



**BERT VAN MANEN MP**  
**FEDERAL MEMBER FOR FORDE**

**Beenleigh Yatala Junior Chamber of Commerce**

**[10 MINUTE SPEECH]**

Distinguished Guests, Students, Members of the Beenleigh Yatala Junior Chamber of Commerce, Ladies and Gentlemen.  
Good Morning.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Bert Van Manen, and I am the Federal Member for Forde. It's a pleasure to be here today to speak with you about my life journey from High School and how that journey has shaped me into who I am today.

So, firstly I guess you want to know a bit about me. Well, I was born right here in Brisbane to Dutch Immigrant Parents. My parents, Bob and Cornelia, came to Australia in the mid-sixties and I was born in Brisbane in 1965.

At an early age, my family moved to Waterford and, together with my brothers Peter, Robert and Douglas and my sister Cathryn, we enjoyed a fun-filled childhood swimming and fishing in the Logan River and the Tygum Lagoon.

We even created our own sports field at the back of our property, which was used by local kids to play soccer, cricket or any other sport we decided was relevant at the time.

I went to school at Waterford and Waterford West Primary Schools and then attended Kingston State High where I graduated in 1982. I am now blessed with two wonderful sons, Zac and Josh and my wife, Judi.

We bought our first home in Loganlea. Judi and I were married in Beenleigh in October 1987. And we now live in Cornubia.

In my younger years, I was an avid goalie who played at a representative level in Football. To this day, you may still spot me lacing up my boots and jumping in front of the goal posts.

When I completed my high school education, I immediately began employment as a Bank Officer which kick started a 15-year career in the financial sector from 1983 through to 1998.

In that time, I spent 15 years working for the Commonwealth Bank and for the 11 years before my election to Parliament in 2010.

This choice of career came from my passion for improving the future finances for people in my community. That passion then inspired me to start my own financial services business with Judi.

What I am trying to say is that whilst the man that stands before you now is involved in the political landscape, politics didn't come into my life for a very, very long time.

In fact, after I graduated High School in 1982, it would be almost 30 years before I would consider running for any form of political office.

I won't go into too much detail about politics apart from outlining my Brief Political Career. In the 2010 Federal Election, I was fortunate enough to win the Division of Forde from the Australian Labour Party. I have retained my seat at the 2013, 2016, 2019 and now the 2022 Australian Federal Elections.

To be honest, what has been challenging since our party went into opposition at the last election in 2022, has been my role outside of the Electorate of Forde.

Yes, I still serve the people of my electorate, but now I also have another role in Canberra and that is – 'Chief Opposition Whip'.

So, what is a 'Chief Opposition Whip' and what do they do?

The 'Chief Opposition Whip' role is so diverse and busy that the major political parties (Liberal and Labour) have a chief whip, which is the role I fill for the Opposition. Each party then has two deputy whips.

As Chief Opposition Whip, I meet with the members of each party to plan the days in parliament. I help to set the agenda and then organise a list of party members who wish to speak on various bills within parliament.

Another big part of my role as the Chief Opposition Whip, is negotiating 'pairs' from the opposing parties, so that numbers between the government and opposition are kept in balance if members of parliament are absent.

Some could be overseas, or some could even be seeking time off for medical purposes. The pairs system is an unofficial arrangement between members of parliament, which can be used to enable one side of the house to be absent on votes.

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That is my career to date and how my schooling and education has benefited my career both in the private and public sectors.

If I had to give you any advice here today to help in advancing your life journey beyond your schooling years, it would be this.

I'd say - venture outside of your comfort zone, think of yourself as a lifelong learner, ask the important questions and don't be afraid to speak up.

Remember that a job doesn't give your life meaning. Whatever you choose to do with your life, whether it is in politics or education – whatever the job, it does not have to define you.

Find a job you love, and you'll never work a day in your life.

Distinguished Guests, Students, Members of the Beenleigh Yatala Junior Chamber of Commerce, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank-you for having me today to speak to you about my life and my career.

It's been an absolutely pleasure and I hope more than anything that I've been able to impart some form of knowledge upon you.

**ENDS WORD COUNT [900]**