




Speech by

Jason Woodforth

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Hansard Thursday, 31 May 2012

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Mr WOODFORTH** (Nudgee—LNP) (4.01 pm): I respond to Her Excellency the Governor and I pledge my allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I congratulate Madam Speaker on her elevation to the role and that of being the first female Speaker of the House. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which this parliament sits and that of my electorate of Nudgee.

It is with great honour and humility that I stand here in this chamber today, elected by the people of Nudgee to this the 54th Parliament of Queensland. It is a privilege to serve the Queensland community and I thank the electorate of Nudgee for this opportunity. I sincerely thank the LNP for the opportunity they have given me to be a part of this historic Newman-led government as their representative for Nudgee, and I congratulate them on their unwavering commitment to an above-the-line campaign.

I would like to congratulate my fellow first-time MP and now Premier, Campbell Newman. Premier, your exemplary leadership during the campaign that was evidenced through your commitment to ethics and morals has provided a platform of standards and expectations for us to follow. I look forward to providing this level of leadership to you, the state of Queensland and the electorate of Nudgee to which I have this privilege.

For those unfamiliar with the area, the electorate of Nudgee houses the suburbs of Nudgee, Nudgee Beach, Banyo, Virginia, Geebung, Zillmere, Boondall and parts of Wavell Heights, Nundah and Chermide. We take great pride in the quality of schools within the electorate such as Wavell State High School, Nudgee College, Earnshaw State College and many state and Catholic primary schools that grace the electorate. The people of Nudgee have embraced the expansion of the Australian Catholic University, which has grown substantially over the last 10 years and now caters for more than 4,000 students and growing.

We have numerous RSLs, sporting clubs, bowls clubs, golf clubs, community centres, senior activity centres, churches, aged-care facilities and we are home to the Toombul and Chermide shopping centres. Nudgee certainly has a lot to offer. But on top of all this, we also have the lovely Nudgee Beach, the protected Boondall Wetlands, more than 1,000 hectares of tidal flats and mangroves, with a range of open forests, woodlands, grasslands and salt marshes, and not to forget the Nudgee waterholes and bora ring.

Historically, Nudgee has been deeply entwined with our service personnel, with many of the streets in Zillmere named after our war heroes. This includes Sergeant H Fowles, who gave what Abraham Lincoln describes as 'the last full measure of devotion' for your country. Zillmere's young men were some of the first ashore during battle. The Geebung and Kedron-Wavell RSL clubs, including the Banyo and Zillmere subbranches, are steeped in the traditions of Anzac Day. I took great pride this year in attending several services in my formal capacity as the state member.

It is not just Nudgee's military achievements that run a thread through our community. Not only is the iconic Golden Circle Cannery part of the Nudgee electorate, but its products have adorned the pantries of almost every Australian household since it began. And it has not just been Australian pantries. Queensland's gift on the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Philip Mountbatten in 1947 was 500 tins of pineapple from the Northgate cannery. I am not too sure what one does with 500 tins of pineapple!

Of course the demand for casual labour at the cannery brought a range of people into the area—students and women, and migrants—who were not a part of the traditional workforce. This continues today, with immigration adding to the richness of the area, not least through our food such as Singh's Curry House at Banyo.

Adding to the diverse nature of the electorate is the Virginia industrial area, home to literally thousands of small and medium businesses and large businesses like the Arnott's biscuit factory. In Geebung we find Gerns Continental Smallgoods, the local butcher—and we also find him in the gallery today—still family owned, established in 1895 and continuing to provide their famous Christmas hams to many businesses and families in the surrounding areas and beyond.

I believe that the history and the rich diversity embedded in the electorate of Nudgee is a direct reflection of the people within it. I am excited to be a part of this community and I am committed to representing the electorate of Nudgee, ensuring that the progress of this state reflects the needs of the community.

My campaign was long—over a year. It had its ups and downs, its highs and lows. But for every person who stopped and told me that they had voted Labor all their life but never again, it made it all worthwhile. To Labor this was a seat they could not lose, a safe seat. The seat of Nudgee had only ever been a Labor seat, and it makes me very happy to say that at this election the LNP won with a swing of over 17 per cent—a fantastic outcome but not one to be taken for granted.

There are many people who supported me throughout this campaign, but my first thanks must go to the people who encouraged me to nominate for preselection—Councillor Fiona King and Mr Mike Dowd. Without meeting both Fiona and Mike, and without the mentoring I received from them respectively, I would not be standing here today.

To my campaign team, first and foremost I would like to pay tribute to my campaign manager Rod McGarvie. Rod is an exemplary Australian who embodies the spirit of service to others. He has done this through his service in the Army and his humanitarian service as a missionary in Africa. I hope he will be able to build on his success in outpolling Wayne Swan on primaries at the last federal election to one day serve the people of Lilley in the federal parliament.

Other dedicated members of the team who I sincerely thank for providing me with support and commitment include the two Neils, Rob, Dom, Matt, Adin, Greg, Scott, Bill, Bruce, Cheryl, Cindy, Laurie, Lisa, Mark, Kevin, Stuart, Annie and a special mention to my good friend Andy, who flew up from Melbourne to be a part of the team on polling day. I apologise to anyone I may have left out. To all the booth workers, those who provided sign sites and all those who spent even just five minutes helping me, I thank you.

To my family, you supported me all the way until the polling booths closed. To dad and Judy, Jodine, Sarah, Rohan, Angela and to my two sons, Mitch and Matt, who would often get offended every time a voter refused one of my how-to-vote cards and at times would chase them down the path. They eventually learnt not to take it personally. To my mum, she is with us in body but not in mind. I know she would be proud. God bless you, mum.

Of course being a new member of parliament and even as a candidate, the electors of Nudgee want to know a bit about who you are and where you came from. My parents, Peter and Dale Woodforth, both hardworking, had four children—I am the second of the four. My dad worked for the Brisbane City Council for over 44 years and built our first home. Even today in his 70s he continues to keep his hand in building and renovating. And until the day my mother could no longer work, she never stopped, working up to three part-time jobs at a time to ensure all bills were paid and food was on the table.

My father also coached club and state softball teams for many years and, together with mum—a talented softball player herself—they formed the Panthers Softball Club back in 1958, a club that is still going strong today 54 years later.

I have fond memories of growing up in the seventies and eighties. I remember Chermside Shopping Centre when it was just the size of a postage stamp compared to the monstrosity it is today. Our parents would let us walk to school without fear. We rode our bikes—without helmets. Possibly there is a hint of what I think about helmet laws, the loss of freedom of choice and the increasing growth of legislation for legislation's sake.

Weekends and many week nights were spent at sporting fields somewhere around Brisbane playing baseball—the sport I loved and played for 25 years—and any other sport I could find when time permitted. You could say that sport was a major part of my life growing up and still to this day plays a massive part in my life. I have been a proud northsider for all of my 41 years, and my colleagues from the south side can tell you there is no greater divide in Brisbane than the Brisbane River.

For the last 14 years I have lived in the electorate of Nudgee, and the rest of my life has been spent in and around it as circumstances or Nudgee's boundaries have changed. My sporting background has

taken me to almost every suburb in Brisbane, every major town in Queensland and every capital city in Australia. My business has taken me further, to many locations around the world. Despite seeing many beautiful parts of Australia and the world, I still proudly call north Brisbane my home.

Whilst sport has been a major part of my life, so, too, has health, and for the last eight years in my electorate I have owned and managed a business in health and fitness. So it would be remiss of me not to spend some time sharing my thoughts on and concerns for our health and our future. Health and fitness are very important to me, and I believe they should be important to all Queenslanders. It is estimated that 90 per cent—90 per cent—of health problems in Queensland are due to preventable chronic disease. This means that there is an opportunity for us to explore and develop programs that can educate families and young children in relation to making good choices, for ourselves and our families.

While a better lifestyle will result in a longer and healthier life for our community, the opportunity to work proactively towards reducing and hopefully preventing chronic disease in our communities also means that we as a community could potentially see a decrease in the healthcare costs currently being demanded of this system. The *Australian* of 24 February 2012 states—

Within the next 10 to 15 years it is predicted that the Australian federal and state budgets will be totally consumed by the expanding cost of healthcare.

Under this scenario, if we were simply to maintain services ... at present levels there would be no money left for roads, rail, education and many other essential services.

Over the last 25 years the Queensland population has not quite doubled, from 2.6 million to 4.5 million people. The Health budget, on the other hand, has risen dramatically, from \$1 billion to \$11 billion. I am not going to dwell on the failures of the previous government today, but I think we can all agree that the way Health has been managed over the past 20 years could not be regarded as a success.

We need to do better in administration, practice and, most importantly, preventative measures. I have already had the privilege of visiting Boondall State School and learning about the Friday Fresh Menu program they have implemented. It was interesting to hear from the deputy principal that Fridays are their best day for student behaviour. For me, that is food for thought. It is also great to see many schools actively encouraging students to participate in walk-to-school days, to not be picked up and dropped off at the gate but a few blocks away and to participate in school sports and not have an option to sit out. These are fantastic initiatives, but we need to continue to improve on and expand them. Every generation should live better than the last, but from a health perspective are we? I say not. We lose around 1,500 Australians each year on our roads. We lose 15,000 each year due to smoking and 16,000 due to obesity related diseases. I could go on about this subject that I love, but time is limited.

I mentioned earlier that I owned a business. There are a lot of business owners in my area. I see firsthand the challenges facing them each and every day. I talk to other businesses, and our stories have a certain similarity. There was a time in Australia when hard work was rewarded. There are a lot of businesses in our community that exist solely to pay their suppliers, their staff and the government. There is very little money left over to pay the owners. Sometimes there is nothing left. In an internet age, many businesses, including mine, are competing against overseas suppliers that do not have to pay GST, minimum wages, high rents, rising public liability insurance, import taxes and AQIS fees or comply with workplace health and safety laws, added labelling requirements and a host of other imposts. Yet we are told to come up with better ways. Better ways to what? Work out how not to pay tax, not to pay staff high wages, not to pay the high rents and the ever-increasing electricity costs?

There are solutions out there, and this new LNP government is setting about putting many of these in place, where possible from a state perspective. Unfortunately, federally it is not the case, and everyone is about to take a new hit that will make things worse. On 1 July the carbon tax will hit every Queensland and every Australian. I have an open mind on many issues; however, of the so-called science on climate change I am yet to be convinced. We must separate climate change from carbon tax. Even if one were to believe in climate change, how could we embrace with all our hearts the concept of climate change and reject with all our hearts the people whom this tax will cruel? How can we turn our hearts away from the workers, the families and the children who will suffer as jobs are lost? No truly compassionate Australian can do this, and nor should they.

I became involved because I was sick of the lies, the deceit, the waste. If I ran my business like the previous government ran Queensland, I would be out of business. I say to the opposition: I welcome you to parliament as part of the solution, not as part of the problem. Do not carry the baggage of the past. Instead, I urge you to be part of making Queensland and your individual electorates great again. You were elected to government, not elected to the opposition. In 1829 Henry Clay said—

Government is a trust, and the officers of the government are trustees; and both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people.

I look forward to addressing many areas of neglect in Nudgee over the next three years. That is the problem sometimes with so-called safe seats: over time the government and opposition get complacent about the work they have to do. Nudgee is now a marginal seat, and our side of politics will start delivering for Nudgee.

There are a number of concerns that constituents in Nudgee have already raised with me, and I am committed to working in conjunction with government to meet the needs of the community. Our current objectives include delivery of the Geebung rail overpass, together with the Telegraph Road overpass for Aspley and Sandgate. These two improvements will have a dramatic effect on road traffic on the north side. A commitment to extra front-line police will deliver more officers in Zillmere, Geebung and Banyo, making Nudgee safer. We will attack the cost-of-living problems in Queensland by cutting waste. I will continue to highlight the need for increased upgrades for the federally funded Gateway Motorway at Nudgee, currently the most expensive car park in Australia. This will provide benefits not just for Nudgee and relieve the congestion this causes every day on Sandgate Road but also for my colleagues in Sandgate, Redcliffe, Aspley and seats further north. I will investigate options for a rail-crossing solution at Banyo as well as improving safety around the Banyo shops and increased bus and rail services. I will undertake consultation in relation to flashing lights at all schools, realistic school zone times and matching those times so they are relevant to each school. I will also investigate the upgrading of safety at school crossing lights such as on Newman and Handford roads.

In closing, I say this: in this chamber I will not be afraid to change my mind based on new and better information. The greater cowardice is the fear to change your own mind because of how you feel other people will see you. I am committed to leading the electorate of Nudgee through the opportunity they have afforded me, and I am excited about the positive changes we will see in our communities through the collective leadership of this LNP government. I look forward to the challenges that face me in the years ahead.