



Speech by

Verity Barton

MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

Hansard Tuesday, 29 May 2012

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (12.45 pm): It is indeed a great honour to rise as the member for Broadwater for the first time in this hallowed place. From the Jabiru Island Bridge in the north, to Loders Creek in the south, west to the Coombabah reserve, east to the magnificent South Stradbroke Island and all in between, it is a community that I am proud to be a member of and even prouder to be a voice for and serve. I have long been of the belief, Mr Deputy Speaker, that after military service there is no greater way that one can serve their community and their country than to represent them in the parliament, and it truly is a great privilege to be here.

I am very proud to be a third generation member of the Liberal National Party and its predecessor, the Liberal Party. I am a proud conservative and a proud constitutional monarchist. Indeed, it is on a pedestal that I place Sir Robert Menzies, Baroness Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and the Hon. John Winston Howard as the key political influences in my life. It is their writings and their words that have shaped my political philosophy and shaped the beliefs that I am proud to hold today.

I joined the Liberal Party at the age of 17 because I believe in the rights and freedoms of all, because I believe that it is the individuals and businesses of this great state and country who are the true creators of wealth and opportunity. I am a member because I believe in free enterprise and in offering incentives for positive action rather than punishment for inaction. I joined because I do not believe that governments can tax their people into prosperity. I am a member because I believe in smaller government. As 'the Gipper' himself once said, 'The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: "I'm from the government and I'm here to help."' And it is with this mantra in mind that I can honestly say that I truly hope that when I leave this place our government is smaller and its interventions in our lives less.

My political philosophy is also shaped and guided by my Catholic faith and my belief in God. In times of trouble and discomfort I know that I can seek solace in His wisdom and His guidance. It is my faith and my association with the Society of St Vincent de Paul which has helped shape and guide my belief that we should always offer a hand up not a handout to those who are truly in need and who are unable to help themselves. I believe that we, as individual members of our communities and society, have a duty to help those suffering and struggling the most, for it is as the Chinese proverb declares: if you give a man a fish you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.

As a conservative, I believe in strong families and the sanctity of marriage—two great institutions that have stood the test of time. I believe in families who work together for the greater good of all and I believe that we have a responsibility to support those families. Australia rode to prosperity on the sheep's back and it continues to grow today and will grow well into the future on the back of strong, hardworking Australian and Queensland families.

Not only am I a strong supporter of families; I am also a constitutional monarchist and an ardent supporter of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia. As I proudly stood by the banks of the Brisbane River in October last year, waving my little Australian flag, the words of Elizabethan poet Thomas Ford came immediately to mind—

I did but see her passing by

And yet I love her till I die.

Our constitutional monarchy is a system that works. It is a system that works to ensure democratic mandates are protected and the people's choice honoured. Republicans oft cite the proposition that an Australian republic is an inevitability and that we should not fight to protect the sacrosanctity of the system of which we should be so proud. To those I say: not only is that argument flawed but it is akin to saying that death is inevitable so why should one bother living? I am proud to be steadfast in my beliefs, and if you will indulge me and allow me to borrow some words from the great 'iron lady' herself, this lady is not for turning.

It is the people of my community who make it so incredibly special. I have long had an association with the area, and I made the decision nearly 10 years ago that it was the Broadwater area where I wanted to live and where I one day hope to raise a family. I have some incredibly fond memories of my school holidays spent at my grandparents' place at Paradise Point. I remember getting very excited when I was first able to swim from one side of the canal to the other, I remember long walks through the park to the Sovereign Island bridge and back, and I remember being a precocious little girl as I popped into the O'Callaghan's chemist just to say hello.

That said, however, I also have some not-so-fond memories that include the ritual dumping by waves on the other side of South Stradbroke Island and getting caught by one of the many sandbanks at low tide when fishing or crabbing on the Broadwater with my grandfather—though at the time, of course, I was completely unaware and thought it was all part of his grand plan to get the best yabbies for yet another few hours of tranquillity as we sat side by side, lines in, looking out to the Broadwater as he indulged my incredibly juvenile and innocent dreams that I might just snag a six-foot barramundi. That said, my memories are mostly fond and they are very good and they are what have influenced my love of the area.

It is the needs and the concerns of my community that will drive me and to which I will respond. And that is why I am proud to be the member for Broadwater at a time when we will see the re-establishment of an independent Broadwater management authority, an authority which will seek to ensure the future and health of our beautiful namesake. It is an authority that will plan dredging with the interests of recreational boaties, fishermen and the marine life paramount in its focus. And it is also why I will be fighting to see the removal of transit lanes in Labrador so we can ease the growing traffic congestion and why I will fight to see the installation of flashing lights at all schools in the area for the safety of everyone.

I would also like to acknowledge the former honourable members for Broadwater, Mr Allan Grice and Ms Peta-Kaye Croft, and recognise in this House and at this time their service to our community.

I believe that we need strong communities, and that is why I will be fighting for more police in our community and why I will be working with groups like the Runaway Bay RSL Sub Branch, the Coombabah Neighbourhood Watch groups and the Paradise Point Progress Association. It is also why I will work tirelessly to ensure not only that the Labrador Men's Shed, an establishment which grows rapidly every single day, has the ability to grow so that it can continue to be the social hub that our local men need and where they can relate their life experiences, trials and tribulations with their fellow shed members, but also that the great men there can continue the prodigious and phenomenal mentoring work they do with Labrador State School.

My belief in strong communities is why I will always be a strong advocate for the networks that Coombabah State High School has made with local businesses as part of the beacon program, a program which seeks to ensure that our local high school students fully appreciate the breadth of opportunities they have in their futures. The children of today are our leaders of tomorrow, and that is why I will be a resolute supporter of the leadership programs at Coombabah State School and Coombabah State High and why I will work to forge strong relationships with Biggera Waters State School and St Francis Xavier school in Runaway Bay. It is my hope that I can use my relationships with these schools to encourage in the young and youth of today a love of reading, a thirst for knowledge and an indomitable sense of the need to understand what governments do and current local, national and world events.

When I was in kindergarten and preschool a love of reading was inspired in me. Over the years I have gained and derived much pleasure from the many tomes, and it has driven my thirst for knowledge. I honestly believe that if you give a child the gift of reading the opportunities and experiences for them that you create are endless.

Our community has many assets of which it can be exceedingly proud, be it the Labrador Tigers AFL club, the Runaway Bay Cricket Club, the soccer club or the rugby league club. And let us not forget the Labrador scouts club, still in its original den down on Turpin Road, which provides mentoring and life skills to the boys and girls of our community as they grow into remarkable young men and women. We should also be very proud of the Runaway Bay Sports Super Centre for it is a rare institution indeed. Not only does the centre provide excellent, world-class facilities for students on school camps and visiting athletes from all around the world; it continues to do so as a government owned entity that does not seek

to rely on taxpayer dollars for day-to-day operational costs. Rather, it has a business plan and runs itself like any private entity.

We should also be very proud of the multicultural nature of our community. I have had the great pleasure of congratulating Australians on the attainment of their new citizenship and welcoming refugees into the school community at Labrador. One of the things that makes Australia, Queensland and all of our communities so great is the extent of cultural diversity to which we are all exposed on a day-to-day basis. When I went to primary school we had the motto 'we all smile in the one language', and as an adult who appreciates Australia's cultural diversity I now, more than ever, fully appreciate how true a statement that is. One of the lasting memories that I will have for the rest of my life is the look on the face of an Ethiopian refugee as he thanked me for the opportunity that his children will have, not only for a better life but also for a better education. It made me incredibly proud to be a part of a community that he wants to be a member of and that is welcoming him with open arms. I will also never forget the smiles on the faces of a Guatemalan migrant and his wife as they recited the oath as they became Australian citizens. Our diversity means that our communities can learn and share much with each other, all while smiling in the same language.

We should be incredibly proud of our way of life as we remember that people the world over strive to have the same opportunities that we do and that good men and women fight to ensure that people the world over have the same freedoms that we have and that we often take for granted.

As a society we do a fantastic job of recognising people's sporting abilities and prowess and we offer them the opportunities that they need to excel. This is something that we should continue to do now and into the future. However, we should never neglect those whose endeavours towards excellence are cultural in nature, be it dance, theatre, film, art or music. It is my hope that over coming years the Gold Coast community will be able to provide a public hub for those who strive towards cultural excellence and need our community's support.

I would not be here today if it were not for the trust and faith that the great people of Broadwater have placed in me. There have been moments when it has been incredibly overwhelming, but it is also a remarkable honour. Someone wise once told me that I should always remember that when people come to our door as their representatives they are at their darkest and their problems are at their worst and it is our duty to do our utmost to help remedy and relieve their problems, regardless of how little it may seem that we can do. Indeed, as Edmund Burke himself once said, 'the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing'. To the people of Broadwater, I make this pledge to you: I will honour the trust and faith that you have placed in me and I will reward you with my heart and with my soul.

I am incredibly gratified to stand in this place knowing that I am the youngest woman ever elected in the great state of Queensland. This achievement is all the more rewarding knowing that it is the conservatives in Queensland who have always selected and chosen women for public office on the basis of their merit and their ability, not because of the antiquated and, quite frankly, simply offensive concept that is a quota system and affirmative action. I hope that this achievement, along with that of the honourable member for Maroochydore as Queensland's first female Speaker, serves as proof to all women, to somewhat blasphemously paraphrase the great Annie Lennox and the even greater Aretha Franklin, that sisters really can do it for themselves.

As I look around this chamber I am delighted to see a broad range of people from a broad range of backgrounds. I have long been of the view that our parliaments need to be representative of our demographics, and I am proud to be a member of this 54th Parliament because it does just that.

There were some very special people who helped me reach my dream of being a voice for my community who I would like to acknowledge publicly today. And whilst it would be impossible for me to name them all, I would like to particularly mention the Premier, the Hon. Campbell Newman; the President of the LNP, Bruce McIver; Bernard Ponting; Bruce Duncan; Betty and Laurie Robinson; Paul Donovan; Peter Campbell; Blair Shapland; Kyle Shapland; Julian Leembruggen; the Gold Coast Young LNP and the Young LNP at large; Nan Rogers; Ross Tregida; Pat Crotty; Richard Towson; Stuart Robert MP; David Callard; Robert Knight; Kerry Knight; Phil Hunniford; Mitchell Redford; all my volunteers; and last but certainly not least, my campaign director, John Clarke.

Finally, there are some very special people who have helped me achieve great things in my life and who have contributed to where and who I am today. I would like to especially mention and acknowledge the Sisters of Mercy, particularly Sister Mary Pescott RSM; Senator the Hon. George Brandis SC; Liam Brennan; Ryan Murphy; Kate Pasfield; Amy Schloss; Malcolm Hughes; Christopher Hughes; Jackie Hughes; Clive Hughes Jr; my grandfather and former member for Kurilpa, Clive Melwyn Hughes; and my mother, the incredibly perspicacious Janet Barton, to whom today I dedicate this maiden speech. I can honestly say that I would not be the person I am today if it were not for the love that she showered upon me, the upbringing that she gave me and the grounding in faith that she provided me and her constant reminders to behave impeccably at all times. The sacrifices that my mother has made to give me the

opportunities that I have had in my life and my education will never be forgotten. In my life I have always striven to one thing and acted to ensure it, and that is that my mother is proud of me. And I hope that today the woman I have become, who stands before you all, is one she can be immensely proud of, take credit for and take pride in. My Uncle Clive, my grandfather and my mother are the guiding lights of my life who inspire me to shine and for whom I hope to shine brighter and brighter every single day of my life.