




Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

Record of Proceedings, 11 March 2021

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mrs MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (3.30 pm): It is with great pride that I stand in the chamber today re-elected as the state member for Jordan. I would like to congratulate all of the members who have been returned and welcome the new members to the 57th Parliament. It is indeed an honour and privilege to serve in this parliament—something that is never lost on me or that I ever take for granted. I love our Jordan community. It is truly special and every day I am witness to some of the very best people in our society. There are of course too many to mention, but I try to acknowledge them as often as I can.

I would like to thank the Premier of Queensland for her steadfast leadership not only during these most difficult years in a global pandemic but for the last seven years. The return of the Palaszczuk government for a third term is in no small part due to her remarkable leadership—something again that is not lost on me. I am very proud of the campaign that we fought in the seat of Jordan—a positive, engaged campaign that highlighted our considerable achievements and made a number of important commitments that focused on the needs and aspirations of our community.

When I ran in 2017 I did so because I could see some immediate and longstanding issues that needed to be fixed in our community. This included but was not limited to solving the parking issues at Springfield Central station, getting a solution to the Centenary Highway-Logan Motorway interchange, getting public transport for the communities in Greenbank and Flagstone, and fixing the bus zones in our Ipswich area as well. I feel very proud that I have been able to progress all of these issues in my first term.

Construction has now started on our \$44.5 million multistorey park-and-ride. The Minister for Transport and Main Roads and I inspected it only last week. Funding has been secured and planning is underway on the upgrade of the Centenary Highway-Logan Motorway interchange. The first ever TransLink bus service has been introduced into Greenbank and Flagstone, and we improved and added bus services for our Ipswich area. These are just a fraction of the many things that, with the support of our Labor government, we were able to achieve for our Jordan community.

Importantly, I had a very clear vision and focus on why I sought re-election. I want to look beyond the immediate. I want to futureproof our Jordan electorate for the population growth we know is coming. Whether it is the Centenary Highway, our schools, our health services, our social services or our public transport, the next four years will be critical in planning ahead.

In 2019 we opened our brand new primary school in Spring Mountain. On the very first day a journalist asked me how we could justify building a \$40 million school for the 40 students who were enrolled. To me it was a no-brainer. We were actually delivering something ahead of the growth. We planned ahead. By the end of 2019 the school numbers had more than doubled and have continued to double in 2021. This is what I mean about futureproofing. Now that I have been fortunate to be re-elected as the member for Jordan, it is where I will be focusing my priorities.

We currently have 15 schools in the Jordan electorate—all wonderful schools but a number of them are continuing to grow very quickly. It is really important that we begin to plan for our future schools, to secure land and to confirm construction and opening dates. As part of our Great Schools, Great Future plan, Labor confirmed that we would begin the immediate planning for six new schools in and around the Jordan electorate: a new primary school in the Augustine Heights-Redbank Plains vicinity, a new primary school in the Bellbird Park-Brookwater vicinity, a new primary school in Springfield, a new high school in Greater Springfield, a new high school in Greater Flagstone and a new special school in Springfield.

Late last year we also announced we would develop a new primary school in Greenbank—the first school to be built in this area in 128 years. I was so pleased to be able to join the Premier, the Minister for Education and the member for Logan just a few weeks ago as we turned the sod on this \$73 million school. Construction is now underway under the experienced hand of FKG Group, who have built a number of our recent schools. A principal will soon be appointed and we are looking forward to seeing the first students walk through the school gate in term 1 in 2022.

I am also working with all of our current schools on planning for additional buildings. This includes Springfield Central State School, where we have committed \$9.3 million for new classrooms, and Springfield Central State High School, where construction is currently underway on a brand new \$12 million building. I am also in discussions with the principals of Springfield Lakes State School and Flagstone State School on their additional requirements going forward. New and growing schools need more teachers and teaching staff. I am really proud that we as a government have committed to more than 6,100 new teachers and 1,100 new teacher aides—the single biggest investment in teachers in Queensland's history.

Beyond schools, I also want to futureproof our skills base in the Jordan electorate. It is why we are funding the Springfield Regional Jobs Committee, a group firmly focused on connecting skills with future jobs. We have announced an expansion of TAFE which is really wonderful. Locally I am even more excited that we have announced the expansion of the WesTEC Trade Training Centre in Springfield—\$2.25 million so that our young people can get the skills and training for jobs we know are coming and will be available.

It was great to join some of those students of WesTEC Trade Training Centre last month at the Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence, where they not only got to meet the Premier—which they were very excited about—but also got to see what a future in defence manufacturing could look like for them. Whether it is welding, electrical work or AI, there are so many job opportunities emerging for our young people from our strong association and support of Rheinmetall and the Land 400 military contract. We are futureproofing education, training and skills in our region.

I want to thank our incredible health staff who have supported our community through COVID-19 and particularly when our own community in Jordan had two local outbreaks in 2020. Our health staff very quickly established fever clinics—a massive undertaking. When it comes to health, I know everyone's focus in my area is on a public hospital for Springfield. I really appreciate the desire of our community to see a public hospital for the region and I am a strong advocate for this.

Since being elected in 2017, I have worked closely with Queensland Health, with West Moreton Health and with the Mater on developing a plan for what expanded health services could look like. This is a massive undertaking and work is continuing with all stakeholders to progress this important initiative for our community. I am also excited by some of the other key health initiatives for our region that will greatly benefit those in the Jordan electorate. Work has already begun on a new \$91 million acute mental health unit, providing 50 beds and something of critical need in our region. We have also announced that the Labor government will develop a brand new \$24.5 million alcohol and other drug withdrawal and rehabilitation centre for the Ipswich region—10 withdrawal beds and another 35 residential rehab beds.

I was fortunate to meet with some of the AOD clinical staff, and they were thrilled about this announcement because they know just how necessary a facility like this is for our health region. Of course, the \$460 million expansion of the Logan Hospital is absolutely critical for those who live in the Logan parts of my electorate. Again, we cannot build new hospitals or new health facilities without people. We have announced that we will grow frontline health staff—5,800 nurses and midwives, 1,500 doctors, 1,700 allied health professionals and 475 paramedics. We are providing health services now and beginning to plan for more health services here in our region.

Of course our economy has been challenged as a result of this global pandemic, and there are financial challenges which my electorate is not immune to. Many people have lost their jobs, and there is still much uncertainty with many industries impacted. In July last year I received a report that showed

that in the suburb of Springfield Lakes those who were on JobSeeker rose from 347 to 1,014 people—more than triple; I do not underestimate the task ahead—which is why I truly believe our economic recovery plan is what is going to lead us through and is already showing that Queensland is recovering faster than any other state.

My immediate focus will be on continuing to support our small businesses because I know that in the Jordan electorate 97 per cent of all businesses are small businesses. We announced a \$140 million Small Business Strategy to help our Queensland small businesses recover from the pandemic, and I want to ensure that my local small businesses are getting the benefits of this strategy.

This builds on our government's record level of support for small businesses, including: \$950 million in payroll tax relief; \$1 billion in job support loans; \$196 million in COVID-19 adaptation grants; and \$100 million in electricity rebates. Locally, more than \$840,000 was distributed to local Jordan businesses through our COVID grants. I have spoken with many business owners who have received these grants, and I know how much they have helped at such a critical time.

Our plan for economic recovery is all about backing local businesses to create more local jobs. That is something I will proudly support not only as the member for Jordan but also now as the Assistant Minister for Treasury. I am honoured to have been invited by the Premier of Queensland to undertake this role. Working closely with the Treasurer of Queensland we will not only deliver on our Unite and Recover economic plan but we will deliver on the over 1,000 commitments our Labor government made during the election. I am also pleased to be working with the Treasurer on the investments side of the portfolio, which is very exciting.

Finally, I wish to thank the amazing and dedicated team of volunteers in the Jordan electorate who have supported me and Labor. Without them I would never have been able to be returned as the member or to achieve a sizeable swing of 7.1 per cent to Labor. Thank you to the wonderful and hardworking members of the Greater Springfield and Logan West branches, particularly our Carole Park cartel—Neil, Judy, Martin and Vince—who staffed probably the least busy pre-poll booth in Queensland but who never once left their spot and ensured that every single voter who did turn up had a Charis Mullen how-to-vote card. To our small but dedicated team in Flagstone, Terry, Trish and Bev, I am always so grateful for your support in this growing area of our electorate and for your sound advice. I would like to give a massive thank you to my incredible electorate team, Fran and Rose. I am only as good as I think I am because of their hard work, dedication to our community and amazing and positive spirit.

To the Labor Party team who were a big support to me, Julie-Anne Campbell, Zak Beers and Mitchell Kingston, thank you. To my union, the Australian Workers' Union, thank you Steve Baker and team for your continued support. Thank you to my good mate Milton Dick MP, who continues to support me without reservation and for whom I will always gladly return the favour. Thank you also to Shayne Neumann MP for his assistance and support and my parliamentary colleagues and friends for their support. I am so pleased to see you returned to this parliament.

Thank you to my truly amazing family: my husband, Sean, and my daughters, Zoe and Mary. Politics can be hard on families and we continue to navigate our way through it all, but I know that without you none of this would have any real meaning or purpose. It is truly the greatest privilege to be part of our family. I love you all so much. Thank you to my wonderful parents, Leon and Katherine, and my brothers, Nickolas and Alexander, who all my life have been my biggest supporters and strongest advocates. Being part of a big Greek family is truly wonderful. You yell to be heard, you are always well fed and you always know how much you are loved.

Four years may seem like a long time, but I know it will go by ever so quickly. There is so much ahead of us, including ongoing storm recovery for our affected residents in Springfield Lakes, Springfield and Greenbank. I want to once again thank the amazing people of the Jordan electorate for giving me the opportunity and the honour to advocate for them and speak for them in the 57th Parliament.