




Speech By  
**Hon. Shannon Fentiman**

**MEMBER FOR WATERFORD**

---

Record of Proceedings, 27 March 2015

**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (3.02 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion as moved. I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and pay my respects to elders past, present and future. I congratulate all members of the House sitting here today. We are here not only as representatives of our communities but also as custodians of the enduring democratic tradition. We must uphold it, respect it and protect it.

I stand here as a new Labor member of parliament and a member of the next generation of the Labor movement. I am humbled by my new role as Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. It is both an honour and a tremendous responsibility. I look forward to the challenges ahead and am gripped by a sense of great potential.

I would like to give particular thanks to our Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, for placing her trust in me. I would also like to extend my gratitude to our Deputy Premier, Jackie Trad, for her friendship, mentorship and support over many years, as well as to Minister Kate Jones for her friendship and invaluable advice. I am proud to be in a cabinet with such strong and intelligent women.

I am also extremely proud to be the member for Waterford. The people of Waterford and Logan are the reason I am here, and I am honoured to be representing our community, which is strong, diverse and resilient. It is a community of generous and kind-hearted people, and I speak for my constituents when I say that we are optimistic about our future.

In Waterford we have one of the biggest and most active Labor Party branches in the state. I take this opportunity to thank all of the hardworking branch members for their support. Thank you to Evan Moorhead, our previous Labor member for Waterford and now the ALP state secretary in Queensland. Evan, you have left big shoes to fill. I also acknowledge my predecessor in the seat of Waterford, Mr Michael Latter, and wish him the very best in his future endeavours.

I would like to thank my local campaign team: Sean Leader, Dolly and Anton Chang, Kate Luke, Cynthia Kennedy, Romony Rogers, Aaron Bakota, Chris and Luke Moore, Chantelle Tibbotts, Melissa Venville and the Nielson family. To my campaign director, Jules Campbell: you have been most importantly a great friend. I cannot thank you enough.

Thank you also to Murray Watt, Susan McGrady, Milton Dick, Matt Collins, Sarah Abbott, Travis Dawson and Dee Madigan for all your advice and support before and during the campaign and I hope for many years to come. Thanks must also go to former state secretary Anthony Chisholm, who ran our very successful state election campaign.

Most importantly, I thank all of my campaign volunteers. They gave their time, energy and support over those seemingly endless days of doorknocking, and I could not have done it without them. We can be proud of the Waterford campaign. We talked about the issues that matter—about jobs, health, education, transport and the environment. And I am proud because we talked about our

values—fairness, integrity and opportunity. It is those values the people of Waterford saw in them, and it is those values the people of Waterford saw in the Labor Party. It is those values I am now so honoured to bring to this place, the Queensland parliament, on behalf of the people of Waterford. Waterford is a place I am proud to call home. I am humbled by the faith my community has placed in me, and I promise that I will not let them down.

Politics sparked my interest at a very young age. Growing up, my grandfather Bernard was a fixture in our living room. Whenever parliament was sitting he would tune in to the ABC's broadcast of question time. With me sitting by his side, fixated by the television screen for that one hour, he taught me the importance of civic participation. Though he lacked the voice and opportunity to speak in this forum, he held parliament in that living room. That was his contribution to democracy. There was never a debate he was not across, an issue he did not seem to know everything about or a cause he was disinterested in. It is individuals like my grandad who protect and strengthen our democracy. When I think back to the crank of the volume knob and the flicker of green across the screen, I remember that my grandad is the reason I am in politics today.

My grandad emigrated from Northern Ireland, where political disputes were not always resolved peacefully, and his values were informed by that bloody conflict. He understood better than most that democracy is a time tested system that allows people with different beliefs and from different backgrounds to come together for a common good. My grandad also brought with him from Northern Ireland the value of solidarity. He was a working man, a nurse and an active union delegate in Melbourne, and the proudest moments of his career were working alongside the then secretary of the ACTU, Bob Hawke, in the late 1960s. My grandad always stood up for those who were treated unfairly, and he knew that the best way to ensure a fair Australia, the aspiration that motivates both me and the Labor Party, was to stand up for what is right and that doing so with your mates is always better than alone.

The Labor Party for me is not just a loose collection of interest groups; it is a family of true believers. It is a movement of people and ideas. The Labor Party for me is not just a political organisation; it is a belief in an optimistic and progressive future. The Labor Party is not just a government; it is ideas, principles and long-lasting reforms. It means a better-working, more inclusive and more prosperous Australia and Queensland for all of us.

My personal journey and my family's experience inspired me to run for parliament. I have been privileged in my career to fight for working people—people like my dad. Dad has worked as a carpenter for over 50 years, like his grandad before him. He taught me the value of not only hard work but also fairness at work. When I was quite young I remember coming home one day with my sister to find my mum quite frantic on the phone because Dad had injured himself at work and was taken to hospital. It was an incredibly stressful time for our family, but the one thing my parents did not have to worry about was how they were going to pay the bills. They were okay because Dad had access to first-class public health care and a strong workers compensation scheme, both legacies of Labor governments.

Workers compensation makes the difference for many working families in Queensland, and I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government that will reinstate Queensland's previous successful workers compensation scheme. We will restore the rights of injured workers to sue negligent employers when they are injured at work. One of my first cases working as a young employment lawyer has always stood out for me. It was an unfair dismissal case for a woman named Lyn Hastie. Lyn was a middle-aged forklift driver. She rolled her ankle at the end of a shift and her employer refused to let her return to work. She was stood down indefinitely without pay and she was forced to resign. Unfair workplace laws made it a really tough fight but, after almost 12 months and many legal hurdles, Lyn was finally successful and won compensation. It was the plight of people like Lyn that drove me to fight for those who have been treated unjustly and I would not have had the opportunity to take on cases like Lyn's if it was not for the work given to me by our union movement.

Today I want to give particular thanks to AMWU Secretary Rohan Webb, to National President Andrew Dettmer and also all of the officials that I have had the pleasure of working with who do an incredible job day in, day out representing the rights of working people. Thank you also to Gary Bullock and United Voice, Michael Ravbar and the CFMEU, Wendy Streets and the FSU, the Plumbers Union, the ETU, the Not 4 Sale campaign and the Nurses' Union. I also want to thank my former colleagues at Hall Payne Lawyers, particularly John Payne, Charles Massy, Luke Forsyth and Laura Fraser-Hardy. I also want to give particular thanks to the Hon. Justice Roslyn Atkinson. Before being admitted as a lawyer, I had the privilege of being her associate at the Supreme Court of Queensland. She was a fierce advocate for the equal treatment of all persons before the law and a champion of social justice. I could not have asked for a better mentor. Thank you to her for her guidance, advice and friendship.

Prior to my election as the member for Waterford I had the privilege to work on the ground in my community of Waterford. Through my work with the Beenleigh Neighbourhood Centre, the Logan Women's Health and Wellbeing Centre and the Centre Against Sexual Violence, I saw firsthand how strong services really make a difference in our community, and today I want to pay tribute to the dedicated staff at these vital community organisations. I want our young people to have the choice to live and work in Logan and the ability to take ownership over local issues, and jobs for our young people in Logan will do just that. Jobs give people dignity, a stake in society and the opportunity to contribute in their community. Jobs are vital for the future of Waterford's youth, and that is why jobs are the No. 1 focus for our government. I want jobs for young people like Rachel, a young woman who came up to me at the Loganlea train station one morning while I was campaigning and told me it meant so much to her that the now Premier and myself were talking about addressing youth unemployment because so many of her friends and her sister could not find work.

Nearly 40 years ago Logan City Council was established for what was a semirural district with a population of 60,000 people. Since then, Logan has grown into a city of nearly 300,000 people across 63 suburbs—we are a growing community and economy—but our expanding city needs jobs to prosper. I want to see the next generation of Logan's young people fulfilling their dreams and aspirations. This means smaller class sizes and more teachers in our local schools and better investment in skills and training. I want our Meadowbrook TAFE to achieve its potential and, most importantly, I want those jobs for our school leavers and graduates to go into once they have finished learning. But a community is so much more than just an economy and I think Waterford's greatest strength is its multiculturalism. It is a community of diverse and rich cultures. Waterford is a true multicultural success story. It is a place where traditional owners and Australia's most recent immigrants make their mark. Our Mayor Pam Parker often says that Logan is the heart of South-East Queensland, and I for one believe this to be absolutely true. It is the generous spirit of so many people in Logan and their generosity in welcoming new residents that makes it a wonderful place.

Today it is also most important for me to mention the women in my family. These women have paved the way for me. They have inspired me and shaped my values. My great-grandmother Josephine worked as a seamstress for almost her entire life. She was tenacious, hard working and an advocate for equality and in her later life she became active in her local Gold Coast branch of the Labor Party. Our family often tells the story of how Josephine marched defiantly down the streets of the Gold Coast with her daughter and granddaughters protesting then Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen's preposterous ban on street marches. My grandmother, Elaine, grew up in the Depression and started out her working life as a clerk. She then married and went on to become a mother of five and, when she later separated from my granddad, she worked three jobs to support her children through school. She did anything and everything to give her kids an opportunity in life. She worked in a bread factory, as a cleaner in a Gold Coast caravan park and a prawn peeler at a seafood processing plant at Tweed Heads.

My mum Chris was lucky enough to finish school and eventually went to university as a mature age student. Mum did an exceptional job raising my sister Erin and I, but she always wanted to study education. Once university became available and affordable for my mum, she was able to realise her lifelong ambition. She became a teacher. Mum instilled in me a passion for social justice and the belief that any child, irrespective of how much their parents earn or where they live, deserves a quality education. I also cannot forget my Aunt Kerry, who was one of the first women to become a partner at a large Gold Coast law firm. She was my inspiration to study law. These strong women paved the way for me and these incredible women are the reason I stand before you today.

The promise of true gender equality is within our grasp, but much remains to be done. The gender pay gap in Australia is the highest it has been for more than 10 years. Currently in Australia, there are more men named Peter in CEO and chair positions in our country's top 200 listed companies than there are women. I am determined to increase women's leadership roles, not just in the government sector but in industry and across all levels in our community, and still one in three women will experience violence or sexual violence in their lifetime. Too many women and children are hurt and killed each year as a result of domestic and family violence, and we know these deaths are preventable and we can stop the behaviour and attitudes that feed the domestic violence cycle. We are all responsible for ending domestic violence. This begins not only here in parliament but also in our living rooms, our pubs, our clubs, our parks, our streets and our schools. The epidemic can no longer be ignored. We must all play a role in challenging the attitudes and culture that surround domestic violence. Along with the Premier and my colleagues, I will work hard to ensure that victims of domestic violence will always have someone to turn to. Every Queensland woman who lives in fear as a result of domestic violence deserves our help. I do not simply want to reduce the statistics of women suffering from domestic violence here in Queensland; I want them to be where they belong—

the past—because I believe that when women are empowered our society benefits, economies grow faster, families are healthier, children are better educated and our communities become intrinsically fairer.

I proudly call myself a feminist. I also proudly call myself a Labor woman, as the ALP has and continues to be a light on the hill for women. We are a proud party of firsts. We were the first party to have a woman Premier of Queensland, the first to have a woman Prime Minister, the first to appoint a woman High Court judge, the first to appoint a woman Governor-General and of course, as you are aware, Madam Deputy Speaker Grace, we are the first to have a majority of women around the state cabinet and our first Indigenous woman here in this parliament, my good friend the Hon. Leeanne Enoch. We are led not just by a woman Premier but a woman Deputy Premier too, and that is a first for Queensland and the country. It is true that the Labor Party has led the way, but we need to be firm in our resolve. As Deputy Premier Jackie Trad said recently, a majority of women in the cabinet is an achievement to celebrate. But let us make it something we do not have to celebrate. Let us not make it the exception; let it be the norm.

That light on the hill must continue to shine for Queensland women. I have been inspired, encouraged and mentored by those women leaders who have come before me and now it is my turn to extend a hand to the next generation of women and girls. I realise just how lucky I am to have a supportive and loving family. To my aunts and uncles, cousins and family friends, thank you. To Barbara, Richard, and Alex, thank you for your ongoing love and support. To my sister and best friend, Erin, my mum and my dad, who have always believed in me, I cannot thank you enough. I thank my husband, David, for his love, support, strength and advice. Thank you for encouraging me the whole way. We made it! I thank my grandad, Bernard. I cannot help thinking of him every time I set foot in this place. It is for him and our community that we must work together to create a Queensland that those who came before and those who will come after are proud of. Finally, I thank all the women in my family and those women who have come before me in this place. If it were not for their courage I would not be standing here today.