



Speech By
Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Record of Proceedings, 5 May 2015

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (8.30 pm): It is a tremendous honour to rise to address this House as the newly elected member for Nudgee. I take this opportunity, along with many before me, to congratulate the member for Nicklin on his elevation to the honourable position of Speaker of the 55th Parliament of Queensland. I also congratulate our Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk, and thank her for the leadership and humility she has shown, both in opposition and now government. I congratulate all members on their election to this honourable place, particularly those who have been elevated to the high office of cabinet and shadow cabinet positions.

I would like to sincerely thank my community, the electors of Nudgee—from the suburbs of Boondall and Zillmere in the north of my electorate to Nundah, Northgate, Chermside and Wavell Heights in the south and Banyo, Nudgee, Nudgee Beach, Virginia and Geebung in between—for the great honour they have afforded me to serve them in this place. I am the fifth member and first woman elected to represent the electorate of Nudgee. I acknowledge the service of the four members who came before me, particularly the proud Labor tradition of service by Jack Melloy; Ken Vaughan, a friend much missed; and Neil Roberts. With the exception of two years, I have lived in the Nudgee electorate since I was 12 years of age. It is where I studied, volunteered and started my first job, where my husband and I bought our first home and where we are now raising our two young boys. I feel honoured to have the opportunity to serve my community and the people of Queensland, and I respectfully acknowledge the duty that I have to take proper account of their views in the exercise of my duties as a member of this Assembly.

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which my electorate and this parliament rest and pay my respect to elders, both past and present.

We have all come to this place from different beginnings with different experiences and views but no doubt with a shared desire and purpose to serve our respective communities. I have taken great pleasure in listening to the personal journeys and motivations shared thus far by fellow members in the chamber. As a new member, I humbly acknowledge that I have much to learn and a tremendous opportunity, afforded to a few, to contribute to debate in this place. For my part, my parents came from the land: my mother's family from the Atherton Tablelands and my father from small business and a hobby farm in rural Victoria. They both met in the military and I spent my early years growing up on various Air Force bases around the country. I will never forget and was much shaped by the strong sense of service, responsibility and duty displayed by the men and women who served on those bases.

School holidays were invariably spent either in an aeroplane hangar working on aircraft or on the family property. My parents always took an active interest in news and political affairs and expected that my sister and I did the same. They were actively involved in the school P&C, Neighbourhood Watch, Girl Guides and various other community groups, and modelled a belief that community service is something to be valued and pursued and that we all have a responsibility to

make a contribution. I had every opportunity in life and grew up valuing hard work and initiative as the precursors and determinants of opportunity and success, and these are good values. However, in my teens and early twenties, through very personal experience of family separation, the death of my father and the prolonged illness and death of my mother, I began to see how life can change the fortunes of an individual, a family or even a community and that life does not always share opportunity equally.

Diagnosed at 49, my father died a year later from aggressive brain cancer. My mother, diagnosed at 46, endured an eight-year battle with ovarian cancer, undergoing prolonged periods of treatment and suffering continuously declining health. Unable to work, she became dependent on a disability support pension. As a carer to both, their lives, the way they faced their deaths and the struggles they endured—financial and otherwise—indelibly shaped my empathy and commitment to represent and advocate for those who are most in need. I would like to thank my parents for the values that they instilled in me of responsibility, integrity, loyalty, empathy and service. I know they would be proud of my desire to make a contribution here if alive today.

After finishing school and joining the workforce, I experienced the tension that can exist between profit and the rights and entitlements of workers. While employed as a manager in a large retail company, I experienced firsthand an environment in which staff were required to do excessive unpaid overtime, denied access to leave entitlements and often promoted and transferred based on favouritism. Many of the people I worked with were young and living independently. Some had children and most were too frightened to rock the boat for fear of losing their job. I very quickly found my voice as a workplace advocate and developed an enduring respect for the work that our trade union movement has done, and continues to do, for workers in this country. Through these experiences I realised that I could never passively accept a situation where some people are taken advantage of or are left behind because of where they were born or to whom, how old they were or their level of education or opportunity. I fundamentally disagreed with a mentality where a market devoid of values, empathy and moral judgement should be the primary allocator of resources, wealth and opportunity. Something else has to do that, governments have to have a hand in doing that, and we all collectively have a responsibility to one another.

It was while at university that I began working for the former member for Nudgee, Neil Roberts. I was studying business and planning on transitioning to industrial law when Neil began to encourage me to consider a life in public service. I spent the following 14 years doing so at both state and Commonwealth level, firstly as a policy and senior policy adviser to the former Labor governments and later as an executive officer in a Commonwealth regulatory agency. I have noted the discourse from time to time regarding former ministerial staffers becoming members of parliament and must say that I pay it no mind. I felt very privileged to have had the opportunity to travel much of the length and breadth of Queensland, meeting and consulting with the community, often seeing people at their most vulnerable and always seeking a solution at best or compromise at worst to address their issue. I know that my preceding years of policy, legislation and consultative experience at the state and Commonwealth regulatory level will assist me greatly in my new role in this place.

Neil, I know you are in the gallery tonight and I take this opportunity to thank you for your steadfast friendship, encouragement and guidance over the past 14 years. Your commitment to the enduring values of the Australian Labor Party, to fairness, equality and reform, motivated me to join the party. Your example and service to the local community and to the state of Queensland inspired me to run for office. I can think of no better words to use to thank you for your 17 years of dedicated service in this place than these abridged words of Theodore Roosevelt—you will recognise them well: you stood in the arena, strived valiantly, dared greatly, spent yourself in a worthy cause and in the end knew the triumph of high achievement. Thank you.

My thanks and deep appreciation also go to Jenny Roberts, who knows well the sacrifice of being married to a member of parliament. Jenny, you have welcomed us into your family and become like a grandmother to my two young boys. Thank you for your acceptance, wisdom and friendship.

As everyone here is keenly aware, we do not come to this place without the love and encouragement of our family and friends and the support and hard work of many others. I would like to pay tribute to my husband, Ian, who is also in the gallery tonight, who has been my greatest support and encouragement over the past 16 years. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to see me succeed and for the sacrifices you, Jordan and Oliver have made and continue to make in order for me to serve in this place. You have always put the demands of my career and the needs of our family before your own. You are an amazing husband and father and I love you dearly.

To my beautiful children, Jordan and Oliver, you are without doubt the crowning achievement of my life. Thank you for being ever ready to remind me, whether in the heat of an election campaign or otherwise, that sometimes it is just time to sit down and play Lego.

I would like to thank my family: my sister, Michelle, Jenny and Fiona, Tach and Stu, Rachel, Veronica, Emma and Meaghann for your love, encouragement and support. Thank you to my campaign director, Neil, and core campaign team, Kim, Reg, Veronica and Michael, who met with me weekly but took calls from me daily—sometimes hourly—during the campaign. It takes the strong bonds of friendship to weather the inevitable bout of candidates disease that takes hold during an election campaign. Michael, for your sins, you took leave and campaigned with me full time and did a marvellous job. To the hundreds of hardworking branch members and volunteers who worked on my campaign, I say thank you for campaigning in the heat and rain and for sacrificing time with your families to bring about change in the electorate and our great state. I am proud to represent you as a Labor member of parliament. To my branch, many of whom I have journeyed with since joining the party, I say thank you for your loyalty, support and encouragement and for giving me a safe place in which to learn and grow.

I know you will forgive me for mentioning some at the expense of others, but it would be remiss of me not to thank my good friend Councillor Kim Flessor, who has been a constant source of support and wisdom over the years; Reg, whose tireless commitment to the party, branch members and the local community is a credit to him; my dear friend Veronica, who has been loyal beyond measure; and Peter, Bruce, Graham, Craig, Darren, John, Louen, Angela and Jill.

Lest anyone assert, as they did during the campaign, that I am seeking to hide my union links, I would also like to put on the record that I am a member of the Services Union and have been for the past nine years. I joined a union because I respect the role they play in trying to make a real change to, and to improve the lives of, workers in this country. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank branch secretary and Nudgee local Neil Henderson for his unwavering support and encouragement. I also thank Assistant Secretary Jennifer Thomas of the Services Union, the Transport Workers Union and the Plumbers Union for putting their faith in me, my vision for Nudgee and campaigning alongside me.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to federal member Wayne Swan and Councillor Victoria Newton for your support over the years. Along with the neighbouring electorates of, and my colleagues in, Stafford and Sandgate, we have always shared a strong collegiate relationship on the north side. Finally, I acknowledge my colleagues and friends, the member for Bulimba, Di Farmer, and the member for Brisbane Central, Grace Grace, for their support and encouragement.

At the risk of earning the ire of my fellow colleagues, I cannot but declare that the Nudgee electorate—a vibrant mix of residential, commercial and industrial land use and green space—is without doubt by any objective assessment the epicentre of Brisbane. Located on the edge of Moreton Bay, the electorate lays claim to the Boondall wetlands: 1,500 hectares of tidal flats, mangroves, salt marshes, melaleuca wetlands, grasslands and open forest. It is an area of precious environmental value and has been listed as a wetland of international importance.

The electorate has changed significantly since the boundaries were first drawn 55 years ago. Gone is the farming land, the vineyard and Cribb Island. Many have discovered our wonderful lifestyle and that we are only a short seven-minute drive from the domestic and international airports, 20 minutes from the city, and have direct and quick access to both the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast via the Gateway Motorway.

Rich in diversity and character, we have significant Indigenous, Indian and Islander communities as well as newly settled and growing Rohingya and African communities. Almost half of the people in the Nudgee electorate speak a language other than English at home, compared to 36 per cent for Queensland as a whole. Each year there are many wonderful local celebrations of this diversity, including the annual Banyo Diwali festival and Harmony Day celebrations—which I have had the pleasure of emceeing for the last three years—in addition to the recent Harvest Festival Celebration, Zillmere Multicultural Festival and NAIDOC celebrations.

The electorate is well serviced by public transport, both bus and rail, with 12 railway stations across the electorate. I look forward to working with Queensland Transport and Queensland Rail to further enhance these facilities, particularly in regard to park-and-ride capacity, for the benefit of my electorate and commuters across the network.

The Nudgee electorate has wonderful educational opportunities, from vibrant and welcoming playgroups and kindies to the 15 state and Catholic primary and high schools across the electorate, and of course the educational jewel in our crown: Australian Catholic University at Banyo. ACU McAuley Campus is one of the fastest growing in Queensland and has become a valued part of our community, thanks to the vision and leadership of Associate Vice-Chancellor Professor Jim Nyland.

Children deserve the very best education. It is the single greatest investment we make as parents in our children and as policymakers in the citizens of this state. This government's commitment to ensuring excellent teachers are properly rewarded and the foundations of teacher training strengthened for preservice teachers is most welcome, as is the commitment to deliver 45 full-time guidance officer positions from 2016, including at Earnshaw College in my own electorate of which I am a former alumni. I have taken great pleasure in speaking with each of my school communities since being elected and consider one of my most important roles as a member of parliament to be an advocate for improved safety and enhanced facilities and support at my local schools. I look forward to working with the hardworking and dedicated teachers, staff, parents and students at each one of my school communities over the coming term.

In addition to education services, one of the most important hallmarks of any government is how they deliver the services Queenslanders need and depend on most when they are at their most vulnerable. I am proud to be a member of a government who has committed to legislate to ensure nurse-to-patient ratios meet the levels recommended by experts. That means an extra 400 nurses over the next three years so that our nurses are not overworked and can provide the best level of care to patients. I myself am married to a registered nurse and sit beside one in this chamber. They are extraordinary and they do extraordinary things each and every day, but we must not take them for granted. These commitments, along with the announcement in March of \$30 million to address the more than 100,000 Queenslanders waiting longer than clinically recommended for an outpatient or diagnostic appointment, and the announcement yesterday of a further \$30 million to address waiting lists for outpatient appointments for children and adults suffering from ear, nose and throat complaints, will start the process of addressing the 'waiting list for the waiting list'.

The Nudgee electorate has a vibrant community sector, and I admire tremendously the work that our community groups do supporting and advocating for local families and the vulnerable and providing opportunities for social engagement, sports and fun. Since being elected I have had the pleasure of meeting with many of my local cricket, AFL, soccer, bowls and athletic sporting clubs, as well as seniors, Meals on Wheels and disability service groups, RSL sub-branches and neighbourhood centres. I appreciate that I have barely scratched the surface and that there is much work to be done. I will continue to look for opportunities to support the great work that they do.

The Nudgee electorate has two large retail centres at Chermside and Toombul and boasts over 4,000 businesses across the electorate. Where possible, my office takes advantage of these wonderful local offerings, engaging local services and using requests for the donation of prizes and gifts to showcase some of the many local businesses and their products. I am proud of my electorate and the many creative and entrepreneurial people who live and work within it.

Home to iconic brands Arnott's Biscuits and the Golden Circle cannery, the electorate has a large industrial precinct in Geebung and Virginia with smaller pockets in both Banyo and Northgate. I acknowledge the tensions that can and do exist when industry coexists side by side with residential developments. These industrial areas are an important source of local employment and economic activity. Equally, residents' and communities' quality of life must be safeguarded. Likewise, high-density living brings benefits and opportunities; however, high-rise developments in both Nundah and Chermside, parts of which are in my electorate, are causing significant concern and issues in local suburbs owing to flawed planning laws at council level in regard to the provision of adequate parking. A fine balancing of interests is required, and I will be looking for opportunities to work with council, the state government and the community to address these concerns locally.

We have many things to celebrate here in Nudgee, but we also have people who are struggling to make ends meet. Without question, the issue raised most frequently with me, both prior to and since the election, is jobs. This government made a clear commitment during the election to focus on job creation and to work collaboratively with industry and business to restore confidence in the economy, and we are delivering on that commitment. Reinstatement of the highly respected Skilling Queenslanders for Work program to support 32,000 Queenslanders back into jobs, in addition to payroll tax rebates for employers hiring apprentices and trainees and \$34 million to improve training and to provide skills young people need to find work, will make a significant difference. I will be looking for every opportunity to assist people in my electorate who are in need of employment support to access these services over the coming term.

In conclusion, I am proud to stand here as a member of this Labor government. I appreciate that there will, and must, be robust debate in this House in what is by nature a combative environment. In saying so I am reminded of the words of Robert F Kennedy, who said:

All of us might wish at times that we lived in a more tranquil world, but we don't. And if our times are difficult and perplexing, so are they challenging and filled with opportunity.

He also said—

The purpose of life is to contribute in some small way to making things better.

I look forward to making a contribution to healthy debate in this chamber in the interests of making things better for the people of my electorate and our great state.