

Councillor Ian McKenzie's Maiden Speech
City Hall, Brisbane
6 May 2008

Thank you Madam Chairman. Representing the interests of some 27,000 citizens through their local government is a daunting job description few people choose to face.

All 27 elected members in this chamber willingly made this decision and I am sure they are as humbled by their position as I am. For me, to be allowed by the people of Holland Park to stand in this chamber and represent them as their councillor is a great highlight of my life.

This is the ward I have known as a boy and a man, and this is the ward in which I now live and will live for many years.

My presence in this chamber is the culmination of many years of involvement in community and political matters. It would not have been possible without the generous contributions of time and talent of many people on this floor, in the visitor's gallery and in the Liberal party.

To Col Peardon and Bill Hewitt and to all members of my campaign committee and helpers too numerous to name here, goes my sincere thanks. At a personal level, my 88 year old mother, Muriel McKenzie who with my late father John provided my sister Beth Weil and myself with an inspirational and loving upbringing.

To my lovely daughters Krissy and Ally and to my wife Josie, my Campaign Director whom I suspect was more popular in the ward than I was, my election would not have been possible – a special thank you.

In March this year, the people of Holland Park re-affirmed Campbell Newman as their Lord Mayor and elected myself, as part of an energetic and fresh team, to govern Brisbane for the next four years.

Throughout the election campaign the Campbell Newman team clearly stated its aims for the people of Brisbane.

All successful governments have aims and goals. They have the unique responsibility of providing those physical resources and services unable to be provided by the private sector, but governments must allocate those resources through technical, ethical and moral decisions to provide the greatest good for the greatest number.

Guidance on how this can be achieved can be found in a simple but powerful statement from a great American statesman. Thomas Jefferson said "The care and happiness of human life is the first and only object of good government".

Madam Chairman, we don't always view the activities of local government in such lofty terms. However elected officials can strive to provide care and happiness in the form of convenience and safety. Local government provides the foundations on which personal achievements are built.

For example, it may be the provision of convenient and safe transport for constituents to commute to and from their place of work. It may be the confidence to turn on the tap and drink pure safe water or it may be the pleasure of experiencing the physical outlet and mental peace of our open spaces and parklands. These seemingly simple outcomes require rigorous planning and sophisticated implementation by elected officials and expert public servants.

Equally, great corporate achievements would not be possible without wide ranging local government infrastructure. An example is the operation of commercial businesses backed by industrial enterprises relying on Council infrastructure such as the utilities, roads and regulations necessary for the never-ending movement of goods through our city.

Other tiers of government also depend on local government. Many of our original municipal buildings, public utilities, hundreds of schools, bridges and suburbs were constructed by local government over 100 years ago and still effectively serve our community. Our Lord Mayor's farsighted vision of bridges and tunnels currently under construction will still be in existence 100 years from now.

Madam Chairman, the issues of care and happiness cannot be valued too highly when considering our children, the elderly, the disadvantaged and our new citizens. Our children's safety in school precincts remains a priority for this administration.

Older citizens facing inevitable change can find this difficult, after establishing a long and successful routine of living. Conversely, younger families seek change and increased community services to ease their busy lives. Local government must accommodate all these groups while keeping costs under control.

Those who have been disadvantaged by poor health or by physical disability have a special place in our society. These people will continue to receive special attention under this administration and in the Holland Park ward.

The Newman administration encourages an inclusive society, welcoming migrants and refugees. It is our new Australians, working with their fellow Australians, who will strengthen the moral and physical sinews of our city and build long-term vision and prosperity.

However, a vision in itself is not enough. It must be combined with venture and courage and it is the city's transport infrastructure where this administration has shown its colours and stands out from the previous Labor administration. The Councils draft 2006 –2026 transport plan targets three broad areas - improved public transport opportunities, better cycling and walking facilities and an improved road network

The following elements in these areas, which have either been completed or commenced are the North – South Bypass and Airport link tunnels, the eastern busway in partnership with the state government, the completion of the King George Square Cycle Centre, the completed award winning Eleanor Schonell Bridge, the introduction of nine Bus Upgrade Zone routes, the introduction of 300 low-floor air-conditioned natural gas buses and the eminent commencement of the Hale St link.

Record monies are now, at last, being spent on practical ways of getting people around the city. Brisbane's roads and tunnels will ensure our city can match its economic development. A development now at a critical level, driven by an unprecedented population explosion. The previous 17 years of Labor's timid administration is now being brought into sharp focus. It's record is a textbook for all local authorities of what not to do.

Modern local government must be adventurous, but not rash. It must embrace change, but not for the sake of change and it must have the courage to move ahead in partnership with state and federal governments and the community. Most importantly it must be biased towards action.

Madam Chairman, local government is not the preserve of any political party or pressure group. Labor's devastating loss at the polls on 15 March is a sombre reminder that the electorate will only embrace a local government prepared to get on with the job and plan for the future. This administration will drive difficult issues through to the end, unlike some previous Labor Councillors who voted for projects in one place and spoke against them in their wards.

Fortunately the Newman administration now has in place, experienced and informed chairmen of committees, capable and willing to tackle the complications and inconsistencies of large public portfolios.

Madam Chairman, the ward of Holland Park Ward is a mature inner city ward containing 15 schools, 21 churches and numerous community organizations including Meals on Wheels, sporting clubs, the RSL and the Greenslopes Repatriation, now private, Hospital

Thousands of our returned heroes spent their final days in this hospital. I am honoured, that many of these returned service people and their families still live in the Ward.

Madam chairman, in conclusion I would like to emphasise the important duty all elected Councillors accepted when they affirmed the Councillors Declaration of Office.

I look forward to discharging that duty over the next four years and I am eager to learn and to apply my life and professional experience for the betterment of my constituents.

I challenge all Councillors to strengthen their commitment to this duty and with resolution, honesty and enthusiasm this administration will be the most successful city council in Brisbane's history.