



Speech By
Jim McDonald

MEMBER FOR LOCKYER

Record of Proceedings, 22 March 2018

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr McDONALD** (Lockyer—LNP) (4.28 pm): Mr Speaker and fellow members, congratulations on your election results. Most importantly, thank you to the people of the Lockyer electorate who have allowed me this wonderful opportunity to join you in this honoured place.

I congratulate our leader, the member for Nanango, Deb Frecklington; our deputy leader, the member for Everton, Tim Mander; and our shadow cabinet. Congratulations to the Premier, her ministers and team on forming government. I will be working hard to help claim those benches in October 2020.

To my predecessor, Mr Ian Rickuss, his wife, Ann, and family: thank you for your 14 years of service to our community. No-one could doubt you had our community's best interests at heart. I also recognise former member Tony Fitzgerald and his wife, Bernadette, who are still active in Gatton.

I make special mention today of Mr John O'Brien of Lockyer Valley Toyota fame. John has been a great supporter of mine. John and his family have been great contributors to the Lockyer in so many ways. John passed away last Friday morning. Ivy, Peter, Neale, Andrew, Ian, Sue, your family and friends, we offer our sincere condolences on your and our community's great loss.

As we all know, it takes a team to win an election. I sincerely thank Linton Brimblecombe and his wife, Melinda, whose manner and conduct both during and after preselection was evidence of the quality people they both are. To our campaign team, your commitment to our goal was inspiring. To Glen Pavey, our chairman: your political nous is far beyond your years. Your interest in the finer details of the campaign was testament to your management ability and skills.

To the former member of Ipswich West, Sean Choat, who, together with his wife, Nikki, and family gave us invaluable assistance in the new geographic area of Lockyer from day one: thank you. To our treasurer, Brett Qualischefski, and our secretary, Brad Jeffs: your efforts with a mountain of work were key to our success. To our team of doorknockers, phone callers, booth workers and scrutineers: thank you. To our prepoll team, including Andrew O'Brien, Ray Hawley, Mancel Robinson, Tina Fry and Heather Stegeman: you engaged with so many people and the results were spectacular.

Most national and state media reports had Lockyer written off, but we just focused on doing our best. Thank you to Senator Barry O'Sullivan, the federal member for Wright, Scott Buchholz, the members for Toowoomba North and Toowoomba South, as well as Alan and Tina Fry for your wise counsel. Thank you to the members for Clayfield, Nanango, Everton and Mudgeeraba for your many visits during the campaign and for your clear guidance and support. It was much appreciated. Thank you to Mike O'Dwyer and Lincoln Folo for your confidence and advice. A special mention goes to Lachlan Crane, who kept me on task and who, together with Geordie Felesina, produced our very popular *I'm from here* video.

To Mick and Pauline Brennan, Angie and Gary Campbell, Peter and Don Hooper, Bruce and Karen Peel, Ken Driver and David Locke: it was your unwavering friendship, encouragement and support that kept us focused on our final goal. To our family members who could help out and take up the challenge: John, Joan, Geoff, Lisa, Grant, Annette, Ree, Troy and Deb's mum, our Sandy, who was a tremendous support around the house in the lead-up to the election: thank you.

From my long professional career as a police officer, I have many people to thank. To Mick Brennan: as a leader, you are inspiring; as a person, there are few better. Mick always told us to help people as if they were our own family. It might have been just another crash or crime to us, but to the victims it was probably one of the biggest events of their lives. To my hierarchy over the years: thank you for your tolerance of my political interests. To my loyal station administrator, Sharyn Kirkwood—the real boss—my right-hand man Sergeant Dave Grave and Sergeant Michelle McTaggart: thank you for your ongoing support and operational leadership.

In 1997 I was proud to be elected to the Gatton shire council whilst continuing my policing career. That gave me a wonderful opportunity to be locking up baddies one day and contributing to growing social capital, delivering sport and recreation facilities, and running community events the next. In 2008, I was one of the first six councillors elected to the amalgamated Lockyer Valley Regional Council. During my 17 years on council, I gained a range of experience across the now \$52 million Lockyer Valley Regional Council business.

I was challenged both personally and professionally by the tragic floods of 2011, where many lives were lost in Toowoomba and Lockyer. Today, my thoughts are with the families and friends of those people. From the dual roles I played during those tragic events, I gained a great understanding of recovery and rehabilitation efforts. Our world is a complicated place. However, through my police and councillor roles I have developed skills to interpret legislation and understand its operational effect. I will continue to use those skills to advocate for solutions that meet the changing world and, importantly, our community's expectations.

My wife, Deb, and I have lived in the Lockyer Valley for almost all of our adult lives. Despite winning an award for the prerequisite for commissioned officer rank in 2010, we chose to stay in Lockyer and serve our rural community. In Lockyer, the spirit of the people is clear: they are typically Australian and they are fair dinkum; they do not want to be patronised; they want action and they deserve action. There is no doubt of the increasing customer and community expectation. People hate waste. They do not want to see their governments wasting anything, including time in the chamber, on less important issues.

There are many tremendous businesses and organisations in Lockyer. In 2017 the University of Queensland's Gatton campus celebrated its 120th anniversary. That world-renowned university contributes enormously to the diversity of our community and economy. Many advances are occurring in the agribusiness sector, with our next generation of well-educated farmers and innovative enterprises, including Qualipac, Koala Farms, Sutton Farms, the Linnan's Maragi farms, Rugby Farm and the Mulgowie Farming Company, together with Stanbroke Beef and Withcott Seedlings leading in their fields and serving national and international markets.

Despite those successes, the biggest issue facing our agricultural sector is the threat from drought and the lack of water security. As the bumper stickers read, 'Every family needs a farmer' and 'No farms, no food'. This is serious. Water management and infrastructure should be beyond political bounds. I urge the government to halt further volumetric allocations, because it will not work in Lockyer. Our aquifer is not like a big tank sitting underground. For generations, farms have been bought and sold based on the availability of and access to water from a complex array of underground streams. Introducing volumetric controls per hectare places an artificial layer of equity, lifting the value of a farm that does not have access to water whilst dropping the value of land that does. That would have massive financial implications and close farms.

There is an alternative solution. With the Lockyer Valley and Somerset councils working together with industry, we are in the best place ever for the coordination and delivery of sustainable water solutions. I fully support the industry led Lockyer Water Users Forum and mid Brisbane River irrigators in their fights to secure water. When our community hears about 150 megalitres of water going over the spillway of Wivenhoe Dam or 60 megalitres of high-quality treated water being dumped in the bay, we are disgusted by that wasted resource. That has to change. We are the driest continent on earth. That available resource should be put to good use. The cost of the infrastructure would pay for itself in a few years through certainty of supply. Our councils secured federal funding to develop the case to bring some of that water to Lockyer, supplying farms along the way and filling Atkinsons Dam, Lake Clarendon Dam and Lake Dyer. Those underperforming irrigation schemes are something that we can leverage off immediately.

It is clear that, if our farms are not viable, every aspect of our lifestyle and economy is affected. With real water solutions, we will see more kids in our schools and more money being spent in our businesses. My key goal is to sustain our rural lifestyle. We must maintain our agricultural areas, but we must also stop congestion on the roads and ensure our communities feel safe and are healthy. Lockyer is part of the regional plan's western growth corridor, our population is growing and so is the traffic. The Brisbane Valley Highway and Warrego Highway run through Lockyer. People are dying on those roads. My experience as a forensic crash investigator tells me that we must invest in grade-separated overpasses that save people's lives. It is not a matter that we cannot afford those engineering solutions; it is a matter that we cannot afford not to. What price a life?

I turn to high-speed passenger rail from Brisbane. I was a member of the group that undertook the Gowrie to Grandchester rail study that forms the basis of the planned inland rail freight route, which was originally established for passenger rail. I have been part of the council that developed a clear position paper that instructed the government that the intended freight route might be a project of national significance, but it cannot be at the expense of Lockyer. We want a project that has no loss of community connectivity and no future flooding impacts, that must minimise the loss of good-quality agricultural land and, most importantly, the new infrastructure must deliver intermodal transport, including busways and bikeways and enable high-speed passenger rail from Brisbane to Toowoomba. That will help ease congestion on our roads.

My role as a police officer has shown me the real world, which many normal people do not see—the innocence lost at the hands of sickening acts of cruelty or torture or the countless families whose lives have been shattered by the sudden death of a loved one. I have seen many young productive lives lost to drug abuse that rips families and our communities apart.

The social and personal effect of domestic and other forms of violence is difficult to cope with. I was proud to have established the Lockyer Valley Says No to Violence initiative, changing the community conversation so people are saying we will not tolerate any forms of violence. Ownership by the community is key to fighting this problem. A huge cost to our communities is the intergenerational dependence on welfare. When able people feel it is their right to choose welfare payments over employment, the system is broken.

As a police officer I have seen firsthand that the criminal justice system is rarely effective as a deterrent. We need to deliver punishments that are. I am not just talking about bigger sentences. This is about sentences that have consequences for actions, where the victims are recognised and other liberties of the offenders' lives are affected.

It is my personal belief that all children should play sport or participate in some other extracurricular activity like dance, music or drama. If we invest early in our youth then they are far less likely to come to the attention of police as adolescents. Investment in proactive solutions for families and children from birth through their formative years, such as guidance officers, trauma officers and chaplaincy programs within schools, must be well funded. These programs change children's lives for the better. My experience as an adopt a cop, running blue light discos and encouraging youngsters to participate in community life has shown to me that this is the front line in our fight against drugs and crime. Academics agree—youth engagement is the opposite of addiction.

These investments need to run hand in hand with a non-tolerance approach to stop the scourge of the drug ice. If we think back to drink-driving 30 years ago, it was common practice. It is now socially unacceptable. The government or police cannot win the fight alone. We need to support rehabilitation and health programs whilst we stamp out criminal gangs who distribute. The problem has to be shared by the community. We need every parent, brother, sister, grandparent, friend and neighbour to give the clear message to our children that we do not tolerate ice—ice will kill you.

Despite the sad things I have just spoken about, we have many exciting things happening in Lockyer, including the intergenerational investment that is the Toowoomba second range crossing. Until now members of this chamber did not know that the Lockyer is the centre of your universe. Lockyer is bound by the Great Dividing Range to the west and the Main Range National Park to the south. Darryl Low Choy of Griffith University and chairman of the Regional Landscape and Open Space Advisory Committee will tell you that our Lockyer provides a significant amount of environmental services to South-East Queensland.

If it were not for the Lockyer electorate, the people of greater South-East Queensland would not have enough clean air or water, nor would they have much food to eat as we are recognised as the seventh most fertile valley in the world. We are just an hour's drive from Brisbane CBD and have a wonderful rural lifestyle, with great restaurants, cafe, clubs and pubs to visit. Come for a drive and have a feed and take home some great local produce. You will like it so much you might even stay.

I am excited by the regional opportunities. The Lockyer Valley and Somerset regional council areas make up the new Lockyer state electorate. I look forward to continuing working with our mayors, Tanya Milligan and Graeme Lehmann, and their council teams as we see our region be the best it can be. I am pleased that the Council of Mayors South East Queensland are following the New York catchment model where stakeholders focus on proactive solutions in the region's catchments to deliver clean water downstream. State and federal governments need to commit to long-term funding programs that give certainty to our natural resource management sector so that our rich alluvial soil stays on the farm and less sediment ends up in Moreton Bay.

There have been some great people in this chamber and gallery in the past, but in my life there have been none greater than those who are here today and of whom I am about to speak. My family's background is in small business, particularly the printing industry. However, our lives were full of sport, particularly Rugby League and athletics, agricultural shows and other community contributions.

My parents, John and Joan, have negotiated the trials and tribulations of life. They have been successful in many ways—wonderful hosts, both humble and unassuming. It is their example that has taught me loyalty and to have a strong work ethic, but, importantly, to enjoy life along the way. It was fun growing up as a young McDonald—the eldest of six children, we could make a game out of anything, and we still do.

I am a proud Queenslander! My father, John or 'Cracker', is well known as being the first coach of the 1980 Queensland State of Origin team—a great player in his own right for our state and country, he was chairman of the Queensland Rugby League for 21 years and chairman of the Australian Rugby League when the Super League competition was reunited. However, his commitment to the grassroots development of Rugby League across Queensland and his service as a committee member and chairman of the Royal Agricultural Society of Queensland for 20 years have left wonderful legacies.

Of course all this would not be possible without mum, Joan—the best hostess in the world. While they ran the family business they raised six children yet still found time to run keep-fit classes for the school P&C and later become very active with RASQ and Endeavour.

From this upbringing I have developed a strong appreciation of the social fabric that sporting clubs and competitions and our agricultural shows make to our communities. I was extremely proud that my first official duty as the member for Lockyer was to open the Queensland shows next generation of leaders program at UQ Gatton—a wonderful example of leadership and succession planning.

Through my family I have learnt that longevity might create stability but it does not create success, nor does blind loyalty. However, longevity that is based on loyalty and built on trust allows spirited decision-making and creates a wonderful shared commitment to goals. These are the ingredients that over time will create a culture of trust and opportunity so all involved can share the success.

This is the family culture that mum and dad created for us. It is a foundation that I have tried to emulate in my leadership and family life. To my children, Sam, Millie and Tom, their partners and families, you make us proud of the adults you have become and the way in which you all conduct yourselves. I hope you can look back on your lives and be as proud of yourselves as we already are.

My darling Deb, you are beautiful and still after 18 years you are the best blessing that has come into my life. With your dedication to the campaign, together with your competitive nature, you really shone and your efforts were unsurpassed. Thank you my darling, we did it together.

On reflection, all the great people in my life and other leaders I respect all have integrity, a strong work ethic, principles and, most importantly, passion for their chosen goal. People are enterprising. As a leader, set a goal with the necessary resources and get out of the way. People will surprise you. Governments should do the same.

About 20 years ago at a personal development seminar the facilitator handed all the participants a card at the end of the program with a personal message for each of us. Mine read 'carpe diem'—seize the day. If we do our best in every moment the future will look after itself. I will do my best for the people of Lockyer and for Queensland.