




Speech by

Anthony Shorten

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Hansard Tuesday, 29 May 2012

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr SHORTEN** (Algester—LNP) (5.13 pm): I rise today to make my first and, I hope, one of many contributions to the debates and discussions we will have in this chamber. Before I begin my speech, I would like to congratulate the member for Maroochydore on her appointment as the first female Speaker of the Queensland parliament. I know that she will provide leadership and guidance to all in the chamber, but especially to the new members of parliament, of which I am one.

It is with the most humble heart that I stand here today the member for Algester. As we all know, it is a privilege to be elected to parliament and with that privilege comes great responsibility. As I spoke to residents on street corners and in shopping centres throughout the recent election and before, they expressed to me the struggles that they were enduring with skyrocketing cost-of-living pressures and they looked to me as their LNP representative to ease these burdens. Living in and connected to my community, my family contends with the very same burdens: do we pay the light bill this week or put food on the table? I understand the kitchen table discussions that go on every day in homes in my electorate. That is why I am proud to be a member of a Campbell Newman led government which has a plan to cut the cost of living for Queenslanders and deliver on our promises.

Many voters in Algester and across Queensland cast their vote for an LNP candidate for the very first time. It is their hopes and dreams, along with those of all my constituents, that I, as the member for Algester, carry into this place. I will be a strong voice for my community in pursuing the issues that matter to them. All of us in this chamber know that the privilege of being a member of parliament is not bestowed lightly by the electorate. I am the first Liberal National to ever represent the Algester electorate and I know that I will have to work hard every day for my residents, and I will do so gladly. I will strive to better the lives of all residents in my electorate.

Becoming a member of parliament, as we all know, is not a one-man show and I would like to thank a number of people who were crucial to my success in Algester: Paul and Debbie Daly who have supported me throughout my two campaigns and before; John and Teresa Samson, whose support and advice was instrumental in our success; Steve Andrews; Ray and Kerrie Attwell; Rob and Deb Millar; Steven and Katrina Johns; Chester and Melvina Hallum OAM; Bob Norton; Lucian O'Kill; Clinton Patterson; Brent Brettag; Tony Stevenson; Henri Rantala; Heather Millard; Alf Middleton; the Hon. Gary Hardgrave and his wife, Lorraine; the former Logan City Councillor Lynne Clarke and her husband, Don, and many, many more who provided support and advice to me in the campaign. I thank them all and look forward to their continued support. I would like to thank my old boss, the hard-working local councillor for Marchant in the Brisbane City Council, Councillor Fiona King. For the past two years I have watched how hard she works for her residents and I am happy to see her returned for another four years in the recent local government elections.

To my beautiful wife, Kelly, who could not be here tonight, and our wonderful daughter, Harmony, I say thank you for your love and advice that you give freely to me every day. You sustain me when things get tough and I love sharing our lives together.

I would like to thank Matt McEachen and the whole team at LNP headquarters for their support and efforts throughout the campaign. I would also like to thank the now members for Sunnybank, Stretton, Logan, Waterford and Albert, and Joanna Lindgren, candidate for Inala. We worked as a team through the campaign and we will work as a team in government.

The Algester electorate is diverse and quite distinct. On the western side we have Forest Lake built around its beautiful lake and on the eastern side of the electorate we have Algester and Parkinson. Right in the middle we have the semirural areas of Pallara, Willawong and Doolandella. The electorate also takes in parts of the Logan City Council area: Forestdale, Hillcrest and my local area, Boronia Heights. The issues facing my community are the same as those faced by most of Queensland: battling the skyrocketing cost of living, providing the necessary infrastructure for future development, planning sustainable developments and providing the required health, education and emergency services assets for a growing region.

As the youngest of eight children who grew up in a housing commission area in Coopers Plains and educated at Coopers Plains State School and then Sunnybank State High School, I understand the importance of providing for those in our community who have found themselves in difficult circumstances. I also understand that government does not have an answer to everything. I am a firm believer in personal responsibility. We cannot control all things in life but we can control how we treat people and how we act within our community.

My mother taught me very early on to treat people how you would like to be treated. She also taught me by her actions the humility and selflessness of being respectful of others' views and circumstances. We are all a product of our upbringing and I pay tribute to my mum and my late dad, Bill Buster Shorten. My dad won the Grogan medal for Yeronga Football Club in 1951 and he taught me the life skill of listening. They say apples do not fall far from the tree. Well, in my case that is true. For most of his working life my dad was a rep for Westons Biscuits and I have also found myself in customer service roles, which has provided me with my drive to find solutions to people's issues. I believe this will stand me in good stead in my role as the member for Algester.

As I mentioned, I grew up in a housing commission home in Coopers Plains. My mother only recently moved out of the house that she called home for the past 60 years. In that house she raised a family of eight kids, 13 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren. When I was growing up through the seventies and the early eighties, there was a sense of community. You knew your neighbours and your best friends were the kids in your neighbourhood. In my case, endless hours were spent playing that great sport of backyard cricket. I can say that, after 30 years, friendships forged in the heat of a backyard summer are still strong. I thank my brothers and sisters who have been a constant in my life. I have learnt so much from them. I thank my eldest sister, Lyn, and her husband, Colin. As mum already had seven kids, she was pretty busy when I came along and Lyn and Colin picked up when mum was not able. I thank my other sisters, Lorraine, Linda and Lisa, and my brothers, Ian, John and Daryl, for their love and support.

That brings me to my next point: throughout the recent election campaign, I was approached by young people questioning why they should vote or even be worried about politics. I am deeply concerned that a generation of our youth are so disengaged from and jaded with our political process and what that means for the future of our democracy. Government is important. As Bill Clinton, the former US-President, said, 'The role of government is to give people the tools and create the conditions to make the most of our lives.' This is no less important for young people leaving school with their whole lives ahead of them. This is why it is imperative that we create the economic conditions and return confidence to the business community so that industry can expand.

There are other issues facing the youth of today, which is why I use this opportunity to announce that once a year I will be convening a youth round table for the Algester electorate. The round table will be a forum for community groups, schools and NGOs to come together and discuss issues that are facing the youth of Algester. As part of this initiative, I will be appointing an Algester youth ambassador. Recently I was very honoured to join Madam Speaker at the launch of the 2012 YMCA Youth Parliament, which was held in the chamber opposite this one. That is a great initiative and it should be supported by all members. In fact, a previous youth representative now works in my electorate office.

I have talked about the sense of community that I grew up with. It is that sense of community that I want to rebuild in the streets and suburbs of the Algester electorate. I want to see the residents come together to celebrate important dates like Australia Day, Queensland Day and Anzac Day. Algester is a kaleidoscope of cultures and I would like to see those diverse communities celebrating their cultures and customs and, in doing so, building a strong, vibrant and understanding community. I will work towards making our community sustainable by supporting things such as community gardens and healthy lifestyles. With life getting busier and busier, our parks and green space take on more and more importance, not only for leisure but also for simply sitting and taking in the beauty of our natural world.

I started my speech by recognising a woman whose appointment marks a milestone in the Queensland parliament. I finish my speech by recognising another remarkable woman; a person who has given of herself for the past 60 years and celebrates her diamond jubilee this year. Of course, that most remarkable woman is Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. It is with sincere and heartfelt joy that I send my very best wishes and those of the constituents of Algester to Her Majesty on her 60th year on the throne. Recently on a television program I heard that a well-known republican said he wished that Her Majesty would stop visiting Australia, because every time she does she sets the republican cause back 20 years. I hope that last year's visit will not be Her Majesty's last to our state or our country.

During this speech I have ranged across lot of areas, but they all boil down to one thing: I want to deliver for the constituents of Algester. Whether I am the member for a long or short time, my goal is to leave Algester better than I found it. I will work every day to do just that.