. I agreed with them and I acted with them to fight on this issue. It was a grassroots movement, and many supporters of the Royal Children's Hospital had firsthand experience with the wonderful doctors and nurses and other staff of that fine establishment looking after our most valued assets—our children.

There is not one good reason why the additional investment could not have been made in the current Children's Hospital at Herston to make it an even better one. I remain committed to the belief that saving the Royal Children's Hospital was the right thing to fight for and I remain concerned that moving the hospital was a political decision influenced by considerations beyond the health of children. My suspicions were reinforced by the fact that the government had to scramble with a cobbled-together promise to provide paediatric emergency services at Prince Charles Hospital. I remain unswayed in my view that the best solution was, and still is, to invest the extra money at Herston, where the foundations and supporting infrastructure and world-class medical research facilities are already so strong.

Two other local challenges reflect a failure to listen and an increasing risk to the future lifestyle of our suburbs. The first is the proposed high-density, 10-storey housing developments at Fitzgibbon and

Carseldine by the Urban Land Development Authority—more specifically, the ULDA's proposal to cut into the urban green space and education infrastructure of the QUT campus at Carseldine. Many locals feel they were misled by not being told the ULDA's 'Fitzgibbon Development Plan' actually affected Carseldine, and now they feel that they are not getting a fair say and are not being listened to by this unaccountable body.

I will have more to say about the flaws in the establishment and operation of the ULDA at another time. Today I simply want to point out that, although it is inevitable that we will have to accommodate reasonable growth and development, we have to balance that with a higher value on the aspirations and lifestyle of current and future residents.

Many residents agree that, while much of the Fitzgibbon development can and should proceed, the entire QUT campus should be preserved for future education purposes and urban green space. We also believe that before this development goes ahead there needs to be more investment and a better plan for local transport infrastructure which is not coping now—never mind with the influx of thousands more people from this development. Part of my plan for Aspley is to continue to work with and listen to all locals affected by this development and, if the government is willing, to work cooperatively with them to get a better outcome on density, on green space, on services and on traffic.

The second challenge I want to briefly discuss is the inadequacy of local traffic and transport infrastructure to help preserve and maintain local lifestyle into the future. Many local residents chose to live in Aspley, Bridgeman Downs, Carseldine and other local suburbs because it was a good balance between a safe suburban location to live and reasonable proximity to the CBD. That is at risk if we do not address the traffic challenges. Indeed, many feel we are already falling behind.

A local told me recently that he had been stuck in traffic while travelling to the CBD and it took over an hour to travel the 14 kilometres from Albany Creek Road to Eagle Street. He said it routinely takes 45 minutes and delays beyond that are getting more frequent. Ninety minutes to two hours a day in traffic to go to work just 14 kilometres away is simply not good enough and reflects very poorly on the efforts made by state governments for Aspley for some time. And neither is public transport filling the gap. Carseldine Railway Station, for example, is not coping now—and that is even before the extra impact of the massive Fitzgibbon urban development.

Just as we need to accommodate good and reasonable development while safeguarding local amenity, we have to accept that there has to be more road and transport infrastructure and the state has a role to make that happen. And there will be some impacts from doing that. What is not fair, however, is for Aspley to wear all the impacts—as many locals fear some proposals incur—with none of the benefits. So part of my future plan for Aspley will be to work constructively with locals and authorities to seek better suburban transport solutions that share the pain more fairly between areas of Brisbane and share the gain more fairly with places like Aspley.

Too much is said about Brisbane versus the regions, as if every community in Brisbane is the same. I believe in equity with the regions—we are one state after all—but I also believe in equity for people in places like Aspley and other electorates in the middle and outer suburban rings. These were areas populated in hope and optimism. Many of us chose to raise our families in places like Aspley—indeed, John and I did—because this area offers so much.

We should never forget that residents in electorates like Aspley are people who largely do all the right things. They pay their fair share in rates, taxes and even a little extra for petrol to sit in traffic. They are the small business people, the employees and the tradesmen our economy depends on. Households often have two people working, they have mortgages, they raise families. They are invariably the people who are the first to feel the ups and downs of recessions and they are often among the first to suffer unemployment.

When people from outside Brisbane say, 'Look at the stadiums, look at the Goodwill and Kurilpa bridges, look at the art galleries and look at the motorways,' I have to say that that is a long way from the reality of Aspley and other suburban electorates like it. I think the forgotten people in suburbs like Aspley, McDowall, Carseldine, Bald Hills and Chermside West deserve a bit more respect for their contribution and a louder voice. That is why I believe we have to place a higher value on the lifestyle of our suburbs and those hardworking families and taxpayers who live in them. I hope to be a champion for a better deal for our suburbs, and I will be asking locals to participate in a process to develop better local solutions.

I also want to recognise the importance of small and medium businesses in our local area, which is where the local jobs are. In the early days, along with the cattle, the orchards and the vineyards, some of the first local enterprises—at what was then known as Soldier's Flat and Little Cabbage Tree Creek—were the Royal Exchange Hotel and the first general store, located at what remains the commercial heart of Aspley at the intersection of Gympie Road and Albany Creek Road. The entrepreneurs of local industry

were instrumental in establishing the Aspley State School in the late 1880s. So it was not business or community; it was business and community.

I am a small business owner. In these difficult economic times, I understand just how hard it is keeping cash going through the till and retaining your most valuable assets—your employees. When small business suffers, the community suffers. I want to ensure that Aspley and its small business sector in particular are not forgotten as government faces the challenge of job protection and creation. I also commit to helping locals in my area participate in any government programs that grow and retain jobs.

But the core part of my plan for Aspley is the commitment to listen—because I know George Street is in a different world to Maundrell Terrace. That is why I will be continuing my local community corners that were received so well during the campaign in order that I might stay in contact with local neighbourhoods throughout my term—not just at election time.

There are many people I would like to thank and I know you can never fit them all in. The first people I would like to recognise are my family. This was the third time I have put my hand up for election, and the challenges of running and the shared costs are borne disproportionately by our families. I simply would not even have had the courage to run without the love and support of John, my husband, who juggled his business and our lives to help me. We are a true partnership. It is an interesting bit of trivia that John's great-great-grandfather was William Pettigrew, an MLC in the Queensland parliament and the Lord Mayor of Brisbane in 1870, so our family connection with the aspirations of the people of this city and this state goes back a long way. I want to thank three amazing young adults—my children, Richard, Rowan and Alexandra. I am so proud of them and what they have already achieved in their lives. The joy they have brought to my life is immeasurable and I love them with all my being.

I want to acknowledge my mum and my dad. My dad, Jim, missed out on so much as we grew up. He was a sailor and, like all who serve our nation, he spent long periods away. As a child, it was hard to understand and, in our lack of understanding, we often resented the disruption of his returns and just as we all got used to living together again he would have to leave. I now know that that was very hard on him. While he loved the Navy, he left after 20 years service and went into small business but then had to ride the rough seas of the 'recession we had to have' and came off second best. But he kept on surviving, as ordinary Australians do.

My mum, Marjorie, more than held up her end as service mothers and wives do. She raised my brother, Michael, and me in a funny little community in south-west Sydney known as the East Hills Naval Estate, which was nestled precariously between dense scrub, the murky Georges River and the Holsworthy Army firing range. Our daily connection to school, shops and public transport was via a timber footbridge across the river, so she and the other mothers made a special effort to make this cluster of 72 homes a happy community and not just an isolated married quarters patch. My mother was a magnificent role model but it is not surprising given the woman that raised her, my late grandmother, Marjorie Hopkins—a glorious woman who gave me the life-lasting advice that if there was a job to be done you just had to stop fiddling around and get on with it. I also want to recognise my brother, Michael Palmer, in Melbourne. Michael taught me that to enjoy the fullness of life you have to be true to who you are. I love him to pieces.

To the Davises, my in-laws: Judy and Daven, and John's siblings, Joanne, Andrew, Christopher and Susan, and their spouses, my fellow members of the Outlaws Club, Stephen, Amanda and Julie—thank you for your never-ending encouragement. My thanks go also to other family members: Leone and Ian Taylor, Jodie Taylor and Adam Bennett, all who came from interstate to help, and to my cousin, Dan Palmer, whose attitude to life is always 'pretty groovy'.

I want to thank the members of the Aspley and Chermside West branches, other local branches and the countless helpers, volunteers and friends who helped me during the election. There were hundreds, and their willingness to help and their enthusiasm for change was quite invigorating. I cannot list everybody, but in particular I mention Loris Barlow, Bill Richardson, Shirley Lehmann, Max Mathers, Len and Dorothy Smyth, Ken and Margaret Jackson, Jane Cowan, Tamah Brunckhorst and Steven Dregmans.

To my long-time personal friends, Aileen McGregor-Lowndes and Jacki Scott, who have been with me over the three campaigns, thank you. And there is a special thanks for the absolute commitment to two successive campaigns from two amazing people who put their lives on hold for me: Lacey and Stuart Perrett. Your unbelievable generosity will never be forgotten.

I also want to mention three people because they not only helped but offered advice, friendship and a tolerant ear during the campaign. They are Kevin Martin, Saleena Ham and David Moore—my little 'Kitchen Cabinet'. They shared and fostered my already deep passion for our local community and helped give a sense of order to what can be quite stressful campaigning.

I want to thank the LNP women's movement and before that the Liberal Women's Council. I participate in that body because I believe that our parliament will only truly be capable of listening to all concerns when the people are represented equally by men and women. I am not convinced of the merits of quotas because I think they can devalue and undermine the contribution of women, but I do support the efforts of the LNP women's movement to give more women a voice and a pathway. I particularly recognise the President of LNP Women, my close friend Melina Morgan, who contributes so much to that forum.

We have not come far enough, in my view, from when Irene Longman was the first woman elected to this place in 1929. She must have been a formidable woman. It was said she did not use a loudhailer as her voice carried well and she could deal with hecklers. The *Brisbane Courier* reported that when she was elected one supporter yelled out, 'She's the best man of us all!'

I would note that of the six elected MPs in Aspley three have been women—Beryce Nelson; my predecessor, Bonny Barry, whom I wish well in her future; and now me. People do elect women if they are given the opportunity, and the trick is to encourage more women to participate in the political process. On this note, while I have a different view from the Premier on many things, including the Royal Children's Hospital, I recognise that being the first woman Premier of the state of Queensland is a special honour and I congratulate Anna Bligh on achieving that.

Finally, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to the member for Southern Downs, Lawrence Springborg, whose vision for a unified conservative force was realised in July last year and in no small way contributed to my being here today. To the other new members of the class of 2009, may I extend to all of you my very best wishes for your time in this place. I believe we bring diversity and enthusiasm to the 53rd Parliament and I look forward to working with you.

I am electrified by the challenges and opportunities ahead. In conclusion, let me leave you with a comment from Irene Longman and a comment from American poet Oliver Wendell Holmes. Mrs Longman, in her address-in-reply to the Governor's speech in 1929, said—

For fourteen years Queensland has wandered in the wilderness of socialist labour rule, lured by the bright promises of lands of ease and vistas of idyllic field where we would obtain the maximum comfort and prosperity by the minimum of effort. But it was a mirage leading to the morass of debt and to the slough of unemployment.

It is a comment that could equally apply today.

I have a plan that I will be discussing and developing further with locals to support their everyday aspirations and needs. At its essence is a commitment to value locals, listen to locals and act for locals for a better future. Oliver Wendell Holmes said, 'It is the province of knowledge to speak, and it is the privilege of wisdom to listen.' Thank you to the House for this opportunity to speak. To the people of Aspley, I am all ears.