




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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VACANCY IN SENATE OF COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Election of Senator

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (2.33 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise today to support the motion with respect to Liberal National Party senator-elect Amanda Stoker. The Liberal National Party recently conducted a rigorous and exhaustive Senate preselection process. Two hundred and forty-eight Liberal National Party state councillors, including myself, from across Queensland heard from 12 outstanding candidates who had diverse backgrounds and a lot to offer with respect to public service. Following a number of rounds of voting, senator-elect Stoker was chosen. Senator-elect Stoker was chosen not for her gender but because of her many great skills and great abilities. The LNP is a grassroots democratic party and Amanda was selected via a very democratic process.

Amanda was born in Campbelltown, New South Wales, in 1982, the eldest daughter of Mark and Connie Fell. She excelled not only academically but also at gymnastics, competing at a national level. In senator-elect Stoker's final year of school she was school captain and also a qualified gymnastics judge. Amanda graduated in 2000 and at the time was on the New South Wales premier's list for being in the top 20 statewide for all-round academic performance. She received an HSC grade of 99.8 out of 100. Subsequently Amanda studied at Sydney University on a full academic scholarship studying arts majoring in history and government as well as law. This was also when Amanda joined the Liberal Party. It was during this time that Amanda also met her husband Adam. They were married in 2005 and are parents of three daughters, as we have heard today, Mary, Jane and Emma, and I acknowledge them, one and all, in the gallery, as well as other family and friends, sister Susan and, in particular, Amanda's mother Connie.

Adam has also made a great contribution to the Liberal National Party as a regional chair and served on the state executive of the party. Senator-elect Stoker graduated in 2005 with a combined Bachelor of Laws/Arts degree with first class honours. Following her admission as a solicitor Amanda served as an associate to then justice Ian Callinan. The honourable Ian Callinan AC QC, former justice of the High Court of Australia, describes Amanda as—

... quick-witted, articulate, well liked and courteous. She quickly earns respect for her work and her intelligence. I have observed that she is driven by an ethic of public service in all of her political and community service activities. There is no doubt that both the party and the Senate would be greatly enriched by Amanda's sensitivity and her compassion, her skilful advocacy and her deep interest in policy.

Following this period with then justice Callinan, Amanda and Adam relocated from Sydney to Brisbane where senator-elect Stoker worked as an associate for then justice Philip McMurdo. Amanda was then appointed as a Commonwealth prosecutor in the Director of Public Prosecutions office serving in both Brisbane and Townsville. In 2010 Amanda commenced on the LNP Policy Standing Committee

and worked as the Young LNP treasurer. Denver Beanland, historian, honorary LNP life member, former Queensland attorney-general and former member for Indooroopilly has acknowledged Amanda's abilities by saying—

In Amanda, the party has a person who has the ability and readiness to make an immediate and long-term contribution to the direction of the nation. It is time to make a strategic choice. Amanda has the ability and intellect to advocate for our beliefs, policies and values and the courage to make that case in a hostile environment. I am always impressed by her good-humoured patience and perseverance in turning ideas into actions.

In 2011 Amanda was called to the bar and as such she has worked widely throughout Queensland. Amanda has worked as a lecturer at the Central Queensland University and in 2015 received the Central Queensland University Student Voice Award for distance educator of the year. That same year senator-elect Stoker became vice-president of the Women Lawyers Association of Queensland. In 2017 Amanda was appointed honorary legal adviser to the LNP. She is determined to make an impact and improve the lives of Australians. Senator-elect Stoker has vowed to fight to improve the international competitiveness of Australian students' school performance and to ensure there are high-quality education opportunities available in rural and regional Queensland. Amanda is unwavering in her defence of the values that underpin our society: freedom of speech, equality of opportunity and a reasonable approach to our economy.

I will leave my final comments to Don Cameron AM, the former federal member for Moreton, and his wife Lila—

As active and separately awarded honorary life members of the LNP, with 122 years combined membership, we recognise that our Senate is vital to our country's very future. We have a duty to ensure we select someone who possesses the energy, skills and competency to make their mark in our name, along with a genuine commitment to what the LNP represents. We believe Amanda Stoker more than fulfils the criteria and is the ideal choice.

Amanda will enrich the fabric of the Australian Senate. She will make a thoughtful and important contribution to public life. I support and commend the motion to the House with respect to Liberal National Party senator-elect Amanda Stoker. I conclude by thanking former senator George Brandis for his service, not only to our party but to the Australian Senate and to public life, and wish him all the very best in his new role as High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.