




Speech By
Hon. Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (4.54 pm): I start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather today—the Jagera and Turrbal people—and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which my electorate sits—the Kombumerri people and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

I said in my first speech that my presence in this House as a then 24-year-old woman being elected as a Labor MP on the Gold Coast was unlikely. So unusual was my election that a staff member who shall remain nameless nearly did not let me in to the Legislative Assembly following the Governor's speech for the opening of parliament, explaining to me in the hallway as elected members were asked to leave the upper house that 'this was just for MPs'.

I would be lying if I said that there were not significant barriers for young women in politics. We need only look to the experiences of many brave voices from the federal parliament who are speaking out to say enough is enough. While these headlines may deter some from entering institutions of power, I am a firm believer that the only way we will create the reform needed for gender parity is to hold a seat at the table and break through that glass ceiling one small crack at a time.

I am incredibly grateful to be given the extraordinary privilege to hold a seat at that table and be returned to this place for a second term. I express my deepest gratitude and thanks to the people of Gaven for trusting me to continue representing our community—the place that I grew up in and love. Despite there being more than double the number of candidates in the field this election, I was incredibly grateful, and in all honesty surprised, at the swing we received going from a 0.7 per cent margin to a nearly 7.8 per cent margin. There were people who voted Labor for the very first time, and I will never take that trust for granted.

Like the commitment I made in 2017, regardless of your political persuasion, I remain steadfastly committed to doing what is best for the Gaven electorate. Whilst I am deeply honoured to be given the responsibility of the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs, the most important title I have is MP. Serving my local community is and always will be the highest priority.

My presence in this chamber would not be possible though had it not been for the many volunteers who gave up their time to campaign on our team. From residents in the community, branch members through to family and friends, I would not be here today without their support. I give a special thanks to the volunteers who made phone calls, doorknocked, letterbox dropped, organised postal votes, did street stalls through to staffing pre-poll and election day. Words will never express how grateful I am to have the support of so many kind and generous people.

To the staff of the Queensland Labor Party, particularly Julie-Ann Campbell, Kerry Kahlon, Stephanie Sall, Brianna Rose-Bailey and David Shaw: thank you for your enormous effort in keeping Gaven red and for putting up with my frequent panicked phone calls. Thanks also to the mighty union movement—my union the United Workers Union, as well as the ETU, RTBU and MUA—for their support.

At difficult moments during the last term I reminded myself of the quote: ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.’ While there were a growing number of people who volunteered so much of their time—and I wish I could name them all here today—there are a few people I need to specifically mention.

Megan Kennedy-Clarke is our electorate officer and so much more. Megan is the person you want in your corner when things get tough. Her selflessness, dedication to the cause, generosity and ability to pick up new skills when I say, ‘I have a good idea,’ ranging from trying unreasonable requests like turning around a mail-out to nurses with hand creams within a week through to learning to fly a drone should make her eligible for sainthood.


Luke Eyres is our AEO or, as many refer to him as, ‘that lovely young man in your office’. Luke is one of the most generous people you will ever meet. He will drop everything to help if you ask and is the person who will jeopardise often his own health for the betterment of others. Luke, like me, sometimes gets frustrated at the time it takes to create progressive reform, so today I restate my commitment to him that I will continue to push for a Queensland and Labor Party that future generations will be proud of.

Kathy Cardona is our other AEO. You will not find a prouder resident of Nerang than Kathy and her husband, Pete. Both give up huge amounts of time in our area at Country Paradise Parklands in an effort to ensure residents are not socially isolated. It was therefore a no-brainer that she take on the work on complicated constituent matters.

Margaret Cox had never been involved in an election campaign before, but she made up for that in spades. Margaret dedicated her professional life to helping vulnerable Queenslanders, and in retirement she has not stopped playing an integral role in the campaign—doing all of the public out-facing activities on our campaign, as well as key organisation assistance behind the scenes.

Last and certainly not least I thank my mum and my brother, Callum. Callum, or as he likes to be referred to as ‘my favourite brother’—despite having no other siblings—is not particularly interested in politics. However, he is fiercely competitive and protective of those he loves, so naturally those attributes come in handy on pre-poll. In those last tough and long few weeks of the campaign, seeing Callum’s face at the voting booth gave me the energy I needed and reminded me why I entered politics in the first place.

Finally, I mention my mum. For much of our lives Mum raised Callum and me as a single parent, and she made up for that absence with double the focus. She has dedicated her entire life to ensuring that my brother and I reach our fullest potential. My mum is tired though. Every day she gets up to care for my brother, Callum, who has Down syndrome. There are some really lovely moments because Callum is a kind-hearted, funny and decent bloke, but there are some challenging times. Mum is tired because for his entire life she has been advocating for him to be given the same basic opportunities I was: to get a quality education, to get a job and to gain as much independence as possible. I shared the story of this fight in my first speech at our high school; 10 years later, not a lot has changed.

 **Hon. MAJ SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs) (6.10 pm), continuing: Most recently my mum spoke out at a conference pleading for the Commonwealth to reverse the decision to bring in the privatised independent assessment process as well as raising concerns over the new Sustainability Action Taskforce, a razor gang within the National Disability Insurance Agency which is reported to have told staff to ‘slow down’ getting Australians with a disability on the NDIS and to slow their funding. My mum is busy enough trying to care for my brother. Carers and people with a disability should not have to keep fighting for basic rights. I am lucky to have a platform to raise issues on the public record and restate my commitment to lending a voice to those vulnerable Queenslanders who deserve to be listened to.

We advocated on some big issues last term, from the NDIS through to aged care, and we delivered on what we said we would do: the Nerang BMX track upgrades; Pacific Pines State School \$900,000 resource centre upgrade; \$800,000 upgrade of classrooms at Worongary State School; and Pacific Pines State High School’s multimillion dollar new 2020 Ready two-storey building. We delivered the first two upgrades of the M1, we installed traffic signals and road lighting on Beaudesert Nerang Road at the Nerang fire station and we restored frontline health services.

At this election I made a number of commitments, and I intend on ensuring every one is delivered, like we did last term. Ensuring Gold Coasters have good, permanent, full-time work has always been a priority for me. With a large manufacturing base in my electorate I advocated for a manufacturing hub, and I am pleased that funding has been allocated for this to be based in Nerang.

Like any good Labor government, our priorities remain investing in critical frontline services. When it comes to education, we will be delivering over \$20 million to deliver a massive expansion of classrooms at Pacific Pines State High School; \$5 million to upgrade the performing arts space at Nerang State High School; and \$350,000 for Nerang State Primary School to go towards general upgrades including to the prep playground. I was pleased to call the principal last night and advise her of a further million dollars that will be added to further enhance facilities at that primary school. We are also providing \$350,000 to upgrade the STEM building at Worongary State School and \$700,000 for upgrades at William Duncan State School. We will be air-conditioning every state school classroom, library and staffroom by mid-2022 and delivering over 190,000 solar panels for state school rooftops.

We are also investing in tertiary education, recently opening the new \$10.5 million trades training centre at Ashmore TAFE and a \$10 million nursing and allied health facility. Work will commence on a new \$5.7 million plumbing tower at Ashmore, there is \$11 million to expand our TAFE training facility in Coomera and there is funding for a new eco-friendly TAFE campus in Robina.

When it comes to roads and transport, a number of big projects will commence in this term of government. There will be a \$755 million investment to begin construction of the second M1 from Carrara to Coomera, creating 700 new jobs. We have committed funding to upgrade Yalkuri Drive and the Maudsland Road and Beaudesert Nerang Road intersection. Following a transport mobility study conducted last year, we will be delivering a \$2.8 million demand response trial for Nerang West, Highland Park and Pacific Pines which will allow families who do not have immediate access to public transport to be picked up from their address on demand.

We are building three new train stations for the Gold Coast as part of the Cross River Rail package at Helensvale North, Merrimac and Pimpama. We are building Light Rail stage 3 as well as delivering a business case for stage 4. We have allocated \$1 million to install sound barriers on Nerang Broadbeach Road and there will be a multimodal study for Nerang Broadbeach Road to look at rapid transit options.

The list goes on. For the Gold Coast health system, we will be investing to deliver over 680 new nurses and midwives, over 160 new doctors and over 160 new allied health workers. There is \$105 million for a new 40-bed secure mental health rehabilitation unit, something I know many people in my community advocated for. We recently opened the new \$5.8 million hybrid theatre, and we are also delivering a \$40 million new satellite hospital on the southern Gold Coast.

We are the party that created Medicare and we will continue to invest to ensure Gold Coasters get the health care they need.

Mrs Gerber interjected.

Ms SCANLON: I note that the member for Currumbin is interjecting. It is interesting to hear from those opposite on these projects because, of course, these projects would not have been delivered had those opposite received enough seats to be entered into government. They did not match the Palaszczuk government on any of these projects during the election, and I will be reminding everyone of this fact whenever those opposite wish to make commentary, particularly given their appalling track record under Campbell Newman when health workers on the Gold Coast were so callously sacked. This budget will see even more funding for education, and I just mentioned a number of projects.

We are delivering not only frontline services but also progressive reform. Last term we created a new offence of industrial manslaughter; we criminalised revenge porn; we criminalised wage theft; we have made TAFE free for young Queenslanders; we legislated Queensland's own Human Rights Act; and we no longer criminalise a woman's right to have agency over her own body. We started the conversation around treaty with First Nations Queenslanders, and we made proper reparations for having stolen the wages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in past decades. I am very proud to be a part of a government that made a significant contribution today as part of the Path to Treaty.

We banned developer donations and we have the strongest, fairest and most transparent electoral laws in Australia, including real-time donation disclosures and expenditure caps. We created the nurse navigator positions, the first of its kind in Australia, as well as implemented nurse-to-patient ratios and minimum staffing levels in publicly owned aged-care facilities. We made it a requirement to have a teacher aide in all prep classrooms and career progression for high-achieving teachers. We expunged historical homosexuality convictions and allowed same-sex couples to foster kids in care.

We are building hundreds of new public housing homes on the Gold Coast as well as a new youth foyer for at-risk young people. Again, I was incredibly proud to be a part of this government that announced record funding for public housing throughout this state.

The list goes on, including in the environment. Right across our state, the Palaszczuk government is making meaningful and positive change when it comes to jobs, protecting our natural assets and driving our economic recovery from COVID-19.

It is an honour to continue delivering the legacy of my previous ministerial colleagues as the Minister for the Environment and Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs. This budget is investing \$1.4 billion for the environment and for jobs. This year's record investment will see a significant focus on the ongoing protection of the reef, measures to reduce landfill, land regeneration and conservation while creating jobs as part of the state's COVID-19 economic recovery plan. That includes: \$270 million for the Great Barrier Reef; \$60 million for the Land Restoration Fund; \$254 million for waste programs and initiatives; \$12 million for our Crocwise program; \$8.6 million for national parks infrastructure, visitor experiences and engagement with First Nations communities; \$8 million for ongoing scientific research; \$6 million for the South East Queensland Wildlife Hospital Network; and \$3.7 million for koala conservation projects.

When we announced Queensland's plan for economic recovery last year, we made sure that protecting our environment would be a key pillar. We know that to protect the environment we must drive down emissions and create the jobs of the future, which is what this budget does. This investment in the environment, together with record investment in this budget for renewable energy, will help Queensland meet its emission targets. We have also passed significant legislation, like the ban of single-use plastics, with thousands of businesses gearing up to ditch plastics ahead of the 1 September ban.

We have returned the protected areas of Mulgumpin—Moreton Island—to traditional owners with the passing of legislation just in the last month to transfer back some 17,000 hectares of national and conservation park land. The passing of the legislation is about the ongoing recognition of Quandamooka connection to the land, returning rightful ownership to traditional owners and working with them to manage and promote new tourism opportunities for this national treasure.

This government knows just how important protecting our environment is to creating jobs. It is why we have set a 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030 and a net zero emissions target by 2050. We are well on our way to achieving those targets. We have increased renewable energy generation by almost 300 per cent, and we are building on it with new renewable energy zones, like in the Far North where the Premier only recently announced that the Palaszczuk government will unlock 350 jobs and \$370 million in renewable energy infrastructure. We have established Queensland's new publicly owned clean energy generator, CleanCo, focused on growing a portfolio of low- and zero-emission electricity generation assets. We have implemented containers for change, which has seen more than four billion containers diverted from landfill, \$400 million back into the pockets of community organisations and individuals and 700 jobs at facilities right across Queensland.

We are also working with primary producers right across the state to make their farms more sustainable and profitable and to protect our \$6 billion, 60,000-job-supporting World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef. We released Queensland's strongest ever koala protections with the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy. We have stopped widescale tree clearing and established the Land Restoration Fund to monetise carbon sequestration through vegetation protection and better land use management. Queensland now has some of the strongest mine rehabilitation laws in the world, with a financial assurance fund to guarantee rehabilitation costs are being provisioned for and independently managed, alongside the independent Office of the Rehabilitation Commissioner. As the home of the world's largest coral reef system and more than 1,000 national parks and protected areas—double the size of Tasmania—the Palaszczuk government knows just how big a role the environment plays in Queensland's economy.

Our budget also focuses on building Queensland's scientific capacity with a further \$7.7 million over three years for research into disaster management, water quality modelling and sediment management. Our scientific and health experts helped keep Queenslanders safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing us to kickstart an economic recovery focused on jobs. We are backing them with close to \$8 million in additional funding to support the 300-plus scientists who work tirelessly in the pursuit of scientific excellence, because we trust the science and the experts. Thanks to the medical experts and science, Queenslanders have continued to manage the pandemic.

I will conclude by paying tribute to my year 7 teacher, Mick Beard, who was present in the gallery when I delivered my first speech and sadly passed away in October last year. The world has lost a giant in the education sector and one of my favourite people. Mick Beard's teaching method was not ordinary

and the impact that he had on students was extraordinary. He is the person who inspired me to critically think, challenge the status quo and be a part of reforming public policy. While changing minds and laws can feel painfully slow at times, Mr Beard is the person who taught us that changing the world one step at a time is a worthwhile endeavour.

This election was different without him. In 2017, despite being very unwell, he was insistent that he help hand out how-to-vote cards for me on the pre-poll booth. The last time we saw each other was filled with laughs and a couple of drinks at Javeenbah Theatre Company in Nerang where he was loved and known by so many in our community. Mr Beard leaves behind a legacy of students who are better people because of him. He will be greatly missed.