

QUEANBEYAN BUSINESS COUNCIL

SPEECH 1ST AUGUST 2006

THE EDWIN LAND PARKWAY AND THE FUTURE OF QUEANBEYAN

Thank you for inviting me to speak today – the QBC is a great initiative and a boon to Queanbeyan and the businesses that operate in this great city.

In particular I would like to congratulate and acknowledge Ian McNamee and Simon Mitchell-Taverner for their vision, drive and initiative in making this body a reality.

Queanbeyan past, present and future is inevitably it's people. Governments – local, state and federal – can rise and fall, can promise, deliver and move on, but the people of Queanbeyan are immutable – they – like all residents in towns all over New South Wales generally know what is best for the future of their community – and quite frankly – are not afraid to voice it. And this should always be the case.

One person that has been the most immutable – but certainly not the least mute – has been Ian McNamee. Since my family moved to Queanbeyan in 1964, it seems that Ian McNamee has always been part of the scene – although he would always maintain that he was only a few years older than me, he seems to have always been there in some capacity.

Macca is the epitome of a person that you would want on your side – a point not lost on my mother, Barbara, with whom Macca had a relatively tempestuous relationship – but in the end was a relationship built on mutual friendship, respect and a drive to make Queanbeyan a better place for everyone. Now, as the son of two community-minded parents, I am now here to continue the relationship that the Madews and Ian McNamee have had – in fact, consider me the second generation Madew to Macca's one of a kind.

The point of praising Macca like this though is to show that when he expresses concern on a topic you take notice. In one of our earliest meetings after my endorsement, he sat me down and – in his own style – said 'David, the number one, two and three priorities for Queanbeyan is the Ring Road'. I remember that he said it much more colourfully but I'm sure that you get the gist.

This was confirmed later in the day when I met with Mayor Frank Pangallo, who stated that from a Queanbeyan City Council perspective the ring road was the project that would make the difference in the future of Queanbeyan.

The reason for the Ring Road is simple – it allows traffic to bypass Queanbeyan when travelling north to Goulburn, east to the coast, south to Cooma or west to Canberra. But much more importantly it becomes the 'spine' of a future Queanbeyan. Major development in Queanbeyan has to go south and notwithstanding the outcome of the proposed developments at the moment, we will have about the same number of houses eventually south of the Ring Road as we do to the north. We demand of developers infrastructure provision within their developments – we as a state government then have to come to the party with major infrastructure works.

Now several months later – who said that politicians - particularly Nationals politicians - were slow on the uptake? – I am here to say that we have listened – not just to Ian McNamee and to Frank Pangallo but to the several hundred people that I have spoken to whilst doorknocking and at various meetings around town – that we will be starting the process of getting the ring road as the ‘number one, two and three priorities for Queanbeyan’.

I am bringing the leader of the Nationals and shadow minister for roads, Andrew Stoner, here on the 9th August, to explain the concept and the outcomes, including costings and timeframes for the project.

We already have a briefing paper prepared for the Shadow Minister so we can set aside funding for the project. Because make no mistake, this kind of project has the ability to allow Queanbeyan to develop and to grow as a southern regional centre much in the same way that TR 51 or Canberra Avenue did in 1982.

We would see that the first thing on this priority list is that we start with the Lanyon Drive extension. The bottleneck created by running the dual lanes of Lanyon Drive and Thomsett Drive into the single lane is intolerable for Jerrabomberra residents. The Feds have allocated funding under their Roads to Recovery for the duplications and flyover in the ACT – however the ACT government have chosen to delay their commitment until 2009 -2010. I now call on the ACT Government to bring this timeframe forward to ASAP.

The interstate relationship between the ACT and the NSW Labor governments – whilst it should be a meeting of the minds - has proven to be dysfunctional, to the detriment of Queanbeyan – the Cross Border Water Agreement and the siting of the ACT Gaol are but two examples. What hearing will Jerra residents receive from the ACT government over the proposed duplication in this light? Unfortunately dialogue or any kind of relationship does not seem to exist between the state local member and the ACT government.

If we win office in March 2007, we can then get straight on with it. We need to be able to hit the ground running as the popular saying goes, because there is a lot to do.

The NSW Labor government is at the end of its political cycle.

This government is bereft of ideas, the bureaucracy is bloated – but it is no use complaining about it unless we can show alternatives.

It is no use highlighting the government’s shortcomings if we cannot show how we can address them.

We cannot accuse the government of being unfit to govern unless we can show that we are fit for government ourselves.

But what is the role of governments? We are there to provide infrastructure then get out of the way to allow businesses – both big and small – to get on with their jobs.

Governments are to govern – to set policies, to try to predict the future, but at the end of the day to allow businesses to do business. In Queanbeyan, according to the Queanbeyan Region BEC, we have over 2000 businesses with 80 - 90% of these businesses being 5 employees or less. Fully 50% of Queanbeyan's population is employed in private business. We cannot be proscriptive in what we want from each and every one of these 2000 businesses, but we can set the agenda to allow them to build and thrive on the base that we set.

And this is the guts of it – we want you to run your business within given guidelines – Labor wants to run your business – but you put up the capital and take the risk. As a small businessman I choose to run my business in a particular manner – for example we own and run a restaurant at our winery at Lake George – on a Sunday we still charge a 15% surcharge as the majority of our waiting staff work for us as a second job and would not work for us if they weren't getting the Sunday penalty rates.

If people don't want to pay this surcharge, they can come on Saturday or vote with their feet. The point of this is as a business we can choose what to do. This is what we want from government, and one of the major reasons that I am standing for parliament.

One of the most enduring questions that I field is why did I stand for the Nationals? My response from the start has been that I get to represent rural and regional Australia, particularly at a grassroots level.

The day when regional Australia becomes a powerful political force is close, and I want to be part of the defining of this new regional Australia. Don't get me wrong - I love cities, places like Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane. But give me rural and regional NSW any day. It is the best place in Australia to bring up kids, and as a party must make it the best place to do business.

As the Nationals we now have the opportunity to redefine ourselves as a relevant part of this landscape, able to look back and acknowledge our history but at the same time able to respond to the dynamics of the 21st century.

For example, as a husband of a CEO of the largest green building lobby groups in Australia, the Green Building Council, I am aware of the stresses and strains that go on in marriages where one partner works away from home. Far from making this a drawback we as a party are starting to look at some 'pod' set ups in regional New South Wales, that would have facilities such as highspeed broadband connection, teleconferencing facilities and suchlike, allowing the partner possibly one or two days per week more within their community as well as allowing this 'pod' to be used by other people that require the facilities.

Far from decrying this as elitist, we as a community need to keep our best and our brightest within these communities – otherwise we see a 'braindrain' of sorts of capable people moving from areas in which they want to live to areas that they have to live to be able to work. If we keep these people within our community we will be rewarded time and time again.

And this is what we get back to – that people make up our community. We as a government then need to do the things well that look after people. Education, health, law and order, infrastructure and any number of other issues big or small are the things that we have to address.

I want to represent Queanbeyan, a place that I lived in for 30 years – a place that I grew up in, where I went to preschool, where I was captain of Queanbeyan South school.

I want to represent Queanbeyan, where I got my first job with Bruce Greentree in 1974, cleaning the Queanbeyan Rugby Club on Sunday morning, after playing for the Mighty Whites on Saturday.

I want to represent Queanbeyan, where I worked at J B Youngs with Eric Thomas for six years.

I have grown up, got educated, worked and ran businesses in this city and the region. In March 2007 I hope to get the chance to give back by representing this city as the member for Monaro.