




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszcuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 27 November 2014

VALEDICTORY

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.09 pm): I rise to make this valedictory speech conscious of the possibility that today could herald the end of the 54th Parliament. Of course, the timing of the election is the prerogative of the Premier and there is a chance we can resume proceedings—dare I say, hostilities—in February next year. Somehow I do not think the Premier is going to bring me into his confidence when it comes to the election date. However, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the efforts of my team and those who have contributed to the running of this place, not just this year but throughout the entire term.

At the beginning of this parliament, the Australian Labor Party had just seven members and, at the close of 2014, we have nine. My team and I have been tireless in reconnecting with Queenslanders, travelling across the state, meeting with workers, families, businesspeople and mayors. We have worked closely with parliamentary staff who have greatly assisted our team at every turn. We have worked hard to rebuild our own party to the point where we now have 84 candidates preselected to represent the Labor Party at the next election, with the remainder to be in place early next year.

The by-elections of Redcliffe and Stafford gave us an insight into the election next year and potentially a glimpse into what issues the electors of Queensland hold dear. I am very proud of the campaigns run and won by the ALP in both Redcliffe and Stafford. They gave us a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with those two communities and the result was the addition of two enormously capable members of parliament to our team. Nothing made me happier than seeing ALP volunteers, some members and some not, the young and the old, band together for our great cause. The two electorates were able to send the government a very clear message: Queenslanders are not happy with the direction of this government.

This year there were many other highs and lows for Queenslanders. The G20 Leaders Summit in Brisbane and the G20 finance ministers summit in Cairns showcased our great state to the world. No doubt there were some logistical challenges, which have been well documented, but ultimately the G20 shone a light on Brisbane and Queensland, and we did not disappoint. Like many others, I felt enormously privileged to be among the crowd at the University of Queensland for President Obama's historic Brisbane speech. Others may have a different view, but I believe that his global call to arms on climate change, inequality and the economics of opportunity was the sort of leadership that the world has craved. We can only hope that the thousands of delegates and media will head home and tell tales of more than just the heat we managed to serve up over the leaders summit weekend.

Speaking of heat, it would be remiss of me not to mention the great challenge facing regional Queensland at the moment, that is, severe drought. I am advised that over 70 per cent of the state is officially drought declared. As they say, Queensland is a land of drought and flooding rains. I think that those west of the Great Dividing Range would agree that we have had enough of the former and

now it is time for the latter. Over the Christmas period, my thoughts and, I am sure, the thoughts of everyone in this House are with those families that are doing it tough.

My father always said to me that if you are sitting behind your desk you are not doing your job, because our job as elected representatives is to be out talking to people, listening to their concerns and then coming back here and representing their needs in parliament. This year and, indeed, during this whole term I have made every effort to hit the road and communicate with Queenslanders. From the far north to the far west, right down the coastline and everywhere in between, the caravan has marched on. It would be almost impossible to get to every town in this state, but my team and I have given it a red hot go, because we know how important it is to listen. I would like to thank the hundreds, if not thousands, of Queenslanders who have taken the time to stop and have a chat with me about the issues affecting them and their families. Whether it is chatting on The Strand or outside the hospital car park in Cairns, whether it is walking down the main street in Charleville or at the workers hotel in Moranbah, whether it is on the footpath in Currumbin or on the beach at Burleigh, Queenslanders have come up and we have listened. It is their views and their hopes that should mould the ideas and arguments we bring into this place, not to mention the policies.

In many cases, we have already turned that listening into action. To name just a few, we have committed to banning the dumping of capital dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. We have introduced private members' bills on domestic violence sentencing and issues surrounding making vaccination compulsory in child-care centres. We have committed to saying no to 100 per cent fly-in fly-out proposals near established regional communities and, in particular, we have released a series of policies focused on jobs and job training. I am passionate about jobs. In Queensland, we have a seven per cent unemployment rate with little to suggest that it is going to go down any time soon. As I continue to travel around the state over the Christmas break, my message to Queenslanders is that jobs and job security is my No. 1 focus. Our young people deserve hope and they deserve opportunity.

I briefly mention my electorate of Inala and wholeheartedly thank my dedicated office staff, Mel, Charles, Michele and Matt. They do a great job each and every day. To the people of Inala, thank you very much for your support. We are a strong community and we are tough. We look after one another. We get up and we fight each day, and we always help those in need. There is no doubt that Inala has changed a lot since the likes of Wayne Goss grew up there, but there are still plenty of people finding it difficult to make ends meet. As a community, I know that we will pull together in good times and bad. I particularly mention the support of councillors Milton Dick and David Morrison who similarly do a great job representing the people of our local area.

Given that this speech is a chance to reflect on some of the seminal moments of this year, I take the opportunity to pay tribute to two kindred spirits who left us in recent months. It is not enough to say that leaders such as Wayne Goss and Gough Whitlam made Queensland and Australia a better place, even though they did. Those great leaders were much more than that. Their legacies will forever be woven into the fabric of our state and our nation. Both men led their Labor parties out of the wilderness, one at the federal level and one at the state level. They both desperately wanted to modernise. They knew we had to look outward to the world to empower our own people, to untie ourselves from the past and embrace a new future. Above all, both leaders knew within themselves that we were capable of so much more. Both men will inspire us and future generations for decades to come. And they will be sadly missed.

As I said last year, Queenslanders have experienced great change since March 2012. Much of that change has made the headlines, while a lot of it has not. What has not changed is the dedication and commitment of the parliamentary Labor Party. I am blessed with an extraordinary team that works hard to keep holding this government to account. They are passionate about the plight of Queenslanders, they are passionate about their communities and they are passionate about their families. Up against the largest parliamentary majority in Queensland history, they have stood tall, they have stood strong and they have delivered, not just on behalf of their own constituents but on behalf of Queenslanders.

My deputy, Tim Mulherin, has never wavered in his commitment to our team and our cause. Tim, you have been a constant source of wisdom, strength and guidance. I could not have done my job without you by my side.

Curtis Pitt, the shadow Treasurer and member for Mulgrave, is not only a champion of the far north but also a champion of the entire state. He always brings a good sense of humour. I know that Curtis has a young family and, as the member for Mulgrave, has to travel constantly, from

Gordonvale, through Cairns and down to Brisbane. Curtis, we appreciate every effort that you have put in to this parliament.

Jo-Ann Miller, the member for Bundamba, is recovering from an operation and is probably watching us on television. Jo-Ann never walks away from a fight and has travelled extensively, talking to patients and health workers across this state. Whenever I have asked Jo-Ann to travel somewhere, she has dropped everything and done that immediately. Thanks, Jo-Ann.

Bill Byrne, the member for Rockhampton, is the man who fights every day for the people of Central Queensland. Bill, you have been a man of strength and support. I appreciate those regular Friday afternoon phone calls to tell me how the week has gone and how I can do better the following week.

Jackie Trad, the member for South Brisbane, is a tireless advocate for issues affecting her electorate and, in particular, environmental and transport issues. Jackie has great intellect and she has been passionate about saving the Great Barrier Reef. Jackie, I thank you for your wisdom and your support.

Of course, I have mentioned our two newest members, Yvette D'Ath and Dr Anthony Lynham. In February, Yvette won the seat of Redcliffe with a 17.2 per cent swing—I will repeat that for members: a 17.2 per cent swing—finally giving the people of that electorate a voice in parliament that reflects their interests and not their self-interest. Yvette has a depth of experience and she brings that added voice and wisdom to our team.

Not to be outdone, Anthony won the seat of Stafford with a 19.1 per cent swing. Never before has the Queensland Labor Party had a surgeon on its team and Anthony has been able to make a smooth transition from surgeon to parliamentarian. I know he is really connected with his local community. I think this parliament is better for what our two newest members of parliament bring to this place.

All MPs make sacrifices, especially when it comes time for family. To my team, for those sacrifices, I cannot thank you enough. But in case this is the final sitting day of this parliament, I take this opportunity to pay particular tribute to Desley Scott, the long-serving member for Woodridge, who is retiring at the next election. I have never met anyone with a bigger heart than Desley Scott. She is symbolic of everything that is good about public service. For Desley life as a member of parliament was never about the title, it was never about the office or the personal opportunity; it was always about people.

In her electorate there are many families and many communities that often have their backs to the wall, have nowhere to turn and have few options on the table. The one thing they could do was knock on the door of Desley's office where she would be ready and willing to help. No job was too big or too small. It is no wonder that in her electorate she is known as 'St Desley'.

Desley never wanted to be a minister, but after the last election I needed her to take on not one shadow portfolio but multiple shadow portfolios and deputy whip. It was a big ask. I have no doubt that if Desley ever wanted to be a minister she would have been one of the best. On behalf of the people of Woodridge, on behalf of the people of Queensland, on behalf of this parliament and on behalf of the Queensland Labor Party, which she has served so well, I thank Desley, and all the best for your future.

In the same context around election timing, I also recognise long-serving members of the Liberal National Party who are retiring at the next election. In particular, to Howard Hobbs and Vaughan Johnson you have both served your communities for a long time. While we may have had our disagreements from time to time, no-one would doubt your commitment to your electorates. I wish to thank both of you and also the members for Burdekin and Mirani. After the last election all four of those members were always polite and always stopped and said hello to the members of the opposition. I thank you for that.

Madam Speaker, the running of this parliament is never without its challenges. The crucial job of guiding this chamber through legislation, not to mention the less crucial but arguably more challenging job of looking after all of us during sitting weeks, is always done with great professionalism, generosity and kindness. To you, Madam Speaker, thank you for your leadership of the House.

Neil Laurie, the Clerk of the Parliament, ably supported by the Deputy Clerk, Michael Ries, and First Assistant Clerk, Leanne Clare, do a wonderful job keeping us all on the straight and narrow. All the attendants do an absolutely amazing job—thank you.

I pay particular tribute to the Sergeant-at-Arms, Michael Watkin, as well as the security staff. Obviously in recent times security has been increased around here, but Mr Watkin and his team have made the transition as seamless as possible.

To all the Hansard reporters, led by Lucinda Osmond, you do a wonderful job day in and day out. The importance of your work, not just for the present but for generations to come, can never be understated.

The Chief Librarian, Katherine Brennan, and her team as well as the Parliamentary Counsel, led by Theresa Johnson, never fail to provide the help and assistance that we need.

To Jaakko and the catering team, head chef Sucil—and a special mention to Tracey who has kept the bread and butter pudding on the menu over the last few years—the manager of Property Services and Chris who keeps the grounds in great shape and the cleaning supervisors, Azra and Sanja, thank you one and all for the great service you provide this parliament.

Can I make special mention of a handful of long-serving parliamentary staff retiring this year. For time reasons I cannot mention them all, but you have all given so much to this House and I congratulate all of you. In particular, David Dellosa and Geoffrey Carfoot leave us after 26 years. Ken Brambles from the security team retires after 28 years. Attendant Ron Sharples and director of research in the library, Michael Zeremes, retire after 29 years. Attendant Dennis Charters retires after 37 years of service. Farewell one and all and thank you.

Of course I would like to pay tribute to the Parliamentary Media Gallery as well as the broader media contingent here in Brisbane and across Queensland. It is the media's job to chronicle the goings on of this parliament and the government. Be it the gallery here or newsrooms across the state, I have always respected your duty to tell the truth and report the news to the public. Thank you for your hard work and at times your good sense of humour. I am sure you are looking forward to returning here or hitting the road for the upcoming election campaign as much as everyone else.

To my team in the opposition office, led by Angela, Lindsay and Peter, your work over the past 2½ years has been exceptional. You have all routinely gone above and beyond the call of duty. Like our parliamentary team, you are vastly outnumbered and outresourced but your efforts speak for themselves. Like our parliamentary team, you have reached out to stakeholders across the state, strengthened relationships, driven policy formation and ably supported our parliamentary team. We thank you each and every day.

Lastly, on a personal note, I cannot thank my family and friends enough for the support they show to me each and every day. Politics can sometimes be a lonely business which is why we always cherish the time we spend with our family and our friends. I am looking forward to the annual family holiday to Stradbroke Island. I would especially like to give a quick shout out to my grandmother Beryl, who will be 90 years old in February but recently suffered a fall. Get well soon, Nanna.

As we break for Christmas, we will all reflect on the year that was and the year that lies ahead. No doubt the centre of those thoughts will be the upcoming election campaign. It is truly a great thing that we live in a democracy where every voter gets the opportunity to cast their vote and peacefully elect a new parliament. But before we get to that I hope all members and staff get the opportunity to relax, unwind and spend some time with their loved ones.

To the Premier and his parliamentary team and all members of this House, I wish you all a merry Christmas and happy new year. I would also like to wish all Queensland families a relaxing, peaceful holiday season. Although we live in different parts of the state, we all share in a unique Queensland spirit. Merry Christmas.