

Australia's First Female Aboriginal MP Has Given Her Maiden Speech in Parliament and It Was Epic

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Linda Burney, the first indigenous woman to be elected to the Australian House of Representatives, has given her maiden speech highlighting her opposition to planned changes in the Racial Discrimination Act and sending a message of hope.

The Australian Labour Party member for Barton in New South Wales, who was elected on July 2, began her first speech by speaking in her native language, after being sung into parliament by Wiradjuri woman Lynette Riley, who had also made Burney a traditional cloak carrying images describing her story.

Speaking about the cloak, Burney said: "It charts my life. On it is my clan totem, the goanna (a lizard), and my personal totem, the white cockatoo. A messenger bird, and very noisy."

Although Burney made her pride to represent indigenous people clear, she said "I will not be stereotyped."

Burney used her maiden speech to decry moves by the conservative coalition to amend the Racial Discrimination Act.

"Too often these calls to amend the Racial Discrimination Act come from those from whom this kind of discrimination is totally alien," she said.

She also sought to inspire young indigenous people: "If I can stand in this place, so can they – never let anyone tell you, you are limited by anything."