



Speech By  
**Jessica Pugh**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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**MAIDEN SPEECH**

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (5.09 pm): Thank you, Mr Speaker. May I congratulate you on your election to the role of Speaker. I am honoured to count you as a friend and I know that you will bring the same integrity and dedication that you have displayed in all of your parliamentary roles to the role of Speaker. I would like to start today by first acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we gather and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

As a candidate, the first question I was often asked on the campaign trail was: 'Why are you involved in politics?' I love this question—it is an opportunity for me to pause and reflect on why I am here today. For me, my interest in community service began young when I joined Interact as a year 8 student at Cannon Hill Anglican College. I quickly developed a strong interest in the charity organisation World Vision and I decided at the age of 14 that I wanted to succeed Tim Costello as their CEO. Almost 20 years later he is still there, so it is a good thing I gave up on that!

I would devour all of the World Vision newsletters, particularly the column from Tim and, after a year, a theme emerged. Each column was deeply concerned with the lack of overseas government aid. The federal treasurer at the time was none other than Tim's brother, Peter Costello, so I thought if Tim cannot get any funding from his own brother I do not like my chances at all. After a few years, I decided that government was the place to be if I wanted to make the changes in the world that I wanted to see. From that point on, I was drawn to a life in public service.

The second question was: 'Why Labor?' I was raised in a house full of women, dad excepted, and by feminist parents, who are here today. The birth of my youngest sister, Isabella, when I was 12 had a profound impact on me. My father was working long hours as a chef and, like many parents, my mum had to work. Being a little older, I could see firsthand how hard it was for my mum to manage a household and go back to work with a baby and two high school-age children to manage. The juggle and the struggle of balancing work and family was really difficult, and I commend her for her skill in managing that balance. As a young woman, I felt this was incredibly sad and I wanted to ensure that when I had a daughter, who is in the gallery today, she grew up in a society that respected the contribution that women have to make and that made it as easy as possible for both parents to have a meaningful job and contribute to raising their family. It certainly seemed to me at that young age that little thought was given to including women in the workforce in any significant way.

By the age of 12 I was well known at school for my feminist views. At times I wondered why I felt so strongly about this. It turns out that I actually come from a long line of women committed to improving diversity in politics. Members of the House may be aware that the first country to grant women the right to vote in any form was New Zealand in 1893. I was very proud to learn that my great-great-grandmother Jane Pugh was one of the original suffragettes who petitioned the New Zealand government for the right to vote. By the time I discovered this I was already well enmeshed in the Labor movement, and I asked my nan why she had not told me this very exciting family history prior, as it confirmed that politics

was literally in my genes. She responded in her usual dry way that my political interest was already very annoying to the family and that she was afraid this would push me right over the edge to unbearable. Well, Nan, you were right.

When I look around the chamber today, International Women's Day, I am incredibly, immeasurably proud to join a Labor caucus with 48 per cent women—and what a diverse group it is too. I believe the diversity of our caucus is what gives us our strength and, in years to come, I hope to add to the cultural diversity of the caucus too. With Minister Enoch and the member for Cook in the chamber, we are off to a great start.

In Mount Ommaney during this campaign we doorknocked 8,500 homes and called 10,000 more. I did not do this alone. I had an amazing team of volunteers by my side, aged from their early teens to their late 70s. Harvey Dale, at 77, was my oldest doorknocker and, when during the election campaign he was forced to rest due to a skin cancer diagnosis and chemo treatment, he came to make phone calls for me instead. Augie and Marlene, a husband and wife team from Oxley also in their middle years like Harvey, sat outside the Oxley train station every Saturday for six months for two elections in a row. Yet another volunteer—a nurse who was often coming off night shift—doorknocked in a moon boot! One of my most enthusiastic volunteers was Lucy B, one of the many migrants who have come to call Mount Ommaney home. Lucy was initially reluctant to doorknock, but she had an irrepressible happiness and spirit that kept many of the volunteers buoyed during what was a long and hot campaign—and she did end up doorknocking.

So many of my volunteers pushed themselves outside their comfort zone to do things they had never done before—from doorknocking, to making phone calls or talking about issues like the importance of quality state education or marriage equality. Throughout it all I was blown away by the desire that my volunteers showed to help the community. I could not have been more proud of each of them.

I want to especially thank my wonderful, wonderful friend Rachel Hoppe, who is watching from the office today. This indefatigable woman took on the role of campaign manager, despite having no prior experience on a political campaign, and proved that women can do anything. Her mother, Beth, and partner, Adam, were soon roped into the campaign, proving the old adage that behind every good woman is a good partner, and sometimes an awesome mum too.

Behind every candidate, as we know, is an army. My branchies are like family to me and my family are like branchies. My aunts Barb, Jude and Anne are all in the chamber today. They bolstered my Labor values from a young age and pre-poll just would not have been the same without them. I want to thank the wonderful team at ALP head office—Evan, John, Lucy, Jon, Mitch and Sharon—for their time and wisdom. I also want to thank my friends in the union movement, particularly the NUW, the Together union, the QTU and United Voice, for their support and guidance.

I want to thank my parliamentary support crew—former minister Warren Pitt and his wonderful wife, Linda. I worked for Warren as a bright-eyed young staffer 10-odd years ago and was treated as family by the entire Pitt clan including yourself, Mr Speaker. I thank your wonderful family for their support over the last 10 years.

Julie Attwood, a former member for Mount Ommaney, and her late husband, Ron, were wonderful assets during the first campaign. Indeed, her famed work ethic was still on display during our 2015 election campaign when she doorknocked with me every week. Ron's sad passing in 2015 was a devastating blow to Julie, but her commitment to her community saw her once again come out of retirement to help me. I will be forever grateful for her support and friendship.

Warren and Julie are two wonderful people who showed that the best MPs should be hardworking advocates for their local area and never give up asking for more for their community.

In this current parliament I am lucky to have many friends and mentors and to have met some wonderful new members from all political persuasions. I would like to thank Di, Grace, Kate and Curtis and my federal members, Milton Dick and Graham Perrett, for their support. I also want to thank in advance the two Marks—Minister Bailey and Minister Ryan—for their assistance and help with the many questions I have had so far. I feel that my office is never off the phone to the Minister for Main Roads in particular, as main roads are the No. 1 issue in my electorate.

No matter where you live in the Mount Ommaney electorate the roads need improving. I have experienced firsthand the panic that rises in your chest as you realise you are unlikely to make the 6 pm pickup from after school hours care. It is a horrible feeling and one that far too many parents in the community have described to me as they rush from work to home. I will do everything in my power to address this issue for my constituents. I went to the election promising the long overdue upgrade of the

Sumners Road overpass, the improvement of the Darra train station park-and-ride, and the preparation of a business case to upgrade the Jindalee bridge stretch of the Centenary Motorway. I intend to deliver all of those things and will continue to be the advocate that my community deserves.

I am sure many proud members will stand today and say that their electorate is the best. This is only because they have never lived in Mount Ommaney. I am in the truly fortunate position of having far too many community groups to list individually in one speech—I only get 20 minutes! I intend to spend the next three years letting the House know about all of the wonderful events in our local community. Our network of community groups is second to none. In a time when volunteers are harder and harder to come by, our community groups and schools work together to ensure the best outcome for everyone.

Middle Park State School and Jamboree Heights State School alternate their school fete years to get the best possible turnout and maximise revenue. It is the same with Oxley and Corinda. The Rotary Club of Sumner Park heard that the local rowing club needed to be painted so they got the local kids from Corinda State High to paint the club and gave the kids a cert IV qualification. Our local Jamboree Residents Association has teamed up with the Darra Progress Association to work together with business and the community and get the best possible outcome for our Sumner Road overpass upgrade. Our community groups excel at not just working hard but also working smart to get the most possible bang for buck from their efforts.

In my short time as the member for Mount Ommaney so far I have received wonderful opportunities to get a glimpse into the lives of my constituents. Recently I visited the Wolston Correctional Centre and viewed firsthand the hard work of our Corrections team there, working tirelessly and often without thanks to protect our community and hopefully to rehabilitate those who live there. It is the kind of job where the best day is when nothing happens but no-one notices until something goes wrong.

I have met with the Inclusive Education team, a group of dedicated, loving parents advocating for their kids. As a mum, I also got to drop off my preppy a few weeks ago to the same wonderful teacher his sister had three years ago. Every parent will know the feeling of happiness and sheer relief you get when you realise you are handing your child over to a dedicated educator.

I have read the life story of Tommy Kwok, a local engineer born in communist China who worked tirelessly for years studying and working to finally be allowed to stay in Australia and call Mount Ommaney home. He went on to get a PhD at QUT, along with his five children. I was halfway through the book when I mentioned it to my partner who pointed out that Tommy was the father of a friend of his. Only in Mount Ommaney are there so few degrees of separation. When Tommy visited me to share his book *Iron Rice Bowl* he said, 'I believe Australia is the place where anyone can make it because of education.' Indeed, this was the theme I picked up constantly in my doorknocking—the importance of education.

I spoke to a Cantonese-speaking resident in Westlake in a rather palatial home, the kind of place where many Labor candidates would think they are wasting their time. The gent answered the door and I asked what issues were important to him. He answered with real concern, 'I have a young family and I want the best education for my kids. I'm worried that I can't afford private school and I'm letting my kids down.' I know every single one of our local state schools are top notch. I have visited each of them, I have met the P&Cs, the teachers and the principals. I felt thrilled to be able to tell him about the great results his local state school was getting and the wonderful teachers and leadership team it had in place. For many families there is no choice between state and private education, and these kids deserve access to the best possible state education.

As I mentioned, many members of our community speak English as a second language. A few months ago I was invited to view *Vietnamerica*, a documentary about the Vietnam War and its terrible aftermath, causing millions of Vietnamese people to flee. Many settled right here in Mount Ommaney, and their stories are harrowing and heartbreaking in equal measure. Two of these refugees were the parents of my partner, Tu, whose parents first attended the Wacol settlement camp before purchasing a home in the electorate where he grew up, got a wonderful education and finally went to university and became a doctor. How wonderful it is that you can be the child of refugees and become a doctor within the span of a single generation. It shows that we as a government must never, ever lose sight of the importance of accessible quality education for all, for education has the power to transform lives, and indeed it has.

When I started doorknocking I already knew that Mount Ommaney was one of the most multicultural electorates in the state. As my team and I went from house to house and met countless community members, I was struck by the many values and fundamental concerns that bind us as a

community and as a society. Indeed, this campaign has shown me that, although we have superficial differences, no matter where you were born you want your child to go to the best school, you want to be able to get home without worrying you will not make it in time for 6 pm pick-up, and you want to know that your neighbourhood is friendly and safe.

In a world where fewer and fewer of us know our neighbours, ours frequently organise barbecues just to meet people they have never met before in the community. Last year when my parents moved to the electorate I posted on our community Facebook page that my mum and dad were moving and please be nice. The outpouring of kindness for these two was enormous and immediate, and I thank my wonderful community for that.

I also want to thank my family—my mum and dad, Paula and David, who are in the gallery today. Running for parliament is a family affair and I am so lucky that my parents uprooted their entire lives to support me in my quest to win Mount Ommaney. Last year they sold their home of 30 years to buy a house right behind my daughter's school in Middle Park. It was a huge change and a monumental decision for them, and for that I am truly grateful but I am thrilled that they love living in the area as much as I do. The only downside is that they were constituents of Di Farmer, who my father tells me is a truly amazing local member and they have told me they expect me to fill her very intimidating shoes.

The truth is I could have been running in Timbuktu and they still likely would have moved house for me. I will be forever grateful that they stepped into the breach at a time in my life when I really needed them, as a newly single parent. My mother instilled in me a belief that you should always be true to your values. One of my earliest memories is sitting on my mother's hip while she spoke to her environmental lobby group and the television news crews about the need to reduce plastics and waste and protect our environment. I am thrilled, therefore, to be part of a Labor government introducing the plastic bag ban and the land clearing bill.

I did not really get to know my father until we started working together. He is a man of few words and hospitality being what it was he was rarely home when I was little, working long hours to fulfil his dream of opening a fine dining restaurant to support his family. It was not until we started working together at Restaurant Two that I got to see him in his element doing what he loved and including me in that part of his universe. It was a pleasure and a privilege, and some of the happiest days of my life were spent in that restaurant helping couples to plan their wedding. It was an honour to be there with him and help him when he decided to close for good in late 2016. It was a bittersweet time for our family—a tough decision but absolutely the right one.

It was at this time that I became a single parent also. I cannot pretend that going through day-to-day life, let alone an election campaign, as a single parent is easy. There were many nights when the idea of working all day, making campaign calls at night and then going home to wrestle the kids into bed seemed overwhelming and never-ending, but my team showed me that although I was a single parent I was not alone.

I want to thank my beautiful children, Heath and Allegra. Many parents naturally experience guilt when sacrificing time with their children to campaign. For us, it was a family affair with the kids attending countless local events and often getting roped into volunteering too.

My daughter, Allegra, was my greatest cheerleader, speaking proudly to anyone who would listen about how mummy was part of Annastacia Palaszczuk's Labor team. In our quiet moments at home when I was tucking her into bed she would tell me how proud she was. She is a tremendous young lady and it is wonderful that through the campaign she has had the opportunity to meet so many inspirational women including Minister Farmer, Minister Jones and of course the Premier.

Heath's interest in the election was far more superficial. At the age of six, his world view is very simple so I explained that, like the State of Origin he loves so much, there is a red team and a blue team. After that he understood how important the result was, but he wanted to be sure that I was on the red team.

All parents will know that your children can be your greatest joy and your greatest challenge, but more than that they are my inspiration. I want to make my children and my community proud of the work I do in this place to make their lives better. I cannot overstate how deeply humbled and grateful I am to have the opportunity to represent Mount Ommaney in this House. Mount Ommaney is where I have chosen to make my home, raise my family and be part of the community. I promise to always fight for the residents of Mount Ommaney, to advocate for them and to always put them first.