




Speech By
Meaghan Scanlon

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

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MAIDEN SPEECH

 **Ms SCANLON** (Gaven—ALP) (3.31 pm): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and can I add my congratulations on your election to the important role of Speaker of this House. I rise for the first time today honoured to represent the people and community that I grew up in and love, and conscious of the incredible responsibility that has been bestowed upon me. I know that my presence here is rather unlikely so I thank the constituents of Gaven for their trust in me.

My first acknowledgement is to the traditional owners of the land on which we gather here today, the Jagera and Turrbal peoples. I also acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that I represent, the Kombumerria and Wangerriburra people, and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

One of my earliest memories of becoming interested in politics was in primary school where I learnt about our country's cruel treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. I distinctly remember watching the *Rabbit-Proof Fence* in my year 7 social studies class and feeling a deep sense of shame. That shame heightened when I found out that our Prime Minister at the time, John Howard, was refusing to simply say sorry for the well-known and well-documented atrocities carried out against our First Australians. To sit in this House for the first time in the week of the 10th anniversary of Kevin Rudd's National Apology to the Stolen Generations was a timely reminder of how much more we need to achieve along the path to reconciliation.

The leadership shown on 13 February 2008 is one of the reasons I joined the Labor Party and one of the reasons I stand here today. Values of fairness, equality and justice are what I believe in and what I will fight for. Like many in this chamber I got involved in politics because I thought that I could change the world. Whilst I still think that, I acknowledge that reform is hard and it takes time. It is not easy to change people's minds and it is not easy to change institutions or laws. We saw how long and hard reform can be in the most recent marriage equality debate. I am proud to have played a small part in achieving equal rights for our LGBTIQ community. It is a process that we should never have had to undertake; however, through doorknocking, phone calling and enrolment drives on university campuses, the Gold Coast voted 60 per cent yes to marriage equality.

Whilst no LNP MP on the Gold Coast spoke out and actively campaigned for marriage equality, I am proud to have stood up for what I, and what evidently the majority of the Gold Coast, believe in. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr, our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. Equality matters to me. Closing the Gap matters to me. Making sure that every child receives a quality education matters to me. It matters to me when Barry, a constituent and pensioner in my electorate, comes in and tells me that he has to shop around for the cheapest place to get his hair cut because he is struggling to make ends meet. It matters to me that there is still a gender pay gap. It matters to me that my brother and his friends would love nothing more than to work but because he has a disability, and not through lack of ability, he cannot find a job. Our job is to stand up for the values that we believe in and create reform that unites Queenslanders.

I come from a long line of working people who have fought for these values. My mum grew up in Moe in Victoria and came from humble beginnings, living with her five brothers and sisters in a three-bedroom Housing Commission home. Her great-grandfather was a coalminer who tragically died of black lung. This consequently led my great-grandfather to become a lifelong member of the labour movement fighting for workplace conditions and rights.

My dad's life started from similar beginnings. At an early age his family moved from England to Australia for a better life. He too started off in a Housing Commission home in Inala while his family could save enough money to eventually buy a home. My grandfather was an electrician and involved in the infamous SEQEB dispute. I never had the opportunity to meet my grandfather as he died during the industrial dispute; however, his disdain for Joh Bjelke-Petersen's autocratic style of government certainly lives on in me today.

I come from a long line of union members who have fought hard for wages and conditions. I attended my first union meeting at the age of six months when my mum was a delegate in the Public Service. Amongst my family are nurses, paramedics and teachers who are fighting for a fair go. I am a proud United Voice member having worked in the outside school hours care sector. This sector, along with teacher aides and early childhood educators, is dominated by women and their pays reflect that. It is the unfortunate reality that female dominated industries are still grossly underpaid. It is not just these sectors that are struggling to make ends meet, though.

Having doorknocked a large proportion of my electorate it was clear that people are doing it tough with low wages growth. I heard from many people who are living pay cheque to pay cheque. The Gold Coast is often seen for its glitz and glamour; however, there are many people in my electorate who are doing it tough. My electorate has some of the highest rates of workers affected by the decision to cut penalty rates and yet not a single LNP state or federal MP on the Gold Coast voiced their concern about the impact that this would have on local workers.

Inequality is becoming more entrenched and wealth and power is becoming more concentrated. People are worried about their jobs and their future. As the youngest MP sitting in the 56th Parliament, I come hoping that I can contribute a fresh perspective to support young Queenslanders and the challenges they face every day. I am part of a generation that has had to consistently adapt to new and emerging technological change. It is an exciting time; however, these rapid changes create uncertainty for many people. It is therefore critical that governments are forward thinking and train and skill young Queenslanders for the jobs of the future.

Whilst I value the wisdom that comes with age and experience, I believe that this parliament needs to reflect the diverse community of our state to ensure better representation. I do not profess to speak on behalf of my entire generation; however, I believe that this role allows me to talk about issues that for far too long have been dismissed or misunderstood. It is a simple fact that it is far more difficult for my generation to enter the housing market than it was for the generation of my parents. Many of us are burdened with HECS debts and deeply worried about climate change and the inevitable impacts.

We want and need a more inclusive nation. I am proud to be a member of a Labor Party that has the political will to reform many of these sectors and values the contribution of young people. This was most recently evidenced when I, a 24-year-old woman from the Gold Coast, was preselected for the marginal seat of Gaven.

I feel honoured to serve alongside so many incredible women. I am and always will be a proud feminist. I know that I stand on the shoulders of the great women who came before me. Irene Longman was the first woman elected to the Queensland parliament and, whilst we have different political persuasions, I admire her courage to enter this place during a time when her presence was not welcomed. Irene was not permitted to sit in the parliamentary dining room and was relegated to the verandah to eat. During her time as the only female member there were no female facilities, a situation that was not addressed until the next female member was elected 35 years later.

We have come a long way since then. We have won the right to vote, to participate in the workplace and we have had our first female prime minister and two female Queensland Labor premiers. We have made some big leaps; however, there is still a lot of work to be done. The gender pay gap is still unacceptably high. Women are still more likely to work in a narrow field of lower paying occupations. Women are vastly overrepresented as victims of sexual offences, stalking and domestic and family violence. Women are exceedingly underrepresented in leadership roles, particularly on boards of management, and until we decriminalise abortion here in Queensland we still do not have complete agency over our bodies. Globally, we know that a huge proportion of adult women lack basic literacy skills and that there is an unacceptable number of women who die each year from preventable complications during pregnancy and childbirth, the vast majority of them in developing countries.

I acknowledge how lucky I am to live in this state and country at a time when my presence here is welcomed. I am acutely aware that women have put their lives on the line for me to be afforded the right to stand in this chamber and I do not take lightly my responsibility to further the cause of equal rights. I am proud to be able to add another crack in the glass ceiling. I hope that my position here today inspires other young women to stand up and have their voices heard, so that we can address these issues and one day live in a world of parity.

I am a firm believer that one of the ways in which we can achieve parity is through education. Unlike my grandmother, I had the great privilege not only to complete primary and secondary school but also to go to university, where I obtained a Bachelor of Laws and a graduate diploma in legal practice. Education is what has allowed me to achieve a better standard of living. It was through educators such as my year 7 teacher, Mr Mick Beard, who is in the gallery today, that I learnt to critically think and question the status quo. I learnt about history, music and parliamentary process and I learnt to challenge ideas. It was teachers such as Mick Beard who made me realise the power of people and action.

My brother's experience in the education system was very different from mine. My dad battled with melanoma for many years and died when we were in early high school. That left my mum to juggle her workload and raise two children, one with an intellectual impairment. My mum is also a fierce believer in education. While she acknowledges that my brother will not reach the same level as his peers, he deserves the right to knowledge and to be afforded the dignity that education and work provide. There were many occasions when she had to fight for that right and was made to feel as though she was a burden for simply asking for her child to be provided with the foundations to allow him to participate meaningfully in society.

Regardless of the fact that receiving a quality education should be a basic right, we know that it is economically more beneficial for our state. It should not matter if you have a disability and it should not matter what your postcode or background is; every child should receive a quality education. I am proud to be a member of a party that values inclusion in education; a party that knows that investing in training, teachers and schools is critical for future generations.

Our front-line service workers do an incredible job each day educating our future leaders, keeping our communities safe and helping Queenslanders to live happy and healthy lives. My dad was one of those front-line service workers, serving with the Queensland police, based in Surfers Paradise in his later years. My mum was also a public servant for over 30 years, although she did not wear a uniform. She took great pride in her job and worked hard.

Like many other Queenslanders, I will never forget when Campbell Newman and many of the residual members of parliament sitting on the other side of this chamber cut 14,000 Public Service jobs. The callous disregard for the contribution of committed public servants still haunts many people across the state today. It was the arrogance of the Newman government that saw a Palaszczuk government elected and it is what reminds me every day about the importance of listening to the community and good stable government.

It is a privilege to rise in this House today as the one and only Labor member elected to parliament from my region in almost eight years. It is unhealthy for a city to be dominated by one party. Under the Newman government, the LNP held every single Gold Coast seat. Despite their record majority, they failed to contribute a single new dollar to the M1, knowing full well that the Commonwealth Games was fast approaching. I am proud to be a member of a party that has invested in the Gold Coast. We have delivered stage 1 and 2 of the light rail, duplicated the heavy rail line between Helensvale and Coomera stations, built the Gold Coast hospital, the Cbus Super Stadium and, of course, in my electorate the Metricon Stadium, the home of the mighty Suns.

Thanks to Labor governments, my home town was transformed into a city that locals now feel proud of. It was the vision of a Labor government that landed the Commonwealth Games and brought that exciting opportunity to the Gold Coast in what we know will be a transformative event for our local economy and an historic event in our city's history. Over the past three years, the Palaszczuk government has invested around \$1 billion in infrastructure upgrades, leaving a long-lasting legacy for our community.

The electorate of Gaven is right in the middle of the action for the games, generating a huge buzz in our local community. Fearless riders will navigate the Nerang mountain bike trails in the Nerang State Forest. Sporting legends such as Usain Bolt will cheer on our athletics competitors at Carrara Stadium, as transfixed audiences tune in across the world. Carrara Stadium will be where the games begin and end, with a huge celebration of dance, colour and entertainment taking place for the opening and closing ceremonies. Just next door at the Carrara Sports and Leisure Centre, thousands will attend the badminton, para powerlifting, weightlifting and wrestling. We truly are spoilt for choice in the electorate

of Gaven when it comes to attending events right in our backyard. However, what I am most excited about is the opportunity that those venues and pieces of infrastructure provide for future legacy projects. Having an event such as the Commonwealth Games allows us to showcase our electorate to a global audience and encourage more events, attractions and visitation to our region.

I am honoured to be given the responsibility of being Assistant Minister for Tourism Industry Development during such an important time for the Gold Coast and the tourism industry as a whole. Tourism is a huge job generator with complex facets that I hope I will be able to make a meaningful contribution towards. Mr Speaker, if you had not already noticed, I am a proud Gold Coaster. In the words of the Hon. Kate Jones, I am pumped for the Commonwealth Games and to help my region reach its full potential.

The electorate of Gaven and the surrounding electorates of the northern Gold Coast are home to some of the most rapidly growing populations in the country. The Gold Coast is Queensland's second largest city and Australia's sixth biggest city. One of our challenges is building infrastructure to keep up with our population growth. In future years, projects such as the light rail stage 3 will be needed. Widening the existing M1 to six lanes all the way to the New South Wales border is a Labor policy, with \$206 million currently on the table. It was Labor that revived planning on the interregional transport corridor after the previous LNP government stopped it being included in the SEQ Regional Plan and the Gold Coast City Council's City Plan, with two gazettals of new sections in the first term of the Palaszczuk government. I will also do my best in advocating for better connectivity in areas that are not along the linear beach strip by investing in suburbs west of the M1.

The electorate that I represent includes the suburbs of Pacific Pines, Nerang, Gaven, Highland Park, Carrara and a small section of Worongary. Construction is our biggest employing industry and biggest small business industry. I would like to thank the Hon. Mick de Brenni for the work he has done in relation to the security of subcontractor payments. I know that that is a big issue for many subbies in my electorate and throughout the Gold Coast—ensuring that people get paid in full and on time. I reiterate the commitment that I have made to people in the industry that I will work hard to hold the federal government to account when it comes to enacting sensible reform in this space. Our second and third highest employing sectors are the food and beverage service industry and retail industry. Again, I promise to fight the federal government when they cut wages and water down workplace protections.

Whilst those sectors are big employers, we also need to look at the jobs of the future and diversify our local economy. That is why I was only too happy to support the Premier's push to grow our film and TV production industry. I am excited that the provisionally titled movie *Danger Close* is to be filmed in my electorate in the suburb of Nerang, which is the Gold Coast's first major township. I want young Gold Coasters to be able to find a job in our city and not have to travel to Brisbane, as I did, to pursue a career. It is important for the people of Gaven to know that every day over the term of the 56th Parliament I will be fighting to continue improving infrastructure outcomes, to deliver front-line services and to ensure jobs are created for locals in my community. I make no apology for taking on fights for my community and will endeavour to serve the best interests of the people of Gaven.

I want to thank a number of people who have made possible my presence in this parliament. I thank the many volunteers and supporters who came out after work to make phone calls, doorknock, hand out how-to-vote cards, stand in the blistering heat with corflutes, letterbox drop and the list goes on. Their drive to campaign for a Labor government kept me strong.

My sincerest gratitude also extends to the staff of the Australian Labor Party, particularly our previous state secretary, Evan Moorhead, and my organisers, Lucy Collier and Rosy Gillbert and Sharon Humphreys. I also say a big thank you to the field team who worked tirelessly to help me speak to as many residents as possible. A big thank you goes to Jules Campbell for helping me become the Labor candidate for Gaven and I extend huge congratulations to her on being the first woman elected to the role of Queensland Labor state secretary. The party is certainly in safe hands.

I extend my thanks to the Young Labor members from across the country who travelled to help get a progressive Labor voice on the Gold Coast. I also thank someone who has been a tremendous support to me and a man I greatly admire, Queensland Labor senator Murray Watt. His guidance and encouragement were instrumental and I look forward to continuing the fight with him for better representation on the Gold Coast.

I would like to thank the close members of my union family, United Voice, and in particular officials Sharron Caddie and Gary Bullock. I want to specifically thank Jeanette Temperley, who backed me from day dot. She has become part of my family and I will be forever grateful for her guidance, patience and support.

I give a big thank you to the QCU and all union members across the Gold Coast who assisted in the Gaven campaign. They reminded people what was at stake and helped form a majority Labor government. I give a big thank you to the Nerang-Gaven branch and the Pacific Pines branch for the contribution that they all made to the campaign operations. I want to acknowledge in particular two comrades and friends, Ali King and Rowan Holzberger, who regrettably have not joined me in the chamber at this time. However, I have no doubt that their commitment and passion for the Labor movement has not and will not be dampened.

I thank my brother, Callum, for his help on the campaign and for letting me be the centre of attention for a short period of time. I appreciate his patience during a disruptive six months and know the campaign team appreciated his coffees and positivity on the polling booth.

I would also like to say thank you to my extended family who travelled from Victoria to support me at the most recent election and also at the 2016 federal election. It would be remiss of me not to thank my biggest supporter, my mum, who is in the gallery today. I will forever be grateful for her constant support and will never be able to thank her enough for what she has sacrificed for me. In the words of my favourite childhood book, 'I love you to the moon and back.'

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank the residents of Gaven for their trust and support to elect me as their representative. Be assured that I will always fight for my community and always listen to the needs of our locals.