



Speech by

Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard Tuesday, 29 May 2012

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (7.38 pm): I begin my speech by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land upon which we are standing. Mr Deputy Speaker, please pass on my congratulations to Madam Speaker on her appointment as the first female Speaker of the Queensland parliament. The House has made an outstanding choice.

I am honoured to be standing here today as only the second conservative member for Everton in its 40-year history. I am proud to be part of this historic intake of 2012. Never before has an incoming government been given such a mandate and never before has such a high expectation been placed on a new government. Along with my new colleagues, I am acutely aware of the enormous trust the people of Queensland have placed in us. I thank the people of Everton for showing confidence in me and I intend to work very hard to live up to that high expectation.

I wish to acknowledge the man who I believe was most responsible for the LNP's electoral victory, the member for Ashgrove and our new Premier. I thank the Premier for having the courage, boldness and vision to attempt what no other politician in Australian history had ever achieved. I thank him for his leadership and the grace he displayed when he withstood an unfounded attack from the previous Labor government—an attack that will go down as one of the dirtiest in history. I am proud to serve alongside the Premier in this LNP Newman government.

Although I am new to politics in a formal way, I have had a very keen interest in the subject all my life. I thank my mother and my late father for developing my political consciousness from an early age. Politics was a regular topic for discussion in my family. My brothers and I were taught to be informed, to have an opinion and to be unafraid to voice it. Ironically for a newly elected conservative politician, my family was as Labor as they come. In the recent election my first challenge was to convince my mother to vote for me. Despite my doubts, she assures me that she did. My mother was like thousands of other people in Queensland who voted for the Liberal National Party for the first time. My parents were from an era when the Labor Party represented the values of the average worker. Recent election results show that that voting public no longer believes this to be the case. I abandoned the policies and the philosophies of the Labor Party years ago, because it abandoned me. No longer would I be treated with contempt by a party and a government that patronised me on a regular basis. I found a better way.

I am proud to be a member of the Liberal National Party. My core political values align with those of this great party: the belief that individuals must take responsibility for themselves in life, that entrepreneurial spirit should be encouraged, that hard work and initiative should be rewarded and that healthy, strong families are the cornerstone of successful societies.

I stand here today as a member of the Queensland state parliament after joining the LNP only a little over two years ago. Only in this party could I achieve this feat. To be preselected as a candidate for the LNP you do not need to be brought up in student politics. You do not need to have worked as a political staffer. You do not need to belong to a faction, nor do you need to be an official of a trade union. The LNP offers people with real world life experience an opportunity to use that expertise to serve the people of

Queensland. And there is no greater example of this than this current government, where I believe this is the greatest diversity of representation that this state has ever seen. The massive injection of new blood will bring an enthusiasm and zeal for change that will have a lasting, positive effect on this great state.

Being elected the new member for Everton is a huge honour, albeit a little surreal. The last time I was in this chamber before our recent induction was as a 12-year-old Grovely schoolboy during a parliamentary tour. I never dreamed that nearly 40 years later I would be sitting in this august House as an elected member. I hope that my election might be an encouragement to young people who come from humble beginnings similar to mine. I am a product of my electorate. I am a born and bred Brisbane boy who attended school in bare feet, sang a hymn at the start of every school day—this is in a state school—and at ‘little lunch’ drank the compulsory milk that was issued under the government policy of the day.

I am a proud state schoolboy who progressed from Grovely primary school to Mitchelton State High School—schools on the western and southern borders of my electorate respectively. I played junior rugby league at West Arana Hills football club, pumped petrol at the Mitchie service station and served as a part-time groundsman at the Brook Hotel during my final year at school. As a boy I helped deliver mail for my mum, a mail contractor, when the Everton Hills area was not developed enough to warrant an official postal delivery. Evading attacking dogs probably helped me years later to dodge fleet-footed rugby league players. My connection with the Everton electorate will remain in my heart all my life, with my dad buried in a small cemetery at Albany Creek across the road from where my mum now lives.

I come to this parliament with a background of varied experiences. Many will know that sport has played a major role in my life. As a child I played all codes of football, as well as cricket, golf, hockey and even wrestling. As you can see from my physique, that venture was short-lived. Sport has equipped me with many great life skills. It has taught me about leadership, working towards a goal, working as a team, dealing with failure and respecting your opponent. Of course sport also promotes a very healthy lifestyle. I am a strong believer in my old Mitchie high school motto—mens sana in corpore sano, ‘a sound mind in a sound body’. I am delighted that we have a Premier who models this adage so well. It was great to join the Premier on some of his morning runs during the election campaign. In the interests of my future career advancement I made sure that he beat me every time.

As Assistant Minister for Sport and Racing, I look forward to helping this government implement policies like Get in the Game that encourage children to leave their computer games and get out into parks playing active sports. Unfortunately my talent as a junior rugby league player was never recognised, so I became a referee. As a rugby league referee, I developed a very thick hide which will hold me in good stead for parliamentary life. I know what it is like to be constantly abused, unmercifully criticised and blamed for every loss a team suffers—and I am talking about refereeing junior football! As a referee I always had 50 per cent of supporters against me. I thought I might find some relief from that burden when I retired from the NRL and joined the party room of the LNP. But, alas, this has not eventuated. The diversity of opinion about my refereeing career continues. On the one hand, we have the member for Gregory, who holds me in reasonable esteem because I controlled the 2004 grand final, which his beloved Bulldogs won. Countering that affection is the member for Hinchinbrook, who every day gives me menacing stares as he mistakenly blames me for the Cowboys loss in the 2005 grand final.

After 20 years of officiating in NRL, I am used to being under the scrutiny of millions of people, making hard decisions under incredible pressure. My objective in political life will be the same as it was as an NRL referee—that is, to win respect, not necessarily popularity. But I am much more than a rugby league referee. For the last six years I have been the CEO of one of Australia’s largest youth and children’s organisations, Scripture Union Queensland. This organisation is best known for its very effective and highly respected school chaplaincy program, a program that provides pastoral care for thousands of young people in Queensland state schools. Leading this non-profit organisation, with its 600 staff and \$30 million turnover, gave me another real-life experience that I believe will help me to be a more effective local member. I know the challenges associated with recruiting and retaining staff, I know how difficult and costly it is to comply with bureaucratic red tape, and I know how hard it is to stretch every dollar to make sure the costs of business are met.

More importantly, my time at SU Queensland helped me develop my heart for young people and children, especially those who are marginalised or are struggling in life. Modern life throws up lots of challenges for our youth. Some young people find themselves in trouble because they make bad decisions. However, more often than not, they are in these precarious positions because they are victims of bad decisions that adults make. They then find themselves in a cycle which is so hard to break. Mother Teresa once said that the greatest disease in this world today is not leprosy, not tuberculosis, but the feeling of being unwanted, uncared for and unloved, and many of our young people suffer from this ‘disease’. It breaks my heart to see children suffering unnecessarily. They deserve every bit of support we adults can provide, and for many they find this support in their school chaplain—someone who is seen as independent, someone who is accessible and someone who will listen to them without judgement. I pay tribute to the over 500 chaplains serving our children sacrificially in Queensland state schools. I hope that in my time in this parliament I can help develop policies that will ease the pain for those young people who

are suffering and also facilitate support structures that will prevent that suffering from occurring in the first place.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my heart for the marginalised extends to the plight of Indigenous Australians. I am embarrassed to say that it has only been in recent years that I have fully appreciated the challenges associated with being an Aboriginal Australian. Over the last few years a small group of Aboriginal elders have educated me about the dislocation the majority of First Australians feel. This education and the ensuing relationships that I have built have led me to develop a renewed respect for a very proud people. Respect and education is the key to achieving long-lasting reconciliation. We need to find real solutions rather than politically correct platitudes. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians need to take responsibility for finding a better way to close the obvious gap.

The source of my compassion for those who suffer is my Christian faith, a faith that has been on the public record for over 20 years. Nailing your colours to the mast like this often leads to emotive, ill-informed comments from a small section of the community who immediately tag you as part of some extreme right movement. People who know me would not place me in that category. I think they would describe my faith as earthy. I am a strong believer in the words of St James, who said, 'Faith without works is dead.' In public life I will promote those Christian values that this country was built on and are regarded as universal principles of truth: love your neighbour as yourself, every human being is unique and of value, and the marginalised and genuinely disadvantaged must be cared for.

The Everton electorate is a mix of the old and the new. On the southern border are the established suburbs of Mitchelton and Oxford Park, which have been settled since the early 1900s, while at the northern end is the newer suburb of Eatons Hill, typically populated by younger families. Right in the middle of the electorate is the Bunyaville State Forest, a slice of wilderness beauty that acts as a giant lung in the district. We believe that we live in the best region in the best state in the best country in the world. Understandably, many others believe the same thing, which has led to a steady influx of residents over the years. This has placed enormous pressure on the district's roads and public transport systems. The previous Labor governments failed to plan for the impact of these population increases. I will do my best to find solutions in these areas that are sustainable and long-lasting.

Like the vast majority of Queenslanders, the residents of Everton are aspirational. They want to improve their lot in life. They want their initiative and hard work rewarded. They want their government facilitating their success, not stifling it. I believe that only a Liberal National Party government can provide the environment that allows these aspirations to be met.

The residents of Everton are crying out for cost-of-living relief. Water, electricity, gas and public transport costs have skyrocketed in recent years, making it more and more difficult for people to make ends meet. They recognise that these increases are in no small part due to the economic incompetence of the previous government. This ineptitude was best illustrated by the obscene waste that was the day-to-day practice of the former administration. As the CEO of a non-profit organisation for the last six years I was angered by this waste, as were the struggling families I now represent. I look forward to being part of a government whose economic competence will bring the financial relief that is so desperately sought.

I am incredibly grateful for the people whose hard work resulted in me being elected as the member for Everton. I was overwhelmed by the team of volunteers that we assembled over a 12-month period. It is not possible to thank them all, but I would like to place on the record my appreciation of the hard work and sacrifice of at least 150 friends and party members. Of course, there is always a core group of supporters who organise, strategise and lead the campaign. I thank Bruce 'Bronco' Hooker, a man who if cut would bleed LNP; Sandy Landers, an experienced political operative who is now my senior electorate officer; Shirley Lehman, who managed the prepolling; Steve Mammarella, our enthusiastic Young LNP representative; Matt and Katy Constance and their children, Tiana and Tyler, whose enthusiasm and commitment has revitalised our local branch; and of course the irrepressible Michael Leighton, who led the charge as campaign director. Michael's political acumen and passion are simply unmatched.

Finally, I acknowledge the support of my wonderful family. I thank my mother, Hazel, for her undying loyalty to her son, even when he breaks every tradition our family has ever had. I acknowledge my mother-in-law, Glenice, for her ongoing support and encouragement. I remember my late father, Len, and father-in-law, Graham, men diametrically opposed in political persuasion but who, if alive, would be united in their pride for their son and son-in-law. I thank my children—Danielle, Claudette and her fiance Mark, Zachary and his girlfriend Sarah, and Miriam—for their patience and indulgence as they supported their father on another crazy project. I love them deeply. Last of all I thank my wife, Gayle, an amazing woman who has been by my side for more than 30 years. I thank you, darling, for your love and uncomplaining support for everything I have ever done in my life.

I was motivated to stand for the Queensland state government by sheer frustration. I was frustrated by the lies, the waste, the dishonesty and the utter incompetence of recent Labor governments. I along with my colleagues want to restore the public's confidence in the political process. This will only occur when we convince them that we are not here to serve our own needs but rather the wishes and the desires of our electorates. I am determined to put the service back into public service. I make a pledge today that, for as long as the people of Everton give me the privilege of representing them, I will serve them and the wider Queensland community with all my heart and soul. I thank the House.