



Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

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MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Ms MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (2.32 pm): I rise to second the motion moved by the member for Cook for the address-in-reply to the opening speech by His Excellency. A well-known Greek poet Constantine Cavafy wrote in his most famous poem *Ithaca*—

When you start on your journey to Ithaca,
Then pray that the road is long,
Full of adventure, full of knowledge.

As a new member of this House embarking on my parliamentary journey, those are wise words indeed. Certainly you pray that the road will be long, but you also hope that you will encounter amazing experiences and gain great wisdom.

I know that most of what I will learn and experience will come from the people of the Jordan electorate. Their hopes, their fears, their aspirations and their disappointments will all be there for me to embrace, to allay, to advocate and to share. Jordan is an electorate that is of many parts—parts of five former electorates to be exact. It is also one of the four new electorates created in last year's state redistribution. Whilst there were some who did not necessarily agree with the revised boundaries, there is a common theme that runs through this electorate. It is transformation and growth.

At the very top of the Jordan electorate are the long established suburbs of Gales, Camira and Carole Park. Gales, a traditional working-class suburb subdivided in the 1920s, is still dotted with the occasional wooden cottage of the times. Whilst Gales like many other areas has its challenges, the people of Gales are warm, supportive and resilient. Organisations like Gales Community House do much to foster this spirit. I have spent some time with Cassie, the director, and the volunteers who run Gales Community House. Each time I leave more awe inspired at how much they do on limited funds to support children, older residents and families within this community. They are transforming Gales through their wideranging programs, activities and service.

I am fortunate to have the industrial hub of Carole Park within the Jordan electorate. This is an area that is seeing incredible technological change and an increased focus on advanced manufacturing. There is no better example of the transformation from traditional industry to new than the company Mylan. Mylan is one of Australia's leading suppliers of medicines. They locally produce more than 200 medicines at their Carole Park facility that I have been privileged to visit, making them one of the largest pharmaceutical manufacturers in the country. Of the three billion doses of medicines they produce at this local plant, more than half is exported to 50 countries. They also employ over 700 staff across their operation. This is an incredible local success story not only in creating regional employment but also in supporting the industries of the future.

Of course, when talking about transformation, I cannot look beyond Greater Springfield. Situated on a former eucalyptus plantation, declining to the Opossum Creek in the west, the land was acquired by the Springfield Land Corporation in 1992. I would like to acknowledge Maha and Raynuha

Sinnathamby and family, and Bob Sharpless and the team at Springfield City Group for their vision, commitment and sheer determination in driving and investing so heavily in Greater Springfield. Represented by the suburbs of Springfield Central, Springfield Lakes, Brookwater, Augustine Heights, Spring Mountain and Springfield, it is Australia's largest master planned community, with 2,860 hectares under single ownership, and the 10th largest globally. There are currently close to 36,000 residents living in Greater Springfield with an anticipated final population of 138,000 by 2030. Dominated by young families, many buying their first home, the area has become a symbol of people's desire to live, work and play all within their local community—something we need to be encouraging as good planning across the state.

The Jordan electorate also crosses into the Logan City Council areas of Greenbank, New Beith and Flagstone. Greenbank and New Beith date back to the 1840s with dairying, farming and timber being the main industries at the time in the region. In the 1890s farming estates were being subdivided and the area has until recently retained its rural residential identity. I am deeply aware that transformation is not always seen as a positive and I am mindful that the decision to be included in the greater Flagstone priority development area is not sitting comfortably with some residents within Greenbank and New Beith.

In Flagstone, the existing Flagstone estate, with its 4,000-strong community, is expected to transform with the massive \$6.7 billion Flagstone City project underway, which will see an additional 12,000 dwellings once completed. In the next 25 years South-East Queensland is expected to grow by two million people. Much of this growth will occur in the south-western corridor where my electorate resides. Too often I hear people within my electorate ask, 'Where's the plan for all this growth?' To be fair, there is a significant framework for our growth. *ShapingSEQ*, the most recent version of the South East Queensland Regional Plan, is comprehensive, thoughtful and innovative. Its aim is to help manage the potential impacts of this incredible population growth that we will experience by delivering affordable housing and supporting the planning and delivery of critical infrastructure while at the same time protecting our natural environment.

While there are incredible opportunities that come with this growth, there are also challenges that need to be acknowledged. The first one is the most obvious for a Labor government and it should always occupy our greatest investment, and that is employment and, more importantly, local jobs. We need to think beyond the traditional areas of manufacturing and construction, though they will continue to play a significant part. I want our region to attract growth industries: health, defence, aged and community care, retail and hospitality and, of course, technology. However, these cannot be casual and low-paying jobs; we need long-term and sustainable employment for our region, particularly for our young people.

We need to look at how we better support small business. I recently met with five fantastic women in my electorate, all establishing small, local businesses, many of them working from home and juggling family responsibilities. This is the growing face of small business in our region. Importantly, we need to create opportunities so people can work near where they live. This will also help relieve the pressure on roads and public transport, but we know it will not happen overnight.

I fully understand that the infrastructure bucket of money is limited, but for many within my electorate road and public transport infrastructure remains one of the most critical issues. The Ipswich Motorway, the Centenary Highway, the Mount Lindesay Highway, the extension of the Springfield rail line to Redbank Plains and Ripley, and the construction of the Flagstone-Salisbury passenger rail line, are all important road and public transport infrastructure projects that I will continue to advocate strongly for as the member for Jordan. I make no apologies for this. I want to see dads and mums getting home to their families sooner, not sitting in traffic or worrying about the day-care or after-school pick-up.

The Palaszczuk government has committed significant funding and commitment to addressing congestion frustrations: \$400 million for the upgrade of the Ipswich Motorway, Darra to Oxley; \$60 million for significant upgrades to the Mount Lindesay Highway; \$44 million for the upgrade of the park-and-ride facilities at Springfield Central train station which will see more than double the current car parking capacity at the station, allowing more commuters to travel by train and taking 650 more cars off busy roads; and a commitment that the Palaszczuk government will construct the extension of the Springfield rail line and the new Flagstone-Salisbury rail line once Cross River Rail has been completed, relieving the blockage within the city that is preventing new rail services.

Capacity issues for health, education and police will need to be continually assessed as the population grows. As we all know, community is not about bricks and mortar. The Jordan electorate has an incredible community spirit. Through the election campaign I met all our local P&C committees, presidents of sporting clubs and the many and varied community organisations. Many of these people undertake these positions as volunteers and do it with such passion and drive.

As this electorate continues to grow there is a risk that that sense of community can be lost. As the member for Jordan, I pledge to be a champion for these wonderful organisations that are at the electorate's core. I will work closely with them to ensure they continue to grow and with it the community's heart. I will be an advocate for more local jobs, a strong voice for the needs of this growing electorate and a champion for the community.

Before the election I met with someone who had been in the electorate a long time. This person told me that there were no new jobs to be found, no point in skilling young people and no more infrastructure or services to pursue. I left that meeting feeling very sad, because in some way this person was telling me there was no hope. I refuse to believe that. There is always something more that we can do—more options on the table, more solutions to be found. If we, as elected representatives, are not offering people hope, then what are we here for? I will always fight for more and I will help those who need it when I can. I will not give up on the people of the Jordan electorate.

Someone who certainly had that fighting spirit was the woman who inspired the naming of my electorate. Ellen Violet Jordan was elected to the Queensland parliament on 28 May 1966 in the seat of Ipswich West. She was only the second woman to ever be elected to the Queensland parliament and the first Labor woman to get there. Over four decades Vi Jordan was a leading figure in both politics and the Ipswich community. She was a friend and compatriot of Gough Whitlam and Bill Hayden, and she won a competitive preselection in what was, in 1965, a Labor held seat. In fact, when launching her general election campaign Gough Whitlam, then deputy federal Labor leader, noted that this was the first time in a generation that an Australian political party nominated a woman in a held seat.

In her first speech Jordan raised bread-and-butter electoral issues such as the need for more local government infrastructure funding and—a then Labor favourite—the spectre of rail privatisation. She also called for better kindergarten funding and support for the children of single and working mothers. In the first session of parliament she moved a private member's motion calling for equal pay for women working in the Public Service. As a local member Vi was effective. Under early premiers Nicklin and Pizzey she would go to the top fellow and was successful in obtaining school funding and more money for council infrastructure.

Throughout my campaign I thought often of Violet Jordan. I always felt she was watching over me. Soon after I was declared the member I received a special card in the mail written by Keith Jordan, Violet's son, who is now 82 and who still lives in Ipswich. He wrote about how happy he was to see me win and how proud Vi would have been to see a Labor woman elected as the first state member for Jordan, a seat named in her honour. Something that Violet Jordan would have understood, and something that I always remind myself of, is that politics is about hard work, certainly, but there is always an element of luck and timing.

I have been particularly fortunate to have been surrounded by some amazing people who have looked out for me, supported me and pushed me forward even when I have shown reluctance or fear. I want to thank some former members of parliament who have been mentors to me: Jim Elder, John Mickel, Desley Boyle and the late Nita Cunningham. I want to thank current members of this House who have been loyal friends for over 20 years: the Premier and member for Inala; the member for Woodridge; the member for Sandgate; and the member for Logan.

I want to thank Milton Dick, who has been one of my closest friends for the last 25 years. Like all good friendships it has ebbed and flowed over those years, but I have to say that for the last year that friendship has overflowed. Milton showed me incredible support and encouragement in his desire to help me win the seat. He is undoubtedly one of the best campaigners around and I have learned so much from him. What I have learned most is that, if you truly care for people and if you want the best for them, it shows through no matter how slick the campaign is. To be authentic is the best campaign tool you can have, and Milton taught me that. I will be beside him fighting to see him re-elected as the federal member for Oxley and to repay all of the incredible goodwill and support he has shown me.

To Jacki Power and Justine Bond—my friends forever with whom I would entrust with my life—Sarah Mawhinney, Daniel Cheverton and Anika Wells: thank you for your support and for keeping me sane. To all of the wonderful members of the ALP and greater Springfield branch, in particular our amazing campaign team Sharon Mitchell, Riley Williamson, Jon Persley, Brent Cue, Dylan Kerr and Michael Quirk: I could not have done this without you all. To my union, the AWU: I always said that working at the AWU was like coming home, and I will always be grateful for the opportunity to have fought for the industrial and social interests of working people in this state. Thank you Ben Swan, Steve Baker, Mark Raguse and the amazing union team.

I want to thank my family. My dad and mum, Leon and Kathy, raised me to be a believer in a fairer world, a just world, a world where we are equal and where we want the very best for people. I did not need anything more from them. I want to thank my father-in-law, Vince, and late mother-in-law, Maxine, for warmly welcoming this city girl into their Dimbulah lives; my brothers, for never letting me get too big for my boots but who always showed me incredible love; and, finally, my husband, Sean, and my daughters, Zoe and Mary. We always said that this would be an adventure for our family. You knew this was something I needed to do so that I would never wonder 'what if'. I am so grateful to them for allowing me this opportunity and I am so excited to see what our future holds. Cavafy finishes his poem by saying—

Ithaca has given you the beautiful voyage.

Without her you would never have taken the road.

But she has nothing more to give you.

And if you find her poor, Ithaca has not defrauded you.

With the great wisdom you have gained, with so much experience, you must surely have understood by then what Ithacas mean.

It seems strange to think about the end of your parliamentary career as you deliver your first speech, but I believe that the best politicians are the ones who have an end date in mind—if, of course, the electorate does not decide it for them. They are the most effective in this House because they know they have a small window of opportunity to make a significant contribution and difference to the lives of their constituents and to the state of Queensland. I hope that at the end of this amazing journey in the Queensland parliament I too will understand what my Ithaca meant.