




Speech By
Amy MacMahon

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2020

INAUGURAL SPEECH

 **Dr MacMAHON** (South Brisbane—Grn) (12.01 pm): I start by acknowledging the custodial owners of the land that we meet on today, the Jagera, Yuggera and Turrbal people, and pay respects to elders past and present. Sovereignty was never ceded and I acknowledge the struggles for land and sovereignty by the Ugarapul and Yuggera people at Deebing Creek and the Wangan and Jagalingou people in Central Western Queensland—struggles that I commit to supporting in my role inside and outside of parliament.

I have to first thank the people of South Brisbane. I look forward to fighting for you and alongside you for the next four years and beyond. South Brisbane is a rich, diverse and mobilised community and I feel so privileged to have the opportunity to represent you; to put your interests first; to fight for you before big business; to fight for our local schools, public transport, green space and push back against overdevelopment. My pledge to the people of South Brisbane is that I will be fighting for you and fighting to ensure that every Queenslanders, regardless of background or ability, gets access to the things that we need to lead a good life—homes, education, health care and community—and I look forward to what we can achieve together over the next few years, so thank you.

I want to thank my family—Sally and Phil; my siblings, Sophie, Ben and Campbell; and my surviving grandparents, Anne and Norm. With their support, I am the proud recipient of a state education and a lifetime of support for the fights and struggles that I have committed my life to, including my time in Bangladesh where my experience working with women farmers facing climate change changed my life.

I particularly want to acknowledge the ongoing inspiration of my late, great-grandmother, Ruth Miller, whose work has been acknowledged in this chamber before. In 1971 Tom Aikens, the then member for Townsville South, who was kicked out of the Labor Party for being a socialist, recognised Ruth Miller's work running a mobile clinic in Mount Isa with a particular focus on remote Aboriginal communities. Ruth was a committed republican and turned down a Queen's birthday award in the 1980s. She protested the demolition of the Bellevue Hotel by the Deen brothers just around the corner from here. I, my siblings and my cousins carry her spirit and her commitment to justice and transformative change.

I also want to acknowledge my mother, Sally Miller. Sally joins us today in the gallery. She is one of the most kind, creative and loving people that I know. The setback of a stroke in 2012 transformed our family fundamentally and the experience has highlighted for us the woeful gaps that still exist in our healthcare system, our transport system and our disability and support services. Even accessing this building is a reminder of the structural barriers that face people with disabilities. Not only these barriers but also my mother's determination have had a huge impact on my politics and have reconfirmed my commitment to a Queensland where our state's immense wealth is used for the benefit of everyday Queenslanders for access, for education, for health care, for housing, for mental health care and for publicly owned essential services that are free for everyone.

The presence of the member for Maiwar and me here is thanks to a growing movement of everyday people who are fed up with a political system that is no longer capable of meeting some of our most basic needs, a movement of everyday people who believe that, when we work together, when we connect on the issues that matter to us, we are powerful. We are more powerful than big money, we are more powerful than the big corporations and we are more powerful than the major parties.

I want to thank a team of staff and volunteers who have been driving our movement: my campaign manager, Liam, who joins us here today, and my campaign team of Elena, Eva, Sally, Declan, Csilla, Luisa and Kristin and a wide support team including Max, Nicole, Kitty, Ammar, Kirsten Lovejoy, Katinka Winston-Allom, Larissa Waters, Jonathan Sri and many more who are joining us here today.

Most importantly, thank you to the hundreds of volunteers who make up our movement and who have spent the last eight months having tens of thousands of conversations with people at the doors and on the phones delivering our powerful message of hope, and this is the message: Queensland is a wealthy state. We are rich with beautiful beaches, sunshine, farmland, rainforests. We have a rich culture and history going back at least 60,000 years and achievements in sports, science and the arts.

Of course, we are rich in mineral resources, but, unlike our beaches and sunshine, this is a wealth enjoyed only by the few at the expense of the many. In the five financial years between 2013 and 2018, 10 of the biggest mining corporations operating in Queensland made over \$128 billion in revenue and paid less than one per cent in tax, with eight of those companies paying zero dollars in tax. We have suffered a lost decade of mining revenue.

Between 2010 and 2020, mining corporations exported over \$480 billion worth of coal, minerals and LNG and only paid seven per cent royalties on that. There are mining CEOs like Mark Cutifani of Anglo American who take home \$21 million salaries but cry poor that their companies cannot afford to pay more in royalties. It is not just mining corporations. Bank misconduct has cost Australians over \$200 billion in the last five years. In Queensland that is \$38 billion that has been ripped out of the pockets of everyday Queenslanders. Meanwhile, in South Brisbane property developers have been allowed to make millions of dollars of profit off our neighbourhoods with a planning system geared towards developers rather than investment in crucial public infrastructure.

In a state as wealthy as Queensland one would expect that we would have the best funded schools, the best public transport system; one would think no child would go hungry, that no-one would be worried about having a roof over their head, that every family could afford uniforms and club sports for their kids, and that we would be a leader in climate action. From the tens of thousands of conversations we have had with everyday people right across Queensland we know that is just not the case.

Queensland is a wealthy state, but I think about the elderly woman from Dutton Park I spoke to a few months ago over the phone who wanted to move to a social housing dwelling with fewer stairs and was told there were no other housing options for her. Our social housing waiting list is now at 40,000 people, growing at a rate of 20 per cent every year.

Queensland is a wealthy state, but right now local schools and P&Cs that I have visited are fundraising for basic things like classroom resources, air conditioning or building maintenance. Our state schools are the most underfunded in the country. In South Brisbane our state schools are underfunded by \$12 million every year. Queensland is a wealthy state, but I think about the young people I have spoken to who have been out of work over the COVID period competing with at least 15 other people for every job advertised. Child poverty in Queensland is at 18 per cent, nearly the highest in the country, and the COVID crisis has exacerbated the depth of inequality in Queensland.

Queensland is a wealthy state, but we have an epidemic of mental illness. I think about the young woman in Woolloongabba who said she was looking for work and in the meantime she could not afford even the subsidised mental health sessions. She was navigating an expensive, hostile system that often passes off sadness as a personal imbalance rather than a reflection of a society that too often aligns our worth with our ability to generate profit. Queensland is a wealthy state, but there are 120 men in indefinite detention in Kangaroo Point, held in lockdown with the support of the Queensland Police service. They are coming up to eight years of their lives being lost to a barbaric system supported by both of the major parties. Queensland is a wealthy state, but after people lost their homes in bushfires this year, fossil fuel companies have continued to have coalmines approved by both of the major parties.

These issues are not natural, inevitable or insurmountable. Poverty, inequality, deprivation, racism and climate change are structural outcomes of a system that puts the profits of the few ahead of the needs of the many, a system facilitated by politicians who have so often become deeply disconnected from everyday people. These are failings created by policies and decisions about who

gets what and who makes profits; decisions about the quality of our air, our water, our climate; decisions about who gets an education, who gets a roof over their head and who can get home safely at night-time.

We in this chamber, together with our communities, social movements, unions, community groups and protest groups, have the capacity and responsibility to change that. Queensland is a wealthy state. We in this chamber have the responsibility to ensure that everyone can enjoy that wealth, the responsibility to make decisions that make sure that every Queenslander gets housing, schools, health care, food, water, clean air, time with their family and friends, and time to enjoy our beaches and rainforests. The Greens have been told that we are crazy for saying this is even possible—even by people in this chamber—but it is actually pretty simple.

It is time to take the power and wealth off the billionaires and multinational companies and give it to everyday Queenslanders. If we did that, if we made mining companies, the banks and the property developers pay their fair share, we could deliver free school breakfasts and lunches for every Queensland child; we could build 100,000 public homes across Queensland, creating thousands of jobs; we could build 200 new free GP clinics across Queensland; we could tackle overdevelopment with a planning scheme that puts people and essential infrastructure first; and we could revive manufacturing to build the solar panels, wind turbines and green steel right here in Queensland, creating thousands of jobs and achieving 100 per cent publicly owned clean energy; we could roll out a COVID economic recovery plan that puts people first.

We could do all this and more. Queensland is a wealthy state. I ask anyone in this chamber to go out and ask a regular Queenslander what they think of the idea of making big corporations finally pay their fair share of Queensland's immense wealth, if they think that is common sense, and I would bet the answer would almost certainly be 'bloody oath it is!' The question then is if this parliament is supposed to represent the people, why are we not seeing mining royalties raised so we can fund school lunches? Why are we not making the big banks pay a modest levy to fund free public transport? Why is it that Mark Cutifani can continue to make \$21 million a year while our schools cannot afford basic amenities? It is common sense to most people.

My colleague Tom O'Grady, who joins us in the gallery and who ran as the Greens' candidate in Townsville, shared with me a story about a chef who was not planning on voting because he did not think anyone running actually cared about working people. All he wanted was support with the cost of living so he could do more for his kids. After talking through the Greens' platform, he committed to voting Greens. I think about the young nurse in East Brisbane, whom I spoke to at length about our healthcare system, who felt that free hospital parking, paid for by a bank levy, would be transformative for her colleagues and her patients.

The fact of the matter is that this parliament represents Mark Cutifani of Anglo American more than it does that young nurse in East Brisbane. Queensland is a wealthy state, but our political system funnels wealth into multinational mining corporations, and for everyday people nothing is trickling down. Both major parties take millions of dollars in big corporate donations, have secretive cash-for-access meetings and jump back and forth between roles in government and lobbying firms. Queensland is a wealthy state, but our political system is rigged.

The reality is that if we want all Queenslanders to have access to the basics that we need to live a good life we need to turn this parliament inside out. We have to make it represent everyday people again, not big corporations. That is what I am here to do. For the first time ever, Queensland has two Greens MPs who are not beholden to big corporations; two Greens MPs ready to stick up for everyday Queenslanders; two Greens MPs backed up by a movement of everyday people that is only growing.

I say to the people outside of this parliament, do not leave it up to the people in this chamber alone to make this change. The scale of change we need in Queensland to tackle poverty, inequality, climate change and the housing crisis is going to take all of us. Taking on those big corporations is going to take all of us. To make parliament represent everyday people again is going to take all of us. To take back Queensland's immense wealth for the benefit of everyday people will take all of us.

To the people of South Brisbane, to the member for Maiwar, to my colleagues in the gallery and the many people who make up this movement: from the bottom of my heart I have so much gratitude for the opportunity for the next four years to be fighting for everyday people and making these changes. Thank you.