



Speech By
David Janetzki

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

Record of Proceedings, 31 August 2016

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

First Speech

Mr SPEAKER: Before calling the honourable member for Toowoomba South, I remind all members that this is the member's first speech and should be listened to with the courtesies reserved for such occasions.

Mr JANETZKI (Toowoomba South—LNP) (3.58 pm): It is an honour to rise today to deliver my maiden speech as the newly elected member for Toowoomba South. I thank the electors for their support and undertake to represent their collective interests to the best of my ability and with humility, integrity and dignity.

My earliest political memory was a fire-and-brimstone speech from Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen at the Maclagan Hall at the foot of the Bunya Mountains. I cannot remember much of it—I was eight years old—but I went home that night in no doubt about the greatness of Queensland; a Queensland that was bold and visionary. Thirty years later I am extraordinarily humbled to follow in the footsteps of bold and visionary leaders in Toowoomba South.

The electorate was created in 1972 and I am fortunate to know the three most recent members, Clive Berghofer AM OAM, the honourable Mike Horan AM and the honourable Dr John McVeigh. I pay tribute to their understanding of Toowoomba and the Darling Downs and their vision beyond the horizon. I thank them for their friendship and wise advice. All of them are figures of substance and this parliament and our state has been enriched by their contribution.

My ancestors settled on the Darling Downs in the mid to late 1800s, fleeing religious persecution. I carry a Polish name but my ancestors arrived from Prussia, now in Northern Germany. Braving high seas in wooden boats and with few possessions they brought their vocations—mostly farmers—their craftsmanship and their cuisine—cured meats, salted potatoes done a thousand different ways and baked goods. My late grandmother's cooking carried me and my mates through university. How I wish the late Alice Marriage was here to see this day with my late grandfather, a great influence on my life. Set against that regret, I am blessed to have my 94-year-old paternal grandmother here today, my godparents and other extended family members in the gallery.

Through the generations my family have worked the land and, like all rural families, devoted themselves to public service: the church, the CWA, the local shire council and the agricultural show movement. That carries through to this day with my father serving as the president of the Darling Downs Sub Chamber of Agricultural Societies, the largest subchamber in Queensland. Thankfully my maiden speech fell on a Wednesday rather than closer to a weekend show as Dad would have had a tough call to make as to which event to attend.

My father cleared our property, milked cows and, with my mother, raised my brother and me on sheer hard work, ingenuity and faith. We did not have much and my parents battled through my brother's leukaemia, a harsh and difficult environment and tough economic times to send me to boarding school at Concordia Lutheran College in the heart of Toowoomba South where I became head boarder boy and school captain.

After school, studying law at the University of Queensland helped me understand the strength of our democratic institutions. Studying economics taught me that we need to make the best of our limited resources to improve everyone's lives. Economics shapes politics, society and ultimately history. Adam Smith and JS Mill resonated more deeply than Marx and Keynes and accordingly sharpened my political world view. Government interference in the proper functioning of a market, or governments attempting to pick industry winners, should be avoided. Governments must stand guard to address market distortions or deficiencies but should otherwise stand clear and let enterprise do what it does best: create jobs, drive entrepreneurship and deliver prosperity to hardworking people everywhere.

Our world is complicated and conflicted, but I have always strived in my professional life to simplify arguments, clarify issues, empower others and achieve compromise where possible. It has been a privilege to work as a lawyer with some of Queensland's finest legal minds at ClarkeKann and Corrs Chambers Westgarth, in senior leadership positions at Heritage Bank and on boards like Opera Queensland with some of our state's finest business and governance minds.

In his maiden speech, the first member for Toowoomba South, Labor's deeply respected Peter Wood, lamented that 'Toowoomba is at a distinct geographic disadvantage when compared with the Brisbane area and the ports between Brisbane and Cairns' and that 'it has not been able to develop and grow at the same rate as has the Brisbane area.' The honourable member went on to catalogue Toowoomba's transport woes, including road and rail shortcomings. That has been Toowoomba's heritage. But what lies ahead is an era of promise where Toowoomba's future is bounded only by the limits of our imagination. The Toowoomba region's population is expected to expand by 40 per cent by 2031. The region is currently experiencing a \$10 billion infrastructure and investment boom, including the long-sought-after second range crossing, and has justifiable aspirations of becoming Australia's largest inland port. The visionary Wagner family's Wellcamp airport has our primary producers, manufacturers and services exporters a 12-hour flight from 50 per cent of the world's population. The proposed inland rail will have these same businesses within a 12-hour rail journey from 85 per cent of Australia's markets.

Our economy's diversity across agriculture, health, construction, property, education, finance and transport fosters a secure investment environment and allows us to absorb external shocks. Our economy remains underpinned by small family businesses that stand to gain from the improvements in transport and logistics capabilities. Fourteen thousand locally registered ABNs speak volumes of the streak of self-determination and ingenuity that has always set our city apart.

This streak of ingenuity can be seen everywhere in 21st century Toowoomba. With the decline of manufacturing in Victoria and New South Wales over the last 40 years Queensland has exponentially grown its share of the manufacturing industry pie. A pie, at least in my view, that remains too small nationally. Locally, Toowoomba's Russell Mineral Equipment, RME, has created revolutionary technology that substantially cuts the time taken to reline a grinding mill, saving miners a fortune in downtime. My former employer, Heritage Bank, is Australia's largest customer owned bank. It also serves as Australia's largest issuer of prepaid cards, drawing on cutting-edge payment systems technology to partner with national brands like Optus, Qantas and Australia Post. Elsewhere in Toowoomba the FKG Group has commenced construction of a technology park that will house data centres and disaster recovery capabilities. It will be home to start-ups that will create jobs for researchers, scientists, game designers, app creators and software developers.

Toowoomba's ingenuity also sees it widely recognised as Australia's social enterprise capital, with a range of businesses giving the dignity of work to those suffering a disability or long-term mental illness. They include the award-winning Bounce cafe and Ability Enterprises which works in partnership with the Toowoomba Regional Council to employ disadvantaged jobseekers to operate the boom gates of the region's waste facilities and KBH Enterprises to supply the survey pegs for the second range crossing construction. In the heart of Toowoomba South, a social enterprise laundry, driven by the energy of award-winning social entrepreneur Luke Terry—and I acknowledge Luke in the gallery today—is currently under construction. It will employ a further 40 people with lived experience of mental illness and will stand as a beacon to social enterprises across the nation. Social enterprise development has been the most rewarding community work I have ever done. By harnessing the power of the market we can create sustainable jobs for those who need them and the whole community stands to benefit.

Toowoomba is changing in exciting ways. We enjoy a flourishing street food, coffee and craft beer scene popping up in laneways, restored warehouses, antique stores and retro Art Deco buildings. Local coffee institution Ground Up was awarded the seventh best cafe in Australia as voted in the 2016 Top Cafe in Australia awards. The arts, the beating heart of any city, revolves around our beautiful Empire Theatres which was restored by civic leaders well ahead of their time.

Toowoomba's sporting pedigree is legendary and we lay claim to some of Australia's finest Rugby League, Rugby Union, hockey, athletics, cricketing and motorsport greats. That pedigree was recently enhanced as Toowoomba athletes took home gold medals out of the women's Rugby Sevens at the Rio Olympic Games.

Toowoomba may be changing, but one thing that never changes is the beauty of our Carnival of Flowers. In my first shameless effort at boosting local tourism, I encourage all members to head west in the next few weeks to the Carnival of Flowers. If you have never seen Toowoomba in spring, you just haven't lived!

What may surprise honourable members is the diversity of our 21st century city. I acknowledge our city's first peoples, the Giabal and Jarowair. Today our city's Islamic community, led by Professor Shahjahan Khan, is planning the construction of a purpose-built mosque in Toowoomba South. Together with other faith communities and under the strong leadership of my good friend Mayor Paul Antonio, our city works very hard to create a harmonious community where other people's beliefs are respected. We look forward to shortly welcoming Orthodox Christian refugees from war-torn Syria to our fair city.

The diversity of our city is most obvious at one of my primary schools, Darling Heights State Primary School, which has an enrolment of 650 students. Of those, 275 students were born overseas, with 307 students speaking English as a second language. There are 39 countries of birth, with 37 languages spoken in their homes, Arabic, Swahili and Dinka to name but a few. Principal Mark Creedon leads a harmonious community where the diverse ethnic, religious and social groups work cooperatively with a common purpose: the best for every child.

Our city's diversity runs into my own family, with my elder daughter bearing a Nigerian middle name, Itiovie, in honour of a dear friend of my wife and I who was killed in a car accident a few weeks after we all left high school. Itiovie's family, the Jegede family, were 1990s African pioneers in our city, with Itiovie's father lecturing at the University of Southern Queensland and mother working as a GP in our city.

In 2017 the University of Southern Queensland will celebrate 25 years, which will be an opportunity to reflect on how it has brought the world to our doorstep and nourished Toowoomba's intellectual, civic and cultural life. While I may have lectured in banking, finance and insurance law subjects at the university in the past few years, I have fond memories of when I was a student, learning about leadership and teamwork when I played grade cricket for the mighty Phoenix, the University Cricket Club.

Toowoomba's future is bright, but there remain challenges to address. Too often, large-scale development projects are held back through overly complicated regulatory processes. The goal of decentralisation is a work in progress and governments should seek to spread their agencies around the state wherever possible. Toowoomba is always open for business.

Community services funding needs to be appropriately targeted so that the funding better meets the need. Like all regional cities, my community holds serious concerns about homelessness, child and community safety, alcohol and drug abuse, youth unemployment, domestic violence, and mental health. I am committed to helping our incredible community services organisations, too numerous to mention, because the record shows that Toowoomba's heart beats strongly for those suffering among us.

I believe that more needs to be done to improve Toowoomba's public transport system and to develop innovative ecotourism opportunities on our beautiful escarpment to the east of the electorate. There is also work to be done to ensure that the benefits of the extraordinary infrastructure and development boom that we are seeing across our region make their way through to residents and small businesses across the electorate.

Toowoomba South houses the Toowoomba Hospital and the Toowoomba Hospice, 18 aged-care facilities comprising over 1,100 operational places, 24 education facilities and 26 sporting locations. I will be fighting for funding to continue supporting the hardworking men and women who make such a difference to the lives of so many in our city.

No maiden speech can end without giving thanks to the many people who have walked with me on the journey to this House. I thank my campaign manager, Mitchell Haigh, and my energetic team of LNP members, supporters and mates. They are simply the best. The weather on the day of the 16 July by-election was described by none other than the Hon. Ian Macfarlane as 'the worst polling day weather ever'. Mr Macfarlane gamely stuck it out at the booth, as did all the incredibly committed volunteers. I will never forget the efforts of everyone involved that day. They are too numerous to mention by name, but I want to pay one special tribute to a grassroots member of the LNP—and the grassroots are oh so important to our party—Boyd Scheuber, pre-poll volunteer without peer.

I want to thank the LNP organisation, including state President Gary Spence, Lincoln Folo, the inimitable Michael Leighton and Michael O'Dwyer. Their encouragement has made such a difference. I thank the LNP leader, the member for Clayfield, the deputy leader, the member for Nanango, and many of my now parliamentary colleagues for all their help during the campaign, given in so many different ways. In particular, I thank the member for Redlands for his calmness under pressure. Speaking of the campaign, one particularly memorable campaign moment was when the member for Toowoomba North and I decided to go out early one morning in freezing 6 am conditions to do some road-siding. Unfortunately, we had only one pair of gloves between us. We decided to adopt the Michael Jackson approach to campaigning and wore one glove apiece. We got through the cold!

I thank my parents-in-law, Jan and Lyn van der Meulen, and my sister-in-law, Anita, for their love and support. I thank my electorate officers, Kevena Franklin and Janice Nicholson, for all their efforts.

I thank those who have walked the journey the longest, my parents. My mother is the unwaveringly loyal dream planter who believes that education shapes and changes lives. My father is truly the hardest working and most humble man I know. You have both made this day possible. To my brother, Jono, and his wife, Harmony, I am always glad you are on my side. Jono, your tenacity and courage set you apart, mate. I salute you and political volunteers from across the spectrum who are determined to support candidates in nearly unwinnable electorates.

To my wife, Melinda: you have known me since we were 12 years old, from grade 8 English to our years in London as you pursued your opera-singing career across Europe. Through it all, thank you for sharing with me a life of joy, freedom and simplicity. Thank you for sharing this call, which I believe to be an honourable call, to public service. You are and always will be my greatest blessing. Our precious daughters, Elizabeth and Charlotte, are discerning, encouraging, loving and loyal, and as it turns out extremely dedicated, enthusiastic and patient campaigners. When road-siding, I always got more honks on the horn when my two daughters were standing beside me. Mum and I thank God for you both.

One of my teachers at Jondaryan State School, a small country school, incidentally also attended by my predecessor and good mate, John McVeigh, once said to me, 'David, let life be your teacher.' I think there was a touch of exasperation in that comment, but life has been a great teacher to me and I know that this House will be likewise.

I simply aspire to make a small contribution to my community and this House in the years ahead, cultivating a society where family, life, freedom, property rights, individual liberty and economic opportunity are encouraged and where the quiet voices of the disadvantaged, disabled and marginalised might be heard more loudly.

Mr Speaker, no matter whether the time I spend here is short or long, I will be forever humbled to serve the people of the greatest city in the greatest state of all.