




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts) (4.20 pm): It is an honour to have been elected for a third term to represent the people of Algester, be part of the Palaszczuk government and rise today to contribute to my third address-in-reply. In the Jandai language of my people, the Quandamooka people, Yura. Nariba baje baru wunyayi yura. Nya goorigen jagenjen Yuggera Turrbal yura. Ngali jagijin marumba balga yari gana. I begin by acknowledging our ancestors present and past, and also the Jagera and Turrbal people and their country on which we sit. Let us welcome the good spirits here where we talk, think and understand.

I also pay special respect to my family who continue to be my greatest source of support and encouragement, including my mother, Lyn; my brothers, Wesley, Rodney and Andrew; and, of course, my two wonderful sons, Callum and Ethan. I extend my respects to my large and extended family: my aunts, uncles, nephews and nieces, along with the scores of cousins who every day provide me with unconditional love and support. I also acknowledge my union family, the AMWU and the CPSU, in particular for their incredible support throughout the election campaign and their continued support for me as the member for Algester.

The electorate of Algester is a diverse and vibrant community. Like all Queenslanders, my community is recovering from the impacts of COVID-19 and banded together to help overcome the challenges we faced as a community. One of the ways we did that was through buying local. As part of our state's economic recovery for Algester, the Palaszczuk government committed more than \$1.1 million in small business grants to help support local organisations. Many benefitted from a Palaszczuk government small business COVID-19 adaptation grant and, from speaking firsthand to dozens of those small business owners, I know that those grants went a long way to assisting businesses during COVID-19.

Local schools in the Algester electorate have also received a funding boost from the Palaszczuk government. An incredible \$10.75 million was committed for a new three-storey state-of-the-art building at Pallara State School, which is now hosting 17 learning spaces and two prep areas. Algester State School received \$1.45 million to refurbish and finalise their administration building, which I saw recently and it is fantastic, and, of course, to install a new security fence, which has made all the difference to the school. Extra classrooms have been added to Calamvale Community College thanks to an \$8.95 million investment from the Palaszczuk government and the list does not stop there. Other schools that are receiving funding boosts include Calamvale Special School, Acacia Ridge State School, Watson Road State School and St Bernadine's Catholic Primary School. It is clear that the Palaszczuk government cares about a strong and supportive education for the next generation of Queenslanders.

In addition to that support, the Palaszczuk government is also providing the Acacia Ridge sports hub with \$500,000 as part of the Mortimer Road Park sport and recreation precinct. That precinct is home to several local sporting clubs, including Souths junior rugby league football club and Acacia

Ridge Soccer Club, that opened their doors and hearts to local organisations during COVID-19. Adjacent to the Mortimer Road sports precinct is a piece of aviation history: the Archerfield Airport. For years I have been working with Archerfield Airport to secure funding for their Airside Infrastructure Modernisation project. I am pleased that our government has contributed more than \$13 million to improve and modernise facilities and help the airport become an economic and employment hub.

As part of the Palaszczuk government's economic recovery plan we are delivering \$30 million to upgrade the intersection of Beaudesert Road, Algester Road and Illaweena Street to ease congestion and improve commuter and pedestrian safety. On that note, I acknowledge our dear departed friend, the member for Stretton, Duncan Pegg, who worked very closely with me on the election commitment to deliver that great project for our local community. It is something that he was very passionate about as well. Certainly, seeing the project come to fruition will fulfil one of the things that he was working hard for his community on, alongside myself.

Every member of parliament knows that a local election campaign is a team effort. I particularly thank Don Fraser, Barry and Janess Petersen, Nayda Hernandez, Tony Bergman, John Tapp, Anne-Marie Newton, Maria Halwood, Marcus Pedro, Cassie and Connor Cusack, Peter Chalmers, Jorgen Gullestrup, Gertrude Sios, Logan Mete, Harrison Quin, Rose Matters and the many other friends and family who gave their time and hearts to supporting the campaign. I acknowledge, of course, the many representatives of unions who also assisted, in particular, those from the AMWU and the CPSU. I acknowledge the hard work and dedication of my electorate staff—Amelia Norton, Shelley Flores, Bradley Watson and Louise Nann—who continue to support Algester constituents.

In the last term of government I was fortunate to be the minister for the environment and the Great Barrier Reef and minister for science. I am proud of what we achieved in that portfolio, including action on climate change; the ban on single-use plastic bags and paving the way for banning other single-use plastic items; ending broadscale land clearing; implementing the highly successful container refund scheme; putting an end to interstate dumping; protecting the Great Barrier Reef through record investment and strong regulations to address runoff; and creating special wildlife reserves. I am very proud of the strides made in recognising the unique place of traditional owners in managing national parks and, in particular, the commitment to doubling the number of Indigenous land and sea rangers. I have no doubt whatsoever that the member for Gaven, who has now taken over as Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science, will do amazing things in the portfolio. I know she is incredibly passionate about protecting our state's environment and she has all the energy required to make that happen.

It is an honour to be the Minister for Communities and Housing, Minister for Digital Economy and Minister for the Arts in this term of government. The Palaszczuk government has achieved a lot in those portfolios and I know that there is more work to be done. Our government's priority is and always will be the safety and wellbeing of Queenslanders. That is why we see a \$2.9 billion total housing investment in this week's state budget, which is the largest concentrated investment in social housing in Queensland's history. With a \$1.9 billion investment over four years, we are increasing the supply of social and affordable housing by almost 10,000 homes over the life of our housing strategy, including 7,400 new builds over the next four years.

Importantly, First Nations peoples are at the forefront of decision-making when it comes to creating housing outcomes in their communities. Since coming into this portfolio one of the most significant moments I have experienced was seeing the establishment of the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing peak body to respond to the unique housing experiences and aspirations of First Nations peoples. I pay tribute and acknowledge the former housing minister, the member for Springwood, who did an outstanding job to set in motion all of those fantastic outcomes and, of course, to lay the foundations through the Queensland Housing Strategy to set us up for the announcements we have seen this week in the budget.

In the digital space it is forecast that there will be an additional 10,000 digital professionals in Queensland by 2024. That is why our government is investing \$8 million over four years to deliver the Digital Professional Workforce Plan to ensure Queenslanders have the skills for the jobs now and into the future. We have also launched the Check In Qld app, which is an important tool in the government's economic recovery. Some 3.5 million Queenslanders have downloaded the app, 47,000 businesses have registered and we have seen more than 58.5 million check-ins. It is an incredible success and a great tribute to all Queenslanders who continue to work hard to keep us all safe from COVID-19.

The pandemic has also had a huge impact on the arts sector. Our government implemented nearly \$60 million worth of relief measures to help the industry through this challenging time. The arts is key to Queensland's economic recovery, each year injecting \$8.5 billion into the state's economy and supporting more than 92,000 Queensland jobs.

This year I have had the opportunity to attend numerous performances where theatres have seen 100 per cent capacity once again. We know this is not the experience of other parts of the country and the world. Whether it is the ballet, symphony orchestra, opera, theatre or our galleries, it is great to see the arts sector bouncing back in Queensland. It is a testament to the timely and targeted support from the Palaszczuk government in response to the pandemic and, of course, a testament to the incredible resilience and innovation of the artists and performers that make up the arts sector in Queensland.

This is my third term in this parliament and serving as a minister. In 2015, it was a proud moment to stand in this House and speak as the first Aboriginal woman elected to this parliament. Now, of course, we have three First Nations MPs serving in this parliament—all Labor members. I am proud to stand beside my colleagues the member for Cook, Cynthia Lui, and the member for Bundamba, Lance McCallum, as we serve in the Palaszczuk government. Having three First Nations representatives in this House is a great, albeit overdue, achievement. In recognising that we still have a long way to go and the challenges remain many, it also brings huge expectations.

In my maiden speech in 2015 I referenced a donation to my campaign of \$8.25. It was from an Aboriginal elder in the community with whom I had worked alongside on the stolen wages campaign. She had gathered up what change she could spare and placed it in a ziplock bag to have it delivered to me on election day. Remember, this is a woman who had been removed from her family and sent to work for wages that she never actually saw. She, like so many others of her generation, had been severely disadvantaged by policies that discriminated against the First Nations peoples of this country, based solely on the colour of their skin and their cultural background, the impacts of which are still felt and experienced today. That \$8.25 has a place on my desk in my electorate office and reminds me that, although change may take some time and the path may be more challenging than one can ever imagine, meaningful change is still worth fighting for and that even the smallest contribution can mean so much.

I am not exaggerating when I say that this system and this place are not exactly designed with First Nations peoples or traditional owners in mind. Back when this parliamentary system was being determined, I do not imagine that there was ever a thought that a traditional owner might actually take a seat in this place, let alone serve as a minister in the cabinet; yet here we are, although it is fair to say that it is not always a comfortable fit.

As a member of this parliament, I have been confronted by some of the protocols that belong to this place and, at times, some of the views of members. I have been most confronted by the level of white privilege I have had to bear witness to from the Greens party in particular. Even after I reached out to explain certain positions they had taken and their own acknowledgement that indeed they were demonstrating their white privilege regarding those issues, they still declared that they would not adjust their approach. It is this attitude towards First Nations issues, where they pick and choose what they want from our people and our cultures to suit their agenda, that has been incredibly disturbing. It is clear that, despite their rhetoric, coloniser views are alive and well in the Queensland Greens.

As a minister in the cabinet, my birth right as a Quandamooka woman has prevented me from being part of any decision-making regarding my own people due to a perceived conflict of interest, even though there are literally thousands of Quandamooka people across the community. I have had to declare my status as a Quandamooka person before certain legislation debated in this House, and I have had to remove myself from cabinet and other ministerial forums when decisions related to Quandamooka people are discussed—not because I am a registered member of any legal entity that would create a conflict in the usual way for any other person in this place, but simply because I am a Quandamooka person. The standards that I have been held to are not the same as for others in this House.

One of the hardest parts of this fact is that I have had to silently watch from the sidelines as the LNP, in particular the member for Oodgeroo, and the Greens appear to disregard native title rights and drive division in families. Whether or not it is deliberate, they appear to have inserted themselves into the middle of families and long-held culturally and legally agreed protocols, turning brother against sister to serve their own political agendas. Sometimes I think there are those who like to see First Nations peoples in dispute with ourselves so that they can use our culture against us while distracting the broader community from the big, complex, transformational issues that represent the profound challenges of our generation—a well-used strategy of colonisers across the globe. Even in the face of these moments of discomfort, I am reminded of that \$8.25 sitting on my desk, and I know that there are so many aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters who are relying on us to keep pushing for meaningful change.

Last term in my address-in-reply speech, I spoke on the need for a path to treaty or treaties in this state, and I am very proud to be part of a government that is progressing this important work. This past year we have seen conversations in truth telling globally amplified through the Black Lives Matter movement, raising important dialogue about the historical legacy of oppression and institutional racism.

We need a fearless commitment to telling the truth of our shared past—the sometimes ugly, uncomfortable, hard-to-talk-about truth, a truth that includes exposing the decades-long frontier wars that took place across this continent and all the atrocities that accompanied it, a truth that peels back the layers of policy and legislation that for years have been trying to resolve stolen lands, stolen generations and stolen wages without seeking out the core reason there is a gap to be closed in the first place, a truth that, if embraced, could provide a sense of healing that I truly believe will help propel us into a brighter, more prosperous future for all Australians—a future that allows us all, whatever our backgrounds, to feel a deep pride in our place in this great nation.

As a proud Quandamooka woman, I know firsthand the importance of educating our state in the wisdom of the world's oldest continuous living cultures, and as one of three First Nations members of parliament I am committed to working on a path to treaty. I welcome the Treasurer's announcement of the establishment of the \$300 million treaty investment fund. It is the first of its kind in Queensland and a strong indication to Queenslanders of the importance placed on this work by the Palaszczuk government.

This government supports a path to treaty by strengthening the way to greater reconciliation, self-determination and a more inclusive and respectful shared future in line with Tracks to Treaty. Tracks to Treaty is about acknowledging the past and paving a way forward. Through Tracks to Treaty, we are committed to moving forward together with mutual respect, recognition and willingness to speak the truth about our shared history.

I, like those on this side of the House, remain committed to seeing the Path to Treaty or treaties supported through to reality in this state, but we need all members of this House, regardless of political allegiance, to support this important work so we can finally, as a state, explore and accept the truth of our shared history as we move toward a conversation to fully understand our relationships right now and propel our actions toward the next steps in agreement making.

It is not always comfortable, but every day that I get to stand in this House as the member for Algeester I am reminded of everything that the \$8.25 sitting on my desk represents—an acknowledgement of a sometimes painful and challenging past and a recognition that there is hope for a brighter, more prosperous future for all of us in this state. I am very proud to be the member for Algeester, I am proud to be a Quandamooka woman and I am proud to be part of this team, the Palaszczuk government, continuing to work so hard to ensure that everybody in this state has a prosperous future.