




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (5.21 pm): I am thrilled to be delivering my third address-in-reply speech in this House as the member for Ipswich and as a member of the Palaszczuk government. Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Speaker on his re-election to the high office of Speaker of the 57th Parliament. I look forward to working with him and the Deputy Speaker, the member for Greenslopes, and all of the temporary speakers, including yourself, over the next four years.

I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and extend my respect and acknowledgment to elders past and present. We now have three First Nations people in this parliament who are changing the landscape in leadership and paving the way for a better Queensland. I pay my respects to the members for Algeester, Bundamba and Cook.

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk has distinguished herself as an exceptional leader throughout the past two terms and in particular during 2020, which was an historically significant year. At a pre-poll booth during the election last year an older gentleman approached me to tell me that he was voting for me. He went on to express his admiration and confidence in the Premier. He also referred to the leadership of Jacinda Arden in New Zealand. This thoughtful man then went on to tell me that he could not help but wonder how many opportunities have been missed in society after so many years of inequality when women were not even allowed to work, let alone have leadership roles in society.

I congratulate the Premier, Deputy Premier and Treasurer for their leadership and on their re-election. I would like to extend a warm congratulations to all of the ministers who have been appointed and sworn in to the front bench of this 57th Parliament. We are in extremely good hands. I extend a hardy congratulations to all of my parliamentary colleagues. We have all worked extremely hard, and one of the many rewards of this job for me is that I get to work with you all for another four years. In particular I want to mention and congratulate my immediate neighbours: the member for Ipswich West, the member for Bundamba and the member for Jordan. It is great working with you and joining forces to get results for our fabulous part of the world. I acknowledge the new members of parliament: the members for Cooper, Hervey Bay, Mundingburra, Caloundra, Bundaberg and Nicklin. It feels so good to list them off. I am enjoying getting to know you all and working with you during this term.

As I have said, 2020 was an historical year. I am filled with admiration and respect for the discipline and compassion of my constituents. The changes we have had to endure have been significant, but the overwhelming sentiment among the numerous people I spoke to in Ipswich in the past year has been to sacrifice their own privations for the good of the greater community. It is something they have done without a second thought, and I am proud to represent those people in this parliament. I thank them for putting their faith in me for another term. I do want to acknowledge those businesses that have not withstood the restrictions, and I assure them that I will work with them to help them rise again or reinvent themselves. Small business is the backbone of this state, and I will do all that I can to support them through our recovery.

If it were not for the Premier, Deputy Premier, Treasurer and the Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, we would be in a far worse position. Because of their strong and sage leadership Queensland has been 'good to go' for quite some time now, and the employment figures and economic results reflect that strongly.

I have learned over the years that each election has its own particular dynamic. I am pleased to report that the 2020 election—in Ipswich, at least—was one of the most respectful and civil that I can recall. I want to thank all of my opponents and their volunteers for making democracy in Ipswich great again.

Being a member of the Labor Party has many positives, not least of which is our incredible branch members. I have been proud to have worked alongside many of them over the past 25 years on numerous elections. None of us on this side of the House would be here today if it weren't for these stellar human beings. To all of those volunteers who worked on the Ipswich campaign, who doorknocked, made phone calls, worked on pre-poll and election day, stood on street corners and at train stations and mobile offices, I thank you.

I want to make special mention of my campaign director and good friend Wayne McDonnell, who agreed to take on the role when I first decided to run in 2015 and who showed up again in 2017 and now in 2020. You make campaigns fun. There is never anything left to chance, and I thank you. Margaret Doran has dedicated her life to Labor values and continues to make a valuable contribution to local Labor and each election campaign. You mean the world to me, Margaret, and I feel privileged to call you a friend.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Stop the clock. Members to my left, take your conversations outside, please. Member for Cairns too.

Ms HOWARD: Paul Cantrall and Peter Duffy, I thank you for your tireless work organising volunteers, doing up rosters and your sound advice. I want to make mention of Sarah, a woman whose home I doorknocked during the campaign. Sarah went on to make a significant contribution to the Ipswich Labor campaign, despite never having worked on one before. I am very grateful for her hard work and wisdom. I hope we did not turn you off forever, Sarah. It is only four years until the next one. It is not just politicians' and candidates' families who make sacrifices; so too do family members of campaign volunteers. I want to thank my dear friend Bronnie as well as Megan, Lyn and all of the family members of our hardworking volunteers.

I could not do what I do without my own family. I want to thank my partner, Simon, who is my best friend, my sounding board, my biggest fan, and who is always prepared to give me sage advice whether I want to hear it or not. Simon also worked incredibly hard on my campaign, putting in many hours and helping plant pictures of my face in numerous yards across Ipswich. My daughter, Samantha, and son-in-law, Tom, have become seasoned campaigners since they moved back to Queensland. It seems to come with the territory, but there is something really special about working alongside your own children during an election campaign. My son, Oscar, was in lockdown in Melbourne for the duration, but he continues to be an inspiration to me just by his existence.

I would like to thank the state secretary of the Services Union, Neil Henderson, whom I like and admire enormously. I am incredibly thankful for the support of my union and of the union movement in general. I thank Steve Baker, Chris Gazenbeek and Peter Biagini for their ongoing support as well. Jules Campbell, Zac Beers and John Battams from the party office did an outstanding job running this campaign, and I extend my sincere thanks to them and Mitchell Kingston for their support and hard work.

I sometimes have to pinch myself at my great good fortune to have Keryl Harman and Sophie Noble working in my electorate office. Keryl has been an invaluable part of my team for three years now and Sophie just joined us in May last year. These two exceptional young women are professional, hardworking and talented. My re-election is in no small part due to the way they represent me in my electorate office. I am very much looking forward to working with them for the good people of Ipswich for another four years.

There is much to be done, and I am looking forward to continuing to deliver results for Ipswich. A few months ago I turned the sod on the commencement of construction at the \$34.8 million East Ipswich train station upgrade. A month or so before that I attended the official opening of the exceptional \$24.8 million redevelopment of the Ipswich Turf Club. Ipswich Hospital now has a brand new \$5.2 million MRI, and construction is now underway on the \$91 million brand new mental health unit and the \$25 million, 26-bed ward. Planning is also moving forward on the new \$40 million satellite hospital to be built in Ipswich. Construction is now complete on the block of 20 social housing units in

the CBD of Ipswich. It looks amazing. I know that the new residents who move into the complex will enjoy quality living in the heart of town. It is just one of the 383 new social housing dwellings to be built over five years to 2022. This is what Labor governments do.

I started this year in my usual way: catching up with the hardworking school principals in my area. They have all mentioned the difference our investment in air-conditioning their schools has made to the lives of teachers, staff and students. Ipswich is hotter than most places in South-East Queensland and this summer has been no exception. I want to thank the education minister, Grace Grace, for making this important initiative a priority. The next four years will allow me to focus on what needs to be done to make Ipswich a great place to live and work.

One of the ways we can do that is to make sure we look after our natural assets and provide green spaces for the public to enjoy. I have long been interested in the great potential of the Bremer River and waterways. For far too long they have been neglected and mismanaged; however, there is growing enthusiasm in Ipswich for rehabilitating our waterways to improve local biodiversity and provide green spaces along our river that the public can easily access and enjoy. Darren Close, vice-president of the Bremer Catchment Association, is doing excellent work rehabilitating the section of the Bremer River near East Ipswich. I must also mention Job Atkinson, who has a vision to rehabilitate the Bremer River near West Ipswich. These individuals' enthusiasm, along with the great work being done by the Bremer Catchment Association, is helping to protect and improve our waterways.

The Ipswich electorate is mostly suburban, with remaining greenfield areas fast filling up with new housing developments. This means that residents in Ipswich are fiercely protective of what natural spaces we have left, and they are eager to ensure that our industrial and mining history is not used as an excuse for newer industries to come in and cause more pollution and damage to our local environment. I will focus on what more we can do as a city to protect our natural environment, improve biodiversity, develop sustainably as a growing city and make sure we provide natural spaces and eco havens that Ipswich residents need to enjoy a good quality of life.

My other focus over the next four years is ensuring that Ipswich is not left behind when it comes to getting its fair share of infrastructure and services. Our city is the fastest growing local government area in South-East Queensland. We can expect around 500,000 people to be living in Ipswich by the year 2040, so it is absolutely critical that we have adequate roads, public transport, health services and schools to keep up with that growth.

The Palaszczuk government's plan to unite and recover throughout the coronavirus pandemic saw a total of \$11 billion in stimulus funding to invest in Queensland's economy and boost productivity and jobs. More than \$7 billion in initiatives which directly supported Queenslanders' health, jobs and small businesses were delivered in the first stage of our unite and recover plan, and an additional \$4 billion was committed as part of the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review. The Treasurer in his budget speech last year was clear on the need to borrow this money to rebuild Queensland and get it on the road to recovery. In places like Ipswich, where the number of unemployed people has risen due to the impacts of the pandemic, stimulus measures are vital to bring back confidence and secure local jobs. A reckless focus on austerity and needing to get back to surplus does not cut it for those people in Ipswich who have lost their jobs or businesses because of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic.

Last May, I welcomed a number of stimulus-boosting initiatives for Ipswich that will create the local jobs we need in our city as well as provide much needed public infrastructure. This includes the \$10 million upgrade to the five-ways intersection at East Ipswich, which is currently in the planning stages, and the \$3 million for Ipswich City Council to help carry out seven infrastructure projects in the Ipswich electorate under the Works for Queensland program and the unite and recover stimulus package.

There are 85 small businesses in the Ipswich electorate which shared in almost \$740,000 worth of funding allocated through the Small Business COVID-19 Adaptation Grant program. In the lead-up to last year's election, the Palaszczuk government invested an additional \$46.5 million for stage 1 of the Ipswich Hospital expansion. This will allow the hospital to expand their emergency department, put in a new obstetrics theatre and expand their renal dialysis and nephrology services. The investment will also fund a \$24.5 million alcohol and other drug withdrawal management and rehabilitation service to meet the growing demand for rehab services in the Ipswich and West Moreton region. I am very excited about the proposed satellite hospital for Ipswich which will be invaluable as our population continues to expand at a rapid rate.

Schools in the Ipswich electorate also benefited from our COVID stimulus, with \$2.15 million delivered to upgrade learning facilities and carry out maintenance and minor works. I welcomed \$1 million in funding to progress a detailed business case for the Ipswich to Springfield rail line and

\$400,000 to undertake a study into Ipswich's transport needs. These stimulus packages will boost jobs for locals, create vital infrastructure and services for our growing city and restore confidence in our local economy. Over the next four years, I will fight hard for more of that kind of investment in Ipswich.

Ipswich is in a prime location to take advantage of a number of opportunities provided by the defence industry. Our city's close proximity to Brisbane and the Amberley Defence Force base was a factor in Ipswich being named and recognised as one of two defence hubs in Queensland. The hub provides opportunities for small to medium businesses in Ipswich, enabling them to take advantage of defence supply chains that have been opened up by larger defence manufacturing companies based in Ipswich, like Rheinmetall, Boeing and TAE Aerospace.

In February this year, I was pleased the Premier brought her entire cabinet to Rheinmetall's new facility at Redbank to sign the MOU committing our government to a long-term partnership with Rheinmetall in support of their work securing the phase 3 contract to deliver 450 infantry fighting vehicles for the Australian Army. The Premier and the cabinet got to see Rheinmetall's innovative work in building and designing the Boxer CRVs which they are delivering as part of the \$5 billion phase 2 Land 400 contract they landed with the ADF in 2018. If Rheinmetall lands the phase 3 contract, it would deliver 500 highly skilled jobs on top of the 450 jobs already being brought to Queensland through the phase 2 project. This partnership between the Queensland government and Rheinmetall is a huge winner for Ipswich and will support a thriving advanced tech industry in Queensland, delivering thousands of highly skilled jobs and opportunities for local people and businesses.

Rheinmetall's MOU with TAFE Queensland will also ensure that our young people can access skills programs that prepare them for the high-tech skill sets that future employers need to grow and boost productivity. The thousands of job opportunities in defence manufacturing come at a time when school leavers are now finding themselves in a more precarious job market or are embarking on careers that provide less long-term security than in the past. Giving our young people hope by showing them that they do not have to leave Ipswich or go interstate or overseas to get decent, well-paid jobs is something that is well worth investing in.

As the member for Ipswich, I look forward to seeking out opportunities for Ipswich that will provide benefits such as jobs, frontline services and productivity-enhancing infrastructure. In addition, I will be seeking out opportunities to improve our city's natural environment so that people can enjoy a decent quality of life. These are the things that matter to Ipswich people—having a decent job and a good quality of life. Over the next four years, I will work hard to secure those opportunities and deliver on those outcomes.