



Speech by
Samuel Cox

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Hansard Thursday, 17 May 2012

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr COX** (Thuringowa—LNP) (12.03 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to address the House. I congratulate Madam Speaker on her appointment as the first female Speaker in the Queensland parliament and of course the first LNP Speaker in the Queensland parliament. I want to pledge my loyalty to Queen Elizabeth II and her representative in Queensland, Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland, and to the constituents of the Thuringowa electorate. I feel very honoured to be able to address the parliament as the member for Thuringowa. I deem it a great privilege to have been elected to this position and I am instilled with a sense of deep loyalty to the constituents of the Thuringowa electorate for having placed their trust in me.

I am also here today in no small way due to the support of many people for whom I have great respect and admiration and whose support I am very privileged to have. At this time I remember my friends and extended family and I thank them for the guidance and direction they have given me in my life. May our friendship continue and remain strong and long lasting. I ask the House though to forgive me if I indulge on this occasion in giving special recognition and thanks to some people. I thank the honourable member for Burdekin, Rosemary Menkens, John Dywer, Jane McNamara and Des and Jacko Barr for the support and encouragement they gave me during the early days when nominating for preselection and later during my campaign in the seat of Thuringowa for the LNP; to the members of the Thuringowa SEC and the executive for selecting me to contest the seat and for their 100 per cent support from day one; and also to the many LNP shadow ministers who visited Thuringowa and provided us with their support and assistance, especially the member for Hinchinbrook and now Minister Andrew Cripps. I thank you all.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my campaign team in Niki Lyons, Robin Scottney-Turbill, Tom Darlington and Peter Sandery. They all demonstrated the difference between an interest and a commitment when you believe strongly in something or someone. Special mention must be made of Tom Darlington and Peter Sandery for their support and guidance to me 24/7 during a long campaign. The mentoring, friendship and advice they gave me provided me with a better understanding of politics and the political process. They were with me every step of the way, whether it was Peter by my side doorknocking on the hottest summer days or Peter, Tom and me sitting back discussing the history of Queensland politics. The many hours I spent with them both helped get me here today.

I must also thank the former federal member for Herbert, the Hon. Peter Lindsay. His wealth of political knowledge and skills was invaluable to me during the campaign and I thank you, Peter. Mention must also be made of my North Queensland colleagues—the Minister for Local Government and the member for Mundingburra, David Crisafulli, and the member for Townsville, John Hathaway, who are also in the House today. From the beginning of the campaign, David, John and I worked together in a united way which resulted in the three of us successfully claiming the three long-held Labor seats. We will continue this unified front to ensure our region gets its fair share.

To my former employer George Booth at Booth Pastoral Services and the staff, a big thank you for allowing me the time to chase my dream of getting into parliament and for help in so many other ways. To my mother, Pauline Cox, to whom I am forever indebted for all she gave and sacrificed for our family, her unselfish love and commitment to her children and her usual hands-on approach to life in getting things

done, I thank you. Also to my siblings, Les, Kellie and Andrew, I thank you for your support and help not just during the campaign but also throughout my life. Les generously put in countless hours over the phone and advised me firsthand from his knowledge of the workings of state politics. Thanks to my younger brother Andrew, who was very much hands on assisting me with everything from letterboxing, putting up signage, manning polling booths on election day to even taking up child-minding duties for Janine and me.

Finally, words cannot express sufficiently my thanks and gratitude to my wife, Janine, and our children, Harry, Georgia and Dugald. You have all been very supportive and patient with me over the past 18 months when at times it must have seemed to be a very selfish endeavour on my part to enter the Queensland parliament. Your love and support never wavered. You are my drive but, more importantly, you are my life.

First and foremost, I am a family man and I believe that our society can only be truly strong if it is built on the foundation stone of good family values. I believe in the sanctity of marriage and the right to raise children in a safe and loving environment where they can get the best possible education. I believe we should treat the older members of our community with the respect that they have earned. Grandparents and elders are, after all, the bedrock of the family unit. I also believe in reward for hard work. From a very young age I learnt about hard work, as my father died when I was 10 and the children in the family had to step up and fill the breach to help our inspirational mother keep the property running. We succeeded because we were resourceful, hardworking and we believed in helping ourselves and not relying on others to carry us. It was a lesson that has shaped my endeavour since then. However, another lesson from that time was to show compassion for those who are less fortunate and, when needed, to speak up on their behalf. It is that belief that has led me here today with the ambition of representing my electorate and making a difference for my community. It is my firm belief that taking responsibility for helping others and not just looking out for No. 1 is what makes a truly valuable member of society. I believe in being honest, not only to others but to myself with regard to my beliefs.

Thuringowa is the second fastest growth area in Queensland. It is in a prime position to benefit from this growth and to reap the advantages, but the expansion must be matched by good governance and infrastructure development. To cater for this growth, we need to increase education facilities, we need to improve the traffic network and we need to support the front-line operations of our emergency services.

Thuringowa encompasses a large area of new housing estates and any growth in industry and commerce throughout the region places a strain on our present resources. Thuringowa has a mix of private and government enterprises, small business, tradespeople, professionals and Defence Force personnel and it stands in good stead to remain a high-growth and self-sustaining area. The people of Thuringowa need a strong voice if they are to capitalise on this growth. We are the home of the North Queensland Cowboys at Dairy Farmers Stadium. The team is currently in the top four of the NRL and is aiming for a 2012 premiership—sorry Vaughan. We are also part of the support base for the Townsville Crocs and the Townsville Fire, who made the play-offs this year in the NBL and the WNBL respectively. Sport plays a large part in the lives of our locals and initiatives such as Get in the Game for children will help ease the burden of fees and costs on struggling parents. May I take this opportunity to welcome an additional infantry battalion to Townsville. 3RAR is now based at Lavarack Barracks and its arrival has enhanced the strong military presence in our city, which is home to the largest Defence Force establishment in Australia.

I joined the political fray as the LNP was being formed and, while proud of my rural heritage, I endorse enthusiastically this unified conservative voice. I have many friends who come from the opposite side of politics who I also have learned much from when it comes to looking after others rather than just ourselves. While campaigning in Thuringowa, it became very evident that my constituents want their member to be active and involved at the local level in community events. The residents of Thuringowa have also emphasised to me the need for action on juvenile crime in our area. The LNP government's plans to increase policing levels and introduce an early intervention program for juveniles will go a long way towards addressing these problems. Early intervention programs that emphasise civic pride without peer pressure together with programs like boot camps will go long way towards repairing the divides caused by juvenile crime in the community. More resources will need to be directed towards these issues.

Like all Australians, the Thuringowa residents are experiencing increased pressure from the rising costs of living. They welcome our efforts to curtail increases in car registration and service costs. Health has been a serious ongoing issue over the past couple of decades in the region and, along with my constituents, I have welcomed the LNP's promise of a paediatric intensive care unit at the Townsville Hospital and other improvements to health services. The Townsville area has the highest per capita recreational boat ownership in Queensland. I have no doubt that a fair proportion of these owners are Thuringowa residents who are trying to cope with the shortage of boat ramps and car/trailer parking areas. This issue will become a bigger problem as the population increases and I will be working with my colleagues to address it. My vision for Thuringowa is for a vibrant community that works together to achieve results. As their representative, I will strive to be actively involved and assist them in their decision making.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is at this time that I wish to draw your attention to the exploits of an early pioneer, George Elphinstone Dalrymple, who was active in my region in the mid part of the 19th century. George, unlike some of his colleagues, was not an explorer with a narrow view. His vision for the north included pastoralism, tropical agriculture and mining and he did his best to develop all three—not unlike the present day LNP's vision of a four-pillar economy. The LNP has outlined the need to focus on the four pillars of mining and resources, tourism, construction and agriculture to enable economic recovery and growth. Nowhere is this vision more important than in North Queensland and Thuringowa.

A major constraint facing George Dalrymple in the 1860s was the tyranny of distance from the seat of government in Brisbane. There was no real concept of the issues facing an emerging North Queensland or recognition of the economic potential of the region. Unfortunately, some 150 years later it seemed as though the north was again facing the same disconnect from a southern focused government. The policies of the past government had been driven by social engineers who tried to control all levels of government. They had forgotten the role of the three levels of government and ignored the economic drivers for development. The LNP understands the different roles, and we have said we will give the power back to local councils to make relevant decisions. We need to lobby federal governments irrespective of their side of politics for a fair return to this state in recognition of Queensland's contribution to the nation's coffers.

It is time now to focus on the economic potential of my region and turn that potential into an economic reality. My long-term ambition is to promote the sustainable development of North Queensland. I believe the focus needs to be on the areas of water, energy, infrastructure and food production. The importance of these areas have been emphasised by the effects of the recent natural disasters on both urban and rural communities as well as major industries such as mining and agriculture across the state. To the detriment of Queensland, and in particular North Queensland, the previous government forgot that if you choose to stop feeding the goose, the eggs will no longer remain golden.

In closing, I wish to state that the point we need to get right in a good government is the recognition of the significance of local, state and national issues and the need for balance between them. It is a recognition of the unique role that each level of government has to play in contributing to the welfare of the individual and in ensuring the security and prosperity of their community for future generations. I believe good government provides support, not direction; assistance, not hindrance; and policy, not politics. I look forward to representing the people of Thuringowa and working with them to deliver that security and prosperity. Never look back. It is that which is in front of you that you need to see. May I say to the members of the House to take note of the shortness of my speech, as that it will probably be the last time.