



Speech By
Margaret Nightingale

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 16 April 2024

MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Ms NIGHTINGALE** (Inala—ALP) (11.20 am): Mr Speaker, I rise in this House today for the first time honoured to speak as a representative of my community, the electorate of Inala. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, the Yagara and Turrbal peoples. I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. Let me also pay special respect to Uncle Albert Holt, a Queensland great whose contribution to our community in Inala has been enormous and whose legacy of dedication is an example to us all.

I stand here on the shoulders of giants, coming to this place following in the footsteps of over 30 years of representation by the Palaszczuk family: the former premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, and former minister, Henry Palaszczuk. I thank them for their many years of service to our community. The Palaszczuk story is the Queensland story, it is the Labor story, it is the Inala story and that is my story too.

I am a product of the Inala community. I am so proud and privileged to stand in this place today as an example of how a girl who grew up with social and economic disadvantage, being raised by a single mother who relied on social housing, can become the advocate for her community. Like many communities across our state, Inala is diverse with 33 per cent of residents born in non-English speaking countries. We are a vibrant melting pot of cultures, identities and traditions. It is a place where diversity is not merely tolerated but shared and celebrated, where the strength of our community lies in our ability to come together to support one another and to strive for a better future.

Inala is home to the largest Vietnamese community in Queensland. The Vietnamese Tet Festival stands as a testament to the uniting and unifying power of cultural festivities. I was delighted to attend this year's festival. I want to thank Dr Bui and the Vietnamese Community in Australia, Queensland chapter, for their decades of work not only in organising this event but for all their work in our community. I also want to thank my friends Phuong Nguyen and Tuan Le for their ongoing assistance in ensuring that language is no barrier to engagement.

Yet for all its vibrancy and resilience, Inala, like many other communities, faces its share of challenges: suitable housing accessibility, the impacts of the cost-of-living pressures, economic inequality and the community not feeling safe. These issues are priorities that demand our collective attention, our unwavering resolve and our steadfast commitment to address. Only a Labor government has the resolve, vision and commitment to address these problems. I am passionate about chipping away at and changing a system stacked against the most vulnerable and those without power, money and influence. I am a Labor member because I know that these are the values of our movement and that these are the values of our Premier, Steven Miles. I believe that affordable housing is the basis for good health, safety and educational attainment. I believe in free education, free health care and the dignity of work. I believe in a collective society uplifting those doing it tough.

Communities such as Inala most deeply feel the impact of decisions made by governments. With 40 per cent of the electorate falling into the lowest relative socioeconomic disadvantage quintile, I know a lot of families in Inala are doing it tough. I have heard their voices through the result of the by-election. I thank them for placing their trust in me. I will work tirelessly every day to make the lives of the people of my electorate better. The people of Inala rise each day with a determination to deliver and provide for their families. I rise here today with the same drive and determination to deliver the services and support they need.

Growing up in Inala I witnessed firsthand the resilience, strength and compassion that define our community. It is a place where neighbours look out for one another, where diversity is not only embraced but also celebrated and where the bonds of solidarity transcend the barriers of race, religion and background. I have had the privilege of living, working, learning and volunteering across this community. It has been home to four generations of my family. Some of my earliest memories are of being at the home of my grandparents, surrounded by trees and catching crayfish in the clear creek that ran through their property at Ellen Grove, the suburb that sits at the southern end of my electorate. I have seen many changes since my grandparents built a small kit home on an acreage block in Lovat Street in the sixties. There were no services and public transport is still a challenge there.

Ellen Grove now encompasses parts of Carole Park and has seen much development with high-density dwellings slowly swallowing the acreage sites. The suburbs of Richlands and Doolandella have also seen developments of high-density dwellings. Once farmland, over time we have seen the change from farmhouses to townhouses. Whilst new housing is desperately needed, so too is the need for infrastructure and services to support these new developments. Richlands is also where I went to school. Hello to the former students and staff of Richlands State High School, my high school. I look forward to seeing you all at our 35-year reunion this year at the Lions Soccer Club.

I would like to acknowledge the member for Mansfield, Corrine McMillan, who served the school community of Glenala State High School as principal. I thank her for her contribution to our community. That great high school was formed through the merging of Inala and Richlands state high schools. Although the old site on Poinsettia Street is no longer Richlands high school, the same driveway is still there—only now it leads to the Inala Community Hub and Inala Wangarra Inc, two of the many great community associations that service my electorate. There are still students, only now they attend the Inala Flexible Learning Centre. The walk to Darra Station from Inala, passing the Richlands drive-in and crossing Ipswich Road, happens now only in our memories thanks to upgrades to Ipswich Road and a train station at Richlands that is now bursting with commuters.

The suburb of Inala is where most of my friends lived, where I played in their yards and spent endless hours at the skate rink. There are many families in Inala who still live in the same house, some who have lived there for more than 70 years, such is the sense of belonging in that place.

Between Ellen Grove, Richlands and Inala sits Forest Lake. This is where I have lived with my family for nearly 20 years and where I, along with my husband, Jason, have raised our children. It is where I was privileged to serve as president of the P&C in Forest Lake State School. As the suburb name suggests, homes are nestled amongst trees and the lake, although man-made, is the heart of the suburb. Along the edge of Blunder Creek, which borders the electorate, is the small part of Oxley that sits within the Inala electorate. Nearby to Oxley is the suburb of Durack where the new multicultural festival is hosted by Inala Community House.

At the eastern edge of the Inala electorate is Wacol. It was here that I began my career training as a psychiatric nurse at the then Wolston Park Hospital. My journey as a mental health professional has shaped my perspective in profound ways. I have had the privilege of walking alongside individuals and families in their darkest moments, witnessing the courage and resilience that light the heart of the human spirit. I have seen the devastating impact of mental illness, addiction and trauma, but I have also seen the transformative power of compassion, empathy and support.

This was especially true when I was working in the Barrett Adolescent Centre. It was an inpatient unit with an attached school, and it provided wraparound mental health treatment for some of the most vulnerable young people in the state. Tragically, the decision made by the Newman government at the time to close the centre as part of their broad cuts to frontline services resulted in the loss of three young lives. It was this firsthand experience of the damage that can be done when governments fail to understand the importance of frontline services that prompted me to join the Australian Labor Party to do what I could to see a Labor government elected and see the wrongs of the Newman government righted. This will always be a reminder to me of what is at stake.

The Barrett Adolescent Centre Special School continued, led by principal Kevin Rodgers and later Deborah Rankin. It was here I saw the value that continued engagement with education can have in changing the trajectory of vulnerable young people. It was a desire to do what I could to keep students

in school that prompted me to return to study and become a teacher. I was fortunate to return to the Barrett school to teach. I thank the parents for entrusting me with their children and I thank the students for their bravery. It was an honour to teach you. You are seen and you are heard in this place. I also thank the wonderful staff, whose team culture is second to none and whose work is life-changing.

It is in this role that I have seen the impact of the former government's cut to TAFE, removing the opportunities for many students in my community to access further training and enter their chosen career. Fortunately, thanks to the Labor government I have seen TAFE reinstated—now with over 75 free TAFE courses—to not only give our young people a start in their careers but also adults who are retraining to meet the priority skills needs of our state. As an educator, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of education and the boundless potential that resides within each and every one of our students irrespective of their background and circumstances. It is this belief in the inherent worth and potential of every individual that has guided my journey thus far, and it is this same belief that will guide my work in this esteemed chamber.

Having dedicated my life to public service, I have been privileged to witness the extraordinary courage and strength of the human spirit. From the depths of despair to the heights of triumph, I have stood alongside individuals and families in their moments of greatest vulnerability offering solace, support and a guiding hand. It is this commitment to serving others and to lifting up those in need that has guided my path to this place and will continue to inform my actions as I serve and represent the people of Inala.

No member of this place can say they got here truly on their own. It takes the collective effort of supporters, volunteers and family tirelessly working behind the scenes. I want to whole-heartedly thank my team of supporters, volunteers and my family. My deep gratitude is sincerely offered to you all.

Thank you to my husband, Jason, for your endless love and support. To my daughters, Lavender and Lily: you are my reason for everything. You inspire me every day and I am so lucky to be your mum. Thank you for sacrificing so much to support me on the journey to this place.

As a mother to two young women it is not lost on me that there have been fewer than 100 women elected to the Legislative Assembly of Queensland since its establishment in 1860. I commit to ensuring that the voices of women continue to be heard in the halls of decision and power. I acknowledge the great work of the former premier and member for Inala, Annastacia Palaszczuk, and her achievements in this space and I thank her for her support of me.

I also want to thank my mother Noelene, who sadly passed away just over a year ago; my brother Peter, who is watching from home; and my other family who live across the seas.

Although my family is small, I am part of a much bigger family: the Australian Labor Party. Although my thanks to this family goes beyond that which I can list here, I would like to especially thank my branch, the Inala branch, and the many volunteers from local branches and those who volunteered for the first time. It was an immensely hot and humid campaign. Despite that, you were there for me and the people of Inala.

I also want to note on record the sincere support and dedication of my union, the mighty Australian Workers' Union, under the strong leadership of Stacey Schinneri—thank you. I would also like to thank Josh Milroy and the Transport Workers' Union, the Plumbers Union and the Queensland Teachers' Union for their support of me and the campaign.

To Sam, Stacey, Michelle and the other volunteers from the Oxley crew: thank you.

Thank you to Riley Williamson for your ongoing friendship, your counsel and your support throughout this process.

Chris Hancock: you were my rock throughout the campaign, and I could not have done it without you. Thank you for going above and beyond every day. I will forever appreciate it.

I want to thank Jon Persley for his friendship and unwavering support; Les Bryant, the former councillor and stalwart of the branch; and thank you to Henry Palaszczuk. I continue to learn from you and your legacy.

From the party office, thank you to state secretary Kate Flanders, assistant state secretary Zac Beers and Bella Scattini, my friend and great support. I will be forever grateful for your commitment and dedication.

Thank you to my caucus family, in particular the Deputy Premier and Treasurer Cameron Dick. Your wisdom, strong leadership and support means a great deal. Knowing that you were always there to help truly helped.

To my neighbouring members the member for Jordan, Minister Charis Mullen; the member for Mount Ommaney, Jess Pugh; the member for Bundamba, Minister Lance McCallum; and the member for Ipswich, assistant minister Jen Howard: thank you for your support of me and my campaign.

Of course I must thank Premier Steven Miles for his dedication to my campaign and the people of Inala. He was on the ground with me talking to locals, and I never once doubted his commitment to ensuring the best outcomes for us all.

To Milton Dick, the federal Speaker of the Australian House of Representatives, who is a shining example of strong representation as the federal member for Oxley, of which the electorate of Inala is a part and whom I am privileged to call my dear friend: I truly could not have done this without you, Milton. Thank you for being such a positive force for me personally and the Labor movement and an inspiration to us all. I feel very lucky to know you, to have your support and to follow in your very big footsteps as a community advocate.

Thank you also to Rachel Bailey and my new office staff Felicity Crompton, Aaron Bui and Archer Skinner; to my friends Amanda Krarup, Bec Andersen, Georgia Stafford and my honours club of Yvonne, Manda, Erin, Rin and Bec. Difficult times always reveal true friends, and I am truly grateful for your friendship and continued support through all the highs and lows.

I am humbled by the responsibility and trust the people of Inala have placed in me to be their advocate. I am fiercely committed to: being a strong voice for Inala; bringing my experience, both personal and professional, to advocate for what is needed in my community; balance interests, priorities and resources; work productively with others in this place to bring about the best outcomes for the electorate of Inala. As I do so, I feel the immense privilege and responsibility that rests with me and others in this place to keep those we represent in mind at all times and in all things. Let us not forget that true progress is not measured solely by the number of bills passed or speeches delivered. True progress is measured by the tangible impact we make on the lives of those we serve, by the positive changes we effect in our communities, and by the legacy of hope and opportunity we leave for future generations.

It is my solemn pledge to the people of Inala that I will work tirelessly day in, day out to address these challenges head on, to champion the causes that matter most to our community, and to ensure that the voices of the marginalised, disenfranchised and vulnerable are heard loud and clear within this place.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!