




Speech By  
**Jessica Pugh**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY**

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**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (4.50 pm): I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather today and thank them for their 60,000-odd years of continued custodianship. We are so lucky to live in a country with the oldest living culture in the world. I think it is wonderful that we are able to pay tribute to that in the people's house every single morning.

I have to say that my three years as the member for Mount Ommaney has gone by in the blink of an eye; however, our community has certainly packed a lot into that time. Upon reflecting on what I have delivered in my first term I have to say that the greatest outcomes, both big and small, for the electorate of Mount Ommaney have been driven by the community first and foremost. From the smallest thing, like the extension of the Jindalee school zone, to the largest, like the Sumner Road overpass, community is at the heart of every meeting that I have and every budget bid that I make.

As a candidate all the way back in 2015, the Sumner Road overpass was a huge issue for those living in the Centenary and Darra communities. Indeed, every house I doorknocked in the southern Centenary area raised it with me. The Sumner Road overpass, promised by the Premier at the last election in 2017, is now almost complete. I still get a thrill every time I drive over it and watch progress being made. When we made that commitment it was a four-lane bridge; however, it was subsequently upgraded in the plans to six lanes, which is cutting travel times even further. This upgrade meant some access challenges for local businesses at 28 Summers Road and gave me a wonderful opportunity as the local member to work with these businesses and lobby the minister to tweak the designs and improve access. I thank the member for Miller and Minister for Transport and Main Roads for listening to these concerns and helping to make those changes where possible.

Now, of course, my focus has shifted to the Centenary Motorway. Last year I made it a point to campaign for the Centenary 2020. The Palaszczuk government, I am pleased to say, is delivering alongside the federal government. This is a \$112 million commitment from both levels of government for a total project cost of \$244 million. The first \$20 million was committed in the last year's budget. This response typifies the consultative approach that I love so much about the Palaszczuk government—a government I am deeply proud to be serving a second term in.

For the last three years I have been proud to organise the Mount Ommaney Small Business Awards, but of course they would be nothing at all without the involvement and participation of our amazing Mount Ommaney community. Last year, well in excess of 5,000 votes were cast for hundreds of local businesses. Our business community has always been well supported by the Mount Ommaney locals, but during COVID this took on a whole new level of importance and support. The Mount Ommaney community has been nothing short of amazing in their support of our local businesses during COVID, and I thank them for that.

As I said in my speech yesterday, COVID has deeply touched every single Queenslander. Weddings and birthdays were postponed and funerals were limited at times to just a handful of people. During the height of COVID I stood up our 'Seniors Stalwarts', a crack team of volunteer callers who

worked alongside me for months making calls to seniors. I think we made well over 5,000 in six months. They were kind and reassuring to our seniors, checking in to see how they were going. Eventually I think we were able to reach out to each of our seniors at least once and at least leave a message. This was absolutely vital in connecting our community at a time when people were lonely, vulnerable and they may have been a bit afraid. While I was incredibly happy to hear that the vast majority of our local seniors were cared for by family and friends, it also uncovered some need in the community that we would likely never have found had it not been for the amazing efforts of these volunteers.

One year on we can see the light at the end of the tunnel thanks to the strong actions of the Premier, the CHO and the Queensland community. While other nations are gripped by hospitals that have been overwhelmed and unimaginable fatalities, we are looking at the light at the end of the tunnel. This parliament can look forward and plan for the future.

There is much I want to achieve in my coming term, but one issue I am particularly keen to tackle is coercive control, an insidious form of domestic violence. It is a form of domestic violence that can be much more easily hidden, and therefore it is all the more important to get to it early and stamp it out. I am sure that each and every member of the House agrees with me on this critical issue.

We cannot tackle issues big or small without our electorate staff. Once again my campaign and office were run by the amazing Rachel Hoppe. She has had a massive year. Last March at my urging she ran for council herself. Then she was straight back in the office after having taken leave to respond to the ongoing threat of COVID and then running the campaign for Mount Ommaney. I have said it before in this House and I will say it again: she is an amazing woman and I am so proud to call her my friend. She is a campaigner and office manager who is second to none. I know that she is a proud mentor to many electorate office staff around Queensland and she is friends with many electorate officers on both sides of the House. She pours her heart and soul into caring for our community. She has an incredible future in front of her.

In my office I also have Kiki and Karen. Karen is a new addition but Kiki has been there pretty much since day one. Karen has been a wonderful addition to the team. Her kind nature and generous ear for our community is a perfect fit for the role. Kristen comes from a retail background and her unflappable kindness towards everyone makes her a joy to be around. My children and hers are similar ages and my son once made the observation, 'Mum, you're a great mum but I think Kristen might be the best mum ever.' I was slightly miffed, but I did manage to argue that as a single mum at the time I was entitled to some bonus points.

In the last three years we have run the office to respond as quickly as we possibly can, and I know from the feedback I get from locals that my team does an amazing job looking after the community. I have lost count of the number of people who have stopped me in the street or at the supermarket to tell me how well my team looked after them. They are exceptional and I cannot thank them enough for what they do. There are many and varied teams of Team Mount Ommaney—or the 'Pugh Crew', as my son calls us. Since I was first preselected in 2013 for the 2015 election our team has grown mightily and is full of local community champions, Labor stalwarts and all-round amazing human beings. What I love about my branch is that it is full of amazing and diverse people and their support is the reason I am here today.

There are so many members of my amazing branch and probably about 50 very active volunteers. After the last election I decided that I could not do their contributions justice with a brief mention in a speech, so after the last election I wrote a card to each of them to thank them for their help and support during the election because I wanted each and every one of them to know how much I appreciate them. It took me seven hours to thank them all and I got a very sore hand, so I am really glad that I do not have to thank them all here today. We are like a big family, and their delight in my growing family last year brought us all even closer. Truly, I have the greatest volunteers and supporters and we are an amazing team, of which I am humbled to be but a small part.

I want to thank my federal members. Milton Dick is the gold standard of an active local member. He makes an already enjoyable job extra fun. Thanks also to the wonderful Graham Perrett, the member for Moreton. Graham is a fantastic local member but he is also a wonderful dad. I know that when it comes to walking the walk of being a good parent and a good local MP he is the real deal. He often takes his kids to events with him. We need more Grahams doing the same.

I want to thank my electoral neighbour, the Premier of Queensland. She is an amazing woman who has been a wonderful leader for Queensland and an inspiration to every woman I know. As the thrice-elected Premier of Queensland she has blazed the trail for many and set a wonderful example for young women because you cannot be what you cannot see.

It is with her positive example in mind that I reluctantly mention the conduct of some on our pre-poll, particularly the opposing candidate. At seven months pregnant I was subjected to many sexist comments about my looks by LNP volunteers and their candidate, and I know that I was not the only female Labor MP who experienced this from their opponent. I saw a number of little boys and little girls walking into the polling booth—

**Mrs Frecklington:** You had an obligation to report it.

**Ms PUGH:** I did. I saw a number of little boys and little girls walking into their polling booths with their parents and I decided that something needed to be said. I know that people in my community do not agree with objectifying women, but it needs to be said. For those in any doubt whatsoever, it is not right and it is not smart to refer to women as a pretty face in any context. In a workplace setting, it is absolutely appalling and in any modern workplace you would be shown the door. This is a leadership issue, and I was saddened that nobody called it out during the election and I am doing so today, having reported the matter to the relevant authorities.

I am pleased to say that it is not an issue for my union, the United Workers Union, which boasts an impressive number of female members and some wonderful blokes too. I want to thank the UWU team for their advice and support during the election and right throughout my first term. I am so proud to be part of a union that stands up for workers like cleaners, teacher aides and hospo workers. I thank their whole team and in particular Connor for being my point person.

I turn to my amazing community. Wow! What a special place I have the honour of representing. Our small businesses form the heart of our community, regularly supporting and hosting charity events. Our 4074 page is so much more than just a Facebook page. It unites the community with events and common causes. I spent my first term highlighting individual people and community groups in this place, and I will spend my next term highlighting even more. I have made some absolutely amazing friends in the community and I have been blown away by the support some of our community members quietly provide without ever asking for recognition or applause. I will continue to shine a light on these amazing people. The trust that they have placed in me is deeply touching and I will strive every day to be worthy of it.

Finally, I thank my amazing family, all of them. My family has grown a lot since I last gave an address-in-reply speech. Last time I was a single mum with my awesome babies, Heath and Allegra, and I got heaps of help from my mum and dad, Paula and David. Now I am married to an amazing man and I am still getting lots of help from my mum and dad—some things never change. My mum and dad are awesome parents and partners in this role. I cannot say enough for all that they do for me. I have also got two wonderful in-laws, Julie and David, who are a wonderful help with my now increasingly independent children, who walk themselves to school every day and never cease to amaze me with their kind hearts and unique perspectives on life. In fact, David is standing right out there holding the baby because she is ready for a feed.

People say my daughter Allegra, who is now in her final year of primary at Middle Park, is my mirror image, and she is the kindest person I know. Every day I see more of myself in you, Allegra, and I am both terrified and happy to think that if I set a good example for you I can play a small role in showing you the way. Heath, on the other hand, is the spitting image of his dad, Hugh, although he absolutely has my stubborn streak. He was one year old when I became a candidate and he is now nine—smart and strong and the best and most caring big brother. He is learning to change nappies under the watchful eye of Allegra and he takes his role very seriously.

Hugh has been really helpful in working with the demands of my job and I thank him for that. In fact, he has just bought a house in the Mount Ommaney electorate, so I will be hitting him up for a sign site next election. I am very proud of our co-parenting relationship and the fact that we can celebrate Christmas as a family under one roof. Having a blended—not broken—family can pose some unique challenges but I tell you what: it is absolutely worth it. I encourage everyone to stop using the outdated term 'broken family' and consider the impact it has on children who do not live in nuclear family households. I also thank Hugh's mum, Kathy. She is an amazing nana to Heath and Allegra and was a lifesaver during lockdown when she tutored my kids so I could occasionally get some work done. They say the penalty for divorce is two mothers-in-law; instead, I have hit the jackpot not once but twice.

I am incredibly lucky with my family. Earlier last year during the COVID lockdown, my husband, Talbot, and I were able to have a little family lockdown wedding in our backyard. I know that many Queenslanders had to change their plans due to COVID, and I hope that their wedding day was as special as mine. My husband, Talbot, is my rock. He is my backstop, my other half in juggling this job and being a mum. It takes a pretty special person to be a partner to someone doing this job, and I could not ask for a better or stronger supporter than I have in him. I suppose I should thank fate in the form

of chief whip Don Brown for assigning me to the natural resources committee last term. It was not my first choice, that is for sure, but it was during my time on this committee that I crossed paths with Talbot, so I believe it was kismet that it turned out this way. I had an absolute blast with my fellow committee members, and special thanks to Uncle Anthony, as he is now known, for giving his blessing.

Talbot has been amazing right from day one with my kids and my whole family, and this January our family welcomed a new addition—baby Elyse Annastacia Speechley Pugh. She is already a familiar face around parliament thanks to my in-laws, David and Julie, who have made the trip from Beerwah to look after her—hopefully, every parliamentary sitting. I feel really lucky to have not just a village but the whole community behind me every step of the way with my new addition.

Elyse was such a blessing for my family. In the words of my daughter Allegra, she completes our beautiful family and she has brought us all closer together. We found out we were expecting on Easter Sunday, a day that symbolises new life, and she was born on New Year's Day, which is also a day that symbolises a new start—or, in my husband's case, it is cricket season. He lobbied tirelessly over many months to name our daughter after cricketer legend Elyse Perry, arguing that she is a strong woman. I thought that was a fair sentiment and I decided that Annastacia was a fitting tribute to her political roots that brought her parents together. Also, Annastacia means 'resurrection', the meaning of Easter. It is a perfect name for the best baby girl—'Best' being a family name as well. So I have the community to thank for not only the job that I love but also for playing a role in introducing me to the love of my life. Like I said, I think I have the best electorate in Queensland.

I have been so incredibly touched by the support I have received from my beautiful community, including with handmade baby rugs and hand sewn clothes. It has been absolutely incredible, and I am truly humbled that my community is supporting me not just as a local member but as a human being and a mum too. As I said, it is just one of the many reasons that I think Mount Ommaney is really special and why I am so very lucky to be their member of parliament.