

## **GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH**

### **Address-in-Reply**

[Ms RISHWORTH](#) (Kingston) (7.01 p.m.)—Firstly, may I offer my congratulations to you, Mr Speaker, on your election to that office, and I look forward to your guidance in matters parliamentary. I would also like to congratulate the Prime Minister on attaining the high office to which he has been called. I offer him my truly heartfelt congratulations, since it is under his inspiring leadership that I too have been elected to sit in his government. The office of Prime Minister, though, is one whose duty lies beyond party politics and electioneering. It is an office that requires important decisions in the interests of our country and its citizens. It is an office that also requires vision—vision with regard to not only our nation's immediate needs but also the needs of its future. I can think of no man better suited to the task of governing for our nation than the honourable member for Griffith. I acknowledge the contribution made to the federal parliament by previous members for Kingston, Mr Kym Richardson, Mr David Cox and the Hon. Gordon Bilney. I especially thank the latter two for the thoughtful advice they have provided to me as I embark on my parliamentary career.

I am honoured and humbled to stand in this symbolic place as the representative of the people of Kingston. To serve in this House is an honour afforded to few, and we owe to ourselves and our constituents the duty to give the best we can in that service. Kingston is an outer metropolitan electorate in Adelaide that very much represents what is so great about our country. The electorate is bound by stunning coastline to the west and the picturesque Adelaide Hills to the east. We have some of the earliest settlements in South Australia, in Willunga, Old Noarlunga and Old Reynella. We have some of the newest housing developments. We have semirural areas and magnificent vineyards, and we have densely populated urban suburbs that many working families call home. It is also the traditional home of the Kaurna people. Together these aspects of the south create a unique community which, although diverse, has a strong sense of identity.

I was born at Flinders Medical Centre, which continues to be a leading hospital in the state and the most significant medical facility serving the people of my electorate. I studied at the Flinders University of South Australia, where I was also a student leader. These facilities were the herald of promise in Adelaide in the sixties, just as so much of my electorate is the locality of promise in a new century. My parents chose to settle in the inner south of Adelaide before I was born. I want to pay my greatest tribute to my parents, Leslie and Judith, who are both here today. They have been a constant support throughout my life and I certainly would not have made it to this place today without their love, help and guidance. I thank also my siblings, Shannon and Julian. The three of us have shared a strong bond growing up and, although we have all chosen different paths, we continue to share a close and supportive friendship in our adult life. My family have a long and proud tradition of service to our country. Both of my grandfathers served in the Second World War, as did my grandmother. My brother serves today in the Royal Australian Air Force. I hope to emulate their commitment and dedication to our nation, not in uniform but in service of a different kind in the Australian parliament.

I put myself forward for federal parliament because I am passionate about social justice, about opportunity and about a fair go. The fair go is synonymous with the Australian way of life. It is sometimes used as an empty slogan, but for me it is much more than that. It embodies what I believe to be a truly Australian ethos, an ingrained belief that all citizens should be treated fairly, equally and compassionately and that they should be given the opportunity to be their best. This is demonstrated no more clearly than in the work laws that govern our offices, our shops and our factories. The last federal election was absolutely critical in determining that Australians will not tolerate a tearing down of their right to a fair go in the workplace. Australians endorsed the substance of the fair go, not the empty slogan. It is perhaps a cliché to say every election is the most important since the war, since no federal election is unimportant, but I do sincerely believe that the most recent election was a tremendous turning point, a great pivot in our national history. Had the Australian people accepted the previous government's Work Choices, it would have signalled a sad repudiation of our nation's egalitarianism and our commitment to a fair go. Industrial relations has been

important to me for many years. I felt the hard edge of the 1996 workplace relations legislation when I was offered an AWA while employed by a large American retailer. I refused to sign and was no longer offered work despite my five years of loyal service. I was 19 years old at the time. Hence, industrial reform and the enforcement of AWAs is not merely an abstract concept for me. I know firsthand the pressure, the threats and the consequences a large and thoughtless employer can impose on a young and vulnerable worker. I see it as a fundamental duty for me as a parliamentarian to ensure other workers are not placed in that situation and do not suffer that affront to their rights at work. That is why I am proud to be a part of this government, a government going forward with fairness in the workplace.

At that time I was very grateful for the assistance given by the union I had joined to protect my rights. That union, the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association, helped me stand up for myself and demonstrated to me the virtue of sticking together to help each other. I have gone on to have a long association with this union as both an activist and an official. I make no apologies for having been a union official. I am extremely proud of the fact that I have helped thousands of people get a better deal at work and protect their interests in the workplace. Only those who have no genuine conception of real workplaces can think being a unionist is anything less than a fine and admirable preparation for parliamentary service. I am especially grateful that I had the opportunity to represent workers in the southern suburbs of South Australia, the area that I now have the honour to represent here. I take this opportunity to extend my thanks to those in the South Australian branch of the SDA who I had the pleasure to work with over many years, particularly the South Australian secretary, Don Farrell. I would not be standing here today without his support, encouragement, advice and belief in me. I would also like to thank current and former assistant secretaries Peter Malinauskas and the Hon. Bernard Finnigan, who over the years have also provided me with sage advice and words of wisdom.

To me a socially just society is like woven cloth, one in which many threads come together to make a cohesive whole, a unified fabric. I would like to briefly expand upon what I see as some of the key threads that need to be woven together to advance our nation into the 21st century. I am a defender of the role of government in improving the quality of life and opportunity available to all people. Governments cannot solve all problems, nor can governments make all decisions, but governments should, dare I say must, ensure the framework and foundations are there so that our citizens can.

I believe in the social contract, the notion that each individual is part of a society. Citizens pay their taxes and in return are entitled to expect from their government liberty, protection from harm, security and, where necessary, aid to their welfare. This is no more important than in the area of health care. As a qualified clinical psychologist I have had the good fortune to be intimately involved in providing front-line care to the mentally ill and emotionally troubled. We must continue to pay great attention to the needs of those requiring mental health care. Unlike many physical ailments, mental illness is not always visible, but it is no less serious. We must continue to improve our standard of care that promotes psychological wellbeing and mental health in our community.

When it comes to mental health and health care in general, I also believe we must invest in prevention as well as treatment. This is the only way we can advance a healthier, happier and more productive society. I consider it of the utmost importance that Australia enjoys a system of public health care that is the envy of the world. There are many challenges facing our system, such as rapidly changing technology and an ageing population; however, we must meet those challenges and maintain our hospitals and health system at their best. We must protect and defend the principle of universal health care, as it is unacceptable that a person's financial position should determine whether they might live or die.

Maintaining and building infrastructure remains a priority for my electorate and is a key thread to improving quality of life for the people of Kingston. Just as much work was done in the sixties and seventies to lay the foundations for large-scale settlement in the south, so we must make a renewed effort in this new century. Providing greater rail services and better roads, building high-speed broadband and maintaining a supply of high-quality clean water

are all essential infrastructure required not only in my electorate but also across the nation. I am confident the Rudd government, in conjunction with our colleagues at state and local level, can work to lay these much needed foundations for our future.

Intrinsically linked with infrastructure in the south is economic development. The need to focus on economic development in the south of Adelaide has only been emphasised by the announcement that the Mitsubishi plant is set to close at the end of next month. Losing one's job represents much more than just missing out on a pay packet. For many of these workers their identity has been tied up with the quality cars that they made and the line in which they worked. I want to pay tribute to these workers who provided loyal service but were victims of circumstances beyond their control. Despite this sad circumstance we need to look to the future, the future for these workers and the future of the region. I would like to thank the Prime Minister, the minister for industry and the Premier of South Australia for making a commitment to invest in the south of Adelaide, an investment that I believe should be focused in the area of high-tech, innovative and sustainable industry.

The provision of quality education for all children is another vital thread in the woven cloth of social justice. I want to ensure that all young Australians can reach their potential so they in turn can one day also contribute to our nation's growth and prosperity. I am particularly committed to working on early childhood education and I am proud that our government has seen fit to identify this area as a priority. My work as a psychologist has highlighted to me the critical need to provide our kids with the best possible start in life, ensuring that they have access to a high standard of education to allow them the best opportunities in those early formative years and to set them up for the future.

I have spoken of my family and former union colleagues. Of course, there are many others I need to thank—people who have played various roles in getting me to this moment. I would firstly like to thank my friend Brer Adams. It was through his enthusiasm that I became active in the political process and embraced politics as an avenue for change. I would like to thank my campaign team, who worked tirelessly over the election period. I especially thank my campaign manager, Chris Picton, whose commitment, drive and attention to detail ensured that we achieved the result we did in Kingston. Thanks go to my deputy campaign manager, Sonia Romeo, whose dedication and organisation ensured that the campaign ran smoothly on the ground. I express thanks also to Senator Dana Wortley for all her help.

To Alex Dighton, Xanthe Kleinig, Tom Koutsantonis, the member for Wakefield, the honourable Minister for Youth and Minister for Sport, Senator Annette Hurley, Shane McNeil, Nimfa Farrell, and Chloe Fox: I am extremely grateful for all the moral support and well-considered advice you provided me through the campaign. Thanks also to my staff—Emily, Mary, Suzanne, Emmanuel and Aaron—for their hard work in servicing the constituents in the seat of Kingston.

I would like to express my gratitude to all Labor Party members and supporters in Kingston, who worked so hard on my campaign. I truly could not have won without their tireless help. I also acknowledge the Kingston Your Rights at Work group, who campaigned vigorously to ensure that the industrial relations debate remained in the forefront of voters' minds during the election.

In closing, I wish to bring to mind the man after whom my electorate is named. Charles Cameron Kingston was a colourful character and a colossal figure in the story of Federation. Kingston was a pioneer who worked long and hard to see Australia become a nation. I often think about the aspirations of those men and women at the beginning of Federation. They had a vision for a strong, united country. They believed in the capacity of the Australian people for democracy, freedom and enterprise. How proud they would be to see us now, a strong and prosperous nation. It is a nation that contributes beyond its size, population or wealth in international affairs, a nation that enjoys tremendous unity and common purpose, and a nation that soon I hope will select its own head of state.

Our challenge, 100 years later, is to ensure that in another century our descendants can look back on the decisions we make now and feel that we too played our part in our nation's journey, that we built on those early foundations, that we saw both the potential of the present and the challenges for the future and that we lived up to the promise. Just as those who lived in the early settlements in my electorate a century ago sought a better life, so do thousands now seek that better life in newer areas. Their aspiration for a better quality of life and a fair go for their children and their grandchildren is one that is shared by all generations. So it will be my task, with all the energy and ability I can muster, to do what I can to make that aspiration a reality, to play that part, to continue weaving that cloth of justice and to commit to those vital threads of fairness, of opportunity, of education and of care for the benefit of those I have the privilege to represent and to the advancement of our great nation.