



Speech By  
**Brittany Lauga**

**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

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### **MAIDEN SPEECH**

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (3.16 pm): I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Turrbal people, and pay respects to their elders both past and present and to the future elders—a group we do not often mention but one of great importance. Of course, I would like to extend that respect to the Aboriginal people present today. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land which I represent here in this place, the Darumbal and Woppaburra people, and extend that respect to their elders past, present and future.

Firstly, it is a great honour and a privilege to stand here in this place representing the people of Keppel. Let me place on record my deep gratitude and thanks to the people of Keppel for giving me the opportunity to represent our community. The Keppel electorate, in my opinion, is the most beautiful and diverse part of our world, though perhaps I am somewhat biased.

Just five days after the Queensland Electoral Commission declared the winner of the election in Keppel, Tropical Cyclone Marcia formed. On Friday, 20 February 2015 category 5 Tropical Cyclone Marcia crossed the Central Queensland coast near Shoalwater Bay. The cyclone intensified rapidly into a category 5 cyclone within 48 hours of its formation. After landfall the cyclone went on to affect many communities in the Keppel electorate including Byfield, Yeppoon, Emu Park, Keppel Sands, Cawarral, Woodbury, Mount Chalmers, Stockyard Point, Koongal, Nerimbera, Frenchville, Norman Gardens, Coowonga, Parkhurst, Rockyview, The Caves and Etna Creek.

Over 60,000 homes were left without power in Central Queensland and almost 3,000 people requested assistance from the SES. Significant structural damage occurred, with a number of houses having roofs blown off. I was in constant liaison with the mayor of Livingstone shire, Bill Ludwig, and the deputy mayor, Graham Scott, and Rockhampton Regional Council's mayor, Margaret Strelow, and the deputy mayor, Tony Williams, about how I could help, acting as a conduit between local and state government where they needed me.

It has been over two months now since Marcia hit. I have travelled across the electorate visiting and listening to the people of Keppel. The cyclone blew off roofs and destroyed houses and businesses, but I know from talking to people across the region that one thing is for certain—Marcia did not destroy our fighting Central Queensland spirit. I have listened to some heartbreaking stories and also lots of heartwarming stories of neighbours meeting for the first time, of strangers sharing supplies and leads for generators being thrown over fences so that neighbours could share electricity supply. I reminisce about Cindel, an SES volunteer whom I met one afternoon in the days after the cyclone at the SES headquarters in Yeppoon. Both Cindel and her husband had been working hard volunteering in the recovery and had not seen their young daughter for many days. Cindel's mum was in fact looking after her. Cindel's uniform was dirty and she had not slept properly for days, and when she did it was on the floor of the SES headquarters. She had been doing some really hard yakka helping our community. The next time I saw Cindel was a few days later, but this time she was actually wearing a Queensland police uniform. Cindel explained that she also works as a police officer

and in her time off she volunteers with the local SES. I think it is just amazing that this young woman was working so incredibly hard in the recovery as a police officer away from her young family but in her spare time she was also working tirelessly as a volunteer for the SES.

I want to say thank you to everyone who played a role in the recovery after Marcia. In particular I want to thank the Ergon and Energex workers from around the state who worked tirelessly to restore power to our region in record time, and there were over 900 of them who came to our rescue; the doctors, nurses and allied health professionals who worked around the clock in our hospitals and local practices; and the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, emergency services workers and the volunteers such as the SES, BlazeAid and the rural fire brigades around the region, many of whom also came from around the state to help. They volunteered to help and also gave up their time away from cleaning up their own homes and helping their own families to assist our community. Thanks also to the mayors and deputy mayors of Rockhampton Regional Council and Livingstone Shire Council and their respective councillors and staff. Thank you also to all of the local people who went out and helped their neighbours, the elderly and the disabled. I have heard stories from right across the region of generosity, caring for each other and lending a hand. Your efforts have been absolutely brilliant. Finally, I want to say thank you to the Palaszczuk government. Premier Palaszczuk, Deputy Premier Trad and many state government ministers visited the region multiple times during the recovery. I thank you and your staff for your assistance and the urgent attention given to matters when I raised them with you.

The Keppel electorate has some of the most amazing natural beauty and it is an honour and a privilege to be here, the youngest member of this Queensland parliament, representing our community. A prime example of its natural beauty is Mount Archer National Park. I love standing on top of Mount Archer and looking out to the picturesque Capricorn Coast on one side and bustling Rockhampton on the other. The amazing Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area and Keppel Bay islands are within the electorate right on our doorstep. We have a spectacular diversity in corals, fish and marine fauna. The snubfin dolphin, for example, which inhabits Keppel Bay, is Australia's only native dolphin and is genetically unique to Central Queensland. Peak Island, just off the coast from Keppel Sands, is the second largest and most important breeding rookery for flatback turtles which migrate from as far as the Torres Strait.

Picture the bluest of blue water you have ever seen and the whitest sandy beaches. Dolphins frolic with their calves in the bay. I have even seen whales. Some of the most resilient coral lives in the bay, and it has to be resilient because it is regularly flushed with fresh water from the mouth of the Fitzroy Delta. Throw in a line just off the coast and experience the pure exhilaration of having a giant Spanish mackerel on the end of your line. The drag on the line goes 'whiz!' and everyone is running mad around the boat in a group effort to help you land that big fish and then there are smiles and high fives all around when you finally get it in the boat. I love zipping up Coorooman Creek, ducking and weaving through its tributaries to plant a few crab pots on high tide. When you go back out at the next high tide the pots are full to the brim with big dark green muddies, ready to share around the family after being whipped into a tasty chilli crab. You should all be very jealous. You are all of course more than welcome to come for a visit. I am lucky because I do not need to go anywhere for a holiday. Just being home in Keppel with our beaches, great beef, delicious food and produce, amazing weather and cruise lifestyle makes being at home feel like a holiday all of the time.

Great Keppel Island is one of the jewels in the crown of our region and the Southern Great Barrier Reef. We need to be taking action to protect it for the future, for both its natural wonder and its tourism potential. I would like to see tourism development occur on Great Keppel Island but always ensuring that it is undertaken in a way that will be sustainable for future generations. I want to see tourism grow on the island, encouraging more visitors to the Capricorn Coast and Rockhampton to support jobs for locals. I know from talking to locals that they want the development to proceed, but they also want it to be managed properly. I promised I would be a strong voice for our region's future, and that is what I have done. I have been working extremely hard every day since I was elected and I am proud of that. Standing up for our community is what I promised, and I have done that day in and day out. We do not always get our way, but the people of Keppel can rest assured that I will continue to stand up for them and fight for our fair share every day. It is what I was elected to do and it is what I am passionate about doing.

We are also lucky to have CQ University's North Rockhampton campus in the electorate of Keppel—a world-class dual sector university which is also Australia's largest regional university. It has 30,000 students studying qualifications from certificate to post doctorate level from over 100 different countries. We have some of the best schools too. I am constantly amazed by the sporting and academic achievements of students in Central Queensland. We have a river that provides us with so much more than just a reliable water supply. At 142,600 square kilometres, the Fitzroy Basin is the

largest catchment on the eastern seaboard. The most diverse range of freshwater fish in the country is found within the Fitzroy Basin. We love our Keppel Bay, our river and our climate, so it is no surprise that we have more boat registrations per capita than anywhere else in the state. We have an airport with international capabilities, the third longest runway in Queensland and the ninth largest in Australia. More than 750,000 passengers travel through our airport every year, which equates to about 2,000 per day. Our tourism industry employs over 4,000 people and injects hundreds of millions of dollars into the local economy each year. We have over 1.2 million overnight visitors to the Capricornia region annually. Tourism is important, so I am working on making that number of overnight visitors grow.

Local primary producers are busy putting fruit on the plates of our nation. To give members an example, the region actually supplies 45 per cent of Australia's pineapples. We know that we have even more opportunities in agriculture and I am working on exploring and taking advantage of those right now. In fact, this week in the electorate adjacent to Keppel, Beef Australia 2015 is being held. Australia's national beef exposition is one of the world's great beef cattle events and is held just once every three years in Rockhampton. Beef Australia is a celebration of all facets of the Australian beef industry and in particular it celebrates the beef industry in Central Queensland's backyard. Congratulations to Denis Cox and his team at Beef Australia and I look forward to joining the Beef Australia 2015 celebrations at the cessation of parliament this week.

Did I mention that we have excellent weather? We have so many more opportunities and assets that I have not even mentioned. Regional planning to take advantage of these opportunities and assets whilst ensuring that we protect and treasure them for future generations is my passion.

My childhood growing up in Rocky and the Capricorn Coast was special. My family moved there when I was a little girl because dad, Peter, took a job working at Stanwell. My mum, Sharon, whom I thank for being here today, is a primary schoolteacher and she has worked now for almost 25 years at Mount Archer State School, which is where my brother, Lewis, and I went to primary school. Lewis and I had a very busy upbringing. We were always encouraged to get involved in everything. My dad would often have to work away on shutdowns at power stations around the state, so mum was often the one who would run us around to netball training, soccer, footy, ballet, T-ball and anything else that we had on in the afternoons and on weekends.

She would drop one of us off and then the other, race home for forgotten soccer boots or something, hang around to watch practice, pick us both up and miraculously still have a hot nutritious home cooked meal on the table for when we got home. She was and still is in my eyes a superwoman. Both of our parents worked hard to give my brother and I a great start to life. My mum instilled in me the belief that all children should have access to a first-class education. My dad taught me the value of hard work and fairness.

Other women in my life have also played an important role in shaping the person I am today. My late grandmother, Mary Ayscough, was a happy and friendly yet fiercely determined businesswoman. She taught me that everything must be done with a smile and to respect everyone, no matter their background. The Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Shannon Fentiman, is a university friend turned parliamentary colleague and is someone whom I look up to very much.

After I finished school I moved to Brisbane to study law at the Queensland University of Technology. I studied two years of law and decided that I just was not passionate about it, so I changed to a degree in urban and regional planning, which I absolutely loved. I reflect on the passion and grace of my lecturer, Associate Professor Phil Heywood, who also is here with us today, who inspires me with his creativity and who has a real passion for life, enthusiasm and a fervent desire to work for good community outcomes. Planning has been a wonderful career and a great profession to be involved in. Planning matters in Keppel and it matters to our state. Good planning is the best way to manage urban growth, to secure necessary infrastructure investment, to determine appropriate settlement patterns for our cities and towns, and to generate economic development that contributes positively to the wellbeing of individuals and communities and the natural and built environments on which we rely. I thank members and life members of the Planning Institute of Australia who have been wonderful mentors and colleagues over the years, including PIA president Kate Isles, state manager Dan Molloy, immediate former national president Dy Curry, Gary White, Greg Vann, Greg Ovenden, Steve Craven, Laura Gannon and Planning Institute of Australia CEO Kirsty Kelly. They have all taught me so much about good planning. They can rest assured that I am putting those lessons to good use every day in this new role.

I must also say thank you to my husband, Wayne, and I am also grateful to have him here today. Shortly after I moved back from Brisbane I met and fell in love with my husband, Wayne—a

born and bred Rocky boy, quantity surveyor and manager of a building firm. Wayne and I have been happily married now for almost four years. We live in the electorate at Rockyview with our gorgeous chocolate Labrador, Apollo. Wayne has been a great supporter for me in both an emotional and practical sense. Being a hardworking local member involves many late nights and early mornings, often seven days a week. But I come home and my ironing is done, dinner is on the table and the lawn is mowed even though Wayne is extremely busy in his own professional life.

I was endorsed as the Labor candidate for Keppel for 14 months prior to the state election. In that time I spoke to thousands of constituents in the electorate—at market stalls, school P&C meetings, retirement villages and through phone calls and doorknocking. I would like to thank so many people who helped in the campaign. Hundreds of people helped me pound the pavement and to get our message out. I thank my husband, Wayne; my parents, Peter and Sharon McKee; and my brother and his wife, Lewis and Pia McKee.

I also thank Rohan Webb, Ann-Marie Allan, Jules Campbell—who is also here today—Peter Lyon, John Hempseed, Sonia Steffen and Luke Moore from the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union. I also thank my good friend Sara Barnbaum; Lloyd Beatson; Neville Beattie; Ken Berry; Margaret, Katelyn and Megan Clements; Jason Sladden; Jason Conway; Barry Thomson; former member for Keppel Paul Hoolihan, who was here earlier, and his wife, Elizabeth; Jarred Kennedy; Bary Large; Angie and Bill Luck; Bernie Misztal; Leisa Neaton; John Olsen; Cam Schroder; Leonie Short; Wal Taylor; John Homan; Brett Svendsen; Anthony White; Tony Williams; Craig Allen; Craig Sell; Billy Bijoux; Ashleigh Saunders; Barry Thompson; Trish Bovingdon; Darren Blackwood; Chris McJannett; Paul Jensen and the meatworkers; my parliamentary colleague Bill Byrne; Tom Dixon; Rachel Dixon; Vicki Chopping; Denise and John Christensen; Luke Christensen; Clyde and Diana Wode; Les and Mavis Wust; Mary Hempseed; Bruce Craig; Peter Lyon; Tom and Carmel Hall; Hugh and Yvonne Chardon; Ernie O'Sullivan; Janice and Ray Murphy; Ingrid Murphy and her darling children Mitchell and Baily.

I know that for Keppel to grow and develop as a community and to foster prosperity we have to be forward thinking, hungry and ambitious for change. But a region that does not know its destination will never know its journey. I will work with the people of Keppel to realise that destination, plan the journey and bring everyone along for the ride. I will be that loud voice representing them in Brisbane. I am passionate, tenacious and hungry to make a difference. I will be a strong voice for our future. I am young, energetic, passionate and I have a big vision for Keppel. I want to work towards a prosperous and healthy community—one with jobs, opportunity, growth, tourism and a place that we can all be proud of. I will be working as hard as I can for my electorate, because I am here to put Keppel and Central Queensland on the map.