




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (4.59 pm): I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Turrbal and Jagera people, and pay my respects to elders both past and present. I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that I represent in this place, the Darumbal people and the Woppaburra people. I congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on being elected to the high office of Speaker. It is wonderful to have a North Queenslander as Speaker of the Queensland parliament.

It is a great honour and privilege to rise in this place, in the 56th Parliament, as the returned member for Keppel after the 2017 state election. At the 2015 election, Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk promised to stop the cuts, stop privatisation and begin building Queensland jobs again. Over the following 2½ years we made steady progress. When we came to government, confidence in the Queensland economy began to recover from the cuts of Campbell Newman and many of those opposite. Many of those opposite sat around the cabinet table and the Cabinet Budget Review Committee table and cut 14,000 public servants' jobs. Under the LNP, our region was kicked when it was down. Workers were sacked, job creation projects were scrapped and the economy was cut to ribbons.

There is still work to do to repair our economy, but the targeted investment I have fought for is making a difference. In fact, the front page of today's *Morning Bulletin* reads, 'Strong growth and jobs bounce for CQ's economy'. Construction Skills Queensland has said that the region's building and construction industry is on the verge of strong and continued growth with key indicators showing broad-based recovery across all sectors. CWS said that construction in Central Queensland will grow at 11 per cent per year for the next three years, which is great news. In the past 12 months, in the Rockhampton region unemployment has fallen from 8.5 per cent to 5.1 per cent. The CWS said that the tide has definitely turned and the economy is on an upswing. I table a copy of the front page of the *Morning Bulletin* for the interest of the House.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Bulletin*, dated 6 September 2018, titled 'Strong Growth and Jobs and Bounce for CQ's Economy' [\[1318\]](#).

The 2017 state election was a clear choice between Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, who has restored front-line services and confidence without selling assets, and the LNP, which would have just cut more jobs and services and sold Queensland assets. The people of Central Queensland wanted a better future and they voted for me to stand up to Brisbane and fight for us. When it comes to delivering for our community, I have a proven track record of fighting for secure local jobs, standing up for small businesses and ensuring Keppel gets its fair share.

In my first term as the member for Keppel, I fought against the LNP's compulsory acquisition of prime grazing land near Shoalwater Bay, I stood up to Aurizon against job cuts, I stood up for better Buy Local policies and I have been fighting hard against the casualisation of the workforce. I also fought for and delivered over \$100 million worth of job-generating projects, including \$29 million for the Yeppoon foreshore project, which created hundreds of jobs. I fought for and delivered over \$6.5 million

in job projects at Emu Park, including the Emu Park foreshore revitalisation, the Hartley Street multisport precinct and new classrooms at Emu Park State School. In North Rockhampton, I delivered over \$18 million worth of job-generating projects, including the refurbishment of the North Rocky nursing home, new classrooms and school buildings at Frenchville and Lakes Creek state schools, and upgrades to our beautiful Mount Archer.

In my first term, one of my greatest achievements was securing \$29 million for the Yeppoon foreshore and town centre revitalisation project, which has supported 680 jobs and will transform tourism in our town. Earlier this year, I was very proud to officially open the new Yeppoon Lagoon. It was an amazing day. Thousands of children, parents, grandparents and local people joined Mayor Bill Ludwig, the federal member and me to officially open the lagoon. There were people everywhere. The whole foreshore was abuzz with excitement. The music was pumping as the DJ provided some great tunes.

I remember in the afternoon, dozens of children were in the pool. The DJ played the song *Sexy and I know it*. It was amazing to see all the children in the pool dancing when he hit that part where he sings 'wiggle, wiggle, wiggle—yeah'. All of the children were getting right down and boogying in the new Yeppoon Lagoon as the DJ played amazing music on that opening day. Everyone had a smile on their face. There was laughter everywhere and everyone had a real sense of achievement. Yeppoon's heart burst with pride. One local businessman expressed his delight with the project when he said, 'Whatever this cost, it's worth double.'

Our government's plan is continuing to drive record growth in tourism and investment in new job-creating industries such as biofuels and renewables, while keeping our resources sector strong. We promised that a re-elected Palaszczuk government would continue to invest to encourage businesses to innovate, grow, increase their exports, buy local and employ more people, and we are doing just that. It goes without saying that small businesses are the powerhouse of our local economy. The Palaszczuk government has a strong track record in providing support to small businesses to grow, diversify and tap into the digital marketplace. I am proud of our new Queensland Buy Local policy, which gives preference to local businesses for government contracts that in turn support local jobs.

The Palaszczuk government is driving growth and jobs in the north-western parts of Keppel, with a \$240 million investment in the expansion of the Capricornia Correctional Centre. That is the single largest investment by any state government in our region's history. That \$240 million investment, coupled with the \$120 million northern access upgrade, means that there is \$350 million worth of local infrastructure works in Parkhurst and Etna Creek, which in turn is driving our local economy. Local businesses are thrilled with that level of investment. You only have to ask Reg or Cumner at Parkhurst Quality Meats and they will tell you just how busy they are and how pleased they are to have the economy buzzing.

The 2017 election was a choice between Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk, who restored front-line services and confidence, and the member for Clayfield, who only proposed to cut more jobs and services and sell Queensland assets. The last time the LNP was in power in Queensland, they sacked 1,400 Central Queensland workers. At the 2017 state election Keppel locals said loud and clear that we could not afford to take that risk again.

On 12 December 2017, it was a great honour and a privilege to be sworn in as Queensland's Assistant Minister for Education. My mum has been a teacher for over 25 years and the importance of education was instilled in me from an early age. As I was growing up we were always having discussions around the dinner table about the importance of education. I was taught that education is the great social equaliser. Therefore, I am incredibly excited to be working in a portfolio that aligns with the principles that were ingrained in me by my parents. I know the importance of education to community, to society and also to our economy. I want to give students and young people a quality education and the best start to life that they could possibly have. I think that the Education portfolio is the jewel in the crown of any Labor government. I am very honoured to be working alongside the education minister, Grace Grace, whom I consider to be a mentor and a friend. I think that the changes that we can make through this portfolio can make significant changes to the lives of young people.

I am proud that the Palaszczuk government is delivering a great start and a bright future for our children. In our last term, we hired 3,634 more teachers and 1,135 teacher aides across Queensland, including 137 extra teachers and 58 extra teacher aides in Central Queensland. Ahead of Teacher Aide Day, I make special mention of the amazing support work provided to young students by our state's teacher aides. We are going to hire thousands more teachers and teacher aides, because we are building six new schools and spending more than \$200 million refurbishing existing schools, including \$10 million each on 17 high schools.

In Keppel, Yeppoon State High School is receiving \$4.2 million for a new school administration building and new classrooms, as well as \$124,000 for the school's new e-learning hub in the library. In North Rockhampton we are spending \$2.5 million to refurbish classrooms at North Rockhampton State High School. Our priority has been to repair the damage inflicted on our state's education system by those opposite and to deliver on our commitment to provide quality education for all students and give them the resources and support they need to succeed.

In my first term, I heard many stories from local people and families about the devastating impact ice is having on people in our Central Queensland community. I fought for our local community and I am proud to be delivering on our \$14.3 million commitment for a new 42-bed residential drug rehabilitation and detox facility in Rockhampton. The new centre will create jobs during construction and also in the centre's operation. It will give Central Queensland locals improved access to vital drug treatment services and support close to their families and support networks.

We are also building better hospitals, aged-care facilities, health facilities and emergency departments. I am delivering on the commitment I made to refurbish the North Rockhampton Nursing Centre. I visit the staff and patients at this centre regularly and in 2016 I fought for funding to refurbish this important public aged-care facility. I was proud to announce last year \$8 million in funding to refurbish the Cec Pritchard Wing and a new kitchen. I am proud that these major renovations are expected to be completed by early in the new year. I understand that there are staff who work in the kitchen at the nursing centre who are holding off on their retirement because they are so keen to work in this brand-new facility. I hope that it lives up to their hopes and dreams.

The Palaszczuk government is investing more than \$610 million in health care in Central Queensland—a record Health budget for the region and almost \$44 million more than the 2017-18 financial year. We are also investing \$4.4 million across Central Queensland for community mental health services. The Palaszczuk government is delivering a Health budget that focuses on strengthening front-line services and managing rising demand.

Growing jobs in regional Queensland is the Palaszczuk government's first priority. We are delivering on our commitment to build job-generating infrastructure in Central Queensland with \$1 billion for infrastructure in Central Queensland, over \$600 million for our Central Queensland hospitals and over \$30 million for our local Central Queensland schools in the 2018-19 financial year alone. We are delivering on our commitment to the \$352 million project to build Rookwood Weir.

We are delivering on our commitment to grow jobs in tourism, with \$25 million towards power and water infrastructure on Great Keppel Island. Tourism operators, residents and future tourism development projects will benefit from improved access to infrastructure that will create jobs and provide a catalyst for tourism and economic development across the region. Providing affordable and reliable power and water will support existing tourist operators to become more sustainable and grow, while also supporting new and expanded tourism ventures on the island.

It is great to see business owners from Great Keppel Island in today's *Morning Bulletin* have described the investment by our government as 'fantastic' and 'essential'. Shane Bonney from GKI's Tropical Vibes said to the *Morning Bulletin*—

For this island to go ahead, we need power and water. I'm all for it.

I table a copy of the newspaper article for the information of the House.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Morning Bulletin*, dated 6 September 2018, titled 'GKI business owners share perspectives on power and water' [1319].

On Thursday, 19 October 2017 at 1.17 am, with the rain pouring outside, our beautiful baby girl, Odette Mary Lauga, was born. Odette was a healthy 3.34 kilograms and 49 centimetres long at birth, and breastfeeding was established successfully. When Odette was born, my heart burst with so much pride and so much love. I did not realise that something so small and so beautiful could bring me so much joy and happiness. I would like to thank the Mater Hospital's staff, midwives and obstetrician Dr Akash. My husband and I were most grateful to everyone who offered their support and congratulations after Odette's birth.

I did know in 2017 that an election could be called at any time and that it could coincide with the birth of my baby. It was something I considered frequently—what would I do, how would we manage? I prepared the best I could, but I know now that nothing could have prepared me. Nothing could have prepared me for the 2017 state election to be called when Odette was just 10 days old. It was an incredibly difficult time for me, for Odette and for our whole family. I was battling sleep deprivation, still physically healing after giving birth, establishing breastfeeding, battling the trials and tribulations of becoming a new mum and trying to enjoy my new baby, but I was also fighting to win an election.

They say it takes a village to raise a child and I can attest that it definitely takes a village to win an election with a newborn baby in tow. Becoming a mum is a steep learning curve, but becoming a mum in the middle of a state election when you are in a marginal regional seat felt like climbing Mount Everest. We did it and we won. During this time I certainly learned how to be more organised than ever before and an even better multitasker. Like so many other working mums, I felt guilt. I asked myself: am I doing the right thing for my baby and for my family? Am I doing the right thing for my electorate? I did and continue to try to balance my family's needs with that of my community.

Unfortunately yes, some people were critical and they were judgemental. With everything it is darned if you do, darned if you do not—you should have taken more leave, you should not take leave at all; you should take the baby with you, you should leave the baby at home. Having a baby is exhausting and challenging, but it also remarkably rewarding and it certainly makes you strong.

Becoming a mum has changed my perspective on life. I was fighting for Keppel's future before I became a mum, but now I see the future in a whole new light. I have found that being a parent and a member of parliament gives me a greater vested interest in the future—decisions we make today affect our children, well beyond our own life spans. This new perspective and care for our future generations helps shape my work and my vision as the member for Keppel and also as the Assistant Minister for Education.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute and say thanks to the Australian Breastfeeding Association for their support. We know that breastfeeding is the best way to provide infants with the nutrients they need. In fact, the World Health Organisation recommends exclusive breastfeeding starting within one hour of birth and exclusively until a baby is at least six months old. Nutritious complementary foods should then be added while continuing to breastfeed for up to two years or beyond.

I joined the ABA prior to Odette's birth and attended a breastfeeding education class in my local community which the ABA's local breastfeeding counsellors hold each quarter. This class gave me the tools and knowledge I needed in order to establish breastfeeding after birth and to continue on a breastfeeding journey, which I am proud to say has now extended over 10 months and I hope to continue for up to two years or beyond.

I was so grateful in the middle of the night when Odette was only a few days old to have a calm and friendly voice on the end of the phone when I called the ABA's free and confidential 24-hour 1800 breastfeeding helpline which is available for all women and men. I needed advice and the fully qualified breastfeeding counsellor on the end of the line at 2 am was there for me.

Since then I have attended a number of very helpful ABA seminars on a variety of topics like supply, keeping baby hydrated, sleep, baby led weaning and social get-togethers, all provided free to local women and men by the ABA across Queensland. I want to thank the ABA Queensland President, Naomi Hull; ABA Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast Group Leader, Amy Deme; Tiana Ruckert; Pauline Delany, who has been volunteering as a breastfeeding counsellor for over 40 years; Sharon Lowe; and Alannah Shore in Gladstone. They are all qualified breastfeeding counsellors who volunteer their time for women, men and families in our region. I thank all of the trainee breastfeeding counsellors—Kaitlin Holland, Jessica Bell, Katrina Harney, Shantelle Ehmann and Annalyce Coleburn—for all of the work they do to help support women and children in our community to continue to breastfeed.

Whilst we celebrated the birth of Odette, sadly, during the campaign, my family also lost my grandfather, Barry Ayscough. It was a sad time for my mum, my aunts and uncles and all of my family. It was sad that he did not get to meet Odette before he passed away. My grandpa was by no means a Labor man. In fact, as a farmer and grazier for most of his life, he and I had very different views of the world. Our political differences aside, he supported me in my career, he followed me in the news and even had one of my corflutes proudly displayed in his front window for all of the street to see.

I want to pay tribute in my second address-in-reply speech in this place to the coalminers at Oaky North. Many will remember that the workers at Oaky North were sadly locked out by their employer, Glencore, for 230 days. We need changes to the federal Fair Work Act to stop big businesses like Glencore from blatantly sacking permanent workers and replacing them with contract and labour hire. We need the federal government to regulate labour hire, to re-shore work that has gone overseas, to set mandatory local minimums for all major work, to use local workers first, to allow casual workers to become permanent and to save our penalty rates.

Throughout the lockout I constantly called on Senator Matthew Canavan and the member for Capricornia, Michelle Landry, to pluck up the courage and show some compassion to visit the locked out coalminers at Oaky North mine near Tieri during their tour of Central Queensland mines. Both Senator Canavan and the member for Capricornia refused. Instead, they toured mine sites, got selfies

with mine bosses and ignored the very people they purport to represent—the miners who were locked out of their livelihood by rich, multinational company Glencore. I stood in solidarity with the 198 locked out Oaky North workers at the lockout camp and I fought for them. I backed the Oaky North workers and during the election they backed me. On election night I proudly dedicated Labor's win in Keppel to the Oaky North workers and their families.

I want to thank my campaign manager, Thelma Humphris, and her husband, Gary, and campaign director, Paul Hoolihan, and his wife, Elizabeth, for their tireless work. I thank my electorate office staff—Annette, Thelma and John—for their years of dedication to serving our community. I would like to thank the Yeppoon, Emu Park and North Rockhampton branches of the great Australian Labor Party.

Branch members are our party's greatest asset. It is the rank and file who get stuck in and stand up for our party and for our candidates. It is people like Bryce, who slept in his car to protect our marquee at the pre-poll booth. It is people like Hugh and Yvonne who turn up to every barbeque, every doorknock and every fundraiser. It is people like Greg and Dave who sell footy doubles to raise funds for the campaign. It is people like Bruce, Paul, Gary, Ernie, Tom and all of the volunteers who stood in the heat and handed out how-to-vote cards at pre-poll on election day.

I thank the former Queensland Labor state secretary, Evan Moorhead, for his leadership and ongoing and consistent mentorship and advice and the incumbent State Secretary—our party's first female state secretary and a strong woman at that—Julie-Ann Campbell, for her leadership and mentorship both as the new State Secretary and also as the AMWU's political officer. I thank Ann-Marie and Rohan at the AMWU as well for their ongoing commitment and support.

Sadly, I want to pay tribute to a great Labor man—the president of the Yeppoon ALP branch Lance Waters, who sadly passed away on 19 April this year aged 60 years. Rest in peace, Lance, and thank you for everything you have done for me and for Labor.

I grew up in Central Queensland and I am passionate about our region. I love working for the community and I love standing up for our future. I fought for and delivered over \$100 million in job-generating projects in my first term and I have hit the ground running in this, my second term, to make Keppel an even more prosperous place to live, work and raise a family.