




Speech By
Melissa McMahon

MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

Record of Proceedings, 25 February 2021

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mrs McMAHON** (Macalister—ALP) (3.43 pm): Madam Deputy Speaker Lui, I start by congratulating you on your appointment to your position this term and by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather today, the Jagera and Turrbal people. I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which my electorate sits, the Yugambeh-speaking people. I acknowledge my local elders, Aunty Robyn and Ted Williams. Since the time of my first speech, only recently we lost Aunty Eileen. I acknowledge the sorry business that is occurring in my local community.

Here I stand at the beginning of my second term. I feel that I must reflect and comment on the first term. I can confirm that the sense of wonder and privilege upon entering this institution has not completely subsided, but I would like to think that I am starting to get the hang of it. Let's face it: the dynamics of this job, this workplace and this chamber are unlike any other. It can be all at once bewildering and challenging, but I would not have put up my hand in the first place if I were not up for a challenge.

What I really love about this role is my time and work in my electorate. I have decided that being in the electorate office is not unlike my time working in a police beat. We are an outpost of a much larger machine of government and you just do not know what is about to walk through the door or ring through. It makes it exciting. It does make it challenging, but it also makes it rewarding. I would love to say that everyone who walks in the door leaves happy, but life just does not work that way. We know that many will have tried every other avenue before contacting their local MP and we know that a significant number of others have no idea who to turn to first, but in each instance my staff and I do our best to listen and to advocate in their best interests.

This speech allows me to recognise those who contributed to my election. I must first and foremost thank the people of Macalister. It is because of them and it is for them that I have been re-elected to this House. I thank them for their support and for their ringing endorsement of my performance during the first term. My first preference vote increased almost 10 per cent, coming first in every single booth, including winning booths that Labor had never won before.

I am always a bit of a nervous candidate. I was told by someone who has been in this game a lot longer than me that you have to campaign as if it is going to come down to a single vote—or less. My team and I had an underlying confidence that the solid work we had done within the community over the previous two years would stand us in good stead.

I acknowledge the significance of my community's faith and trust in our Premier. I would like to say that the 10 per cent primary boost was all me, but I know that when voters were reaching out for the how-to-vote cards they were looking for the Premier. 'That's the one,' they would say as they walked into the polling booth. I am humble enough to admit that this election was a ringing endorsement of the Premier's handling of COVID-19. I thank the Premier, the former health minister and the Chief Health Officer, for it was their decisions and their fortitude in the face of almost unrelenting pressure to stay the course and to put the health of Queenslanders first that have brought us to where we are today.

I am proud to have a leader who backs the science and the experts in the field. There are decisions that are politically popular and there are decisions based on evidence—not opinion polls and not lobby groups. I thank the Chief Health Officer for her expert guidance and strength during such a trying time. She made herself available to me on a number of occasions when I needed an understanding of individual cases within my electorate. This time, dedication and clarity have given me and my community faith in her decision-making processes.

In my first term I was pleased to have delivered my 2017 election commitments. In 2019 we officially switched on the lights at the Eagleby Giants field at Bishop Park, a year in which they were awarded the BRL's junior Rugby League club of the year. At the end of 2019 we officially opened the trade training centre in Beenleigh. Delivering on election commitments is not where the work of an MP starts and stops; it is the things they do in between that are the measure of how an MP delivers for their community.

The first item on my agenda was a safety issue at the intersection of Kruger Road and Beenleigh-Redland Road at Carbrook, an intersection that during the peak school times services three schools and a childcare centre—all of this at a T-intersection controlled by a single stop sign. Whilst it was not on the timetable for an upgrade, some solid lobbying by the school community and me scored a \$4.35 million signalisation of the intersection. Parents are seeing the work currently underway and, weather permitting, it will be finished during the June-July holidays. I thank locals and the school community for their forbearance during the construction period. I count that as a big win. Sometimes it is the little wins that can bring a big smile to my face: a security fence upgrade at Beenleigh State School that they had been asking for for some time; new multisport courts at Eagleby State School that had been at the top of their list at the beginning of 2018; a bus stop relocation out the front of Beenleigh Special School which eventually led to a commonsense decision; and a new senior playground for the Eden's Landing State School.

Along with the 2020 Ready Program and continual infrastructure upgrades, I can report to the House that there has been more investment in Macalister schools in the past three years than there had been in the previous 10 years combined.

I am proud to be part of a Labor government that invests in our kids and that knows that state schools are great schools and backs this with the funding, but we are not done yet. This term will see the construction of the new hall at Beenleigh State High School, an expansion of the Carbrook State School administration building, reroofing at Mount Warren Park State School and new outdoor learning area at Windaroo State School, but most exciting is the work underway to open a new primary school in the Bahrs Scrub area. This will be the first new school in Macalister in almost 30 years.

It is not just schools that will be transformed over the next four years. The Beenleigh Better Roads Project will be the catalyst for some long-awaited upgrades to key Beenleigh intersections that have remained unchanged for decades while growth occurred around them. It is not just about Beenleigh; the rest of Macalister will start to see movement on some long-awaited road upgrades in Cornubia and Carbrook. Discussions have already begun in planning the new justice precinct in Beenleigh. The Beenleigh Police Station, not much changed since I worked there, will receive a new facility to meet the demands of our growing community and boost in police numbers that will happen between now and 2025.

Delivering on commitments is core business for any member of parliament but the bread and butter is involvement in our community, and I have enjoyed being involved with a number of sporting, community and business groups. Frankly, I am quite chuffed that I have been able to pull on the Beenleigh Pride jersey at my age and be part of a few seasons, having fun and keeping fit with such a lovely group of women supported by the club and the community. I feel my transition to a baseball cap is probably a better fit for my age, so thank you to the Beenleigh Hawks for being patient as I found my way around the ground balls last season. I even got the opportunity to swing a mallet earlier this year with the Twin Rivers mallet club, so I would like to officially dispel the rumours that I am just a footy girl when even croquet gets a run.

I make no apologies in my community for supporting women and girls' sporting opportunities. The research is clear when it comes to the health and wellbeing of children. Girls who stay in sport in their teenage years are more likely to retain healthy lifestyles later in life, and children who have mothers still participating in sport are more likely to adopt more active lifestyles. A population that is healthy and active is in the best interests of everyone, even if you are only interested in the bottom line.

I also believe that it is a fundamental role of a member of parliament to engage with a range of community voices to ensure they are represented in this House. In the last term I established the Macalister youth advisory committee, and a range of people throughout my electorate put their hands up to represent young people in Macalister. Many might assume that young people are disdainful or

apathetic when it comes to politics, but I prefer to take the view that politicians must do more to make politics accessible and relevant to young people. An informed and participating electorate requires us to engage our constituents at an early stage.

I thank Amelia, Portia, Paige and Jaya for their assistance in establishing the youth advisory committee. For it to be successful in its aims, it had to be designed by young people. I thank the first cohort of the Macalister youth advisory committee, which ran from 2019 through to 2020. Obviously the delivery of its projects ran into some trouble in 2020, but it was flexible and agile and turned into a volunteer army, making care and welfare calls to seniors in Macalister. I am proud of the work they did and I never despair for the future of Queensland when I see what they can do. As I mentioned earlier this week, I want to acknowledge the next MacYAC cohort who has already met this year and I wish them well on their next two years in the role.

I now want to thank our members of the Beenleigh Labor branch. They are a small but dedicated and hardy crew. Campaigning was certainly different this time, but the phone calling and letterboxing never stopped. I want to give a big shout-out and thank you to the army of letterboxers who came out—because Australia Post certainly does not make things any easier these days—and it was foot power that came through. Dozens and dozens of friends, supporters, team mates—most not even linked to the party—were out there climbing the hills and handing out flyers. I could not fathom how many kilometres our ‘branchy’ Malcolm walked each day—he is just a machine—but we had a positive story to tell and everyone wanted it out there.

Marlene, Fran, Cathy, Ben, James, Susan, Inari, Stella, Sharon and Belinda were on the ground on election day marshalling the troops—and what a day it was with the threat of some supercell storm activity. At 2.30 pm that Saturday in Macalister, boy, did it hit! My lucky election hat, as my son called it, never knew what was coming and I do not think we ever saw it again. Thank you to all of the volunteers on the day manning the booths. The number of voters on the big day was obviously down, but everyone was in good spirits. We are quite lucky in Macalister with the volunteers we have on both sides. Everyone is there with a job to do and, no matter what colour shirt you wear, in Macalister it is done with a smile and a chat.

As has been acknowledged by all members in this House, the work that our electorate staff do—the diligence they have in addressing routine constituent issues and in our absence when we are in here—is the foundation of our work in the electorate. In the last term I was fortunate enough to have two very skilled and experienced electorate staff members. There are few people in the electorate that either Michael or Sean had not met or knew of. As locals themselves, they were dedicated to addressing the issues that confronted my electorate just as much as the constituents who raised it with them. I thank them for their service last term. I know that the work done last term has set us up for a very good term this time around.

I thank the party office for their support and the team there that provided guidance and assistance and the occasional kick up the backside when required. To Jeanette Temperley, Jules Campbell and the team at Peel Street, thank you for your leadership and on many occasions just being there as a sounding board. This was not my first rodeo, but sage advice is always appreciated. I know there are many Labor faithful who were following the results in Macalister that night and I was pleased to deliver the result for them. I want to thank Gary Bullock and the team at the United Workers Union and Gary O’Halloran at the Plumbers Union. Their assistance over the last term and the election was a solid platform for what we did locally.

I know many in my community and even within my family may have had reservations about how I would be able to juggle such a demanding role as a member of parliament with that of having a young family. My daughter, who was born during the 2017 campaign, is currently three and she is the most grounding influence anyone could possibly have. There is no capacity to have a big head or sense of entitlement when you are toilet training a three-year-old. While I will never profess to have this parenthood gig entirely sorted, I am regularly treated to the eye rolls of my pre-teen daughter and I have been led to believe that this is entirely normal and to be expected, so I must be doing okay. I am pleased and proud to be part of a government that recognises and normalises parenthood in this House and in this chamber. The women of Queensland should know that they do not have to choose between parenthood and a role as an elected person in this House.

My kids are probably getting an upbringing like few others. ‘Little Mack’ knows no other life and she does take it in her stride, even if those strides are at a hundred miles an hour. Ro, we have come so far in the past three years. To see you now talking, although I will not profess to understand what game it is that you are talking about, and to see you at school with your peers makes me happier than any other achievement I have attained. I know every day is a challenge for you and your teachers, but there is a massive support network around you and you are loved for who you are.

Cara, the 'Big Mack', words cannot express how proud I am to see you grow into the person you will become, and I have to say that I can see more than a little bit of me in you. Your individuality and your determination to not fit into any category and to be who you want to be is a sight to behold. I know that you are pretty stoked that you are as tall as me and that you can hold your own against mum at boxing—thanks for the shiner—but I want you to enjoy this time that you have before high school beckons next year.

To my husband, thank you for joining me on this adventure. When we met in the Army all that time ago, it would have been a brave soul to predict back then where we are today. We have been together for 25 years—I apologise for not remembering the date earlier this year, and thank you for the gift; you certainly know the way to my heart—but we are in this together and we are a team, and I am sure that at some point in the future as a team we will get an off-season. Whether you are attending the appointment with Ronan or I am—and he is the one attending right now—or doing the pick-up and drop-off with Mack or doing score table duty for Cara's basketball, we have the logistics under control—mostly! Thank you all. I am proud to stand here as the member for Macalister returned for a second term. Every day that I am in this House know that I am fighting for Macalister; I am fighting for my community.