




Speech By
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (5.44 pm): It is nice to be back. Sometimes we wonder why we do this job, but I think all of us on both sides do it for all the right reasons. It is an honour once again to represent the people of Brisbane Central. Since the last time I was in the House our family has suffered a very sad loss. I dedicate this speech in loving memory of my beloved mum, Concetta Farfaglia, whom we lost on 17 January 2014.

As I said, it is an honour to represent the people of Brisbane Central. This is a seat that I love. Those who know me know that I am an inner-city gal. I have lived in the inner city all my life. I grew up in Spring Hill. My Italian parents moved to the suburbs of New Farm from Spring Hill in the early seventies. I then married and live in the electorate. I can honestly say that I have never lived anywhere else and I love every minute of it. I have heard new members talk about the wonders of their seats. I was a little envious, and they did speak so beautifully of them, but nothing beats the city of Brisbane. It is the place where we have the best coffee shops. You just have to come down to my neck of the woods to enjoy a fantastic coffee and all the delights that we have to offer such as fantastic restaurants and eateries. It is becoming a world-class metropolitan city. Although it is in my electorate, I know that it is owned and loved by every Queenslanders in this place.

If there was a concern that came very early to me during the campaign it was that of overdevelopment. I will talk more about that later on. There was a lot of concern about the pressure that this is putting on inner-city living and the balance appears to be not right. It seems to be out of control. As I said, it is something that I will talk about a little later on.

I want to start by thanking all the hard workers who assisted me. I do not want to leave them until last because I do not want to forget to mention just how grateful I am for their assistance during my campaign to win back the seat of Brisbane Central. I want to start with my family: the love of my life and my best friend, my husband, Michael, and ditto my daughter, Aly. I do not think there is anyone in here who knows my husband, Michael, who does not love him. He really is a fantastic individual. He gives unconditional support. There was no job too big or too small for him to do. He made sure we were fed and watered—almost too well—and he was always there when I needed him. Similarly, my daughter, Aly, who turns 21 this year, I thank her so much for her patience in often not having her mum around. It is often a bit tough but now that she is a bit older it is easier than when she was younger and I was in here earlier. I love them both dearly. From the bottom of my heart I cannot thank them enough for their support and for everything they do for me.

A huge thankyou goes to my campaign team led by my fantastic—it is the only word to describe him—campaign manager, Pat O'Neil. We ran a great grassroots campaign and an excellent social media campaign which Pat was particularly skilled at. His expertise was only surpassed by his good nature, hard work and commitment. I cannot thank him enough for all that he did. I wish him all the very best in his desire to enter politics at a federal level as the federal member for Brisbane. He is currently seeking preselection and I am hoping to assist him as much as I can for him to achieve that end.

Other campaign team members included Judi Jabour and Sam Jones, who now work for the people of Brisbane Central in my electorate office. I believe we make a great team. We have settled into the office. We have been so busy since we have started. It is quite unbelievable, but we are on top of it all, we are meeting constituents and we are out there in the community. I cannot say any more about the hard work that they have put in since we were successful in winning back Brisbane Central.

Coordinating volunteers, as all honourable members know, is one of the toughest jobs, but my volunteer coordinator, Kerry Kahlan, made the job look easy. She worked tirelessly to ensure the volunteers were out working every day—doorknocking, telephoning, having conversations, working at high-vis stalls, staffing booths, working at events, doing corner catch-ups and being fully informed about the campaign. This was her first attempt at working on a campaign and she did an excellent job. Thank you so much, Kerry.

There are so many people who worked on my campaign—literally hundreds—and it is not possible to mention them all, but thanks of course go to my family. My dad always had confidence that I would win back the seat of Brisbane Central, and it was great when we had the celebrations at the Brunswick Hotel. Dad had ordered the most enormous Italian cassata cake you have ever seen from the bakery in Kelvin Grove and Ashgrove called Gerbino's. This is a fantastic Sicilian family who make the best Sicilian sweets anyone in this House has ever tasted. It was huge and everybody enjoyed it, and dad was so proud and happy to have bought a victory cake and it was actually a victory celebration. My five sisters staffed the booths for me, and let me tell you, nobody mucks around with the five sisters of the Farfaglia clan. They had those booths under control and, boy, did they go for it. I also thank my nieces, nephews, friends and supporters.

Special thanks must go to my SEC committee—president Elizabeth Fraser, secretary Stella Donatini and treasurer Maree—who with the committee members made sure we were campaign ready when the election was called. I must also mention and thank other workers—Peter Fraser, Peter Casey, Lynn Kennedy, Adam Matthews, Pav Zielinski, Amber Hawkins, Anne Sleat, Lynne DeLange, Bruce Hunter, Nick Dalton, Richard Burke, Lloyd Casey, Talitha Burson, Kate, Kurt, Robert, Sarah, Susan, Stephen, Marie, Alana and Madonna. I give a particular thank you to Madonna. I met her in the street. She was incensed at what she had witnessed over the last three years. It was the first ALP campaign she had worked on and she did a fantastic job. I give a special appreciation to two visitors from WA who came to help in the election and I scored them—and, boy, did we score great. I want to thank Ryan Anderton and Vicki Burrows who did a fantastic job and fitted so well into the team.

I agree with the member for Maryborough who spoke about the heat. It was one of the hottest campaigns I think I have ever dealt with, and I do not think I have cooled down from the heat yet. It was great that my pop-up campaign office in Brunswick Street was air-conditioned, and we tried to make sure our volunteers were in the air conditioning as much as possible. I want to thank my good friend Gina Salantri for the short-term renting of the little property in Brunswick Street. It suited us down to the ground, and I am so glad we were able to use it for the duration of the campaign. There was a great party atmosphere in there. There was a lot of hard work and it was great to have our functions across the road at the Brunswick Hotel. They looked after us and, boy, did we rock that place on the night that the victory was known.

I would like to thank all of the unions of course. I am a very proud unionist, having been the first female secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions in its history. I want to thank all of the unions who assisted in my campaign: the Plumbers Union, with secretary Brad O'Carroll, and Sharon and Tania were also an incredible support; the NUW, through Dani Shanahan and Greg Moran; the QCU, through John Battams, Ron Monaghan, the other staff who worked there, and some of them are now members of this House with me, and the incredible team from the not for sale campaign; and the QNU.

I want to thank the federal members who came up to assist, including Bill Shorten. On the very first day, Bill came straight to assist me with the campaign. He was welcome, unlike the Prime Minister at the time who I do not think we saw during the campaign. It was great to have Bill Shorten there. As I said, he is welcome at my campaign any time. I also thank Tanya Plibersek, Catherine King and Anthony Albanese who also visited and assisted, and I was very grateful for that assistance.

I want to acknowledge the support of my good friend the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer. They were by my side. We were raising issues and policies. We were attending events and they were supporting my campaign. The team that worked with me absolutely loved having Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk in the campaign office on the last day of the campaign. They loved every minute of it. I send a big thank you to the Premier for choosing my little campaign office to do that.

I want to also pay my deep gratitude to the Queensland Nurses' Union. Following the loss in 2012, I took a bit of stock of my life of where I was going and what I was going to do, and I could not have been happier than to have received employment at the QNU. I want to place on record my sincere thanks to the QNU—to the secretary, Beth Mohle, who would have to be one of the best union secretaries this state has ever seen; to assistant secretary, Des Elder; and to the QNU council for employing me to head up the member and specialist services team as their director. As we know, the QNU is the largest union in Queensland. They have over 53,000 members, with a 95 per cent density in the public sector. It was a pleasure to work with a dedicated industrial, professional service and legal team of workers and it was a privilege to have been able to work with all of the staff representing our great nurses and midwives in this state. The pity was that I saw firsthand the treatment of the nurses and midwives at the hands of the previous government. For all that they were saying—

Mr Minnikin: They got paid.

Ms GRACE: I will come to that—do not worry, I will come to that. For all that they were promised about front-line services, they could not believe that they had been betrayed like this by the previous government. I want to mention the vilification that happened to those who spoke out. I want to thank especially here the new Minister for Communities, Women and Youth. She assisted us with two members who were treated terribly in relation to speaking out about issues that they were concerned about. It was through the legal representation we gave those nurses that we cleared their names. They needed their union and they were there to represent them against the harassment that came from those opposite.

I want to clear up the issue of the payroll. They could see very clearly the difference between an unintended consequence and a direct intended consequence. There is a lot of talk around here about the cost of the payroll debacle and I want to draw people's attention to the Chesterman report and 7.1. It is a guesstimate that KPMG has made on the cost of the payroll debacle and they costed it out to 2017. The last time I looked, it was not 2017 yet, so those opposite should read 7.1 of the report and they will get the response. I cannot believe the misleading that goes on in this House in relation to that issue.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! Member for Hinchinbrook.

Ms GRACE: I guess it is breathtaking—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Brisbane Central will wait for the House to come to order.

Mr Cripps interjected.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Hinchinbrook and member for Chatsworth! The member for Brisbane Central has the call.

Ms GRACE: Thank you for your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. I guess it is breathtaking that we have those opposite asking questions about front-line services and who were front-line workers and who were not front-line workers, yet they did not know the definition of a nurse and a midwife as a front-line worker. It is really quite unbelievable that they could get up and ask questions like that.

I have got to admit that I am starting to become very concerned about the demonisation and the attacks on the union movement by those opposite and the message that this House is sending to workers across this state. Workers join their union for protection. They join their union for a number of reasons. They join their union because the union represents them. But there is this demonising. Workers know that in a workplace there is an imbalance of power between the workers and the employers and the only way they can balance that power is by joining their union. This consistent attack from those opposite is concerning and in my view it must stop. If there is any example—and I have got thousands of them over my career—

Mr Minnikin: Thousands of them?

Ms GRACE: Actually, tens of thousands of workers that I have represented. There is no better case for a worker to join a union than the son of the member for Lockyer. I heard his story in this House about Cement Australia, about driving trucks that were unroadworthy, the treatment when there was an accident and the manner in which he was treated by a large employer. If there is any example of a worker's need for a union, thank you, member for Lockyer; you gave me a great example. I am positive that if his son were a member of the TWU, he would have been looked after.

Mr Rickuss: He was.

Ms GRACE: He should have gone to the union—

Mr Rickuss: I did. I rang them up and they didn't want to know about it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Ryan): Order! Member for Lockyer.

Ms GRACE: There was no talk of this in the member's speech. Now, all of a sudden, things are changing when we are in the House.

In the history of the industrial relations system in Australia I have never known one employer to give any worker an advancement on their entitlements—not once. Everything that we have got for workers—maternity leave, superannuation, long service leave, annual leave, sick leave, casual loading, and I could go on—was hard won by the union movement. When it came to standing up against unfair federal laws, it was the movement that took up the challenge to the then Howard government.

There are a few things that I want to add about my electorate. I am passionate about education and looking after the schools in my electorate. I am proud to say that Fortitude Valley is not for sale. I also want to say that I recently received a briefing from the RNA. I heard the member for Everton, who at least stood up in his electorate and saved the Everton Park State High School. However, I would bet anything that that school does not have 2,000 apartments being built over the next 10 years, as is happening at the RNA site, and that is just across the road from the Fortitude Valley school. In 10 years time there are going to be 10,000 apartments there, and that is not taking into account all of the other cranes and the building that is occurring in my electorate. I do not think there is one crane that is not in the electorate of Brisbane Central. The amount of work that is going on is incredible. It was ridiculous for the former government to sell a school—and where would we get that land again—on a cash grab, and I am proud to say that we are not selling Fortitude Valley State School. I am looking forward to working on the master planning. It is great to be working with the P&Cs.

Let me tell honourable members that I have a very happy Brisbane Central State School because they now have their school, lock, stock and barrel. There is no mucking around about hiving off parts of the car park or secrecy about what was being built. There is no more, 'Oh no, you can't go down there, P&C. We're doing this the way that it was handled last time.' Under this government there is integrity, openness and transparency. That is what I am going to deliver and that is what this government is delivering.

There are issues around overdevelopment, traffic and parking and there are issues with which I am struggling regarding the vision of what this is going to bring about. I am looking forward to working with the Deputy Premier on addressing that vision together with the members for Bulimba, Greenslopes and other members who have issues with overdevelopment in their electorate. We can look at what is the vision and get into the Brisbane City Council, which appears to be addicted to development.

I am looking forward to working with the LGBTIQ community. We are looking at the law reviews and at refunding the AIDS Council. They are very eager to work with the government and I am eager to work with them in delivering those services. I have never seen a community sector more upset than during the campaign. The gag clause, the cuts in funding, the struggling that went on and then, to add insult to injury, there was the situation with the New Farm Neighbourhood Centre. We had already funded a \$600,000 improvement to their building. The former government then cut the funding and during the campaign we were told, 'We'll give you back the \$600,000, but only if I am elected.' What an insult to that community sector, which provides fantastic services in the New Farm electorate.

I also look forward to working with the entertainment precinct. The drink-safe precinct that we brought in was a fantastic experiment on working together with them. I have seen them. We are going to fix up the ID scanner debacle that members opposite left. We are looking forward to working hard on that.

I look forward to development in my area such as the Queens Wharf development and working with the Premier's office on that. I do want to acknowledge the previous member. It is a tough job to be an MP. I am happy to hear he is enjoying time with his family and I wish them all the best.

I have never come across an electorate that was so dismayed at the actions of the previous government—their arrogance, their attacks, their combative style and the fact that everything they saw they voted against. Let me tell honourable members that the people who voted against those opposite knew exactly what they were doing.