



Speech by

Glen Elmes

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr ELMES (Noosa—Lib) (5.08 pm): I rise today as a very proud representative for my home, the state seat of Noosa, and can I say at the outset that it is an honour to be here as a member of the Queensland parliament.

I was born in Brisbane and raised in Everton Park with my parents, Reg and Jean, and brother, Darren. I guess we were a fairly normal family for the time, with mum staying at home to raise her family, dad going out to work and an extended family of grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins mostly living close by. While politics was not really discussed at our home, it nevertheless surrounded me as my grandfather, Henry Henderson, was a waterside worker—a 'wharfie'—and a very proud Labor man. One of our neighbours was Eric Lloyd, the Labor member for Kedron, who retired to Coolumb selling real estate and sadly passed away about 12 months ago.

My early life was spent attending barbecues in the backyard of the Lloyds, going to Labour Day marches with my grandfather; and I think at an age of 10 or 11 working on my first election campaign handing out how-to-vote cards for then Brisbane Lord Mayor, Clem Jones. I mention these early days because, although I decided to follow a different political path, I well remember stories of how people would approach my grandfather and he would go to City Hall and meet with the then aldermen to try to have their problems solved. I firmly believe that the basis for my lifelong interest in politics comes from those days, as do my core personal beliefs of traditional values: the need for society to make provision for those who are in need and the right of the individual to excel and succeed. I inherited, I believe, Labor's social conscience, and I will return to that a little later.

I have been very fortunate in that I have been able to spend all of my working life in Queensland and after a couple of short early jobs began a career in commercial radio that has seen me, I believe, contribute in a small way to communities like Mount Isa, Longreach, Charleville, Warwick, Toowoomba, Emerald and, for the last 21 years, Noosa, Gympie and the Sunshine Coast. Politics was never far away, and I joined the Liberal Party as a foundation member of the Mount Isa branch in 1974. Our Prime Minister, John Howard, often says that he is a creature of the Liberal Party; I think that this is also a fair description of my involvement over many years through the Liberal organisation and, more recently, as a candidate and now member of the Queensland parliament.

There is simply no way in the wide world that I would be standing here today without the support and love of my wife, Lesleigh, and my two children, Teigan and Kristin. When I met Lesleigh well over 20 years ago she knew straightaway of my commitment to the Liberal Party and community service. She has allowed me to follow my dream and, along with Teigan and Kristin, has been rock solid in her support, even after my loss at the 2004 state poll. I started campaigning for the election held on 9 September the day after the poll was declared in 2004. So for them it has been a long, hard campaign. This is a wonderful opportunity to state in the most public of places my love and thanks to Lesleigh, Teigan and Kristin, and we are all looking forward to spending a couple of weeks away together over the coming Christmas break.

As every single person in this place knows, elections at a local level are won only with the vital support of branches and a very enthusiastic supporter group. I was extremely lucky in this regard and

would like to take a minute or two to thank my campaign committee, many of whom put their own lives on hold for weeks and months to ensure victory for the Liberal Party in Noosa. The core of the campaign committee consisted of Nick Dondas, Matt Collins and Jeff Nuskie. These three totally committed individuals kept me and the campaign on track and were available almost 24 hours a day. Nothing was too much trouble, and without them and their wives—Moir, Judy and Aprile—I would not be standing here today. I give special thanks to the Hon. Alex Somlyay, the federal member for Fairfax and his wife, Jenny, for their guidance and support not only during this campaign but over many years. It is wonderful at long last to be able to refer to Alex as my parliamentary colleague.

I have been involved in campaigns when the committee becomes bogged down and focuses on side issues. In my case the campaign team got on with the job. Everyone knew what needed to be done and, as the candidate, I could rely upon them all to be on hand when they were needed. The campaign secretary, Colleen Woods, and treasurer, John Stanton, are fine examples of this.

To the other team members, Karlene Connolly, Tony Tobin, Carolyn Krueger, Lance Barrett, Kenelm Creighton, Gus Hatter, Peg Burgin, Tony Fowler, Jack Connolly, Chris Walter and Barry Elms, thank you—you were the backbone of the campaign. Thanks also to Bruce and Glenise Clelland, who were out almost every day conducting 'information booths' or just spreading the news. Once again, nothing was too much trouble for this committed couple, and I also thank them sincerely.

Over 160 people volunteered to help out on election day, with booth captains in many cases on site from three o'clock in the morning setting up the booths. Our booths looked the part and were manned by helpers who were enthusiastic, on the ball and always wearing a broad smile. I visited every booth on the day and, as a very nervous candidate, I received a real boost in confidence every time I visited a booth.

The Liberal Party organisation was a great help during the campaign, with Geoffrey Greene, Peter Epstein and all of the staff at the secretariat being on hand to assist and help out whenever needed. Bruce Flegg and Lawrence Springborg were also on hand during the campaign, with Bruce and Lawrence visiting early on in the campaign and Bruce on another occasion just prior to polling day.

We all have role models that we have looked to during our lives. These are people who have shown by example how to achieve and who have been free with their advice and guidance. For me, two people stand out from different times: the first was my employer for many years, Sir Frank Moore. If ever there was a human dynamo, Frank Moore was it. His contribution, in my experience with him, to radio, tourism and Queensland politics has been enormous. And, while he never did get me to join the National Party, I was never successful in getting him to join the Liberal Party either. Our telephone conversations both prior to the election and after gave me confidence and inspiration.

The other person is former state Liberal Party president and friend Bob Tucker, who has been unfailing in his support for me over many, many years. Bob always comes through no matter what, from giving advice to fundraising and even during the campaign helping out with doorknocking in Coolumb. He and his wife, Greer, are special people who have made a great contribution to the Liberal Party as a whole and particularly to my life.

Lesleigh and I moved to the Sunshine Coast in 1985 and for the past 17 years have lived in the Noosa electorate, the first 10 years in Coolumb and the remainder in Noosa itself. Community service has always been very important to me. I am a firm believer that each of us has an obligation to put back into the community in which we live. I look forward to continuing to play an active role in groups that I have supported over many years, such as the Sunshine Coast Rescue Helicopter Service, better known as Energex Community Rescue; the Noosa, Coolumb and Eumundi chambers of commerce; the Tewantin Community Association; Protecting Noosa Inc.; the Sunshine Beach State High School Council; and many others.

Many people who live in the Noosa electorate have made a lifestyle choice, as I have, to live in a very special part of our state. It is special because of the hard work and dedication of those who lived in Noosa well before I came to call it home and those who carry on that work today. The Noosa Parks Association, headed by Dr Michael Gloster, is one group that has played an outstanding role in preserving our unique lifestyle and protecting the local environment.

Regardless of where new residents come from, or what their political beliefs, they are unanimous in the need to maintain what is essentially Noosa. The neighbouring communities in the Maroochy shire but still part of the electorate, Coolumb and Eumundi, are also determined to maintain their village lifestyle, and they will always have my support to stand up to overdevelopment and undue pressure from government.

Noosa has a reputation as being a community made up of the rich and affluent. While it is true that many wealthy people have come to call Noosa home and invest in its future by buying businesses and providing much needed jobs, it is also true that there are many families and individuals who, through no fault of their own, are finding it difficult to make ends meet. It is here that the state government has to play a much greater role and assist with the provision of more services and not, as is increasingly the case, pass the ball to local government, placing greater strain on ratepayers. I gave a commitment during the campaign to work productively with the Noosa and Maroochy councils and with our federal member, Alex

Somlyay. I am a small part in a team that needs to work together for the benefit of my electorate and the Sunshine Coast.

Noosa is in desperate need of greater health services, and I will continue to develop ways to expand our local Noosa Hospital. Dental services and mental health are also areas where urgent attention is required.

It beggars belief that the Department of Child Safety, while it has an office at the Noosa Courthouse, has to rely on staff visiting from Gympie. Like all communities, my electorate has its problems with young people who continue to do the wrong thing, but they need more help than what is available. The staff who visit are efficient and caring, but we need local experts who are on the ground and able to be of assistance all the time. I raised this issue well prior to the 2004 state election, and I look forward to now discussing the matter with the minister to get a resolution that will help our young people.

Public transport is also an issue, and the service provided by Sunbus continues to draw complaints. Since the election I have had a number of telephone calls and one just this week that was particularly troubling. Locals and visitors must have confidence in the public transport system so that the number of services can increase and the number of cars on our roads can be kept to a manageable level.

One of the policies put forward by the coalition at the last election was on driver training, particularly as it applies to young people. So good was the policy that many parts of it found its way into the material distributed by the Labor Party, and I congratulate the government on picking up on what was an excellent policy. I have had discussions with Councillor Greg Fahey from Maroochy Shire Council regarding a driver education facility which could be built at Quanda Road, Coolumb. The coalition was prepared to commit up to \$1 million towards this project, and I hope that I can convince the new minister to look favourably on what is a very important project for the Sunshine Coast. This is one way of at least limiting the number of young people who are tragically killed and injured on our local roads each year.

In the last term of government there were two issues that stood out head and shoulders above the rest, with the first being continued rumours of forced council amalgamations. Let me make it perfectly clear that to my knowledge there is not a single person in the Noosa Shire who is in favour of some kind of Sunshine Coast supercouncil. Noosa has developed its own way. It is unique, it is sustainable and it is the way Noosa has chosen to live.

The last issue that I would like to raise is one that is not even in my electorate, nevertheless it has united locals to oppose Labor in electorates from Gympie to Caloundra and beyond. Of course, I refer to the Traveston Crossing Dam. In my earlier remarks I spoke of inheriting what I called Labor's social conscience. This is the party that prides itself on supporting the downtrodden, the party that champions basic human rights and the party that has fought the good fight on any number of social issues throughout its long history. Yet, when it comes to the people of the Mary Valley, Labor is prepared to abandon its soul and continue to support the worst of all options that will see townships destroyed and history flooded, the loss of some of the best agricultural land in the state and the displacement of 900 families that call the Mary Valley home.

I am not against dams, and I recognise the need to provide water for the future of south-east Queensland and use all of the technology that is available to us today. But, why does this government pursue the Traveston Crossing Dam when there are sound alternatives that could be started now? We do not need to build this monstrosity. What happened to the Labor Party of my grandfather? I promised during the election campaign that I would do everything in my power to stop the Traveston Crossing Dam, and I will work with my friend and colleague the member for Gympie to achieve just that. The Noosa electorate is my home, and with a bit of luck and a lot of hard work I hope to represent my community for many years to come. The electorate has given me its trust. It is now up to me to live up to its expectations.