



Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Record of Proceedings, 6 May 2015

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (5.02 pm): May I first congratulate the member for Nicklin on his appointment to the important position of Speaker. His reputation for fairness and an even-handed approach precedes him, and I wish him well in this important role. I would respectfully like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we gather and also the traditional owners upon which the Lytton electorate is located as well as the elders, both past and present.

I am proud, honoured and, at the same time, truly humbled to have been chosen by the people of Lytton as their representative in the Queensland parliament. This is an exciting time for me and for my constituents as our new Premier sets the pace for the next term of government. I represent an electorate made up of workers, their families, business owners, the elderly and the young, those who contribute so much to our local community and also those who need a little help from the community. That is the enduring characteristic of Lytton. It is strong and it is caring and it is a vibrant community.

I would sincerely like to thank the electors of Lytton for putting their faith in me to represent their interests. Incidentally, I have the honour of being the first woman elected as the member for Lytton in this parliament. Labor held the seat of Lytton for 40 consecutive years, from its inception in 1972 until 2012. Deputy premiers Tom Burns and Paul Lucas both served the seat and the state with distinction. So there are some very big shoes to fill. Tom Burns represented the Lytton electorate for 24 years. He was a common man of strong conviction and had a practical love of others. His legacy continues, and he is a role model and an inspiration to all those who share Labor's values.

Paul Lucas, member from 1996 to 2012, is a man of great integrity with a burning passion for access to quality education for all, looking out for the battler and delivering great outcomes for the electorate. Whether it be the Port of Brisbane Motorway or the revitalisation and construction of state-of-the-art local state schools, Lytton is a much better place due to the efforts of Paul.

I am very honoured to enter this chamber as a representative of the Australian Labor Party for the electorate of Lytton. I thank the Labor Party for their support. To the dedicated and committed branch members in Lytton and the volunteers who worked so hard during the election campaign to win back the seat for Labor, I thank you. I acknowledge those of you who are here tonight and I promise to work hard for you and with you.

I would not be standing in this place today without the dedicated commitment, support and assistance of my campaign director, Daniel Cheverton, and my local campaign team. I sincerely thank each and every one of you. I would like to particularly mention Mr Darcy O'Dempsey. A quick look at the first speeches of both Tom Burns and Paul Lucas reveals that Darcy has been a local campaigning powerhouse for many decades. Since before I was born, Darcy has fought the good fight and we are better for it. I would like to formally acknowledge Darcy for his life-long commitment to the Labor Party.

My own path to this place has been forged by past generations of my family. Their experiences, the standards they set and their values are firmly instilled in me. I have been fortunate to have instruction from both sides, men and women. The men in my family have a long history of public service. My father, Jack Pease, along with his three siblings, was orphaned at a young age and brought up by an aunt. He became the assistant state secretary and industrial advocate for the State Services Union. My great-grandfather Percy Pease represented the seat of Herbert in Townsville for the Labor Party for 20 years, from 1920 until his death in 1940, serving as deputy premier and minister for lands. But it is not just the men in my family who have influenced me.

My mother, Agnes, instilled in me a strong sense of social justice and fairness. She was one of 12 children. She grew up with rationing in post-war Glasgow and was known to challenge her own parents when she believed her brothers were being given larger portions of food than she was. She migrated to Australia at the age of 19 and set about building a life for herself in a new country. Almost her entire family followed her, including my grandfather, who carried debilitating shrapnel wounds from the First World War. With patience and wisdom, my grandmother presided over a large posse of grandchildren frequently creating havoc in Brisbane's southern bayside suburbs. I am most grateful to my mother for teaching me that women are capable of anything.

We grew up in Birkdale, which in those days was a farming community. Like most families back then, my parents survived on one income; my mother made all our clothes; we holidayed in a caravan; we went to local state schools; our one car was a bomb; and our house was made from fibro. Our playground was a nearby creek and our playmates were local kids and a stack of our cousins.

Both my parents were actively involved in the local community and were members of the Labor Party. Through my parents, I learned that even though we had little, there were others who had less. I saw them help others out and fight for the rights of others and, by example, they taught me a set of values. They taught me the importance of standing up for myself, looking out for others and a sense of fairness. I have carried the values impressed upon me by my upbringing throughout my working life.

Being of independent mind, I left school and home early and began work as an office junior at 16, experiencing firsthand what it is like to start at the bottom, making ends meet on the minimum wage. I fully respect the work of the union movement in Australian history, ensuring that working people are protected from exploitation and have the safety net of minimum wages and conditions. This important work continues today and I am a proud member of the Transport Workers Union.

However, my working life has not been limited to being an employee. I have also had the experience of running a business and employing staff. In my early twenties my mother became ill and I took over the running of her cafeteria. I ran my own training business and, more recently, I owned a cafe in the Wynnum CBD with my sister. I have been fortunate to see both sides of the coin. These experiences have helped me form the view there are often two sides to a story, that it can be folly to jump too quickly to conclusions and that the best outcomes are usually delivered through proper consideration and consultation.

From what I have said already, it is clear that my family is very important to me. I would not be here today without the support of my family: my parents, Agnes and Jack Pease, who are sadly no longer with us; my husband, Peter, and my children, Callum and Audrey; and my sisters, Catherine and Maureen, and their families. Peter, Callum and Audrey have always supported me and are here tonight. They have encouraged me and participated in the many and varied organisations that I have been involved with and they have all often been called upon to undertake duties, some of which they would perhaps prefer to forget. I think dressing Peter up as the IMA safety house may have been asking just a little too much: bright yellow lycra leggings with a foam house on top on a man who is six foot four—I leave that to your imagination. My sisters and their families are an important part of my life, and I was fortunate to have them working alongside me in the recent campaign. Even my very new great-nephew Alex is already working the campaign trail. He is being brought up in the faith. I feel incredibly blessed to be surrounded by such love and loyalty. Thank you.

I love where I live, and I have loved being as involved as possible in the local community. I moved to the electorate with my husband, Peter, over 30 years ago. We raised two children, and I juggled work and home duties while studying for a degree in vocational education. I threw myself into a range of local community and sporting groups, and in so doing discovered just how community minded the people of Lytton are. So many people in the electorate of Lytton are involved in its

communal life. We are justifiably proud of our mighty Wynnum Manly Seagulls, the Bugs, the Manly Halloween celebrations, our hardworking environmental groups and the vast array of activities from callisthenics to amateur theatre that take place in the halls, schools, churches and community centres across our electorate.

I would like to make special mention of a number of community and not-for-profit organisations that demonstrate the commitment of Lytton residents to build a better community. Silky Oaks Children's Haven has provided family and human services with dignity and respect and is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, which is an outstanding achievement. Both Wynnum Family Day Care & Education and Brisbane & Bayside Family Day Care provide education and important services to our local community and families. Sailability provides social and sailing opportunities for people with disabilities, BABI Youth & Family Service provides assistance to young people and families in our community, and Winnam provides a range of services and community development activities in Wynnum and bayside to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These are just a small snapshot of the many not-for-profit organisations that are so important to our community.

Much of the work that goes into making the community a better, more compassionate place to live is done by volunteers; however, volunteers cannot provide all of the services that a community needs. In the last three years, the bayside community has experienced a significant reduction to local services at the hands of the LNP government. The Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit was closed down, and 85 local residents lost their home the day the doors were shut; however, it did not go down without a fight. Hundreds of locals attended protests, and 15,000 signatures were collected on a petition to save Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit. Sadly, the protests and the 15,000 petitioners were ignored. The 85 elderly, frail, and in some cases very ill, residents of Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit lost their home. The unit was demolished and to this day sits as an empty reminder of what used to be the place that 85 people called home.

There have been savage cuts to services in Wynnum. The Department of Housing and Child Safety offices have been relocated and moved out of Wynnum. These services are no longer easily accessed by bayside local families. The Bayside Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service, which assisted residential tenants, closed locally and across the state. The Caravan and Manufactured Residents Association, which provided advocacy and advisory services to tenants and residents in caravan parks and manufactured homes—some of the most marginalised in our state—was closed. The loss of these services has had a direct impact on our local economy. The people who worked at these services and those who used them are no longer in Wynnum and are no longer there doing their shopping, their banking or conducting their businesses.

The Wynnum Hospital has also suffered at the hands of the LNP. Our community has lost valuable and important health services. Our hospital no longer has 24-hour medical staff, and the primary care clinic operates with reduced staff and hours and is now only open between the hours of 8 am and 10 pm. Both of my parents were treated with care and dignity in their declining years at the Wynnum Hospital, and I am very conscious of the value that the proximity of this hospital has to local residents.

Clearly these cuts to government services were a major issue for the citizens of the Lytton electorate in the recent election. What the campaign highlighted in Lytton and across the state was a fundamental difference in philosophy on the role of government. The conservatives advocated *laissez faire*; leave it to the market; small government; if it is an asset, sell it; if it is a public service, cut it; if there is a regulation, get rid of it—as if all of these things are inherently bad. Labor, on the other hand, advocated what it has always done and stressed the importance of the power of the intervention of the state for public good, that there is an important role for the public sector and the provision of services in a civilised society.

It is amazing how long the debate between these two positions has been going on. In researching for this speech, I came across my great-grandfather's first speech to the House on 18 August 1920. He had recently won a by-election for the seat of Herbert, which covered much of the city of Townsville. As coincidence would have it, his campaign dealt with similar issues to the election which brought me here today. The people of Townsville were most concerned about services—in particular, the expansion of rail links—and threats by the conservative opponent to sell enterprises which were of particular value to the north.

What the public—the voters—said in 1920, they are saying now. Our society is made up of communities that are more than economies, and communities need services. Further, communities need infrastructure spending, and that infrastructure is vital to future growth and prosperity for employees and employers alike. Communities need the hand of government to make sensible decisions for the public good.

My great-grandfather's first speech to this House made fascinating reading, not just in the context of the major issues of Queensland's latest election campaign but also reflecting on the impact that the decisions made by the Labor government nearly 100 years ago have had on today's Queensland.

Percy Pease joined the Labor government that had first come to power five years earlier and was already the first of its kind in Australia to introduce health and safety regulations, workers compensation legislation and to regulate at a state level to ensure fairness, competition and to intervene in the market if it thought the greater good could be served. In its time it was seen as a radical vision, and the Labor governments of TJ Ryan and 'Red Ted' Theodore particularly were thrown into conflict with the London money market, which was not keen on lending money to governments with these priorities. The state Labor government of the day was intent on building a future and intended to use the power of the state to do so. For example, to combat profiteering following meat rationing from the First World War, the Labor government established state pastoral stations and state butcher shops to create market competition. In a struggle against profiteering and monopoly interests, the government established sawmills, coalmines, a fishery and even a hotel. They intervened in the sugar industry and took on powerful interests by instituting a prices board to ensure fair prices for growers. They even had the cheek to borrow money from the United States instead of England to help develop Mount Isa Mines.

These are examples of some of the deliberate interventions by the Labor state government of the day into the market to address issues of the time and to lay down foundations for a fair and prosperous future. The ideologically-driven notion that the public sector is a burden on our society, which is currently being pushed by state and federal conservative parties, is erroneous and has been proven incorrect many times in our own history and around the world.

When the Forgan Smith Labor government was elected in 1932 at the height of the Great Depression, my great-grandfather became deputy premier and minister for lands. The Forgan Smith government shocked the world by refusing to adhere strictly to the premier's plan, which was a federal plan drawn up at the request of the Bank of England to ensure that all interest repayments were made and that no new spending was entered into. Instead, the federal government bankrolled three major construction projects: the Stanley River—or the Somerset Dam—which provided water for Brisbane for the next 50 years; the University of Queensland campus, which continues to educate Queenslanders; and the Story Bridge, which is still a vital link for commerce in Brisbane. All these initiatives were on borrowed money, against the economic rationalist thinking of the time and were successful investments in the future.

There are two sides to every story. Regulation, government spending, public services and state owned assets are not all bad. Some interventions serve their purpose and are no longer needed—there are no state butcher shops or cattle stations anymore; others still serve the public good. Constant re-evaluation is needed, and the threats of the future do need to be considered. But on the evidence of our past, the Labor philosophy of using the hand of government for public good has served us well. It was during the time my great-grandfather was minister for lands that vast numbers of unemployed were paid a small stipend by the state as relief workers—building roads, reclaiming land and in my own electorate constructing sea walls at Wynnum and Manly.

This brings me back to the people of Lytton, who live in the Moreton Bay suburbs of Wynnum, Manly and Lota as well as Hemmant on the Brisbane River. The electorate includes part of Moreton Bay Marine Park and all of the Port of Brisbane on the south side of the river and covers 48 square kilometres. It is a community that has benefited from the infrastructure spending on the Port of Brisbane Motorway and the extensions out into the bay of the Port of Brisbane. Many residents work there. Clearly, the people of Queensland have also benefited from this spending.

Importantly, the Lytton campaign and my postelectorate priorities are based on saving the services of Wynnum Hospital for the people of Lytton. The people of Lytton not only need and want these services but also deserve to have these services reinstated. We need to keep public palliative care beds and rehab beds and we need 24-hour primary care services in our community. Now that I am elected I will fight to keep these valuable services in our community.

I really want to see the redevelopment of the old Wynnum Central state school site into a vibrant community hub and look forward to working with council and stakeholders to ensure that this meets community expectations. I want to work with the residents of the Wynnum chamber of commerce, the business owners and the greater community on advancing plans to revitalise the Wynnum central business district. Many local residents are profoundly disappointed at the LNP council's decision to ignore the Wynnum/Manly Neighbourhood Plan for the utilisation of the old Wynnum Central state school land. The neighbourhood plan was designed and drafted by a local committee including local residents, community and business groups for the long-term benefit of the community.

What the Wynnum CBD needs most for future prosperity is an increase in population density, which was a focus of that plan. However, the LNP council has decided instead to give us another supermarket and a library. We locals are struggling to understand the wisdom of this decision, which is yet another example of the conservative side of politics' approach to public consultation. This is the kind of extreme ideology and public policy that characterised the LNP state government, which the voters of Queensland resoundingly rejected at the last election. The LNP government decided to act first and ask questions later. We need to get back to a more considered approach to public policy, because the voters of Queensland made it clear that they would prefer us to ask questions and to listen to what Queenslanders have to say.

Queenslanders want the government to listen and act sensibly, and I intend to devote myself to listening to the residents of Lytton and standing up for the interests of my electorate, for working people, for local business, for the young and the old, for the Labor movement and for the future prosperity of Queenslanders.