




Speech by

Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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VALEDICTORY

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (7.43 pm): As parliament concludes for 2012, it is my great honour to rise to reflect on the year that was—a year of challenge and change for Queensland. From the outset, let me say that we are all aware of the events of 24 March, when Queenslanders went to the polls. Although those of us on this side of the House are small in number, we are abundant in spirit. It is the role of the opposition to hold the government to account and with such a large majority in this place those members on the other side can be assured that we are determined to do that.

In many ways parliament is designed to bring out the best in people. I take this moment to thank and pay tribute to the huge efforts of my six colleagues on this side of the House who have in the past eight months carried an enormous workload. Each of the members who make up the Labor caucus are strong advocates for each of their local communities. At the same time, they carry out the critical work that makes for an effective opposition. I want to thank my deputy, the member for Mackay, Tim Mulherin; the Leader of Opposition Business, the member for Mulgrave, Curtis Pitt; the member for Bundamba, Jo-Ann Miller; the member for Woodridge, Desley Scott; the member for Rockhampton, Bill Byrne; and the member for South Brisbane, Jackie Trad. Each of those people have risen to the considerable challenge over the past eight months, but I make particular mention of Bill Byrne and Jackie Trad, who are both in their first term in this place and who are doing a remarkable job.

The role of the Speaker is of pivotal importance to the smooth operation of the parliament and I extend my thanks to the chair for her performance over the past several months. The role of the Speaker is not an easy one. It often involves walking a delicate tightrope and in that regard I acknowledge the efforts of the Speaker.

I want to pay tribute to Queenslanders. I want to thank the good people of my electorate of Inala. They are hardworking people. They are always giving. It is a wonderful community and they always put the needs of others ahead of their own. This year my travels have taken me from Logan to Ipswich, to the Gold and Sunshine coasts, to Rockhampton, Mackay, Cairns, Emerald, Barcaldine, Longreach, Mount Isa, Gladstone, Townsville, Proserpine and Bowen and next year I will continue an extensive program of travel, along with other members of my team—

Mr Pitt: Collinsville.

Ms PALASZCZUK: And Collinsville. Wherever I go, I cannot but be impressed by the sheer resilience of people in this state, our great state of Queensland. For many Queenslanders, 2012 was not an easy year for a range of reasons. But everywhere I go in regional Queensland I have been struck by the uncanny ability of people to pick themselves up, dust themselves off and get on with it. I applaud that resilience. I applaud that unique character. I hope that it will see all Queenslanders through times good and bad. I make particular mention of that because even though our summer of natural disasters is now almost two years behind us Queensland is still experiencing the fallout. Many towns in the north are still being rebuilt. Much infrastructure remains under construction and Queenslanders in many areas are holding on in typical fashion while their lives are rebuilt. For many others, the memories of that terrible time will not

easily fade. As the anniversary of these disasters approaches, my thoughts are with them and may the memories further fade with time.

In a similar light, I also pay tribute to those in the armed forces who gave their lives for their country this year. The tragic parade of soldiers lost overseas, in particular Afghanistan, has continued this year as we help that country rebuild. My thoughts go out to those Queensland families who have this year lost their cherished sons.

I also pay tribute to Mr Eric Deeral, the first Indigenous member of this parliament, who died at the age of 79 in September. He was a fine politician, a fine spokesman for his people and a resilient man.

I pay tribute to the resilience of such people as the women and men and families I met just this week who have fought a decade-long battle for the restoration of their dignity and their life-altering experiences with forced adoptions. I was proud to be part of a democracy that this week offered a formal apology to those brave families and I was moved by their stories and, once again, their resilience in the face of unimaginable trauma.

Running this place takes something akin to a small army, focused with military-like precision. I want to take this moment to thank the hardworking men and women who make each of our lives easier each and every day in this place. I thank the Clerk, Mr Neil Laurie; the Deputy Clerk, Michael Ries; and the First Clerk Assistant, Leanne Clare. Mr Laurie is someone who can always be depended upon to keep the operation of the parliament moving smoothly and can always be relied upon to provide accurate and sensible advice. I acknowledge the work of Kevin Jones, this parliament's Sergeant-at-Arms, and Michael Watkin, the acting Sergeant-at-Arms.

Some of the most important people in this place are those who record our words for history and for accuracy. I thank the Chief Hansard Reporter, Lucinda Osmond, for keeping us all on the record this year. I make mention of the hardworking Hansard reporters: Annie, Mandy, Janine, Leah, Megan, Jenny, Jenny, Annette, Giacinta, Melissa, Tania and Nicole. Sincerely I thank the Chief Librarian, Katherine Brennan, and her team of librarians and researchers. Thank you to Theresa Johnson, the Parliamentary Counsel. I thank everyone behind the scenes for keeping this place working and acknowledge that there are now fewer of you than in the past. Thanks Jaakko, the manager of Catering Services, and our wonderful head chef for keeping us all well fed. Thanks Darryl, the manager of Property Services, for providing each member with office space. Thanks to Chris King, the head gardener, for keeping the precinct green. And I thank Azra and Sanja, the parliament cleaning supervisors, who do a fantastic job. And a big thankyou to our parliamentary attendants who keep us on our toes at all times.

There is another group of people who also play a crucial role in this place—the media. The members of the parliamentary press gallery are extremely important in keeping Queenslanders informed about the workings of this House. We may not always see eye to eye, we may not always agree, we may not always be happy with what is printed or what is broadcast, but I acknowledge the television, radio, print and online reporters who strive for fairness and accuracy each and every day. I look forward to working with you again in the new year.

I could not carry out this job without my family. I thank my family and my extended family and make special mention of the two latest additions to our family, my nieces Lucy May and Evelyn Rose, who arrived this year. I and the other Labor members could not do our jobs without a team of the best staff around us. I thank my electorate staff, Mel and Charles, who probably have one of the most demanding jobs in Queensland. These are the people who day to day deal with all of the issues in my electorate. I know each member in this House would acknowledge the hard work of all of their electorate officers and the tremendous work that they do. To do the best job you can, you must surround yourself with good, solid, professional staff.

We are lucky to have a group of people working with us who are among the best in the business—the best and the brightest. I thank our senior staff, Angela, Lindsay, Peter, Kate, Chris and Jimmy. I also want to make special mention of Donna and Darren who stay here very late at our parliamentary sittings and all of my team. These are the people who keep us clicking over like clockwork, who help prepare speeches, who ensure we get wherever we are going on time and on schedule—and a special mention to Jackie Hughes for that. I am looking forward to returning to this House next year to continue the job of holding this government to account. It is critical for the people of Queensland that we continue that job.

In conclusion, I want to share the best wishes for the forthcoming season. As mentioned by the Deputy Premier, we all have very difficult jobs but we are all human beings and we all have hearts; we all have families and we strive each and every day to do our best not just for our electorates but for all of Queensland. With those few words, I wish everybody in this House and the staff the best for the Christmas season. May you enjoy the time with your family. It is a very special time. As members of this House we know that it becomes harder and harder to spend time with your family. There is nothing more important. Enjoy the Christmas season and I look forward to seeing everybody in the New Year.