




Speech By
Margaret Nightingale

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 10 December 2024

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mrs NIGHTINGALE** (Inala—ALP) (3.21 pm): I rise today to contribute to the address-in-reply for the 58th Parliament. In doing so, I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and pay tribute to their elders past and present for their enduring care and stewardship of this land. There is much to be learned from the experience of others. The responsibility of representation is laden with the responsibility to listen and to hear the stories and truth of those we represent. This responsibility should never be ignored, yet the LNP, in an indecent act of disrespect, has taken away the opportunity to hear the truth of our First Nations people, all before its own new members had completed their maiden speeches. I look to this side of the chamber for better news. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the member for Sandgate, whose maiden speech was inspiring and who has made history as the first person of Muslim faith to be elected to this House. Her story is much like those of many in my community who have crossed the seas as migrants or refugees to find a safe place for their families.

As the member for Inala, I am incredibly proud to represent a community that is diverse and vibrant and one that welcomes and supports those who are new, who are in need or who are doing it tough. It is a generous and giving community. I am humbled that the people of Inala have entrusted me with their vote for a second time in only a matter of months and I am deeply grateful for their continued support. It is an honour to serve a community that holds such a special place in my heart. I have loved meeting so many locals—thousands over the course of the two elections—and I have had the privilege of listening to my constituents. Polling booths, train stations and shopping centres have been the backdrop for many greetings, from a quick hello to in-depth conversations.

I thank those who took the time to share their messages of support. It was a truly humbling experience to hear from individuals and community groups who expressed their faith in me as their representative and their desire for me to continue. I was also touched by those who made the effort to share their hopes and concerns and differing values and opinions. I take my responsibility to represent you all very seriously, and I want to thank everyone who engaged in our democracy. Your voices matter and I will continue to listen.

It is a privilege to stand here as one of the many women in this chamber, and I congratulate the member for Ipswich West on being the 100th woman elected to parliament in Queensland. We have the responsibility to ensure that the rights and opportunities for women continue to be progressed. Although I am new to this place, in my short time here I have seen just this under a Labor government and I witnessed democracy in action. I have seen all kinds of motions brought before this House and have valued each member's rights to represent their electorates. Though we may disagree, sometimes in dramatic style, we here in this place are afforded the opportunity to engage in debate and to put our values on display—that was, until today. Today we have witnessed the Premier, in an attempt to manage his own weakness, fear and lack of trust in those he leads, gag each and every one of us in an unprecedented act. In so doing, he has damaged the democracy of Queensland. Only seven months have passed since I delivered my maiden speech here in this place. I spoke of those in my electorate

who have come in search of freedom and democracy: people who have sacrificed much to escape tyrants and dictators, to have the right to have their voices heard—rights that have been stripped away from their representative in this place on matters that the LNP just does not want us to talk about. I firmly believe in our democracy and the rights of Queenslanders to have their voices heard, and this abuse of the parliament is a disgrace. The silencing of Queenslanders will forever be this Premier's shameful legacy.

Although my opportunities to represent my community have been diminished in this place today, I remain honoured to represent my community. As the member for Inala, I have been delighted to deliver funding to a range of community and sporting groups and to schools like Glenala State High School, which will soon have a fantastic new facility for its netball academy. Keep an eye on these great youngsters; these young people may well be winning gold one day. I have also had the challenge of racing sponsors of the Forest Lake State High School Esports program in the Bridgestone Cup. Suffice it to say, I have limited skills as a video game race car driver and was pleasantly surprised when I did not come last.

Engaging with schools and community groups is one of my biggest joys, and I appreciate the warm welcome that I have received and the close working relationships we have developed together that have enabled us to achieve outcomes for the betterment of our community. However, there is more that I must do and that we as the Labor Party must do. Throughout this election cycle the people of Queensland have made it clear that they expect more from their government. I acknowledge that there are areas where we must do better. We have heard Queenslanders' concerns about crime and we are committed to fighting for solutions that work. As a party we have heard that message loud and clear, and we are committed to reflecting, learning and regaining the trust of the people. At the same time, we must hold the new LNP government to account. Its mandate is limited and its victory does not absolve it of the responsibility to deliver on its promises across every electorate and every portfolio.

The LNP has promised much. Promises are easy, but what matters now is whether these promises are backed by real action. Queenslanders deserve results, not rhetoric. Over the past months as the member for Inala I have heard firsthand of the positive impact that Labor's cost-of-living relief package had on many families. I am proud of what we achieved. This was made possible by making international coal companies pay their fair share, because that fair share belongs to Queensland. I heard from many in my community during the election that there are fears about what the LNP government will do, about what promises it may break and whether it will come clean with the people of Queensland about the details of its plans and whether it will put people before profits. I am proud that as part of a Labor government we took action and did just that. The 50-cent fares—a great legacy of the former premier and member for Murrumbidgee—are a lifeline for many in my community, and I know how much they help to ease the financial strain on working families.

I also recognise there is much more to be done. Public transport, while improved, still needs to be better in Inala. The LNP has promised a transport system with improved public transport services. In Inala, public transport is a lifeline for many of my constituents, especially for those who do not have access to a reliable vehicle. Improvements to services could mean the difference between a job and unemployment, between attending a medical appointment and missing it, between a young person engaging with education and staying at home. I look to the new LNP government to honour its commitment to improving services in our outer suburbs and I will hold them accountable to ensure that Inala receives its fair share of resources.

The LNP promised to build 53,000 new social homes across Queensland. This is a promise that must not be buried in budget details or forgotten as time passes. For far too many Queenslanders, including many in Inala, affordable housing remains a daily struggle. Labor understands that providing affordable housing is not just an investment in bricks and mortar, but an investment in people and communities. A roof over your head is not just a basic need, it is fundamental to dignity and security. I call on the LNP to deliver on this promise, not just in the cities, but in the regional areas and suburbs like Inala where the need is greatest and to ensure that infrastructure needs keep up with increased housing stock.

The LNP have also promised targeted support for women returning to work after having children or performing unpaid work. They committed to providing \$5,000 grants to help remove barriers to employment. I know firsthand how challenging it can be for women in my electorate, as across Queensland, to balance family responsibilities and return to the workforce with limited support. While this promise has the potential to make a real difference, we need to see the detail. I do not want to see a situation in which this new government has given women hope only to strip it away with a rollout that fails to meet expectations.

The LNP has also promised to provide new and upgraded community sports infrastructure. Inala has a proud community spirit, a love of sport and our young people deserve access to quality sports facilities. We understand that sport is about more than just exercise; it is about community, opportunity and breaking down barriers. Youth participation in sport helps build social connections and provides a pathway to education and employment. I call on the LNP to honour its promise and ensure that every Queensland community, including Inala, has access to modern, inclusive and well-maintained sports facilities.

There is an increasing need for youth focused initiatives in my community, especially in areas like Forest Lake where young families have now grown to young adults, all in need of targeted infrastructure and community supports. Investment in our children and young people is essential. From early intervention to targeted supports, areas like Inala must not be overlooked. The LNP's promise to create new youth supported accommodation services will receive my strong attention and scrutiny. I will always advocate for the needs of our youth. This is a generation of so many wonderful and exceptional young people. I urge the LNP to make informed decisions based on evidence to ensure that we are giving our young people the best opportunities to succeed and to create safe communities for everyone.

I ask the LNP to prioritise expansion and improvement of services in outer suburbs like Inala. We need to see investment in infrastructure that reflects the needs of the community. I welcome the LNP's commitment to building 10 new domestic and family violence services and replacing existing ones. This is a much needed investment, especially in communities like Inala where this is a pressing concern, but I call on the LNP to do more. Domestic and family violence is a complex and challenging issue that impacts the safety and wellbeing of our communities. It impacts our criminal justice system, our health system, housing, child safety, employment and educational outcomes. This impacts us all—none more so than those who have lost loved ones and those whose lives continue to be affected by violence, instability and lack of support. We must ensure that the right supports are available where and when they are needed the most.

I know firsthand the importance of this. As a young girl I, with my two brothers and mother, needed to escape our household due to domestic violence. On one occasion we found an opportunity to sneak out of the house in the middle of the night. We quickly hopped into the Valiant station wagon, keeping the doors open as we quietly rolled down the driveway, pushing it down the street until we were far enough away to start the car and drive to the nearest phone box. It was here that my mother called the local DV shelter. I will always remember the look on her face when they told her there was no space. So we drove home, knowing that we could not push the car back up the driveway, terrified that our escape would be discovered—and it was. Reaching out for help in this instance only made things worse. I tell this story in an effort to encourage the government to make good on its promises to ensure that vulnerable Queenslanders are protected and supported. We must ensure that there is always help available when needed and until help is no longer needed in our society. I thank those organisations and individuals in my electorate and across Queensland for your work in this space.

The LNP has also promised to invest in more dedicated mental health facilities. This is a welcome shift from the previous LNP's actions that tragically saw cuts to mental health services and facilities. My focus will be on holding this government to its word. In Inala, as in so many other communities, we see the impact of poor mental health on our children, young people and families and I have seen the devastating effects of bad decisions and a lack of adequate mental health support. The LNP must ensure that these promised investments are real, sustained and accessible to those who need them the most. They must listen to those who have the expertise and skills to help them to make informed decisions.

While we are now in opposition, we will be an active and engaged opposition. We will continue to fight for the issues that matter most to the people we represent. The people of Queensland deserve more than just words. They deserve real action and a government that delivers on its promises. Inala, like many communities across Queensland, faces significant challenges and it is my job to advocate for the needs of my constituents. I will never stop fighting for better services, for affordable housing, for improved public transport, for health services and for support for the most vulnerable members of our society. I will fight for investment in education and training and for early intervention for our young children and young people. I will advocate for reasoned responses that are informed by evidence and expertise. I will continue to hold the LNP accountable and ensure that they deliver on the promises they have made to Inala and to all Queenslanders. I will work tirelessly to ensure that the people of Inala are not forgotten and that their voices continue to be heard loud and clear in this House. It is a community that will feel the ramifications of poor government decisions most heavily and which felt those ramifications in the past so heavily when the cuts from the previous LNP significantly affected my community.

Finally, I want to take a moment to thank the many people who supported me through my election campaign, many of whom stepped up again after only a short break after the by-election. Some were new to the campaign, or to any campaign for that matter: locals who approached me out in the community and at pre-poll offering to help because they feared what would happen if we lost Inala to the LNP. Then there were those rusted-on Labor branch members who were right behind me every step of the way. Thank you. Thanks also to those who supported me from party office: Isabella Scattini, Meredith Newman, Chris Hancock, Zac Beers, to name a few. I thank my staff, who are not only my angels but also angels to our community, serving my constituents with care, compassion and dedication. Thank you to Felicity Crompton, my EO, who has been an amazing support helping me with the difficult task of establishing an office during what was a very busy time. To Aaron Bui, my campaign manager, who, despite being at the pointy end of a PhD, took leave to be by my side every day at pre poll. Thank you. Thank you also to Tiffany, Tom, Zeph and Diane, staff who have helped me in my office. A big thanks to Milton Dick who will always be an inspiration to me, and to Councillor Charles Strunk and to Les Bryant for your enduring support.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kempton): Members on my right, could you keep the noise down, please.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Thanks also to Riley Williamson, Jon Persley and Archer Skinner, my field organiser, who worked so very hard for me. Thanks are also due to those who are not political players—those friendly people from the community who step up to lend a hand. They are people such as Peter Rundle, who was there for me every day at pre-poll and who now volunteers as a JP in my electorate. Thank you to my friends from the Vietnamese community, especially Phuong Nguyen and Tuan Le. You have welcomed me so warmly into your community. It is my delight and pleasure to represent you all in this place.

I am deeply grateful to my volunteers but even more grateful to my family. My husband, Jason, and my daughters, Lavender and Lily, sacrifice so much so that I can serve. They inspire me every day to continue to fight in this place for the rights of our young people and our women.

The people of Queensland deserve nothing less than a government that puts people before profits and delivers on its promises. The people of Queensland deserve a government that listens and that understands. They deserve a government that does not silence its First Nations people or members of this place whose job it is to debate ideas and to represent the people of their electorates and communities who absolutely—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members to my right, I will start warning if this continues.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: Members in this place should be afforded the right to debate ideas but today, in an unprecedented attack, they lost the right to speak on some issues that I know are of grave importance and will continue to be into the future. As the member for Inala I will continue to fight for my community. I will continue to fight against those opposite who, through fear—

Government members interjected.

Mrs NIGHTINGALE: It hurts, doesn't it? Through fear they have caused—

(Time expired)