




Speech By
Simone Wilson

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

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MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mrs WILSON** (Pumicestone—LNP) (3.33 pm): Mr Speaker, I rise today in this chamber as a member of the 56th Parliament of Queensland honoured to serve and represent the people of the Pumicestone electorate. The privilege of this position is something that I take most seriously, and I will never lose sight of this in every dealing that I have with my constituents and every action I take as their state representative. I stand here today and solemnly promise the Pumicestone electorate that I will use my voice and I will put my heart into this job as I represent them fairly and justly. The people of Pumicestone now have a state representative who will put their best interests first; one who will put their heart and soul into delivering for them. This is what they expect, and under my representation this electorate will no longer be taken for granted.

Those who know me will attest that my heart is in the right place and I put my heart into everything that I do. I do not believe that we can be good politicians without having a good heart in the right place. My personal guiding principles are founded on honesty, equity, accountability, responsibility and trust. These are the values that have been instilled in me by my parents, Owen and Patricia Bellamy—who are here with us today—which I will utilise to represent my community wholeheartedly during my term in office. I want my constituents to not only trust that they are being represented but to actually feel that they are being represented as they deserve.

As the renowned modern poet Maya Angelou said, 'I have learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.' I want to place on record my thanks to those who put their trust in me to represent them. I will serve all residents of my electorate, and I want those whom I am yet to win the trust of to know that I will work hard to earn this from them. I would like to thank the LNP and members who provided me with this profound opportunity to represent my community—the community in which my husband Steve and I have raised our family, but more so a place that we are all so proud to call home.

As a child my family moved to Queensland from Victoria and settled in Morningside, where my siblings and I attended Seven Hills State School. It was during this time in year 7 that I was first captured by politics. My social conscious was sparked. Standing there as a student in the House of the people understanding the fundamental principles of democracy, representation and advocacy—at that point I knew this was something I wanted to be part of. Now, some 30 years later, I again stand in the House of the people humbled to my core.

From a young age I developed a love of running, netball and swimming. To me sport was everything, and I am so grateful to my parents for encouraging me to pursue athletics. Like many children and young people today, I too struggled to fit in. I became one of those kids who was bullied because I was different. I was very tall, skinny and a kind of awkward adolescent. I was vulnerable because of this. In sport I found solace, and in fact it was sport—in particular, running—that I found the freedom to express myself and develop inner pride and the self-confidence that I needed to become

the woman who stands today in this parliament. Victims of bullying today find it harder to escape their abusers due to the connected world that we live in. Today we must realise that what was accepted in the past is no longer accepted today, and we must all play a part in standing up and stamping out this bad behaviour. I still recall clearly the old saying, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.' Well, they do and for so many in our community they have lasting effects.

My parents were both hardworking teachers who raised their five children with the strong ethic of 'a hard day's work for a fair day's pay'. They taught us compassion, empathy, tolerance and charitable values, and I thank them. I will use this and demonstrate it throughout my role as the state member for Pumicestone. In 2003 Steve and I moved to Ningi in search of a larger parcel of land on which to raise our family, one that was close to the water and provided the lifestyle that we wanted for our kids. Soon after settling at Ningi our family grew rapidly from four to six and then to seven the following year. Five sons later, now ranging from 22 to 13 years of age, my home has always been a hive of activity, not to mention an overabundance of testosterone. If you look in the gallery they are here today. I can confidently say that raising these five energetic boys has more than prepared me for the rigours of this chamber.

I am proud that all of my sons were born at the Caboolture Hospital, and I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hardworking doctors, nurses, ward staff, administrators and volunteers who work tirelessly at the hospital for the good of our entire community. They are exceptional people who are dedicated to the health and wellbeing of others, and they should be commended.

My life after school, be it working or studying, has taken me on a journey for which I am grateful. I have experienced so much across various sectors of employment, education and finance and within all these roles I have worked at the coalface with people to help them achieve a better life. I am proud to have worked as a teacher aide at Bribie Island State School and during this time I undertook further study in education. This work and study provided me with an in-depth insight into educating today's young people and from this firsthand experience I understand and know the battles of our teachers and the struggles of our students. Every parent who sends their child off to school wants nothing but the very best education for their sons and daughters. They want their child to attend a school that fosters quality teaching, that helps shape their child's resilience and that provides a positive atmosphere to stimulate their child's intellectual and emotional growth through their educational journey.

The parents I speak to also want their schools to be inclusive of all children, not just in words but in real actions. Like me, most parents I speak to believe that the education system should provide for all children to reach their full potential and achieve their life's aspirations. We may have written the policies on inclusivity that read well on paper, but the reality is there is still such a long way to go before every child with a disability is truly able to succeed through our education system. Like thousands of other Queensland parents, I have a child with dyslexia. Dyslexia is a disability that is extremely hard to diagnose and even harder to understand. For my son our educational journey began in term 1, but it was not until five years later and thousands of dollars spent on treatment and specialists that we were able to obtain a formal diagnosis for his dyslexia.

In essence, while the formal diagnosis helped put the framework around my son's learning disability, the lack of funding for dyslexia and other learning disabilities in Queensland fails students like my son in our schools. I still recall the day when one option suggested to us was to have a doctor diagnose our son with anxiety. Why? Because funding could be sourced to assist him in the classroom if he suffered from anxiety and not dyslexia. Naturally, we were at odds with this advice and did not heed it, so we struggled, as many parents do, to ensure our son received the very best education despite the obstacles in our way.

From my days as a teacher aide to being a parent of a child with a learning disability, I am, needless to say, looking forward to my role as the shadow assistant education minister. I look forward to working with my colleague the member for Kawana, the shadow education minister, in holding to account Labor's commitment to education of our children and the education system as a whole.

Pumicestone electorate is a place with unique beauty and boundless offerings. It has diverse needs and immense possibilities. One thing more than anything else binds the diversity that is Pumicestone together, and that is community spirit. It is almost inconceivable that there is no formal support base on Bribie Island to provide personalised support for domestic violence and elder abuse victims. Since January last year over 1,100 domestic and family violence related incidents were reported to the police in the Pumicestone electorate. Times this by five or even 10 on average for the number of people closely associated with each of these incidents and we can see how unacceptable it is not to have a DV service within my electorate to support the many thousands of residents impacted each year by this insidious crime.

Not too long ago a small group of Bribie Island locals, concerned about this lack of support, decided to do something about it and what it has shown is that there is a community ready and willing to help. Like many community minded groups, Hairdressers with Hearts has sprung up from the hearts of local people. The two powerhouse women behind this initiative are Sonia and Tammy. Through their work they have encountered men and women of all ages who are victims of violence and abuse. It is from these humble beginnings that a most worthwhile community driven initiative is emerging in my electorate—an initiative that is helping mothers and children get back on their feet at a time when support is needed most and helping elderly residents to regain control of their lives.

It is the commitment of people like Sonia and Tammy that keep people connected in the community and make it an even safer place to live. I am a firm believer that we can never do enough to protect those who are most vulnerable and I look forward to keeping the House up to date on the progress of this grassroots initiative happening in my electorate. We simply must do more for our senior citizens who find themselves in highly vulnerable situations that lead to abuse and we must be open to new initiatives in addressing domestic and elder abuse and rid our communities of this plague. Addressing these two issues with local actions and initiatives will be a focus of mine during this term of parliament.

I want to acknowledge the immense and diverse life experience that exists within the Pumicestone electorate due to our large retiree population. The breadth and depth of knowledge that exists must be recognised and I look forward to seeing what opportunities can be created to share the expansive knowledge bank that resides within the electorate. Pumicestone truly is a playground in the sun offering diverse, friendly communities made up of stunning neighbourhoods which provide ideal places to raise your family, enjoy your retirement years or discover that sea change you have been dreaming about for so long.

Very soon after becoming the state member, I coined the phrase 'Pumicestone fun, sun, everyone', as this is what our electorate offers. The electorate is the gateway between Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast and it is visited in droves by people who, like its many residents, realise all that Pumicestone has to offer. It is a place that abounds in nature's gifts, of beauty rich and rare. In fact, I think the national anthem could have been written in Pumicestone! From the beautiful Bribie Island with its west banks spanning the Pumicestone Passage all the way to the tip of Caloundra, Woorim's rolling surf and the many sparkling beaches dotted around the perimeter that rival the best that Queensland has to offer on any day, we live in a unique part of the world in the Pumicestone electorate. There is really no other place quite like it.

The Pumicestone electorate comprises close-knit welcoming communities and landmarks like the Caboolture Aero Club and airfield, the State Equestrian Centre, the Caboolture historical museum, the Abbey Museum, our Volunteer Marine Rescue centre, cultural and historical landmarks of great significance, amazing fishing and water activities, not to mention some of the best weekend markets and recreational areas for all to enjoy. You cannot pass over the Bribie Island Bridge without seeing the pelicans sitting proudly atop the light posts as if they are welcoming you to the island and all it has to offer. All this and more—all of what is Pumicestone—deserves the very best representation.

I want to acknowledge Lisa France, the former LNP member for Pumicestone who made a significant contribution to our electorate. Just the other day I was visited by a constituent who pulled out a Lisa France pen from their handbag to sign a form and, after a little chuckle at still having that pen some 3½ years later, we exchanged our admiration for the work that Lisa did in the electorate that still holds her in high regard today. I also want to pay tribute to the member for Glass House, Andrew Powell, who, prior to the boundary realignments, represented parts of what is now within the Pumicestone electorate. In my view, and many others I expect, the member for Glass House is one of the finest politicians we have in this state and I thank him for his support and guidance, which I value more than words.

I am particularly proud to be a female member of the LNP standing alongside some inspiring, strong, compassionate women colleagues and, when I talk about inspirational women, I need to look no further than our very own Leader of the Opposition, the member for Nanango, Deb Frecklington. I also want to acknowledge some incredibly dedicated people who stood beside me in the past 12 months working tirelessly on my campaign, forsaking their own precious time with family and loved ones so that Pumicestone could have a member who is committed to their home and their best interests.

Whilst I cannot mention all by name, I want to acknowledge particularly Cameron Matheson, Ray Adams—who is here today—Vicki Morris, Ross Dunn, Michael Leighton and Andrew and Nicole Smith. I am truly grateful for their dedication and support and guidance over the past 12 months. To all of those who volunteered on my campaign, I thank them from the bottom of my heart—in particular Val, Kate, Rim, Deb, Steph, Joy, Melissa, Kym, Geordi, Con and their families. There were some very long and exhausting days, but we got the job done and we made it fun.

For some members, the journey to this House involves literally just a short drive, but for others it takes much longer. For me, my journey was a relatively short drive, but a drive that involves a stretch of road that has fast become the bane for motorists in my electorate. Bribie Island Road stretches almost the length of the Pumicestone electorate—from Caboolture through to and over the Bribie Island Bridge—and is now a most pressing issue for residents. It is time this government directs its attention and gives a commitment to my community to deliver the long-overdue upgrade to this road that it needs. I will continue to fight for this upgrade, as I will for many other improvements to road infrastructure within my electorate. I would like to acknowledge my staff: Sally Grant and Daniel Downes who, along with me, work tirelessly to support the community that is the Pumicestone electorate.

I have saved the very best for last. It would be impossible for me to be standing here today without the support and encouragement of my wonderful family. Once again, I wish to pay tribute to my parents, Owen and Patricia; my in-laws, Robert and Rosina; my great-uncle, Charles, who is almost 92—a World War II veteran—and who has flown up from Melbourne to be here with me; and my aunt, Pauline. Their love and support means everything to me. I thank my sons, Bryce, Jack, Daniel, Matthew and Stephen, who over the past 12 months have spent many weekends on the roadsides with me and letterbox dropping. I love them so much and I am so proud of the young men they have become. Finally, I am so proud to be the wife of Steve. He has been a great source of encouragement and strength to me, in particular over the past 12 months. I am so happy that he has come on this journey with me.

I think that members can tell from my speech today that I am a local member who is about people, for people and with people. I will never lose sight of the real reason I am here today and that is to make the people of the Pumicestone electorate my No. 1 priority. Collectively, this 56th Parliament can make the most difference to the lives of Queenslanders and the most difference to the future prosperity of our great state. I am looking forward to the journey ahead.