




Speech By
Marty Hunt

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Record of Proceedings, 20 March 2018

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr HUNT** (Nicklin—LNP) (3.53 pm): Mr Speaker, may I add my congratulations to you on your appointment. I deeply honoured to be representing the people of Nicklin in this House. It is humbling to receive the support and trust of one's community to be their voice in parliament. I undertake to serve them to the best of my ability and to always respect the trust they placed in me.

I wanted to be here because I believe our community deserves strong representation. Nicklin has concerns it shares with the rest of the state and it has issues unique to our area. In my time in this place, I will seek to advocate on issues in a way that will represent the views and further the interests of our local community.

Beyond the matter of particular issues, I seek to represent our community in the manner in which they approach their lives—with optimism and hope, with a hardworking ethos, with a recognition that there are people who, through little fault of their own, are struggling and good communities do what they can do to help. These are the qualities that bind our community and rally them to support various community groups, advocacy groups and charities. These are the qualities that make our local businesses not just part of the local economy but the local community through supporting local events, community infrastructure and the general improvement of our area.

These are the qualities I see every weekend from people who run the local events, volunteer at local community groups, speak out at local forums and participate in planning and important discussions. These are the qualities I see in the people who give up their time to help our most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community. These are the qualities of mums and dads who get up every day and work hard in their small businesses, employing local people and making a go of it. These are the people who inspired me to run for parliament and to come here to represent their interests.

I would like to acknowledge the almost 20 years of parliamentary service of my retiring predecessor, the honourable Peter Wellington. Peter is well regarded in the Nicklin community for his commitment and dedication to our local area. Congratulations to Peter on his service and I hope that he and Jenny enjoy a long retirement.

I also want to acknowledge the late Hon. Neil Turner and his combined terms of over 20 years in the seats of Warrego and Nicklin. The honourable Howard Hobbs described Mr Turner as 'an extremely hardworking member of parliament and one of the finest Speakers the Queensland parliament has known in recent times'. This is a legacy that I hope in some way I can live up to.

I was born in Windsor, New South Wales. I grew up in the northern New South Wales town of Lismore after moving there at aged seven. I attended St Carthage's Catholic Primary School before moving across the road to Trinity Catholic College for high school. My mother, Jan, had Irish Catholic ancestry and Irish Catholic values and she passed these on to me. These Catholic values and beliefs I still hold and still practise to this day as best I can. I believe that this upbringing gave me, above all, an

ethos of service and a sense of purpose above personal profit. You should treat others as you would have them treat you. It is important to help those who cannot help themselves and represent those who need an advocate.

It was these values that led me to a career in policing. I joined the Queensland Police Service in 1988, straight from high school, under the old cadet system. It was a steep learning curve for a young 18-year-old lad—out of school, thrust straight into day-to-day crisis and misery; people at their best and people at their worst. I initially served three years in general duties around the Inala area and then as a detective in the Criminal Investigation Branch in the Oxley district for six years before moving to the Sunshine Coast to work in the child abuse unit in 1998.

An opportunity arose to relieve as branch manager of the Nambour Police Citizens Youth Club, PCYC, in May 2000. I went on to apply for the position permanently after 12 months of relieving, during which time I grew to love that role in the community. Working as a police officer for such a great community organisation allowed me to work with young people and families to be the best they could be. I always felt a great sense of pride and achievement over the long term I spent in that role in the great young people I was privileged to work with. PCYC work is a marathon, not a sprint. It requires relationship building over a long period of time and it is very hard to show the outcomes on graphs. The great police officers who work in that role will know what I mean.

Having served in the Queensland Police Service for almost 30 years, I have always had a keen interest in the work of the parliament. I spent those three decades upholding the laws passed in this place and working with the community to see the value in those laws and to abide by them. I could also see how from time to time the system failed people, and so I am used to problem solving with the communities in which I have served.

I have always been a conservative, and the values of the Liberal National Party have always resonated with me. It is an honour to have been selected by the party to run for the seat of Nicklin, just as it is an honour to have been chosen by the people of Nicklin to represent them. The values instilled in me as a child, my professional experiences and my life in the Nicklin community have paved the way to this place today. That path has also allowed me to see the wrongs that we in this place have the power to right and those areas where steady, capable governing can improve the everyday lives of Queenslanders.

A central pillar of our democracy is the rule of law, a system of justice that protects citizens and punishes those who seek to disrupt or otherwise corrupt our society. I have come from the constabulary into the legislature—two important parts of that system that, along with the courts, write, enforce and apply the laws of Queensland. The public must have trust and confidence in that system. While community trust and confidence is not at its worst, it is not at its best. With this in mind, and going back to that ethos of supporting those who through no fault of their own need supporting, we must always have as our priority the victims of criminal activity.

Too many times as a police officer I had personal experience with the devastation of victims of crime and trauma at the outcome of their matter through our courts. I understand the difficult role that our judicial officers undertake in carefully weighing up all the circumstances surrounding events. While sometimes sentences and punishment will never be enough for a victim, community expectations should be met consistently in our justice system, and this House has an important role to play in that endeavour. If an individual consistently or repeatedly disrupts the good order of society and causes harm to its citizens, they should no longer be a part of that society.

Of all the victims of crime, those who need supporting most are children. I worked in the child abuse unit and had involvement in the Sunshine Coast Child Protection Week Committee. Your average Queenslanders would struggle to comprehend the evil that exists in some of our most broken families—a group of children at the margins of society and too often forgotten. We must do more and we must do better.

Child protection is a difficult area to work in and certainly the great police and child safety officers who work on the front line are faced with what can amount to life and death decisions in regard to children's wellbeing every day. This job is so important that specialised training is essential. Suitable legislative powers to protect children should be available, with our highest priority being the consideration of the safety of the child.

While the government should seek every reasonable avenue before they consider permanently removing a child from their parents, we must constantly examine the ethical questions about the boundaries of that reasonableness. At times in our history governments have taken children far too swiftly and at other times governments have allowed families unfathomable latitude despite repeated and consistent demonstrations that their chances of turning their lives around are negligible.

A leading cause of families breaking to this horrible point is drug use. Ice in particular has drastically escalated the consequences of drug use. Local police have recently expressed to me that children as young as 12 are using this insidious drug. It is cheap, it is easy to source and it has a devastating impact. Sadly, I feel that words like these are falling on desensitised ears. This contagion is completely overwhelming the meagre resistance we are putting up to it. We need a bipartisan commitment to work this one out and do whatever we can to rid our communities of this curse.

The impact of horrible crimes, particularly those against children and resulting from the scourge of drugs, takes its toll on those who are first to respond. Police officers and our colleagues in the ambulance and Fire and Rescue Services, as well as others like child safety officers, carry the mental scars of things that should not have happened and should not have been seen. I have a passion for the mental health of police officers and emergency service workers. In 30 years I lost far too many friends and colleagues who tragically took their own lives. Policing is a job where you put your brain through much more than a human is designed to cope with.

A professional athlete puts their body through more than it was designed to withstand and as a result they undergo regular training, rehabilitation and specialised care for injury. Injury is expected and managed as part of their profession—so should it be with policing. Their mental health should be managed individually and carefully right throughout their career. We need drastic improvements in this area right across Australia and I look forward to advocating for the health and wellbeing of our police officers in this place.

I said at the beginning I am passionate about serving the community in which I live, the community of Nicklin. Our geography determines our greatest need—infrastructure. We are at the northern tip of the great mass of population that is South-East Queensland. During my time in parliament I guarantee empty fields and vacant blocks between my house and the Brisbane CBD will continue to fill and the growth corridor will continue to grow.

We need to be better connected through improvements in public transport, and the railway to Brisbane is a priority for our area and the Sunshine Coast region. We need to make train travel between Nambour and Brisbane accessible, regular and fast to attract commuters to choose rail, relieve congestion on the Bruce Highway and make our region an attractive place for families to live and businesses to invest.

During my campaign for the seat of Nicklin, the LNP made over \$10 million worth of commitments to local projects. Nicklin people voted LNP and therefore voted for these projects as a priority for our area. I will not turn my back on these priorities, advocating for them as best I can in opposition or in government during my time in this place.

Whilst I have outlined problems that need solutions, I said earlier that the community has hope and optimism. The things that challenge us are also great opportunities. We have great people doing great things and we will not only survive but thrive due to our fantastic community spirit. We have young families moving to the area and great educational institutions. I have certainly worked with many inspiring young people through my PCYC work in the Nicklin electorate. The future can be bright and I look forward to being an advocate for Nicklin to help ensure that we reach our potential as a community.

Finally, I need to give thanks to the many people who are responsible for me standing here today. To my campaign team: Alex Blake, Lesley Cowan, Matt Trace, Susan Blake, Ron Bailey, Grant Cunning, Simon Verdouw, Michael Negerevich and special mention to Sepp Schembera, who was my political mentor and gave me confidence and encouragement right through the process from preselection to election. To all of the LNP state and federal MPs and senators who mentored, advised and assisted me in the campaign: it has been great to have the assistance of the Liberal National Party family that mirrors that of the Police Service in terms of support for each other. To the Queensland Police Service colleagues and mentors that I had the pleasure of serving with along the way: I thank you all too. The Police Service is like a family and I will never forget the camaraderie, discipline, loyalty, ethics and commitment to service that were instilled in me through the job.

To my parents, Bob and Jan, who gave me the values of service and love for community; to my siblings, Paul, Brenda, Jo and Matt 'hashtag McNicol'—he made me do that—who keep me grounded, thanks for your support and love. To my parents-in-law, Bruce and Lyn Adams, thank you for always being there for Kelly, the girls and me. Holding true to my Christian values, I would also like to acknowledge that I am here by the grace of God. I pray that he will give me the required wisdom, courage and fortitude to get the job done.

Of all the words I say today I want to say these the most: thank you to my wife, Kelly, and children, Julia and Olivia. Thank you for going on this journey with me and thank you for your support right through my career in the police and now as I enter the parliament. There are many sacrifices that police

families and parliamentary families make. I thank you for sticking with me through it all and for the tremendous support you have given me. Kelly worked extremely hard during the campaign, giving up nights and weekends, making sure the job got done. She was always picking up the slack wherever there were gaps and taking on the hardest jobs. Kelly's unwavering support through the years has been the primary reason I am able to be where I am today. I could not have done any of this without her, so to Kelly, Julia and Olivia, I say thank you so much and I love you dearly.

In conclusion, I want to pay tribute to Sir Frank Nicklin, in whose memory the seat of Nicklin is named. Sir Frank was a member of this parliament for over 35 years and served as premier from 12 August 1957 to 17 January 1968. I was inspired to read Sir Frank's first speech to this parliament. His conclusion echoed much of what I heard from everyday Queenslanders during my campaign and that is their desire that all of us in this parliament work together for the good of Queensland. In tribute to Sir Frank, I will conclude with his words, which are still relevant today. He appealed—

... for the co-operation of all hon. members in assisting to restore Queensland once again to a proper state of prosperity. We in this Chamber are all Queenslanders, if not by birth, then by adoption; and it should be our endeavour to do everything possible to make and keep Queensland the premier State of the Commonwealth—

of Australia.