




Speech By
Jimmy Sullivan

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Record of Proceedings, 26 November 2020

INAUGURAL SPEECH

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (11.22 am): Mr Speaker, it is an honour that I be given the opportunity to move—

That the following address be presented to the Governor in reply to the speech delivered by His Excellency in opening this, the First Session of the 57th 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.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I want to thank firstly the people of Stafford for their support. It is humbling and I promise to honour the trust that they have placed in me. I also want to thank the Premier for the honour of moving this motion today.

My world view was shaped by two important sources—my family and my education—and both pointed me to pursue my values through the great Australian Labor Party. We were raised with a strong value setting based on the importance of fairness and social justice, with a hint of Catholic guilt thrown in for good luck! As a teenager I saw up close what changes the Goss government was making to this state. In hindsight his government provided a very practical social and political education and I am lucky to have had such an example to learn from and aim for across my career. I did not know it at the time, but the personal relationships from those times would develop and be important. I want to thank Roisin for her touching messages of support and thank Gossy for his ongoing friendship.

The example we saw as kids of hard work and the commitment to social justice was both through dad's work and mum's dedication. Both were teachers by training. My most enduring image of mum is her sitting on a comfy chair in the lounge room with a cup of tea and a cheeky Tim Tam marking paper after paper. There is a generation of women across the north side who benefited greatly from her dedication and inspiration as a teacher.

In taking on this privileged role after being elected by my community, there is zero risk of my feet leaving the ground. In addition to my wife, Carolyn, and kids, I am one of five siblings. Despite our current geographical distances, we are very close and I thank them for their love and support. My sister works in Indigenous engagement in the resource sector and my younger brother is a qualified construction project manager and runs his business in London where, with his beautiful wife, Rachael, they are raising two adorable kids. My next brother is a qualified lawyer with a masters in business who works for the Australian Olympic Committee in Sydney, where he lives with his partner and talented actor Kate Murphy. Our baby brother is a qualified psychologist whose specialty is high-risk youths,

including dual diagnosed kids. I guess my point is this, Mr Speaker: I am very proud that, when it comes to community contribution, being sworn in as the new member is perhaps my chance to add to this collective contribution.

Stafford has a proud working-class history, but we have come a fair way from the tanneries. We are a community where we have in the same streets families who live in social housing, in post-war homes, in units and others with homes with a city view. We are CBD commuters in the private sector, law, engineering and accountancy. We are public servants as well as families who work locally in trade or in retail at our local business strips or Westfield Chermerside, Stafford City or in our suburban industrial estates.

The Prince Charles Hospital is an icon in our community. I thank the doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, wardies, cleaners, caterers and operational staff who do so much to deliver a modern, complex health system. I of course thank them for the services that they provide to the community, but for me they are also constituents, neighbours and the lifeblood of our community. We are well serviced by local institutions like the Kedron-Wavell RSL, our budding hospitality locations and our community sporting organisations. We are blessed with local volunteers like Jack Poole, who was recently recognised for his extraordinary years of service to the Stafford Meals on Wheels.

I also want to recognise previous members who have served our great community. I want to again publicly thank Dr Anthony Lynham for his significant contribution to public life both before entering parliament and in this place. The fact that he is returning to medicine in the middle of a health pandemic will surprise nobody. He came here wanting to change the future for young people suffering unspeakable violence. This government introduced those reforms in the first term, cemented them in the second. He leaves vindicated for his public advocacy on this important issue and he should rightly be proud of his legacy. I also want to thank Pam for her hard work and significant contribution locally. Thank you both for extraordinary service and your ongoing friendship.

There are a couple of other former members for Stafford I want to acknowledge. I will start with Chris Davis. He and I disagree strongly on our political philosophy but, like Anthony, he left this parliament on his own terms and with his integrity intact. I thank him for his service and wish him the best in his career. It also gives me great joy to recognise the current member for Sandgate. It is quite a thing that I can reflect that I am currently the second best member for Stafford sitting in this chamber. I am sure he will not mind me hoping that my career as the member for Stafford is as successful, if not slightly longer!

Of course, I grew up knowing the long hours and hard work that good local MPs put in. The public contribution of my dad, Terry, is well documented. I want to put on the record that one of his more quiet achievements was to maintain that high level of public service whilst also maintaining an active, loving relationship with his kids, and that is a very important example for Carolyn and me as we embark on this new path.

As for my story, it is a local story and it is a Labor story. I cannot overstate the importance of education in my life, and of course there are teachers improving the lives of kids right across the Stafford electorate. I thank them for their contribution and I look forward to working with teachers, principals and parents as we seek the best support and outcomes for our children. My education through OLA in Wavell Heights and then Padua in Kedron was not just about academic advancement, although they provided that in spades, but more crucially had a focus on nurturing and developing good people who are well rounded and with a commitment to social justice. The Franciscan ethos certainly shaped my world view in those formative years. It was an awareness of the world around us, a commitment to others and a drive to contribute to our community.

I want to thank my teachers who gave me such opportunities in life, as well as my law, political science and international relations lecturers at university, particularly my thesis supervisor, the great Dr Alex Bellamy. My education in the law did not finish at UQ. I was lucky to work for District Court judge Michael Shanahan. It was an incredible learning experience to see one of Queensland's best legal brains at work—he quite literally wrote the book when it comes to criminal law in Queensland—but also to engage with the profession and to understand our great regions. I know I am here representing the people of Stafford, but I also come here with an early understanding of the vastness and needs of this great state. I was lucky enough to travel and work in our provincial cities, regional towns and as far away as Cooktown, Thursday Island and Bamaga. It also included working with community justice groups, including in the cape and Woorabinda. That experience continues to shape my understanding of government services and law reform and continues to inspire me to this day.

I am passionate about the role of education in changing people's lives, especially the more vulnerable in our community. My work in criminal law and government services suggests to me that the role of education cannot be overstated in the lives of young Queenslanders at risk of entering or already

in the criminal justice system. When it comes to young people and youth crime it is very easy to just yell and shout as if that will change a single thing. A lot of names get thrown at these young Queenslanders and from the point of view of victims I get it. But there is one name I would love to be able to throw at these kids in 15 or 20 years time—taxpayer. Wouldn't it be great if in 10 or 20 years time these kids have a secure job providing for their families and paying taxes? Surely no-one could disagree with that proposition. If we agree on that, let us have a sensible discussion about how we get from here to there to make it happen. I am mindful that at the end of my career, whenever that will be, I will be judged against these goals and so be it. Sadly, some of these kids will no doubt continue to be in contact with the criminal justice system, but hopefully fewer and fewer because in changing their lives we also create a safer community for us all. I do not suggest there is a silver bullet. I believe this needs to be a generational change, so let us make it this one.

There are many members in this House with whom I have worked. I want to thank the caucus for their warm welcome, for a constructive relationship over the years and, of course, a special shout-out to fellow incoming caucus members. May our service be long and our friendships be longer. If you will indulge me, Mr Speaker, there are a couple of members I need to thank in more detail. Through the chair, Premier, congratulations on a well-deserved victory. I have not always called the Premier by that title. The Premier's work in those dark days of opposition rebuilt the party, reconnected with the broader movement and reconnected with the community. I am very proud that in years to come when people ask, 'When our party was at its lowest what did you do?', I can say, 'I put my hand up to work for the team fighting against the largest parliamentary majority in Australian history,' and for the Premier, of course, the rest is history. I thank the Premier for her extraordinary leadership in those times and now as we face the global health pandemic and the global economic challenges that it brings. It is a real honour to continue to serve the team in a different capacity.

The member for Redcliffe inherited a profession and judiciary at war with themselves and with the government. I am proud to have been part of the team to restore civility and respect to the legal profession and the judiciary. I thank the many legal stakeholders and office holders in government and the judiciary who worked so constructively to that end. I am proud to have been part of the team that delivered such important, evidence based, truly historic law reform in government. I am proud that in the training portfolio the government reintroduced Skilling Queenslanders for Work and increased investment in TAFE to give Queenslanders the skills and experience they need to get into the workforce, have secure jobs and provide for their families. I thank the now health minister for such a productive working relationship, for her support, her mentoring and her friendship.

I also want to publicly thank the many public servants I have worked with throughout my career, from those who helped a young associate in the registry at the old District and Supreme Court site—we will not miss that building—to those who worked with dedication and quality for the minister—in education and training and, of course, in justice. Thank you to the heads of jurisdictions, statutory bodies and advisers who perform such important work, not for this particular government but for the Queensland public. My humble observation is that good government can be delivered not by subservience or the politicisation of the Public Service, rather by mutual respect and hard work in the pursuit of a given goal. It might not be politically popular, but I am proud to support the Queenslanders who decide to dedicate their skills and experience to our Public Service. Whatever our interactions, whether locally or through the parliament, you should know that I come at it with that genuine respect.

In a similar vein I want to thank that most maligned group, staffers. Thank you for your continued hard work and dedication to pursuing good service delivery and outcomes for Queenslanders. A particular shout out to those who worked so hard in those dark years, including the force of nature, Donna O'Donaghue, a colleague and friend. To Tim, Ian, Jackie and the whole team; to Jim, Denise and Paul; and to my most recent colleagues Michael, Lucy, Luke, Marty, Darren, Justin, Dan, Emily and Carl: keep fighting the good fight.

The most important person I want to thank is Carolyn, my wife. I am so lucky to have you in my life. Your intelligence, beauty, humour and accomplishments in your own world cannot be appropriately captured here today. Can I simply say I love you and I am so proud to be doing this with you. I want to thank the kids for their hard work and their joint efforts in making this change in our family life. To Olivia, Lauren and Olly, we love you dearly and we cannot wait to see you continue to grow as students and as the beautiful individuals that you are. Sadly, there is a member of our family who is with us every day but not present with us in parliament. Working in and around this place for so long I had always assumed that a member's first speech would be the most significant speech in their life. With all due respect to the people of Stafford and the members of this House, tragically for me that is just not the case. The most significant address is one that no parent should have to give: the eulogy of their child.

Francesca Charlotte McAnally Sullivan was born still at 35 weeks in April last year after what can only be described as a complete medical failing. I said at her funeral that there may come a day when I can say her name without crying—obviously not yet—but there will never be a day that the thought of

her and talk of her will not bring a smile to my face, pride to my soul and great joy to my heart that Frankie, the beautiful child that she was, brought such joy to this world already. I would never pretend that Frankie is the reason I went into public life. After all, I have been a member of this great party for 22 years. Frankie is not the reason I believe in a strong healthcare system, although I passionately do, but she is the reason I will try to contribute what I can to tackling this failing in the broader health system that has not seen a reduction in the rate of stillborns across the last two decades. Frankie is forever with me and continues to shape the person I am, including what sort of member I will be.

I am in no way pretending that I am on the same level, but it is hard with our election timing not to recognise that our election coincided closely with that of now President-Elect Joe Biden. One of the great characteristics of the incoming president is his basic human decency and his handling of grief, with his first wife and daughter and, more recently, his son. In discussions with the person who I think is one of the wisest modern commentators on politics in the US, Stephen Colbert, Biden spoke about the role of grief and loss in being humble. It is truly a grounding experience. I hope to follow his inspiration so that however our grief and loss may change over time, the humility and compassion for others will remain.

As for taking this big new step, sometimes inspiration can come from an unexpected source. Last year I attended our 20th school reunion. The guys were giving me grief about, 'What are you doing, Sully? You're not even a pollie yet.' But a bit later one of my good mates who had moved away but moved back to Amberley said, 'Jokes aside, Sully, you know me, I'm not political, but we want good people doing good things and you're our guy.' So, Bradley Fay, I hope you enjoy reading your name in the copy of *Hansard* I will be sending you next week.

From the time Anthony told me he was returning to medicine and encouraged me to put myself forward, there have been countless people who helped me get here today. First and foremost Stafford branch members, family and friends. My family, as well as Carolyn's—particularly her mother Kath who has welcomed me into the family with open arms and an open heart. Peter and Ailma, Darcy, Bec, Krish, Simon, Ian, Laura, Lyndsay, Mike, Darren, Adam and Kat, Rachael, Jakub, Hollie—friends and supporters—Ellie, Michelle, Sue, Phil, Tracy, Bill and Sue, KVP, Kern, Janet, Jessie, Bev, Stephen, the lunch gang, including Ciaran and Duffy.

To Wayne Swan, not everyone has the resource of the national president as a local branch volunteer. He and Kim went above and beyond. I thank them for their hard work. I am comforted that this campaign will not be the last time I rely on their advice and support. Thank you to Steve Baker. You will not find a more genuine, decent bloke. I am proud to be a long-serving member of the AWU. To Chris Gazenbeek, who works tirelessly for his members and the movement. The SDA is the union I joined as a young retail worker at Stafford City Shopping Centre. To Peter Biagini and Garry O'Halloran, we have worked together across different roles and I thank them for their support in this latest endeavour.

I also thank Beth Mohle from the QNMU. We too have worked together in different capacities for years. Apart from being State Secretary she is also a constituent, as of course are many of her members. Thanks to the crew at party office: Jules, Adam, Mitch, Abi and the team. A special thanks to Zac Beers, a man who is wise beyond his years. I thank him for his hard work, his advice and his friendship.

It probably surprises nobody that in my youth I was a proud member of the United Nations Youth Association. Yep, I am a proud UN geek. It provided not only opportunities and education but also lifelong friends and colleagues who are doing great things in their own lives around Australia and, indeed, around the world. Thank you to Trav and Julia, Penny and Dan, Ravi and Jo, Varun, Sas, Josh, honorary member Marianna and so many more over the years. In conclusion, I also thank the parliamentary staff for their work. I refer not just to the warm welcome and help that they have given us as new members over the past few weeks but also to their work over many years and the general warmth and friendly disposition that they bring to this building each and every day.

I return to where I started. To the people of Stafford, I thank you. My pledge to you is that I will work hard each and every day in this chamber, in our community and within government to represent you well and to promote the values and policies that we took to the election. I am a passionate advocate for the Labor Party, for our shared values and, most importantly, for the Queenslanders who rely on Labor governments for fairness, for job creation and for decent services. As my old mate from school put more succinctly and simply, my intention in this place is to be a good person doing good things.