



Speech by

KERRY SHINE

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Hansard 5 April 2001

FIRST SPEECH

Mr SHINE (Toowoomba North—ALP) (4.25 p.m.): It is with immense joy and pride that I speak for the first time in this House. At the outset, may I add to the congratulatory sentiments already expressed to Mr Speaker on again being accorded the high office he holds with distinction. In addition, I join with other honourable members in acknowledging the interesting, informative and worthwhile contributions from so many new members during this debate.

I think without exception, members have claimed their own constituency to be that with the greatest appeal. Alas, understandable though those claims might be, the fact of the matter is that Toowoomba is the city of Queensland that stands out from the rest for its qualities of nature and human endeavour. It has developed on the lands of the Jaroweir people.

The seat of Toowoomba North is now held by a member of the great Australian Labor Party. Every member on this side of the chamber knows the pride felt in being a Labor member. This is particularly so in Toowoomba, as it is a city possessing a rich heritage of Labor representation extending over generations. Under those circumstances, it is entirely appropriate to firstly acknowledge the Australian Labor Party and, in particular, its Toowoomba North branch for the confidence placed in me.

There are many thousands of Australians—indeed, probably hundreds of thousands of Australians since the 1890s—who are or have been members of the Labor Party. Comparatively few, however, have had the honour of carrying its banner. To be an ALP candidate, even in an unwinnable seat, is a singular honour and privilege. I express my deep appreciation to the electors of Toowoomba North in their choice. As each day goes by, realisation of the quite awesome responsibility sets in. I am keen to do my best for all those who are marginalised, disabled, out of work or otherwise disadvantaged, those needing to access decent educational, health and other public services and those leading the charge for substantial and, in some cases, massive infrastructure claims.

Our success in Toowoomba North, as in most seats gained, was substantially due to the strong and intelligent leadership of Peter Beattie. Whilst the Premier did not visit Toowoomba during the campaign, his presence a week beforehand was most appreciated by our candidate in Cunningham, the hardworking Leann King and myself. I express my gratitude to the Minister for Primary Industries, Henry Palaszczuk, for having opened my campaign office and the other minister who travelled to Toowoomba North during the campaign, the Minister for the Arts, Mr Matt Foley.

I want to thank in particular two party officials. Cameron Milner did me the honour of opening the campaign in April 2000. Milton Dick gave constant expert assistance and encouragement—attending meetings in Toowoomba on a regular basis. Appreciated also was the input of Simon Finn and Lindsay Jones in the latter stages. To the many volunteers who assisted, my deep gratitude is sincerely offered. In particular, may I mention in that regard my joint campaign managers, Des McGovern and John Wiedman. Their help, enthusiasm and generosity of time continues. Barrie Ryan—and his friend Georgie, who came all the way from Papua New Guinea—took up the responsibilities of office manager and performed his duties in an extraordinary manner. I particularly wish to mention some of those who worked in one way or another during the pre-election period: Des Mallett, Peter Chippendale, Graham Byrnes, Mary Henricksen, Liz Smith, my cousins Elin and Brian Thomson who are here today, and their daughter Mary-Kate Khoo, Margaret Silva, who travelled from

Sydney, Janet Miebusch and Barry Donnelly. I happily acknowledge the work carried out over decades by Tom Baker who, along with Mrs Robyn Wood, was recently awarded life membership of the ALP. I would particularly like to thank Peter Wood, Toowoomba's deputy mayor and a former MLA for Toowoomba South, for his wise counsel.

Prior to 17 February 2001, Toowoomba North was represented by Mr Graham Healy for the National Party. I wish to acknowledge here his assistance and advice on a range of matters consequent upon the election. Upon reaching here I was not surprised to ascertain that he was held in high regard by many members of my party. I wish him and his family well.

Labor members who have represented Toowoomba North or its predecessor include Dr John Flynn and Ray Bousen. John Flynn, a skilled and highly qualified medical practitioner, served from 1989 to 1992 with distinction. Residents of Acacia Ridge now have the good fortune to benefit from the presence of this doctor. He is a good man. Mr Bousen was mentioned consistently to me during my doorknocking as being a member who got around and was seen often as a hard worker.

The seat of Toowoomba has previously been represented by another solicitor who was also a Labor member, that is, Frank Tennison Brennan, during the period 1918 to 1925. Mr Brennan rose to the ministry but, as a member of parliament, is perhaps best remembered as the target of a would-be bribery attempt. In 1925 he was appointed to the Supreme Court, where he served with distinction for many years. He was the father of Sir Gerard Brennan, a former Chief Justice of the High Court. In an extraordinary coincidence, his daughter, Miss Ann Brennan of Sydney, was in attendance yesterday in support of the honourable member for Thuringowa, Anita Phillips. I was pleased to be able to make available to her a copy of her father's maiden speech, which was delivered on 29 May 1918.

Two leaders of the opposition and members of the ALP came from Toowoomba North: Mr Les Wood and Mr John Edmund Duggan. Mr Wood, who was Leader of the Opposition from 1957 to 1958, died prematurely. His son Peter later represented Toowoomba East and then Toowoomba South. Peter's identical twin brother, Bill, represented the electorates of Cook and then Barron River. Jack Duggan sat in this chamber for over 30 years. He was the longest serving Transport Minister. He was the only member of the Gair cabinet to stay with the ALP in 1957. I remember him as Toowoomba's deputy mayor. Even at an advanced age, his speeches were delivered with eloquence. In his maiden speech, Mr Bousen said of him, 'He had a logical mind, a fluent tongue and a wide knowledge of many subjects.'

My own interest in politics commenced at the age of 14. I recall on a nightly basis being glued to the wireless, listening to the ABC broadcast of federal parliament. It was 1962 and John Fitzgerald Kennedy was the leader of the free world. It would be hard to imagine any other person in the 20th century who exerted more influence over a generation of people than Kennedy. In Australia, Menzies reigned. To a teenager passionately interested in the political process, the radio emitted hour upon hour of riveting repartee from Menzies, Calwell, Uren, Killen, Barwick, Leslie Haylen, Daly and, in the Senate, Reg Wright, McKenna and Patrick Kenneally.

Although my dad, Dan Shine, had been actively involved in the Labor Party—in the late 1930s when teaching in the Sarina district, he was branch secretary for Ted Walsh, then the member for Mirani—his interest waned. Ironically, considering I now represent the seat held by Mr Duggan, I was drawn at an early age to the QLP-DLP. Today, the feelings I experience as a speaker in the same chamber in which Vince Gair, my hero as a teenager, sat are difficult to describe. It is 44 years this month since that party split in Queensland. Over the last few days I have been visualising the exchanges, the tensions and the emotions that would have been displayed in this place 44 years ago. Having read widely of the period and having known some of the participants in the split, my overall feeling is one of great sadness. The split spelt disaster to many involved, especially members of this House. Far more importantly, it denied the people of Queensland just, honest and caring government for an inordinate period of 32 years.

The Gair government was electorally and spectacularly successful: it received 53.1 per cent of the vote in 1953 and 50.69 per cent of the vote in 1956, returning 49 out of 75 members. Within a year, it was rent asunder. I know that our party is led nowadays, both in here and in our machine, by wise and temperate people who know well the history of the Labor movement and, in particular, the history of the split. That history should be, in my view, compulsory reading.

As I recall it, I had a most fortunate childhood. For most of my primary school years I attended Wivenhoe Pocket State School in the Brisbane Valley. My mother died shortly after I was born and I was reared by my father's sister, Mary Elson-Green. During those years I lived what seems now to have been the idyllic existence of a boy growing up on a farm. The one-teacher school provided me with close friends. I am sure my interest in history started there. Despite the grades taught ranging from grade 1 to scholarship, the attention given was superb, there being usually only about 15 in the school.

From there I had the privilege of attending Villanova College, Coorparoo, where my secondary schooling was entrusted to the Augustinian Fathers. Today I am indeed proud to say that two other

Villanovans hold high office in this great government, namely, the honourable members for Sandgate and Lytton. Father John McGlone, whom I met on my first day at the school, does me great honour by being here this afternoon in the gallery.

I completed senior in 1966, before the Whitlam era. I had determined that I wanted to study law. Of course, this was out of the question because of the fees and the need to contribute to my upkeep. I was fortunate to obtain articles with the firm then called Trout Bernays & Tingle. My master was an extraordinary gentleman, George Deeb. In early 1976, I returned to Toowoomba, the city of my birth, and commenced practice as a sole practitioner. Toowoomba has been exceedingly good to me professionally. When I retired from my then firm of Shine Roche McGowan at the 1998 election, I could look back with considerable satisfaction. My success in law has largely been due to an ability to attract talented, hard-working and loyal people to work with me. In that regard I would particularly like to acknowledge Faran Gouldson, my partner in the firm that we established at Browns Plains in 1999. He has had to put up with an extraordinary amount over the past 18 months.

I want to mention the debt that I owed to my Aunt Mary, who mothered me from when I was just a few days old. I loved her dearly. However, she was a National Party voter and was deeply thankful to God that, at the 1998 election, as she was residing in Toowoomba South she could safely vote for Mr Horan without offending me. I have been blessed with three great children, Stephanie, Matthew and Madeleine, whom I love greatly. The experience of prolonged separation from one's children consequent upon divorce is one to be earnestly avoided.

In what little time remains, I would like to indicate to the House some of what I will work for as it pertains to my electorate. In doing so, may I indicate my intention to work with the members for Toowoomba South, Cunningham and Darling Downs in attempting to better our region. Of special importance are—

- the establishment of a police and emergency service presence at Highfields;

- the provision of adequate funds to ensure first-rate educational, medical and housing facilities;

- the implementation in my electorate of the government's programs to combat crime and the causes of crime;

- the investigation of a proposal to move government departments, for example, the DPI to our region along similar lines to the transfer of Agriculture NSW to Orange;

- the further decentralisation of tasks within government departments, for example, clerical to our region;

- the gaining of a firm commitment from both the federal government and our government to commence construction of the second range crossing within a specified time frame;

- the recognition of Toowoomba not only being the centre for the downs, Western Queensland and northern New south Wales, but also exploiting further its already acknowledged reputation as an educational and medical centre of excellence. I wish to pursue that further; and

- finally, one of the other major topics of infrastructure need in our area is the conveyance of waste water from Brisbane to the Darling Downs.

Toowoomba has many things going for it, particularly an energetic and game mayor, Di Thorley. To ensure its expansion and the provision of a sound future, it needs—and I am sure we will get—a wholehearted commitment from the Beattie government. For too long our region has been taken for granted by successive National Party governments. I certainly aim to make a difference.
