




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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VACANCY IN SENATE OF COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Election of Senator

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (2.07 pm): It gives me great pleasure to endorse the nomination of Amanda Stoker to fill the Senate vacancy created by the resignation of the honourable George Brandis QC. Of course I am also very proud to support the election of another LNP woman to a high office in our democracy. From one working mum to another, I say: welcome to the world of politics, Amanda, and good luck. The two of us have a lot in common. We both came to politics from law and both have been blessed with three wonderful daughters.

The opportunity to serve the public in parliament is a great honour, but being a mum is the most important job in the world. It is not easy to balance these two roles although it is made easier by the loving support of family, friends and our husbands. I know Amanda has the same love and support from her wonderful husband, Adam. Adam is in the chamber today, along with Mary, Jane and Emma. We also thank and acknowledge Bec and Rachel for their assistance with the girls. Emma is only six months old, Jane is two and Mary is four. A bright group of young girls they are. Amanda's mum, Connie, is also here in the gallery today and unfortunately Amanda's dad, Mark, was unable to make it at the last minute. We also have Amanda's younger sister, Susie, in the gallery. The whole family are incredibly proud of Amanda, and rightfully so. She is a remarkable woman with a bright future ahead of her.

I must put on the record my appreciation of the service of Amanda's predecessor in the Senate. After a prestigious legal career, George Brandis was chosen to fill the Senate vacancy created by the resignation of the late Hon. Warwick Parer in 2000. Senator Brandis served as minister for arts and sport in 2007 in the Howard government and in 2013 was appointed attorney-general in the Abbott government, a role he held up until his recent resignation. A man of principle, he robustly supported the rule of law throughout his time as attorney-general. Senator Brandis is a proud Queenslander and the state's most senior member of the coalition government. He will become Australia's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom next month and will continue to serve this country with distinction. I can assure this parliament that Amanda will serve Queensland as diligently as her predecessor did.

Let me take a moment to explain why Amanda is such a remarkable woman. She was born in south-west Sydney in 1982 to Connie and Mark Fell. Amanda's devoted mum and dad passed on strong values to her which helped shape her view of her life and her world. Mark was a plumber and a gasfitter and Connie worked in an optical shop. The couple worked hard for their kids but things did not always go their way. Amanda was still a young girl when the economy went into recession and unemployment started to soar. Mark was one of the many who lost money owed to them when his business started going bust. Things got tough for the family and Amanda can still remember her dad getting a job on garbage trucks to make ends meet. After a lot of work and worry, the Fells pulled through and they have never looked back, but the tough times saw Amanda aware of the hardship that poor government can cause for ordinary families. Even then, she was thinking hard about the world and how it could be made better.

Amanda was an exceptional student at her local state high school and it was clear that she would become the first member of her family to attend university. Amanda did not just win a place at university; she won a scholarship to study law and the arts at the University of Sydney after her academic results placed her among the top 20 students in the whole state. She studied hard and she worked just as hard outside university too. At one time she was holding down four jobs—a waitress, a bookkeeper, a paralegal and a shop assistant.

After graduating with a first-class degree, Amanda was hired by MinterEllison and soon became an associate to then justice Ian Callinan. This was when Amanda began coming regularly to Queensland and decided—and why not?—that this would be the best place to live and raise a family with Adam. This was a wonderful decision not just for Amanda but also for the Liberal National Party. After another associateship with then justice Philip McMurdo, she joined the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions in Brisbane. Vile individuals involved in the production and distribution of child pornography were jailed thanks to Amanda's work. Fraudsters and drug traffickers were also successfully prosecuted thanks to her determination to see justice done.

In 2011 she became one of the youngest women ever called to the bar in Queensland, and one of the most successful. She has contested cases in every corner of Queensland, from Cairns to Goondiwindi, and she has taken cases to the High Court and the Court of Appeal, where she acted for Police Commissioner Ian Stewart.

Throughout her career Amanda has supported women in the legal profession, especially after the birth of her first daughter, Mary, four years ago. She is a leading figure in the Women Lawyers Association and was very proud to order the first bar jackets for pregnant barristers to wear into court. Equality of opportunity is a principle that Amanda fiercely believes in and she is an inspiring example of how individuals, whatever their background or gender, can succeed in our society.

She was chosen as the LNP's next senator from an impressive short list of six women and six men. She was chosen because she was the best candidate for this office of senator. The LNP believes the people of Queensland should be represented by the best and brightest Queenslanders. Talent, ability and integrity are what we look for in potential MPs and senators. The LNP does not pay lip-service to our democracy. Our candidates have to take on all comers and convince their party colleagues of their worth. We believe in the ballot box.

As a professional working mum of three, Amanda Stoker has blazed a trail in Brisbane and she will blaze a trail in the Senate too. Amanda Stoker will follow Joanna Lindgren as the LNP's latest woman senator. An Indigenous woman, Joanna broke down barriers too—just as her grand-uncle Neville Bonner did when he became the first Indigenous Australian to sit in the federal parliament in 1971.

I am very happy to support the nomination of Amanda Stoker. She has seen life as millions of ordinary Australians and Queenslanders see it. She has been successful in her career to date but has not forgotten those who have been less fortunate. Amanda has already fearlessly served the people of Queensland as a public prosecutor and she will continue to serve them with distinction as their new senator. I know Amanda will bring the same understanding and compassion to her new role that she has shown throughout her career. The Senate will be a better place with Amanda Stoker in it and I hope she stays there for many years to come. I commend the motion and I wish Amanda the best of luck.