




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2015

VACANCY IN SENATE OF COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA: ELECTION OF SENATOR

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation) (2.45 pm): I rise to support Joanna Lindgren's appointment for the casual vacancy in the Australian Senate following Queensland Senator Brett Mason's resignation. Like me, Ms Lindgren is an Aboriginal woman with a strong heritage and a strong family history of political involvement. Like me, Ms Lindgren lives in Logan City. I am sure the community is pleased to be the home of so many achievements.

As we have heard, Ms Lindgren is the great-niece of the great Neville Bonner, who served as a senator for Queensland from 1971 to 1983. As we are doing here today, Mr Bonner was initially chosen by the Queensland parliament to fill a casual vacancy in the Senate. He became the first Aboriginal Australian to sit not only in the Australian parliament but in any parliament in Australia. Neville Bonner went on to win elections in his own right repeatedly in 1972, 1974, 1975 and 1980. In doing so, he blazed the trail for so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the years that have followed.

On taking her place in the Senate, Ms Lindgren will join the ranks of so many of those who have followed that trail all the way to our nation's capital. In the federal parliament she will join Nova Peris in the Senate and Ken Wyatt, who sits in the House of Representatives—two other proud Aboriginal people in the parliament. Senator Nova Peris was the first Aboriginal woman to ever take a place in the federal parliament, and I am certain she will be pleased to see another Aboriginal woman take a similar path.

We are seeing more and more first nation Australians than ever engaging in all levels of government and entering state and federal parliaments across our country. It is pleasing to see that all political parties are beginning to appreciate the value of diversity in our political processes and the value that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, our perspectives, our experiences and our approaches bring to the parliament and to political debate. Ms Lindgren's appointment to the Senate helps to sustain that appreciation and builds on the expectations and hopes of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and those in our community who value and seek out diversity in our civic society. I certainly hope that in the years to come many more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will follow this same path and that at some point down the track the election—or, in this case, the appointment—of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to political positions will be seen as quite normal and even expected.

Ms Lindgren, like me, worked as a high school teacher here in Brisbane. What better or more noble profession to have had? Teachers are often those who can have the greatest impact on our young people and are often the best representatives of our communities. They are also advocates for the importance of good quality education. I want to see the next generation of young people in my electorate of Algester and across all communities throughout Queensland fulfilling their dreams and aspirations. Good education is the best and often only chance in achieving this.

It is clear that investing in quality education makes our communities stronger, fairer and more prosperous. That is why I am pleased to hear Ms Lindgren has said that education and training will be her main priority in Canberra. I know that she will be committed to helping our young people get jobs, which give them dignity, a stake in society and the opportunity to contribute to their community.

Ms Lindgren also has a keen interest in community affairs, and I anticipate she will be supportive of initiatives we are implementing to help the community services sector to deliver services here in Queensland. I also hope to work with Ms Lindgren in building capacity of community organisations and businesses in regional, rural and remote Queensland to be able to deliver services locally and provide much needed jobs, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

I am pleased to see the LNP has put forward not only a woman but an Aboriginal woman for the Senate position. I am sure Ms Lindgren will live up to the legacy of her great-uncle, the great Mr Neville Bonner. He would be so proud of you—as I am sure your family here today are very, very proud of you. I support Joanna Lindgren's appointment to the Senate.