




Speech By  
**Jennifer Howard**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.53 pm): I rise to speak on the address-in-reply and, in so doing, I wish to pass on my congratulations to the Speaker of this House and commend him for his professionalism and his excellent performance in the role so far. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are standing and the traditional owners of the land in my electorate, the people of the Jagera language group.

I am deeply honoured to be re-elected to represent the state seat of Ipswich in the 2017 state election and to be standing here today as a member of the 56th Parliament of Queensland making my second address-in-reply speech to the Queensland parliament. Before being elected the member for Ipswich for the first time in 2015, I worked for a federal politician and, before that, for state politicians. I loved working in those roles but confess that, during the vast majority of that time, I harboured no ambition to be a politician. In working so closely with politicians, I saw firsthand the long hours, the public scrutiny, the incessant and often completely unwarranted criticism—let us face it, politicians are among the most disliked and maligned individuals in society—and I questioned why would anyone want to be a politician.

From 2012 to 2014, during the Newman state government, I saw what happened to my community. I saw the cuts to social services such as our beloved tenancy advocacy service, IRASI, our sexual health clinics, our legal services and, of course, to the Public Service. I saw the axing of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, which was playing such a pivotal role in Ipswich in getting people, particularly young people, back into the workforce.

People often say that there is no difference between the two major parties. During those years, what happened in Queensland, which was particularly felt in communities such as Ipswich, shows that the difference between Labor and the LNP is stark. It was that stark difference and the lived reality for so many as a result that prompted me to run in the first instance for the seat in 2015 and it is that same stark difference that I believe was responsible for me being re-elected late last year for a second term.

I have never had a moment's regret at my decision to run. Being a staff member for politicians did not show me what an absolute honour and privilege it is to represent your community in the parliament. That may sound trite, but it is completely true. For every individual who tries to bring us down either as individuals or as a party, there are 1,000 others who are doing extraordinary things in our community each and every day. These groups or individuals seek no accolades or recognition for what they do, yet what they do changes people's lives in very tangible ways. As the local MP, it is my very great honour to work with them and assist them where possible.

During the last term of parliament, I am proud of what I had been able to achieve for my beloved community. I am proud of the more than \$18 million I secured for local schools, of which the majority went to Ipswich's special schools. I love visiting them, or even when I am driving past them and see the construction activity and the jobs that brings and the raising of the morale of that school community that that investment brings. I am proud of the significant drop in youth unemployment and I delighted that the final stage of the Ipswich Motorway will happen, with \$200 million from the Palaszczuk government

going towards the project. I am pleased that, for the hardworking and community minded people of the Ipswich Turf Club, I was able to secure \$13 million for a much needed upgrade to their facilities at Bundamba.

There are smaller, less expensive projects that have also contributed enormously to the wellbeing of the Ipswich electorate, such as the Ipswich safe cycle park, which I spoke about earlier this year in this parliament during an adjournment debate and which was opened by sports minister, the Hon. Mick de Brenni; the Big Ass fans for the hall at Ipswich State Central School—and I thank Bev Sheather and the executive of the Ipswich Central School P&C for their advocacy and for their own extraordinary fundraising efforts; and the reinstatement of tenancy advisory services, to name a few.

I am not resting on my laurels. As I repeatedly remind ministers and anyone else who will listen, Ipswich has been identified as the fastest growing local government authority in Queensland. That growth is becoming increasingly and rapidly obvious. I welcome this government's commitment to building two new schools in Ripley, the fastest growing suburb of all in Ipswich. The new primary school and high school are much needed. Once built, they will relieve congestion at schools such as Raceview State School, which is well and truly at capacity.

My electorate needs more relief for its rapid growth. The people of my electorate need to see the extension of the Springfield train line right through to Ipswich. They need a second crossing of the Bremer River to relieve congestion on the David Trumpy Bridge.

I welcome the Palaszczuk government's commitment to providing an extra \$124.4 million to Ipswich Hospital. This funding will see an MRI suite established at the hospital and will assist in the development of plans to expand the hospital site and includes a 50-bed mental health facility. Recently, Ipswich Hospital experienced its busiest day in emergency on record. I have no doubt that that day will not remain the record, as the population continues to increase rapidly and, with it, the demand for health services. It is the same situation with mental health. Supporting people experiencing mental health issues is absolutely imperative. I will continue to ensure that the Ipswich electorate gets its fair share of funding to support the most vulnerable people in our community.

It is not a pleasant subject, but there is no denying that Ipswich has a high incidence of ice usage and addiction. I commend the Palaszczuk government's commitment to ending the scourge of ice and I will fight to ensure that a drug rehabilitation centre is established in Ipswich. People experiencing addiction need the community's support to help them recover and become productive citizens.

Similarly, Ipswich, like most communities, is struggling to deal with the scourge of domestic and family violence. In our first term the Palaszczuk government made great strides in tackling this issue. One of the most successful tools was the establishment of DV courts. Ipswich needs a court dedicated to domestic and family violence, and I will continue to work towards ensuring that we get one. I want to thank all of the individuals and groups in Ipswich who are working so hard to eradicate domestic and family violence—in particular, the Domestic Violence Action Centre, or DVAC, led by Gabrielle Borggaard and all of her extraordinary team.

Earlier I spoke of those exceptional citizens in Ipswich who work tirelessly to support vulnerable people in our community. I would like to make mention of all our disability support service providers who always do extraordinary things but who, for the past few years, have been dealing with the introduction of the NDIS. I am optimistic about the values and goals of the NDIS, but I am also painfully aware of the difficulties that have arisen and continue to arise during the transition process. So, to Mickael Blanc at FOCAL, Judy Dickson at ALARA and to all of the disability employment providers and support workers in my community: thank you for the work that you are doing.

Being re-elected and commencing my second term in the Queensland parliament has been a time of reflection. I am so proud to be a part of the Palaszczuk government. I congratulate the Premier and all of my colleagues who were re-elected and I thank those who were not for their service and wish them well in their futures. Looking around this side of the House today fills me with joy. The team of 2015 now feel like family to me.

It is great to see people like the member for Gaven, who is the youngest woman ever to be elected to the Queensland parliament, and the member for Cook, the first Torres Strait Islander to be elected to parliament. It is fantastic to have one of our newly created state seats named after Ipswich woman Vi Jordan, the first Labor woman elected to the Queensland parliament, and even better to see another worthy and impressive woman, Charis Mullen, elected to the seat. Queensland Labor is leading the way. Our Premier is the first female to be elected Premier under her own right, not once but twice. We have a woman as Deputy Premier and we have equal gender representation on our front bench. In fact, looking around, there are almost as many women on this side of the House as there are men. This is good for Queensland on every single level. We are making history and I am honoured to be a part of that.

I want to acknowledge former state secretary of Queensland Labor Evan Moorhead and assistant state secretary Jon Persley for their fantastic contribution to our party in this state and for their election work during the 2017 election campaign. Newly appointed state secretary Jules Campbell and assistant state secretary Sarah Mawhinney have big shoes to fill, but I have absolute confidence that they will do so admirably.

I would not be here if it were not for the women who came before me. I am so fortunate to have many wonderful women in my life but the first two role models for me were my grandmother, Sybil Norton, and my mother, Barbara Jones, both sadly no longer with us. I would not be here if it were not for the people in my life who believe in me and who stand by me no matter what, a few of whom I would like to mention today: my partner, Simon, and his son, Oliver; my daughter, Samantha, and son-in-law, Tom; and my son, Oscar. Thank you for your unwavering support and love of me. Each one of you are an inspiration to me and I love you dearly.

To my campaign director and great friends Wayne McDonnell and his wife, Bronwen Cottman, thank you. Wayne runs an excellent campaign, staying on message, working all hours and advising and supporting me, not just during campaigns but all year round. In fact, most recently Wayne and Bronwen have taken on the additional responsibility of puppy sitting the beautiful but demanding Juno, our new addition from the RSPCA. To my electorate officers, Susan and Keryl, thank you for your attention to detail, your hard work and your personal support of me.

To all of the extraordinary volunteers who stood with me at train stations and in hi-vis—volunteers who doorknocked with me, did mobile offices with me, handed out how-to-votes at prepoll and on election day, made phone calls with me, made sandwiches and delivered them: thank you. I particularly want to thank Peter Duffy who put together the booth rosters for prepoll and for election day. This is not a task for the faint-hearted. Despite the fact he had never done it before, Peter did a fantastic job.

The 2017 state election was unlike any I have ever worked on previously, as our single real opponent was Pauline Hanson's One Nation. The LNP turned its back almost entirely on the Ipswich community. Not only did it fail to field a local candidate, its support of One Nation was noted with disgust by many LNP supporters, many of them my friends and well-respected members in our community. It is not my wont to be negative, but it needs to be said that the Pauline Hanson's One Nation candidate and supporters behaved appallingly.

Day after day at prepoll, my volunteers—who are experienced and who have always behaved respectfully at each and every single election I have ever had the privilege of working alongside them at—were subjected to abuse and bullying. I have been working on campaigns for more than 20 years and I have never seen anything like it. They were an embarrassment to themselves and to everyone who had to deal with them. Of course, the bullying and abuse by them and their supporters was extended to social media where comments directly related to me were nothing short of unhinged and in some cases downright violent, like the person who made the comment on a video I had posted, 'For God's sake, someone grab the scarf and choke the bitch.' I am pleased to say that none of the abusive people I have referred to actually live in Ipswich, which is certainly a good thing, but it does make me wonder why they were so passionate about wanting to represent Ipswich people.

Again I thank Ipswich people for voting for me. I thank all of those volunteers who maintained their dignity and grace throughout this election campaign. I thank them for the phone calls, the doors knocked, the fundraising, the campaign ideas and the contributions of each and every one of you. People like my dearest friend and mentor, Margaret Doran. I hope she will not mind me saying, but Margaret is now 83 years old and she just gets better and sharper with each passing year and I love and respect her enormously.

I also want to sincerely thank my union state secretary, Neil Henderson, and all of the Services Union team for their support of me in this campaign. I thank Dick Williams for whom I have much respect and his wife, Michelle Williams, who came out to defend Ipswich against the obnoxious orange army, otherwise known as One Nation, and along with their granddaughter Lily defend us they did—admirably!

Ipswich has been identified as the fastest growing city in Queensland. Have I said that before? As members will know, we have had our fair share of challenges over the years. I know that recent events relating to the Ipswich City Council have hit us hard. Ipswich people have an indomitable spirit. Where some people see challenges we see opportunities. My commitment to Ipswich is that no single opportunity for our community will be squandered under my watch. I have no doubt that given our growth, our welcoming and hardworking community and our growing multicultural community we will continue to attract investment and support into the future. There is every reason to be optimistic about the future of our great city and I am ready, willing and able to continue my strong representation of my beloved community. Thank you.