




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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VALEDICTORY

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 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.30 pm): We live in a state of vast, often punishing and uncommon extremes. While I am sure that everyone here and everyone outside of this place would agree that Queensland is the best place in Australia to live, calling yourself a Queenslander comes with a price because we are a state of dramatic contrasts. There is no greater illustration of that than the extraordinary, exceptional—almost surreal—set of events that challenged us throughout 2015.

We began 2015 with a violent event which saw parts of our state brutally lashed with wind and water. We end 2015 with almost our entire state in the grip of an equally punishing drought. Within a week of the 14 February swearing-in of my Labor government, Severe Tropical Cyclone Marcia, a category 5 event, made landfall over Central Queensland near Shoalwater Bay. Central Queensland braced itself on 20 February as Marcia then swept on to Yeppoon and Rockhampton, bringing with her devastation and heartbreak and leaving behind a damage bill of at least \$750 million.

Bureau of Meteorology forecasters began monitoring the tropical low that would become Marcia south-east of Papua New Guinea on 15 February. A tropical cyclone formation alert was issued two days later. By 19 February, Marcia had intensified into a category 2 cyclone but underwent a dramatic and rapid intensification and soon developed to carry winds of 205 kilometres per hour.

Because we are blessed with a gifted team of meteorologists in this state and because as Queenslanders we have been down this path many, many times, we were well prepared for Marcia's fury. We were able to warn Rockhampton and Yeppoon residents to take shelter. We were able to give them an honest and graphic description of what they were about to experience. Thankfully, no life was lost. However, at the height of the storm more than 60,000 homes were left without power in Yeppoon, Rockhampton and Bundaberg as Marcia moved south. The SES was called out no fewer than 3,000 times to assist Central Queenslanders.

In the worst affected areas of Yeppoon, roofs were torn off and walls blown down. There was also significant structural damage in the towns of Marmor and Mount Larcom, the township of Jambin was evacuated and flooding affected communities as far south as Biloela. I visited these communities in the immediate aftermath of Marcia, and the damage and wreckage were clear. What was also clear was the abundance of our Queensland spirit. It is that spirit that allows Queenslanders to pick themselves up by their bootstraps, rebuild and get on with it. It is that spirit that extends to friends helping out friends, neighbours helping out neighbours, strangers helping out strangers. I pay tribute to that spirit. I pay tribute to those Central Queenslanders who suffered a hellish experience and then got on with it. I give thanks that no life was lost and I extend my government's ongoing sympathies to those who lost their homes and those who continue to rebuild in the wake of this terrifying experience.

If spirit has triumphed in Central Queensland, it is fair to say that it has been stretched to breaking point in many, many other parts of our state. As Marcia faded from immediate memory, our state was faced with a very different, equally tragic and equally destructive force of nature. As we gather today, more than 86 per cent of our state is officially drought declared. To put it in perspective, that means that of Queensland's 77 local governments a total of 36 councils and five part council areas are now drought declared. This has been a catastrophic, wretched experience for communities across Queensland, particularly those in the west and the outback. The crisis has now extended into such urban areas as Townsville.

Mr Speaker, as Premier I have visited our drought-affected areas and I can tell you that the fallout from this event, particularly for our farmers and primary producers, is heartrending. Seeing families that have been on the land for generations forced to euthanase their livestock and forced into debt has also been incredibly difficult. Recent rainfalls in the west around Barcaldine and Jericho have brought some relief, but we still have a very, very long way to go. Meantime, my government has joined with the Commonwealth to provide financial relief as well as freight subsidies for fodder and water for livestock. I am proud to lead a government that provides drought declared farmers up to \$20,000 a year, increasing to \$40,000 in subsequent drought years. This funding has been essential to families in areas such as Barcaldine, Charters Towers, Cloncurry, Croydon, Goondiwindi, Paroo, the Western Downs and Mareeba. As we approach Christmas and a time of celebration for families, I would ask all members of this place—I would ask all Queenslanders—to take time to spare a thought for those families in drought-affected areas who do not have much to celebrate.

As we approach the traditional time of celebration, when families gather to enjoy each other's company and reminisce on the year that was, we should also spare a thought for those families who lost loved ones in 2015. In early May, floods claimed the lives of five people as three cars were washed away after a sudden rain event just north of Brisbane. As an east coast low dumped torrential rain across the state's south-east, the Caboolture region was inundated with 277 millimetres in just three hours, swamping hundreds of roads and causing creeks to rise rapidly. I place on record today my government's continued sympathies to the families of those lost.

In June we witnessed more tragedy as a freak accident caused an explosion to rip through the Serves You Right Cafe in Ravenshoe, injuring 25 people and killing two women. These were people going about their everyday lives, inadvertently caught up in an absolutely tragic accident. Many suffered horrific burns, and to this day they continue on their path to recovery. I send them my best wishes. To the families of those who did not survive—Nicole and Margaret—I extend the deepest sympathies of the government and the House.

Tonight at least 80 families across the country are without their mothers, killed at the hands of their partner or former partner in the past year. I ask us all to spare a thought for those families caught up in unspeakable tragedy because of the issues around domestic and family violence. It is awful, it is terrible and it is played out behind closed doors and, in Queensland this year, with the deaths of two women in the public arena. This is an unacceptable death toll. The violence that continues to happen in thousands of homes across this country and this state as we speak is the reason my government has acted swiftly and decisively to put an end to domestic and family violence. Queenslanders have joined us in our fight against domestic violence. Each and every Queenslander can rest assured that my government is in it for the long haul, because no woman, no child and no man should live with the threat of violence and intimidation in their own home. May there come a day when we no longer have to wage this battle, when domestic and family violence is no longer part of our cultural landscape.

Queenslanders went to the polls during an unspeakably hot January and clearly sent a message that they wanted a government that was about consultation, not division. They wanted a government that collaborates. They were tired of a government that seemed determined to pick fights rather than take them on a journey. That is why my government is delivering. We are delivering for our economy, delivering jobs and front-line services. We have a plan for Queensland's future at a time of economic transition for our state, and we will see it through. We are deliberately and actively steering Queensland down a new path—a path that will advance Queensland. We are a government that will always talk to Queenslanders.

We are a government that will always include Queenslanders. That is why I have spent much of 2015 on the road—meeting Queenslanders, listening to Queenslanders and treating them with the dignity and the respect they require and deserve. I thank Queenslanders from right across the state for taking time to speak with me. I thank them for their collaboration.

My government is an inclusive government. I again thank Queenslanders for having confidence in my government. In that regard, I thank each and every member of my caucus. You are doing your communities proud. You are truly representing your communities to the best of your capabilities. You are giving your communities solid, open, accountable, consultative and transparent government—and they expect nothing less.

I thank my Deputy Premier, Jackie Trad, for her counsel and her support during our first 10 months of government. I thank my Treasurer, Curtis Pitt, for his steady pair of hands and his delivery of a responsible budget that all Queenslanders can be proud of. I thank each of my cabinet colleagues—the members of my ministry—who have performed with outstanding professionalism this year. Each of them has delivered in their portfolio areas and continue to do an outstanding job. Of course to the Leader of the House and the assistant minister, thank you for everything you have done this year.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for your true independence, wisdom and calm around this parliament during what has been a particularly challenging time. The running of this place is never without challenge, but 2015 was an exceptional case. Mr Speaker, thank you for your leadership, thank you for your professionalism, thank you for your intelligence and kindness, and thank you in particular for your fairness and your generosity of spirit. I also thank the Deputy Speaker, the member for Brisbane Central, Grace Grace, and all of the Temporary Speakers.

I thank the staff of this place and in particular Clerk Neil Laurie, Deputy Clerk Michael Ries and First Clerk Assistant Leanne Clare for their guidance and support throughout the year. I thank the Sergeant-at-Arms, Michael Watkin, and all of the parliamentary security staff for keeping everyone who works here safe. I also make special mention of our first female Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms. Liz Tavender is the first woman to perform the role in Queensland and the first woman to carry the mace into the chamber. I thank Stephen Finimore, the head of committees, for doing all the legwork on the important legislation that has been debated in this chamber. I also acknowledge the hard work of Michael Hickey, Director of Corporate and House Services; the Manager of Human Resource Services, Peter Morris; the Manager of Financial and Administrative Services, Craig Atkinson; the Manager of Information Technology Services, Mike Coburn and all of their respective officers, including executive support services, for the important contribution they have made to the smooth and efficient running of the parliament.

I also want to place on the record my appreciation and thanks to the hardworking and dedicated parliamentary attendants, so ably led by Angie, who on each sitting day, regardless of how late we sit, are here to ensure that the House ticks over and they always have a smile. Our Hansard reporters, who are ably led by Lucinda Osmond, do a wonderful job of capturing each word and sentence that is uttered in here and preserving them all for future generations. I thank the staff of the Table Office for always meeting every request with courtesy. I also thank the Chief Librarian, Katherine Brennan, and her staff along with the entire Parliamentary Counsel team, who never fail to give us their support.

Jaakko and his catering team keep us all fed while the Manager of Property Services, Darryl McCarthy, and the Gardening Services Supervisor, Chris King, keep the grounds pristine. Our cleaning supervisors—Azra and Sanja—and their staff ensure this place does not fall into a state of disrepair. I thank all of the staff. They do an outstanding job and we all thank them for the service they give day in, day out.

We do not always see eye to eye, but I must thank the media gallery, who keep Queenslanders informed of the goings-on in this chamber and beyond. In fact, I thank the media across the state in newsrooms and those out and about on the road in Townsville, Mount Isa, the Gold Coast and every place in-between for their absolute professionalism over the past year.

To my team in my Premier's office: thank you. Making the transition to government has not been without its challenges, but each of you has risen to the occasion and delivered above and beyond. Each of you have made hard sacrifices and each of you know that I am adamant that family must come first, so I thank you for frequently giving your time and acting with integrity and professionalism. In fact, I thank staff across each of my ministers' offices for their professional support to our government and I also thank my director-general, Dave Stewart, and all directors-general and the entire Public Service for the diligent way in which they carry out their work.

I must thank my electorate staff, who ensure that Inala is well served in my absences. Thanks to Mel, Charles and Matt for keeping the office ticking over. I thank the people of Inala for their continued trust and faith in me. I am so proud to serve this community, I am so proud to be part of this community and I will continue to work with you over the first term of my government.

I cannot sit down without thanking my family. Thanks to Shaun, my mother and father and sisters and my extended family for their support and advice and for their good humour. Being part of a political family is often not an easy ride, and I thank each of you for taking it in your stride.

Lastly I thank all members of parliament, including those opposite. In the end, we are all human with strengths and vulnerabilities. We each of us face significant challenges in our jobs on a daily basis. We each of us make significant sacrifices to serve our communities. We each of us frequently put our relationships, our families and our friends second so we can serve Queensland and so we can serve our communities. While we may be adversaries in this place, we share a common characteristic—our

profession. We share a common goal—to serve our communities—so despite our differences we can have an understanding of each other. I wish each member of this place a happy Christmas and a rewarding new year and hope that each of you can find some time to get away and spend time with your family and friends, just as I wish that for all Queenslanders. I look forward to a prosperous new year—a 2016 in which my government will continue to consult and collaborate and treat Queenslanders with dignity and respect and continue to steer a steady ship for each and every one of them.