



Speech by

Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Thursday, 12 October 2006

MAIDEN SPEECH

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (5.25 pm): It is a great honour to be elected to this parliament as the state member for Inala. The Inala electorate covers the Brisbane suburbs of Inala, Durack, Oxley, Darra, Wacol, Carole Park and parts of Forest Lake and it stretches as far west as the Ipswich suburbs of Gales and Camira. I would like to thank the people in the Inala electorate for their support at the recent state election.

I am proud to be elected as the first female representative for the area. In fact, I am pleased that there are four other new female representatives from the Labor Party here today—the member for Ashgrove, the member for Mount Isa, the member for Sandgate and the member for Redcliffe. But I cannot see a single new female member in this House from either the Liberal Party or the National Party. Inala has always had a fine tradition of strong and vocal local members. I intend to continue that tradition.

One of my earliest childhood memories was of a very tall, large white-haired man coming to our house for meetings with my father. At the time, I was four years old and my father had a rather large poster of Gough Whitlam on his wall. In that poster, Gough Whitlam was standing tall with a suit jacket draped over his shoulder. With the arrival of this large man at our front door, I would proudly announce to my father that he had better hurry up—and remember I was only four years old at the time—because Mr Whitlam was here. It was not in fact Gough Whitlam but the larger than life state member for Archerfield, Kev Hooper. I pay tribute to the work that Kev did in the electorate before his sudden death in 1984, which led to a by-election.

I also want to pay tribute to the former member for Inala, a man who was a distinguished minister in this Beattie Labor government. Henry Palaszczuk was sworn in as the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries on 29 June 1998. During the next eight years, he introduced wide-ranging improvements to fisheries management, reformed the sugar industry, introduced the world's most advanced animal welfare laws, introduced the plan to tackle the red imported fire ant and ensured a better deal for Queensland dairy farmers in the wake of national dairy industry deregulation. He was known affectionately to all members of this House as 'the farmer's friend'. As the member for Archerfield and Inala, he worked hard to ensure the needs and aspirations of the community were heard and acted upon by government.

The government's investment in the electorate—particularly through community and urban renewal programs—has produced a bustling, community orientated region. It certainly has given the local area a new beginning. Henry served 22 years in public life. Over the years, Henry changed not only the map of Inala but the public perception of the area. When Henry was elected to this House, Labor was in opposition and infrastructure was lacking, especially in funding to state schools. It was virtually nonexistent.

The investment that Labor governments have spent in the electorate has gone into improving education facilities, building new roads, the new TAFE centre, community renewal and new pensioner and housing developments. Inala of the 1970s and 1980s is no more. We are now a vibrant, bustling community with a strong ethnic diversity. Some parts of the electorate can boast distant city views, and many people would be unaware that Richlands is home to the Queensland Roar.

One of the key issues facing the government now and into the future is the capacity to deal with mass migration to the south-east corner. The South East Queensland Regional Plan provides a blueprint for the development of our region over the next 20 years. As a progressive Labor government, we are already laying the foundations. Infrastructure and planning are at the forefront of our minds as we face a future full of growth and economic development. We must match this infrastructure with community facilities providing education, affordable housing, water and reliable transport. Economic and social responsibility must be intertwined.

Our area is fast becoming a vital link between Brisbane and the new development out at Springfield. Indeed, 300,000 extra new residents are predicted to move to this western corridor over the next 20 years. This growth can already be evidenced with the development of the corridor from Wacol and Forest Lake to Camira and Springfield. But with this growth comes new challenges. Water is a big challenge and one that our government has faced head on with the development of the south-east corner water plan. I am proud to say that the electorate of Inala is playing its vital role in developing the infrastructure for the water grid. Local Carole Park company Tyco Water is building the pipes that will become the arteries, carrying the water from one part of south-east Queensland to another. I thank the Premier and the Deputy Premier for visiting this company and its workers in my electorate shortly after the election. I would also like to express my appreciation for their strong election campaign and leadership.

Reliable, accessible transport options are vital for a growing community. The Darra to Springfield passenger rail will involve a new 13-kilometre track. Consultation with the community will ultimately determine where the final locations of the railway stations will be, but already Richlands, Ellen Grove and Camira are firming up to be popular sites. It is expected that early works will commence in 2007, with a total capital cost of \$320 million.

The new Westgate proposal out at Wacol preserves large areas of bushland for future generations. The Wacol station will be upgraded, and there will be more affordable housing. The new \$450 million police academy will continue to be located in the electorate of Inala and housed out at Wacol, replacing the now outdated Oxley Police Academy. Heritage buildings will be preserved and the new police academy will be a world-class training facility.

The Beattie government has a proud record of delivering on jobs. On Monday, I attended the launch of a new proposal, Metroplex, at Westgate that would bring about 15,000 jobs in the outer western suburbs. If approved by the Brisbane City Council, it will provide jobs that can be sourced locally, jobs that are needed locally. This company prides itself on social responsibility and envisages integrating libraries, community centres and child-care centres on its grounds and retaining areas of bushland that would be equivalent to the size of the Brisbane Botanical Gardens. The proposal is still in the early stages, but the benefits that this project could deliver to the electorate in terms of jobs is good news for the region and good news for families. The twin hands of corporate and social responsibility are working as one. This development will complement already good work being done in neighbouring Springfield.

At the opening of parliament Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland said—

Enhancing the welfare and prosperity of the people and the State of Queensland is at the core of my Government's program.

The Beattie government has a proud tradition of delivering services to families in Queensland. A government should not be judged merely on how many roads, bridges and electricity towers that are built, nor the number of skyscrapers that adorn the city skyline. These projects are vital to a vibrant, strong economy, but a true Labor government must deliver on social justice. It is our obligation to improve the lives of people who, often through no fault of their own, fall between the cracks and need help to get their lives back on track. Infrastructure is the key for development, but people are what make a community. That is why social responsibility must be at the forefront of a government's agenda.

We need to afford our children the best start in life. Unfortunately, not all children have the same opportunity. Many parents in my electorate are doing it tough trying to make ends meet. Families go through tough ordeals. Sometimes it is separation and divorce. In some cases it is domestic violence. Some parents struggle to meet the basic costs of uniforms, books, food and clothing. The people in my electorate are proud people and many feel embarrassed to ask for help. I would like to pay tribute to those organisations and volunteers in the electorate who day in, day out help people in need: the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, Mission Australia, Community House, the HUB Neighbourhood Centre, Gales Community House and the Camira Neighbourhood Centre. Schools should provide a learning environment but so, too, must a community. I am proud to say that one of the most innovative programs in Queensland is operating in Inala called Pathways to Prevention by Mission Australia and Griffith University.

Studying at the London School of Economics in 1996 and 1997 opened my eyes to a different world. My fellow students were passionate about changing the world and we challenged each other every day on the economy, social policy, Indigenous rights, US policy and current affairs. Perhaps we were too idealistic back then, but without ideas and visions we become lost and unchallenged. The years of British conservatism were drawing to a close and Tony Blair, as leader of the opposition, announced his 'New Britain'. I embraced his social policy platform of education, better integrated housing models and better

working conditions built on a solid base of Christian values. I visited underprivileged areas that for years had been neglected under conservative rule with no money, no investment, no housing and no infrastructure—complete and utter neglect. These sentiments hark back to the years when Kev Hooper, the former member for Archerfield, in his maiden speech in 1972 in this House said—

As I move about the community and note how gloriously attractive are the preschool centres in the wealthier suburbs of Brisbane and contrast them with the inferior standard and more often than not the total absence of preschool centres of acceptable standards in the poorer areas I realise that today there is as much cause as ever to struggle against the social and economic disadvantages that deprive so many of our young folk of an adequate opportunity in life.

Kev Hooper was talking about the neglect that the then National Party government showed to the electorate: no funding, no infrastructure and little opportunity. Today Inala is a different place. The money that the Beattie Labor government has put into the area now affords every child an opportunity. It is Labor that has delivered for Inala.

Community renewal has been delivered in Inala which has improved housing values and reinvigorated our community. I am proud to report that community renewal is being rolled out to Carole Park. The amount of \$100,000 has just been allocated to upgrade local parks in the area to make them more appealing, safe and suitable for local residents to use. Young unemployed will learn new skills as they embark on this community jobs program.

I would now like to address an issue that is confronting many people in my electorate—housing. The most important thing to a family is to have a roof over their head, but a house does not solve all of the problems. I would like to pay tribute to the minister for housing for his commitment to the One Social Housing Project. The Department of Housing is working alongside community organisations to provide families with ongoing support. The funding that has gone into Inala has been greatly appreciated, and I will be lobbying the minister for even more funding.

In addition, I am proud to be supporting a redevelopment of the old Richlands TAFE site that will now be the site for 59 new affordable housing units alongside a community centre, recreational facilities, support agencies and child-care centres. Construction is due to commence by the end of this month when some of the old buildings are demolished on-site.

With a Queensland unemployment rate of 4.5 per cent, the lowest in three decades, the Beattie government has delivered on jobs. However, I must take this opportunity to comment on an issue that is affecting many people in my electorate who work for James Hardie at Carole Park. I am advised that since 1994 these workers have not had a single wage increase. At the same time that James Hardie directors are lining their pockets with hefty salary increases, they are slashing their workers' wages and conditions under individual contracts. These workers have families. What James Hardie is doing is un-Australian and I urge the company to fix this situation. I would like to thank the Hon. John Mickel, the minister for industrial relations, and Bill Shorten and Garry Ryan from the Australian Workers Union for bringing this issue to national prominence last week at Carole Park. This is a fight that I will not back away from, and I will continue to support the Australian Workers Union in its fight to ensure better pay and conditions for the workers at James Hardie.

The Inala electorate is multicultural, home to many refugees who have escaped war-torn Europe and, more recently, Vietnamese. The Vietnamese community has contributed greatly to our community, and many people from all over Brisbane now go to Darra to enjoy a Vietnamese meal. In the future I would like to see the dreams of the Vietnamese community realised for the establishment of a retirement village and community centre. It would be remiss of me not to mention the Full Moon children's festival held at Freeman Road in Inala that was celebrated on Saturday night by more than 4,000 people.

Closer to home where I live, Muslim women meet in the cool of the evenings as the sun sets whilst their children play on nearby swings, Vietnamese men gather in the mornings at the Inala Town Centre for coffee, the Portugese community meet at Carole Park and Samoan families gather at church meetings on Sunday. These are all people living side by side. There is no racial tension; there is just a strong sense of community.

My grandfather was a Polish migrant who fled Europe following the Second World War to start a better life here in Australia. He arrived first at Wacol migrant camp, later settling in Inala with his family, and he remained there until the end of his life three years ago. He was not a doctor nor a lawyer but a boilermaker who told me it was good work and paid the bills. At night he would read encyclopaedias to find out as much as he could about the world. He did not have any opportunities for education when during his early adult years he was in a German slave labour camp. He installed in my father a strong sense of education. My father became a schoolteacher before entering this House. He then passed those values on to me.

Education is about opportunity. It is not just about going to university; not all people want to do that. It is about giving children the skills necessary in life to pursue a job they want to do or to learn about the world, giving the young boy from Camira or Gales the opportunity to become a carpenter or a scientist, or

the young girl from Inala or Forest Lake to become a nurse, an office manager or a doctor. It is about enabling a child to have a choice in life just the same as any other child.

I would like to thank my mother for encouraging me year in, year out with my legal education. My mother made sacrifices, putting her children's education ahead of her own. My appreciation goes to the hardworking volunteers of the Inala electorate, to organisations such as the Ambulance Committee, the South West Progress Association and the Inala Day Respite Centre, the Inala PCYC, the many pensioner and senior citizen groups, St Vincent de Paul and Neighbourhood Watch.

I pay my respects to the Inala Indigenous elders, Auntie Vi, Uncle Kevin and Uncle Albert. The local historian Gert Riley in her book *History of Our Inala and Suburbs* comments that Inala is an Indigenous name meaning 'good camping place'.

Inala has been a good place to live for many people who have come from different countries seeking a better life. I would like to thank all the people who have highlighted to me that social justice is not just a Labor value; it is what it means to be a member of the Australian Labor Party. Only social justice can bring about real change for families. It is only a Labor government that can deliver on social justice.

To that end, I pay tribute to the great work of ACRODD, QCOSS and the Historical Abuse Network. I would like to pay tribute to all the ministers and ministerial staff who often work late nights and weekends because of their commitment to this government. I would like to thank my campaign director, local councillor for the Richlands ward, Les Bryant, for his guidance and support and his wife, Margaret, my electorate officers, Charles Strunk and Kathy Tofoni, campaign organiser Anthony Chisholm and Linda Paton, a genuine community representative for Forest Lake.

A special thanks to Lindsay Hill for doorknocking with me during the campaign in parts of Forest Lake, Oxley, Darra and Camira and to Jim Horsfall, the president of the Inala branch, and all of the Inala branch members. Jim was sacked during the SEQEB strike back in the Joh-Bjelke Peterson days. He has instilled in me to always stand up for what you believe in and always protect workers rights, To Geoff Hunt, president of the Forest Lake branch, and the members of that branch I thank you for your support. I thank Barry McIntosh, Johnno Johnston and Greg Hooper for the support of the Blue Fin Fishing Club—yes, we do have the largest fishing club in south-east Queensland. To Irene, Sam and Peter Every and Sue Lannen, thanks for running the campaign office.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Bill Ludwig and Garry Ryan. It would be remiss of me not to mention my mentor for admission as a solicitor over the past nine months, Brian Kilmartin, and Senator Joe Ludwig for encouraging me to complete the course even though it meant studying after work from 9 pm until 1 am. My thanks also go to Associate Professor Paul Reynolds for encouraging me to apply for a scholarship to study overseas. I make special mention of two teachers from St Mary's, Charles Costello and Rhonda Nolan.

I grew up in Durack and in year 10 worked for Wallace Bishop at Inala Plaza. I would like to thank David Beddall who took a chance on a kid from Durack who had just finished university and gave her a job at Inala Plaza as a research officer. He took another punt on a kid three years later—that was on Milton Dick, who is now the state secretary of the ALP. Milton, I will never forget those federal election campaigns.

To the member for Murrumba, Dean Wells, your vision of ethanol and a cleaner greener environment is coming to fruition. To Minister John Mickel, a long-term family friend, thank you for your mentoring since I was at high school and thank you to Minister Paul Lucas, who helped out on Henry's by-election. To my parliamentary colleagues the member for Stafford and the member for Thurwingowa, thank you. To Warren Pitt, you are more than a role model to me. You are a friend who I deeply respect. I admire your courage and commitment and dedication to social justice.

I wish to make a very special mention of my university friends Mark Bucknall, Paul Marytn, Helen Byrom, David Bowles, Jacinta Healy, John Cherry, Cameron Dick, Tim Grau and Milton Dick. My thanks also go to all my other friends including Maureen Palmer, Anne Purcell, Carmen Meshios, Stella Rey, Jacqui Argent, Michelle Wellington, Sharyn Durston, Garry Sharman, Margie Ireland, Kirby Anderson, my family and my grandmother Beryl Erskine for always being there for me no matter what, my sisters Cathy, Nadia and Julia and, most importantly, my husband, Simon, for his love and commitment. You challenge me and you inspire me each and every day. We share the same values and commitment to the Australian Labor Party.

Over the years, I have not lost my drive nor my passion. I have put my values into practise each and every day, arguing a point that I believe has merit, putting forward a solution to an issue that may not be popular. It is an honour to be elected as the member for Inala. I will stand up for the people in my electorate. I will work hard and continue to lobby ministers to improve the lives of all members of the community. I am humbled to represent them here in the Legislative Assembly of Queensland.