




Speech by
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 13 October 2011

SHIRM, MS D

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (12.49 am): It is with great sadness that I advise of the passing of Dorothy Shirm on 8 September 2011. Dorothy was one of the most beautiful, caring and wonderful women I have had the pleasure to know and grow to love. She was a very spritely 89-year-old who did not let age slow her down or prevent her from enjoying and living life. Her family, friends and the ALP, particularly ALP members in Brisbane Central, will mourn her for a very long time.

Dorothy May Shirm was born in Mummulgum, a small village about 25 kilometres to the west of Casino, on 25 July 1922. Her mother, Jessie, was from London and her father, Arthur, was a ship's steward from Germany who had immigrated to Australia to start a new life. The Jessie and Arthur Shirm family moved into Casino in 1926, and Dorothy was born the fifth child, with Mabel, Len, Georgie, Ron and Jessie older than her and Gordon, Betty and Barbara younger.

Although the family were staunch Anglicans, Dorothy attended St Mary's Convent in Casino, along with others in the family, as the local public school was said to be too rough. When Dorothy finished school she was lucky to get a job at Glynn's department store in Casino—it was post-depression and times were tough. During her time in the job she used the opportunity to develop her skills as a stenographer which then qualified her for a position with Casino council and eventually secretary to the mayor.

This was an exciting time in Casino. All the soldiers were in town and Dorothy revelled in the social scene. She was also good at sport and managed to be selected in a north coast hockey team, which played in Sydney.

At the age of 27 in 1949 Dorothy made the big move to Brisbane to join her younger brother, Gordon. With her excellent skills and being a diligent and tireless worker she had no trouble getting work. She worked for many years as a private secretary to Mr Frank Waters, President of the then Australian Postal Workers Union—this beginning her long and passionate work for the Labor cause. After 25 years of working with the APWU, she retired and purchased her town house in Allenby Street, Spring Hill—a purchase she told me was the best thing she had ever done—where she lived with her beloved 26-year-old Volvo. She lost her devoted partner Ray in 1994.

She rarely missed a meeting of the Spring Hill branch of the ALP and she never missed a meeting of my SEC. Dorothy gave a lot of time to the ALP when Peter Beattie was Premier, and she enjoyed immensely her invitations to Parliament House for functions and loved politics. Her services to the ALP were recognised in 2008 when she was awarded life membership of the Queensland Labor Party, and then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Premier Anna Bligh presented her with the award she very much treasured.

Dorothy Shirm was one of a kind and we will all miss dearly her forever encouraging words of wisdom and support, her gracious and loving personality and her zest for life. Those who were touched by Dorothy's life and friendship know they have been greatly enriched by the experience. She will be sadly and truly missed and her warmth will continue to glow warm in our hearts every time we think of her. Rest in peace, darling Dorothy.