




Speech By
Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2015

VACANCY IN SENATE OF COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA: ELECTION OF SENATOR

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (3.08 pm): As a former Queensland senator in the federal parliament, it is with pleasure that I make a contribution to this motion in the House today on the appointment of Joanna Lindgren to the Senate. Joanna's appointment to the casual vacancy in Australia's Senate results from the Queensland Senator Brett Mason's resignation. I pause there to comment briefly on the success of Senator Brett Mason. I join my colleagues opposite in commending his period in the Senate. Brett led a distinguished career as parliamentary secretary to the minister for health and ageing in the Howard government from 21 March 2007 to 3 December 2007. He was also the parliamentary secretary to the minister for foreign affairs in the Abbott government from 18 September 2013 to 23 December 2014.

Quite often in the mornings I would see Brett in the gym of the federal parliament under a leg press pushing up weights, and he and I developed a reasonable bond and on many occasions worked out together.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr FURNER: Yes, I was. As we have heard today, before entering politics Joanna worked as a high school teacher, and there is no better or nobler a profession. Educators understand the needs of our young people and are often the best representatives of their community and, as we have seen from contributions in this House, in parliament as well. Educators advocate for the importance of quality education. It is clear that investing in quality education will make our community stronger, fairer and more prosperous. That is why I am pleased to hear Ms Lindgren say that education and training will be her main priority in Canberra. I know she is committed to helping our young people get jobs, which gives 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 that she will be supportive of initiatives we are implementing to help the community services sector in Queensland, particularly the focus on building the capacity of community organisations in regional Queensland to deliver services locally and to provide much needed jobs in smaller towns. I know it is a question of vacancies, but I do hope that she makes her way onto the Community Affairs Senate Committee to assist in those areas. As a member of that committee for many years, I was very fortunate to travel to copious numbers of Indigenous communities to see the need to address some of the issues in those areas. I also hope to work with Ms Lindgren in building the capacity of community organisations in Queensland's Indigenous communities.

I was keen to hear that she has an interest in defence through her current position, and I do encourage her to join some of the parliamentary defence programs that are available there. There is one in particular called Norforce, which is a program where Indigenous people protect our shores in the northern part of the nation.

I am also glad to see that the LNP has put forward not only a woman, but a second Indigenous woman for a Senate position. Joanna will join another great Australian, the senator for the Northern Territory Nova Peris. Senator Peris has made a significant contribution to this country and her territory in reaching out and being a strong voice for our first people. I am sure she will assist Joanna in finding her feet when she navigates the halls of the Senate in Canberra. Both Nova and Joanna will no doubt make a clear case for ensuring that Indigenous people are finally recognised in the Australian Constitution, which is something that we in this House all look forward to.

I am sure Ms Lindgren will live up to the legacy of her great-uncle Mr Neville Bonner, who would have been proud of her achievement. I support Joanna Lindgren's appointment to the Senate.