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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH**

**Address-in-Reply**

**SPEECH**

Wednesday, 27 July 2022

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> Miller-Frost, Louise MP	<b>Question No.</b>

**Ms MILLER-FROST** (Boothby) (13:07): Thank you, Mr Speaker. May I offer my congratulations on your appointment to this role. I acknowledge that we meet today on the unceded lands of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, and I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging. I pay my respects to other First Nations people present today and acknowledge and celebrate their cultural authority.

The electorate of Boothby, which I am honoured to represent here today, is on Kurna Yerta, the unceded lands of the Kurna people. Boothby is spread across the plains to the south of Tarntanyangga, which is Adelaide, from the hills to the coast, and it contains many important cultural sites in the Tjilbruke dreaming story. I pay my respects to the Kurna people.

I'm proud to be here as part of the Albanese Labor government, which has committed to the important reconciliation work that is the implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Voice. Treaty. Truth. This is unfinished business for us all. Together, we are stronger. The work of bringing us together is overdue.

I'd like to acknowledge the previous member for Boothby, Nicolle Flint, who served two terms before retiring at the 2022 election. I acknowledge her work representing the community and particularly her advocacy on the issue of treatment of women. I wish her every success in future endeavours.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to congratulate our Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese. I received so many contacts from across Boothby following the election. The words I heard most were 'relief' and 'hope'—hope for a better future for themselves, their children and their country, hope for a community that works together and cares about each other. Your vision—our vision—for a parliament with integrity, for an inclusive community, for the Uluru Statement from the Heart, for climate change action and for a pathway forward for those doing it tough is inspiring and worth working for. Australia is in good hands.

Like many Australians, I am a migrant. I was born in Hollywood—less glamorous than it sounds—a small town outside Birmingham in the UK. With my parents, along with my mother's parents and siblings, we all moved to Australia as 10-pound Poms in search of opportunity, and we certainly found it. I cannot imagine my family, arriving with a 20-month-old me, foresaw the opportunities that would be afforded to me and the life that I would go on to lead, let alone that I would be one day standing here in this place making this address.

We initially settled in the north-east suburbs of Adelaide. My grandfather worked on the floor of the Holden factory. My father worked as an electrical draftsman for a whitegoods manufacturer and then in the public service. My younger brother was born in Adelaide, and we attended the local primary school. We were the generation that took off on the weekends on our bikes with our school friends, traversing the fields and creeks adjacent to what was then the outer suburbs of Adelaide, building cubbies and bike jumps and reappearing at dinnertime. I was the kid covered in scratches and bruises from falling out of trees or riding my bike through the scrub. It was great.

I still remember the day my brother and I came home to find my mum and dad waiting for us and they told us the worst news: dad had cancer. I was 10 years old. Then started three years of treatment. I don't know what it was like for dad; the worst of it was hidden from my brother and me. But I know that there would be days when mum and dad would head off to the hospital in the morning and they would not be home at night. Dad would be too sick to leave the hospital, and mum would have to stay and look after him. My brother and I would walk home from school and let ourselves into the house. I would help my brother do his homework. I would feed us both and lock up the house, and we'd go to bed. Mum would be home sometime during the night.

And then came the day in August 1980, a very crisp spring morning with blue skies, sunny, icy cold. I remember opening the curtains in my room and the sun shining through the window. I remember going into the kitchen to find my grandparents. I remember being sent into the living room, where my mum was sitting with my brother. My dad had died overnight. I remember the shock. As a child, I had taken for granted that, when they said his cancer was treatable, that meant he would survive.

My Irish grandparents moved in to care for us, and so I grew up with their stories. They'd tell me stories of the Blitz in Birmingham and how granddad had come home to find their house had had a direct hit. He dug through the rubble, not knowing if his wife, my granny, was alive or dead. When he got to the cupboard under the stairs, which was their bomb shelter, he found her unharmed, cradling my two-year-old uncle Tom. Granny was pregnant with my mother at that time. You were that close to not having me here.

One of the stories granny would tell me was of her own childhood in Belfast—the story of her father losing his job in the shipyards. There was no income support in those days, so my great-grandmother went scrubbing floors and pawned her wedding ring to feed the family—no shame in hard work, but my granny was horrified that her mother had had to pawn her wedding ring. The story has a happy ending: when my grandfather found work, the ring was reclaimed, and granny gave me her mother's wedding ring when my own children were born. I wear that ring here today in tribute.

That experience of poverty and of the precariousness of our family's situation drove my grandparents' commitment to education, to ensuring that their family was never so vulnerable again. My grandparents were committed Labor people. Their commitment came from their understanding of the transformative powers of public education and public health. After their experience of poverty in Northern Ireland, they wanted more for their family. Two generations on, the importance of education was drummed into me, and I became the first person in my family to go to university.

Whitlam said, 'We are all diminished as citizens when any of us are poor.' Poverty is a national waste as well as an individual waste. We are all diminished when any of us are denied proper education. The nation is poorer—a poorer economy, a poorer civilisation—because of this human and national waste. I'm not old enough to remember the Whitlam government, but his vision for our country underpins much of what I value: affordable education, affordable justice, land rights for First Nations people and women's rights. Whitlam ended the death penalty, stood up against apartheid in South Africa, established the Racial Discrimination Act and ended conscription to the Vietnam War. Importantly, his vision included affordable health care. My family did not have to choose whether to go broke to give my dad the best possible chance of surviving. Finances might have been tight when he died, but we did not have the crippling medical debt pushing us into bankruptcy that we see in so many countries. Good government establishes the conditions and the opportunities whereby we, all of us, can flourish individually and as a community. If it isn't about the people, if it isn't about the community, what is it about?

One of the great joys of campaigning was talking to the people of Boothby—hearing their concerns and helping them with their issues. In the hills of Blackwood and Belair I heard about climate change and bushfires. On the plains at Dover Gardens and Ascot Park I heard about the housing shortage and the insecurity of casualised labour contracts. In Warradale I heard from a couple, both working, saving like mad for a house deposit as they watched prices escalate faster than they could save. In the seaside suburb of Glenelg I heard from retirees about their fears about the legacy they were leaving their grandchildren: climate change. I heard from a man with quadriplegia who had his overnight support cut by NDIS, and from another man, very distressed, who told me about his mother's last terrible months in aged care.

The very significant benefits of this wonderful country are not shared fairly. My family taught me about the importance of working hard to get ahead but also the importance of social equity. If we want to have a peaceful, cohesive society, if we want to grow our collective wealth, if we want to protect against the very real challenges heading our way, be it climate change, the pandemic or our place in the world, and if we want a strong country, it is in all of our interests that as many as possible are able to share in the benefits of our great country. Inequality is a detriment to us all.

Too often government does not create the conditions and the opportunities for all of its citizens to flourish. Indeed, it creates conditions that push some people down, hold them down and make life as difficult as it can be. It punishes them for not being enough, for not being able to overcome the disadvantage they may have been born into or may have experienced in their lives. Too often past governments have actively and deliberately pushed people into poverty.

Cost of living is one of the major issues I hear about across Boothby. While it affects almost everyone, those on a form of benefit payment, those on minimum wage and those on low fixed incomes are definitely impacted the most. There is no logic and no moral reason why the poorest and most disadvantaged should be the ones

who bear the greater burden. The raising of the minimum wage is a fantastic step forward, and the addressing of casualising gig economy work conditions will make such a difference. Many of you know that I'm a long-term campaigner for the Raise the Rate campaign, and I won't step away from that. I'm also committed to addressing other forms of cost-of-living issues.

This government has inherited wicked problems: \$1 trillion in debt and rising interest rates; a climate emergency and a neglected environment; the pandemic and a shortage of skilled labour; and a housing crisis in both purchase and rental markets. It's important to remember that those in poverty will feel these issues a lot more than the rest of us. They say a rising tide lifts all boats, but not if the boat is tied down.

My recent work has been in the homelessness sector. When we think of homelessness, we are talking about the pointy end of poverty. This is the stage where people truly have nothing left, and it's hard to come back from losing everything. No-one plans to become homeless—this is not anyone's ambition growing up—yet it happens to more people than you would think. There were over 112,000 homeless at the 2016 census, and we expect that number to have risen in the 2021 census.

We always say in the sector that anyone can become homeless and, when you hear that, I know for many there's a small voice in the back of your head that says, 'Well, yes, but not me,' because we'd all like to think that the benefits that we experience are the result of good decisions that we've made and our hard work. And we like to think that because it gives us a feeling of control and safety and security. But, sadly, I'm here to tell you that it can and does happen to people exactly like you and me every day, and to people like your loved ones, your parents, your children, your siblings and your friends.

Physical illness—a cancer diagnosis, for instance—mental illness, relationship breakdown or death of a spouse, a job redundancy, injury, domestic violence: a crisis can arise unexpectedly and very quickly, and suddenly someone who thought their life was stable, secure and independent finds that they have no income coming in and they can't pay the rent. Nearly half of all South Australian women would not be able to support themselves for more than a month on savings alone, and for men it's 36 per cent. It's hard enough trying to survive on JobSeeker, let alone be the preferred tenant in an overly competitive housing market.

Doorknocking in Boothby, I came across people living in garages and squatting in derelict houses. Businesses on our premier tourist strips told me of people sleeping on benches and in doorways. Residents in some of the wealthier areas told me of giving blankets and food to people living behind the local shopping centre and to families living in cars. I've seen it, I've met them, and I can tell you truly: anyone can become homeless.

The Australia my family migrated to, the Australia that I see in my mind and that I hold close to my heart, is an Australia of opportunity, where hard work is rewarded but misfortune is not punished, where we are one community and we are a caring community. I am proud to be here as part of an Albanese Labor government, because Australia needs us to do more and be more.

I said at the beginning of my campaign that this is a 'we' campaign not a 'me' campaign, and I have so many people to thank. Labor is a movement that is bigger than the party. It's powered by the mighty union movement and supported by broader civil society. It's a movement that says that we can all share in the riches of our country, that we should all be treated with respect, that each of us, as individuals, should be valued. Our work should be valued. Our contribution to the community should be valued. We should be valued. I can't thank you all enough and I'm here to help us achieve our vision: a fair community with a better future—no-one left behind.

Particular thanks to Senator Penny Wong; Senator Karen Grogan; South Australian Deputy Premier the Hon. Susan Close, who I think is in the gallery today; Ian Hunter MLC and Abbie Spencer for their support during the preselection process and since; members of the Boothby FEC, particularly President Aileen Croghan, Secretary Don Clancy and former president Dale Beasley for having faith in me; my campaign manager, the wonderful Tom Mooney, who worked the magic and kept me moving forwards; and the campaign team, Liz Temple, Abbie Spencer, Jo Sutton, Ella Waters, Tamsin Anspach, Nick Falcinella, Alexia Deegan, Amy Ware, Ella Shaw, Sean Hill, Cameron Smith, Patrick Stewart, Issie Martin and Elias Hallaj; and the extraordinary support and friendship of Shaun Bonett, Adrian Tisato and Leon Cermak.

I want to thank everyone involved in the South Australian union movement. So many of our unions supported me, and I particularly want to thank the United Workers Union, the Community and Public Sector Union, Australian Services Union and the SDA for their incredible support. I was truly overwhelmed by the support of so many

unions and union members who dedicated countless hours to elect the first Labor member for Boothby in 73 years and a Labor government that will fight for the rights and conditions of workers. I'd particularly like to call out Gary Bullock, Jo Sutton, Abbie Spencer, Liz Temple and Ella Waters.

There were many, many volunteers who came out day after day in hail and in the middle of summer, doorknocking, phone-calling, letterboxing. Some of them are long-term volunteers, such as Julianne Sweeney, who has been volunteering for Labor since Whitlam—and I've seen the photos. Many others were volunteering for the first time, moved by a sense of urgency to change the government.

My staff—all up in the gallery—Nick Falcinella, Amelia Yaron, Hannah Beadle, Alex Bond and James Dimas, are now in the process of setting up the office while providing service to the many constituents we're hearing from. It is a little bit like building the plane while you're flying it. And, of course, I thank the voters of Boothby, who engaged with me, talked to me, told me what mattered to them—their concerns, hopes and fears, the stories of their lives and, of course, what they wanted from their government and their representative. I feel incredibly privileged to be entrusted with your stories, your faith and your votes, and I will work for you every day and every night.

I'd also like to thank my former employer St Vincent de Paul Society SA; its state president, Brad Hocking; its national president, Claire Victory; and staff and volunteers. I'm sure that your newish CEO getting up and leaving to campaign for a federal seat was not in your forward plans—I don't recall seeing it on the risk register, but possibly that was my failing! I thank you for your support.

Finally, my family and friends. My mother: you provided a secure and safe home, despite the death of your beloved husband, my father. You supported my education in an era where education for girls was not a given, and while I recall that I was the perfect child I accept that it may not have always felt that way from your perspective.

To my best friend, Tiffany Williams, who is in the gallery: I suspect that you think I am your support and cheerleader, but actually you're my support and cheerleader. Thank you for putting up with me being a very neglectful friend over the last 10 months.

My triplet sons, Hamish, Rory, and Jacques—also in the gallery—have adjusted well to their mother suddenly deciding to change everyone's lives by abruptly resigning from paid employment and disappearing on the campaign trail. Their enthusiasm for seeing my face on every Stobie pole in the electorate of Boothby and having their friends report back on what I've done and said hasn't failed. Thank you for your support. I love you all, and I'm putting it on the record: you're all my favourites.

And, finally, my wonderful husband, Kim. Kim and I met when we were both sitting on a not-for-profit board. We often comment that the Institute of Company Directors doesn't advertise meeting the love of your life as a benefit to volunteering on a board. And what a man to take on not only me but my three then 15-year-old sons!

When Kim and I went on holiday to the Northern Territory last year, we had no idea that we would come back having made such a life-changing decision—for me to run for preselection for Boothby. Kim has been a constant support and a constant enthusiasm and, to my great amusement, took to doorknocking like a pro. He took to letterboxing, corfluting and spending whole days at pre-poll and polling booths chatting to voters. Mr Speaker, if I might crave your indulgence to directly address my husband: Kim, I love our lives together. I can't thank you enough. I love you, and I truly could haven't done this without your support. In the words of the Kaurua people, 'Ngaityalya.'

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: The debate is interrupted in accordance with standing order 43. The debate may be resumed at a later hour.