



Speech By
Natalie Marr

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

Record of Proceedings, 28 November 2024

MAIDEN SPEECH



Ms MARR (Thuringowa—LNP) (12.42 pm): Mr Speaker, I move—

That the following address be presented to the Governor in reply to the speech delivered by Her Excellency in opening this, the First Session of the 58th Parliament of Queensland—

May it please Your Excellency—

We, the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, wish to assure Your Excellency of our continued respect for the Crown and loyalty to the system of government in this State and to tender our thanks for the speech with which you opened the First Session.

The various measures to which Your Excellency referred, and all other matters that may be brought before us, will receive our careful consideration, and we shall strive to deal with them so that our endeavours may contribute to the advancement and prosperity of the people of this State.

Mr Speaker, I am incredibly proud to be standing here in the chamber today as the member for Thuringowa, a community that has delivered me so many opportunities—and now it is my turn to return those opportunities for my electorate. I also take great pride in having the privilege of being one of only just over a thousand Queenslanders elected to serve this great state as a member of parliament. This significant moment and the honour are not lost on me and I commit to respecting this honour.

Thuringowa is a working-class electorate and is home to a passionate sense of community through our many schools, sporting clubs and community organisations, and I look forward to continuing to work and engage with them over the term. I also look forward to meeting all our frontline staff working within the state government departments delivering services to the electorate. I want to hear directly from you and ensure we make it easier to deliver results in the work you do.

Thuringowa is a vibrant community full of diversity. Our electorate takes in the beautiful Ross River, hosting our water supply in the Ross River Dam, of which I also hope to see further development to allow for more recreational opportunities for our community.

I come from a humble home of proud Australian battlers who have worked hard to provide for their family. I was born in Cairns and raised in Townsville from the age of seven, spending my whole life in the region. I am proud of the strong work ethic and dedication my father displayed and instilled in me as a young girl. I was raised on a foundation of hard work and respect for others.

I have been a proud member of the Thuringowa community since the day my mum and dad bought their first home in Kelso—an ever-growing suburb of Thuringowa where I grew up—where they still proudly live to this day, making memories through four generations of our family in their home. I bought my first home in Thuringowa. My daughter grew up and went to school in Thuringowa. I recall growing up in Kelso when there was nothing but bushland across the road from our home and it was still a very undeveloped area. Now it has grown to one of the largest suburbs in the city with the development of the Kelso State School and many more homes.

I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge a special person in my life: my beautiful late sister Michelle. I know that she would have involved herself in my election campaign and held my hand the whole way. She would be enormously proud of me. Although she may not be sitting here in the gallery today, I know that she is here in spirit sharing this memory and honour with me. She showed the most incredible strength in her hardest days. I think of her every day and I remind myself of her determination through the toughest of times.

I am a very proud parent of my beautiful daughter, Alana, who is in the gallery today. Alana, you have been the reason I wake up every morning for the last 24 years. You are an incredible young woman. Your strength, love and sincere caring nature make me so immensely proud of you. You have proven that hard work and determination are the key to life, working three jobs to get yourself through six years of university. I am proud that this is the example you witnessed growing up with me as your mum. Watching you grow into the incredible young lady you are makes me so proud. Thank you for always being patient and trusting and giving me the absolute joy of being your mother.

I have had the pleasure of good opportunities in a variety of employment fields, from marketing to business management and sales, and as a councillor for Townsville City Council. I come from the days of working in the eighties, when customer service was key to every job. I had my first job in pharmacy, where you had to know your customers by name and exceptional customer service care was expected. This was the start of my love for people and taking the time to listen—really listen and make them feel special. Who would have thought my days working in pharmacy would be my first training for being a member of parliament?

Politics was not a consideration for me growing up and not a career path that I had on my radar. My first taste of politics was when I was asked by Les Tyrell to run as a candidate for the local government election in 2008. This was a unique election as it was the first election with the amalgamation of the then Thuringowa shire council and the Townsville City Council. It was also an undivided council. Out of 49 candidates, I had drawn 47th spot on the ballot paper. It was never going to be easy, but it was a young councillor by the name of David Crisafulli who encouraged me that grassroots campaigning was crucial to winning any election and taught me the art of doorknocking. Hard work and persistence gave me the reward of being elected, and as a new councillor I proudly became the chair of corporate governance and finance. There were many opportunities in this role, including being a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a commitment that I thought was important in such a demanding and important role. I also had the privilege of sitting on crucial committees like the audit committee and budget review committee, but, most importantly, I was given the opportunity to stand up for my community. This is where my passion for good governance and accountability began. It is something I will take into my new role as the member for Thuringowa.

Being a part of the community has always been a joy for me. I have been on P&C committees, a member of the Lions club, volunteered for the Cancer Council and was proud to be the chair of the local Crime Stoppers volunteer committee. I was awarded Queensland Volunteer of the Year for Crime Stoppers Queensland for my contribution in growing the committee and setting a high standard for other volunteer committees to follow. A keen sense of community and a focus on the need for change was one of the driving factors for me to run in the election. Over the last decade my community of Thuringowa has been hurting due to poor governing. They have been terrorised by crime and have almost given up on feeling safe in their own home, instead developing a feeling that the youth crime crisis has become the new normal. That is not good enough for me and I refuse to accept the notion that my community should continue to accept this as normal. It is one of the reasons I put my hand up to stand as the candidate again and why I am proud to be a member of the Crisafulli LNP government, a government that will bring change, not shy away from the tough decisions and deliver a better future for Queensland.

My community told me they have felt unrepresented and ignored by successive governments for far too long, a community that has suffered a continued increase in crime for the last 10 years. What started years ago as opportunistic crime has now become violent, aggressive and organised offending. This is a direct result of there being no accountability or consequences for actions for those responsible for these crimes. Today I stand here in our parliament and say to the many members in my community who have been a victim of crime that we have listened, we stand by you and we will take every step necessary to restore your right to feel safe again.

There are a few stories that I would like to share to highlight the dire distress some of our communities are living in. While doorknocking in Kirwan I met an elderly lady who refused to open the door and was only comfortable talking through her half-open window. She told me that she usually only had one outing a week to the shopping centre with her carer to do her grocery shopping. Now she will not even go there and refuses to leave her home for many weeks due to the fear of being a victim of crime. Another story that stays with me was meeting a daughter who feared for the safety of her elderly

mother who lived alone after seeing CCT footage from her mother's home of young offenders with weapons watching her mother through her window waiting for the right time to break in. Her mother now is afraid to be in her home alone. These are the types of stories I went home with each day. They are raw and very emotional stories. Thuringowa deserves a better future. I am very proud to be standing here today with my fellow members knowing we are determined to make change and be tough on crime. I know my community is expecting and deserves change. We stood at the election on the promise of delivering tougher laws and that is exactly what we will do. I want the people of Thuringowa to be proud that their faith in change and in me has been the driving force of delivering our promise.

When decisions have been made in the past it is usually North Queensland that suffers the most, or is sometimes the only region that is negatively affected due to a lack of understanding of how the regions operate differently to metro areas. I will fight for our fair share of the state, ensuring we are considered and understood at the decision-making table. This will be a priority for me. It is critical that we engage with industry and we must be ready to listen to everyone: not just those who tell us what we want to hear, but also those who will tell us what we do not want to hear. Then we must act; not put it in the too-hard basket left to be someone else's problem in the future.

I have worked hard for the last four years to give the LNP the best chance to win three seats in Townsville. After the 2020 election I committed to whatever was necessary for change for our city. I was elected vice-president of the LNP and for almost two years my focus was to ensure the voice of the North was heard, represented and to encourage change within the party to be more successful with member engagement and successful election campaigns for regional Queensland into the future. I continue to remain engaged in the community, attending community meetings every month, local events and local Willows markets each Sunday. This was to give the community the confidence that there was an alternative and to see that I was ready to put in the hard work and commitment they deserved. Nineteen months out from the election I was preselected for Thuringowa to be the voice of our city, driving our plans for a better future. I made the decision to resign from my full-time job to make sure I could focus on doorknocking and being in my community each day. Many sacrifices were made, but I was happy to make those hard calls because this was important to me and I could not stand back and let our community continue to suffer. It is rewarding to be standing here today making this speech and wanting to be community focused and engaged. However, the work has only just started. I am ready to get on with the job of delivering for a better Thuringowa, not only for now but for the future. The community has spoken. They were not happy with the way the government was doing things. They have voted for change, for a government that is strong, to make the changes we need and a member of parliament who will stand up and fight for them and not walk away from challenging decisions or tough conversations.

There are so many people that I would like to thank, but I do have a fear of forgetting someone so I will start with my volunteers, family, friends and LNP members. I want to thank each and every one of you who came along on the journey with me from day one. While some of you may only have been able to give me a call of support, that still meant a lot. There were those who would get a text about letterbox dropping or needing volunteers for the markets and you would just turn up without hesitation and give your time. Your enthusiasm, support, hard work and love will never be forgotten. As I have said to you all, you are a part of my family and we will share the journey of the next four years together. I must give a special shout-out to my dad for letterbox dropping the whole of Kelso. Thank you!

There are some people I will personally mention as they have devoted so much of their time as members of the campaign team, providing round-the-clock support for my campaign, those who volunteered and were relentless in their support: Kathy Roy, for your friendship, calm nature and positive support. The days were long and months even longer, but you were always the one who gave sound, positive support whenever I needed you. Bernadette Rowse, my dear friend, for your unwavering support, not only for my campaign but for the toughest times of my life. I am so grateful to share this moment with you. Thank you for keeping the campaign on track. You were relentless and organised for all of us. Thank you. Trayeden Fulmer, your support during this campaign has been overwhelming. Without hesitation you jumped into our campaign and put your heart and soul into everything you did. I appreciate the support and dedication you have shown the team. Thank you. Thea Musson, my support person from the 2020 campaign to the end of this election: your wise words, many meals and tough words of wisdom have seen me through the four years of campaigning. I remember the days between the election cycles when it was just you and I at the Willows markets every Sunday. Andy Longmire, my voice of reason and the 'get up, get over it and battle on' person in my campaign: thank you from the bottom of my heart. You helped keep me on track and powering on. Thank you to your beautiful family who made many sacrifices of family time during this long campaign. Drew Alexion, you started as Team Thuringowa, helping to establish my campaign, and ended up being there to support and help all three Townsville seats. Thank you for your time and support. It meant a great result for our city.

To my community of Thuringowa, thank you for your support and placing your trust in me, for welcoming me into your homes and taking the time to speak with me and to get to know me. I have many memories from the campaign trail that will stay with me forever—moments that cemented the reason I invested so much in my community and stood to be their local member of parliament. To the over 50,000 people who call Thuringowa home, I offer you my full commitment and will spend every day of the next four years fighting for you. During the last two elections I have doorknocked on thousands of doors to listen because I want to deliver a better future for you and your families.

I also note that the 58th Parliament will see the election of the 100th female to the Queensland parliament. While I do not believe in quotas and I strongly support the belief in the best person for the job, I am very proud to be a member of this parliament and I would like to congratulate every female member in this room. I look forward to the example we can display as leaders in our communities to let every young girl know that we pave the way for them to continue our contribution to the government into the future.

I take this moment to congratulate Premier Crisafulli and the other 51 members of this LNP government. Our focus on what was important to Queenslanders has put us in the position to now deliver. I am looking forward to delivering for Thuringowa and Queensland. Thank you, Thuringowa.