



Speech by

## Ms Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Tuesday, 26 August 2008

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### BRISBANE CITY COUNCIL, RATE INCREASES

**Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (10.38 pm): Since the Brisbane City Council's budget was passed this year, I have been inundated with constituents—namely unit and townhouse owners—expressing grave concern and disbelief over what can only be described as massive rate increases for ratepayers on community title schemes. A brief history to this story is that in the recent BCC budget the Lord Mayor announced that he would be removing the rate cap of 10 per cent for unit dwellings and introducing a new scheme incorporating a 'parity factor' for general rates from 1 January 2009. What this means is that for all apartment blocks in Brisbane with a land value of over \$1 million, together with the convoluted system for assessing the general rates for units, annual general rates for many units will increase by thousands of dollars.

Many constituents who have visited my office or whom I have spoken to at several community protest meetings on this issue have documentation to prove that rates are to rise for over 5,000 units and townhouses by between 50 per cent and 1,000 per cent. No wonder they are deeply concerned. No wonder they are in disbelief at what is happening, and no wonder they are outraged at the fact that there was no mention of this during this year's BCC election, and these massive increases were announced just weeks later without warning, information or consultation.

As an example, I have one constituent who has written to me advising that his general rates from January 2009 will increase from \$400 to \$2,800 per annum—a 700 per cent increase. As he and his wife are ordinary workers, they will find it extremely difficult to find the extra cash to meet this unfair and unjust increase. He asks a legitimate question: 'Why did the LNP Lord Mayor not announce at the recent election that he would remove the 10 per cent rate cap for those on CTS, thus discriminating against one section of our community?'

No wonder unit owners believe that they are being discriminated against when they have been referred to as 'millionaire unit owners' who should pay more and who can presumably easily afford these unjustified increases. I can assure this House that not all unit owners are wealthy millionaires. Many are ordinary workers, older people or retirees on fixed incomes, pensioners and single people who have moved into apartments for security, proximity to amenities and to be part of inner-city community living. They can ill afford these astronomical increases in one hit. I strongly support and commend those people protesting hard against this grab-for-cash policy that will put all the good work in attracting people back into the inner city in jeopardy. Buying a unit is now less attractive.

I firmly believe that the BCC should reverse this unfair, unjust and questionable budget scheme, and consider the hardship and distress that these exorbitant rate increases will cause many current unit owners who as ratepayers are sending a loud message to the Lord Mayor: 'No can do, Campbell'.