



Speech by
Jackie Trad

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard Thursday, 17 May 2012

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Ms TRAD** (South Brisbane—ALP) (11.29 am): Thank you, Madam Speaker, and can I add my congratulations on your election to the important role of Speaker of this House. It is both historic and, looking around this chamber, one might say timely that a woman has been elected for the first time as Speaker of this House.

I rise for the first time in this place, the people's house, both buoyed by the honour of representing the interests and concerns of the community I love and grounded by the responsibilities and challenges that lay ahead for me and my fellow Labor members. As only the second Labor member to give a maiden speech from the opposition benches in 25 years, I am conscious of the enormous responsibility that I now assume: firstly, to serve my constituents and to work for their interests tirelessly; secondly, to respect the democratic outcome of the last state election but to contribute to delivering to the people of Queensland a strong opposition that can hold the Liberal National Party's massive majority to account; and, lastly, to work hard to rebuild and restore the Labor Party in Queensland.

My first acknowledgement is to the traditional owners of the land on which we gather—the Jagera and the Turrbal peoples. I pay my respects to their elders past and those present, many of whom reside in the electorate of South Brisbane. South Brisbane boasts strong cultural and ethnic diversity that has flourished alongside a respectful recognition of the local Indigenous population. Unfortunately, just this week we have seen a breakdown in this normally harmonious situation with the forced eviction of Indigenous people from Musgrave Park.

Musgrave Park has long been a very important gathering place for Indigenous people across southern Queensland. According to local elders, as Moreton Bay was developed by Europeans, sacred bora sites were destroyed, denying young Indigenous men their important rite of passage in learning ancient customs and being initiated into adulthood. Musgrave Park became the site for a new bora ring, attracting those who were removed from their country looking for family, looking for community. Despite past evictions and past laws banning Indigenous people from the area, Musgrave Park has and always will hold immense cultural significance for Indigenous Queenslanders. It is a connection that no leader with a 21st century conscience should seek to diminish.

For 36 years Musgrave Park has also been the home of Paniyiri, a wonderful celebration of Greek culture and a public acknowledgement of the significant contribution that Greek migrants have made to the local community of South Brisbane and the larger community of Queensland. Paniyiri is important to residents in Brisbane, and many families, like mine, look forward to attending every year. I wish to acknowledge the efforts made by the Greek community and the festival organisers who have worked hard to make Paniyiri one of Brisbane's best cultural events.

Shamefully, yesterday, locals woke up to a complete lockdown of the Musgrave Park precinct, with more than 200 police officers brought in to evict 30 protesters. By anyone's assessment, this is not a measured response but an overreaction. Premier Newman and Lord Mayor Quirk could have chosen reason to resolve this situation but instead they chose force—overwhelming force. These scenes have not been seen in Brisbane since 1984, when Indigenous citizens who were merely gathering in Musgrave Park

were forcibly evicted under the order of the then Premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. As the rest of the nation watched in horror the events of yesterday morning, many local residents expressed their outrage to me that in a matter of three days Queensland had been taken back 30 years.

Madam Speaker, it is a great honour to be elected to this parliament as the member for South Brisbane. I am acutely aware of the historical significance of this particular area of our great city. In 1859 the order-in-council establishing independent government in Queensland had only 16 electorates. South Brisbane is one of only two that can claim uninterrupted continuity from the original 16.

South Brisbane is one of our state's smallest electorates, with the Brisbane River defining a large part of the electorate's boundary. Because of its natural boundary of the river, proximity to the CBD and key cultural and recreational facilities, South Brisbane boasts nine of the 15 bridges that cross the Brisbane River. And while locals enjoy living so close to the majestic snaking bends of the river, we also lament the devastation she inflicts when her banks are breached and our streets are submerged. Of all the major flood events to affect Brisbane—1841, 1893, 1974 and 2011—all have affected the history and distinctiveness of the South Brisbane electorate and our community.

Madam Speaker, like so many other Queenslanders, I was out and about during January 2011 helping family, friends and local businesses save belongings and then clean up. I found inspiration during this terrible time from two sources: firstly, the random acts of kindness from complete strangers, particularly young people who lent a hand in the hard work of cleaning up—from those on high land who stored the furniture and valuables of those who were to be flooded and from those Queenslanders who accommodated whole families displaced by flooding and supported them for weeks on end. In this moment, this quintessentially Queensland moment, while the world watched in pity, Queenslanders displayed their true grit and their incredible compassion.

During this time I, like most other Queenslanders, also found inspiration in the leadership of my predecessor for South Brisbane, Anna Bligh. In this new parliament, the 54th Parliament, and in this new chapter in Queensland's political history, much will be argued and rebutted about the former Premier's legacy to Queensland. Indeed, we have already heard of this this morning. But it is unarguable that during the worst natural disasters in Queensland's recorded history Anna Bligh provided Queensland with the strength and leadership we needed to endure, recover and rebuild our state—a fact acknowledged and acclaimed even by the new Premier.

Madam Speaker, another important feature of the South Brisbane electorate is its ethnic diversity, which I referred to earlier. It is a characteristic that is particularly close to my heart as I am a proud product of this cultural melting pot. Along with some 30 per cent of the current South Brisbane population, my late grandparents and parents migrated to Australia from another country. At the time they arrived in Australia the White Australia Policy was still our nation's overarching migration position, and by the time the Whitlam Labor government finally abolished it I was one.

During my school years, Australia embraced the policy of multiculturalism, and I lived this throughout my childhood growing up in Fisher Street, East Brisbane. Our neighbours to one side were a family from the former state of Yugoslavia and the neighbours on the other side were Russian immigrants. The wave of Vietnamese refugees post the Vietnam War saw many families resettle in West End alongside the large and well-established Greek community.

Multiculturalism has served Australia well and South Brisbane is a microcosm of its success. The many people who visit the West End and South Bank precincts do so to experience a broad range of ethnic cuisines and cultural experiences just as thousands will this weekend for Paniyiri.

Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge the special contribution of a number of local multicultural and ethnic organisations that have contributed to making multiculturalism a success in South Brisbane: the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland, the Multicultural Development Association of Queensland, the Greek Orthodox Community of St George, Annerley and District Community Centre and the Brisbane Lebanese Maronite community.

As a second generation Lebanese migrant, I wish to acknowledge the contribution of key Lebanese descendants to the city of Brisbane and Queensland—from David Malouf's contribution to literature, which has attracted many awards including the recently defunded Queensland Premier's Literary Awards, to the Hon. Sam Doumany, the first state member of parliament of Lebanese descent who took his seat in this House as the member for Kurilpa and was from the other side of politics.

Like other diaspora, the Lebanese are hard workers and they contribute greatly to their communities and I want to acknowledge them here today. We are small in comparison to our cousins in Sydney and Melbourne, but we are a close-knit community that works hard to continue to keep Lebanese culture and tradition alive in Brisbane.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to note the contribution to the cultural diversity that local artists, retailers and organisations make to the fabric of the South Brisbane community. The recent and hasty actions by the new government has given them much cause for concern. From local writers who are

disheartened by the fact that Queensland now holds the new inglorious honour of being the only state in Australia to not have a government sponsored program to reward emerging Queensland writers and great Australian literature; to Sisters Inside, who have recently been advised that they no longer have access to the small amount of funding they have relied upon to provide crucial support to help in the rehabilitation of women prisoners in Townsville. Many organisations are greatly concerned that this is a sign of things to come—that governing with care, fairness and compassion will be completely outweighed by the massive Liberal National Party majority. As their state member, they will always have in me a strong advocate for the important work that they do.

The South Brisbane I live in is unrecognisable from the one I grew up in. The South Brisbane I remember from my childhood had a maximum security prison operating in its heart, it had a stretch of derelict riverbank that invited squalor and crime, and, apart from church and family gatherings, nothing ever happened on a Sunday. Today South Brisbane boasts some of our nation's best cultural and recreation facilities in the Gallery of Modern Art and South Bank. Boggo Road continues to evolve as one of the inner-city's most exciting mixed-use precincts; pedestrians and cyclists have access to more river crossings in the Goodwill and Kurilpa bridges; and construction of dedicated busways has revolutionised public transport in Brisbane.

Our emergence as a modern inner-city precinct has not happened by chance; it has happened by choice. It has been Labor choices driven by Labor values that have indelibly changed Queensland, Brisbane and my electorate of South Brisbane for the better. It was the Goss Labor government that brought to life the vision of South Bank. It was the Beattie Labor government that built and delivered the Goodwill Bridge and GoMA, forever changing the dynamics of the area across the river from the CBD. It was the Bligh Labor government that built the Kurilpa Bridge—the world's largest tensegrity bridge, an international, award-winning display of the best from science, art, engineering and architecture.

It has been the vision of the past three Labor governments to coax Queensland out of the 1950s, where the last long-term National Liberal government wanted us to stay, and have us emerge as a more confident, better educated, better skilled and more compassionate state. Largely, due to that, we have seen massive levels of migration from southern states which has had a very big impact on the inner-city through increased development. South Brisbane residents have taken on a reasonable amount of increased density and worked hard to reach a compromise over the past few years for sustainable increased development in the West End, Kangaroo Point, Woolloongabba and South Brisbane precincts. All of this hard work and compromise by residents has been thrown out the window as Lord Mayor Quirk and Premier Newman now review agreed local neighbourhood plans in order to further increase high-rise development—an announcement conveniently made a matter of days after the South Brisbane by-election.

There was no ambiguity in the outcome or the message delivered by Queenslanders on 24 March this year. This is our system of democracy and it is the system I will defend, regardless of the outcome. There has never existed a perfect government and nor will one ever exist. The wear and tear on government, as former Prime Minister Paul Keating coined, is inevitable, and after more than 20 years the former Queensland Labor government certainly had its share of wear and tear. However, I am enormously proud of a number of key achievements delivered by Labor in this state. These include effectively managing the Queensland economy through the global financial crisis; creating hundreds of thousands of jobs during this time when the private sector could not; delivering the biggest infrastructure program in the country year in, year out; producing important infrastructure including rebuilding and upgrading every hospital throughout Queensland; delivering a surplus seven years out of the past 10 and only going into deficit to absorb the worst effects of the GFC and to keep Queenslanders in work; delivering the best workplace health and safety laws and the fairest and most efficient workers compensation system in Australia; massively expanding quality early education services including a universal prep program and kindergartens; increasing the Disability Services budget by nearly 500 per cent to help Queenslanders with a disability and their carers; introducing an acknowledgement to the traditional owners in the Preamble of the Queensland Constitution; enacting laws to protect the pristine wild rivers throughout Queensland; legislating for the end of sand mining on Stradbroke Island; and ending broadscale tree clearing through regional forestry agreements.

These are merely some of the achievements Labor in this state has delivered, for which I am proud. Every Labor member in Queensland should feel proud of being associated with the transformation and modernisation of our state. To the 35 former Labor members who sat in this chamber, who contested the last election and lost, I am enormously proud of your contribution to this Labor legacy and to your communities.

The Labor Party undoubtedly finds itself in difficult circumstances. However, as a party with a 120-year history, we have been here before and we have rebuilt and reformed to come back stronger and better. We owe it to Labor members and supporters to be diligent and honest in our rebuilding efforts so we can stand up for the values that they look for in Labor. Standing up for fairness in the workplace and advocating justice for those who are most vulnerable and marginalised. Delivering opportunity and

prosperity through education and training, jobs and a strong economy. And ensuring that our environment is protected for future generations. The Labor Party is part of a political movement that is acutely aware of its responsibility to this state and this nation.

The other important part of our political movement is the trade union movement—the foundation of our fair society. Without unions, Australians would not have a minimum wage or annual leave, superannuation or paid parental leave, workplace health and safety or workers compensation. These are basic entitlements in Australia but they are considered unattainable to most working people in many other countries including the United States. These reforms—now widely accepted—did not happen overnight and they did not happen without a lot of effort on behalf of wage earners. They should all be protected because, as WorkChoices showed, many of them can be lost at the stroke of a pen by a conservative government.

As the first person from my large extended family to attend university, I know too well the value of a good education in transforming lives. I have not only worked hard but I have been lucky. I was born to parents who, despite not having much of an education, valued it and encouraged us to complete senior schooling. My first thanks today goes to my Mum, Yesmine, who is in the gallery. When mum arrived from Lebanon, she had no English skills but a huge work ethic. Not only did she learn English on the job; she also raised five children and some 40 years later continues to work in a fruit shop. If I contribute even a quarter of her hard work and diligence to duty and family in this House and in the South Brisbane community, then I will have acquitted myself honourably.

I want to also acknowledge my late father, Victor Trad. His sacrifices and courage are the strong foundation of the success and happiness that my siblings and I enjoy, and for that we are eternally grateful. To my siblings and their spouses, many of whom are in the gallery today—Marilyn Trad and Damien Atkinson, Lorene Trad and Byron Head, Naji and Sandra Trad and Fina Trad—thank you for your constant support and strength.

To my principal partner in life, my husband, Damien van Brunschot, your advice has never let me down. Your faith in me has never wavered. Your optimism and enthusiastic support propels me each and every day. Our sons, Leo and Vincent, deserve special acknowledgement—Leo who completed his last NAPLAN test today. I know they will always balance out the highs and lows of this job with their particular challenges and their unconditional love.

For their longstanding friendship, support and work on my campaign, I place on record my thanks to Alan and Adrian; Penny and Jo; Cecilia Anthony and Ashley Hogan; the bookclub ladies who this year will celebrate our 10th anniversary; the new leader of the Labor Opposition in council and my friend, Milton Dick, and Susan McGrady; the Leader of the Opposition, Annastacia Palaszczuk, and all opposition members and staff. I thank you for your diligence, hard work, guidance and support. To Andrew Dettmer, Gary Bullock, Julie Bignell, Bill Marklew and Jim Valery, thank you for your leadership and support through good times and bad.

Madam Speaker, any casual observer will know that no political party can claim to own a seat regardless of its margin. When I embarked upon the South Brisbane by-election, I knew it would be difficult, if not impossible, to win. In two previous conservative landslides—1929 and 1974—both of which were smaller than 24 March, South Brisbane was won by the conservatives. The fact that Labor won is testament to the hard work and dedication of my campaign team and the local Labor community. I particularly want to thank my campaign director, Sarah Warner, and ALP organiser Shannon Fentiman. To Claudia Whitton, Paddy Keys-Macpherson, Ellie Desmarchelier, Chloe Moss, Leon Naoumis, Peter Shooter, Cath Rafferty, Tim Quinn, Jane Austen, Tina Langford, Louise Kelly, Kevin O'Brien, Susan Ellison and Angus Sutherland, I simply say thank you. Winning would not have been possible without your voluntary efforts. I also wish to record my thanks to the Gabba councillor Helen Abrahams for her assistance during our combined elections.

To the people of South Brisbane, thank you for entrusting me with your confidence. I hope that you will find my thoughts to be just, my actions good, my speech honest and my disposition even and transparent. I humbly look forward to serving you in the years to come.