



Speech by

Carryn Sullivan

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

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FEDERAL PARLIAMENT

Mrs SULLIVAN (Pumicestone—ALP) (9.37 pm): Yesterday I and other invited guests, including former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and his wife Margaret, attended the official opening of the 42nd federal parliament. For the first time in the history of the Australian parliament, the proceedings began with a formal welcome to country. Ms Matilda House-Williams, a Ngambri elder, described the occasion as a significant time for her people. She said that new Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd had shown proper respect to the first people of this land. It was a moving experience and one that I was proud to witness.

From the House of Representatives gallery I and many others watched with immense pride the official swearing in of the new federal Labor government. It was particularly special for me because one of the new members to be sworn in was my husband of 27 years, Jon Sullivan, the federal member for Longman.

Mr Lee: That's not the first time that he's been sworn in.

Mrs SULLIVAN: I have to take that interjection from the member for Indooroopilly, who is a very astute member and has a good memory. Jon served in the Queensland parliament from 1989 to 1998, first as the member for Glass House and then later on—

Mr Wells: Very distinguished

Mrs SULLIVAN: I also take that interjection—as the member for Caboolture. I believe he is one of only 24 members of the Queensland Assembly to make the transition to the federal parliament. Most of the other members served around the time of federation. Only one other former member, Bob Katter, is currently serving with Jon in the federal parliament.

For those interested, on the other hand, there were eight MPs who served in the federal parliament and later served in the Queensland parliament, and one of those is the current member for Murrumba, the Hon. Dean Wells, and I acknowledge him in the chamber here tonight.

The Governor-General, His Excellency Michael Jeffery, in his official address to federal parliament, stated that the new government was committed to a plan to build a modern Australia. Part of this plan is to make reforms to water, health, education, transport infrastructure, child care, the environment—we have already seen the signing of the Kyoto protocol—the Iraq conflict, workplace flexibility and of course WorkChoices but at the same time maintaining a strong budgetary position.

Kevin Rudd indicated his support for an apology to the stolen generation of Aboriginal children who were forcibly removed from their families because of their skin colour, and this morning he said sorry with coalition support. Emphasis was placed on cooperation between federal and state governments and ending the blame game. One such measure is the reinstatement of the Commonwealth dental health funding to states which was axed by the former Liberal government. Kevin Rudd will move to restore \$290 million over three years. The Liberals' decision to remove funding has led to long waiting times, so this is welcome news for many Australians. Remember, Queensland was the only state to retain a state government run dental health scheme, so if you live in any other state you have to pay for your dental work.

Debate on the first day in federal parliament went until 2 am—a lengthy introduction to new members. I wish them well and have already started to work together with Jon on several local issues.