




Speech By
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (3.54 pm): I rise to support the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I think that those opposite need a history lesson, because clearly what is a unique history in Queensland—very few organisations can claim the history that the union movement can in this state—seems to have been missed when it comes to not only the member for Mansfield but also many members opposite.

Stonemasons working for John Petrie won the eight-hour day in 1865—he believed that quality was better than quantity. They commemorated their achievement, as we have done every year since 1865, with a march. Other unions joined in as they won significant reductions in working hours. By 1890, 11 unions had joined the stonemasons. On 18 August 1885 a meeting of union secretaries decided to form the Trades and Labor Council, which came into being on 1 September 1885. Very few organisations in Queensland have a history like that. The next year, in 1886, the peak council was sanctioned by the then Samuel Griffith Liberal government and the Queensland Trade Union Act was passed.

In 1891 the shearers striking in Barcaldine held a march on May Day, 1 May, and the first Brisbane May Day march was held in 1893. After about a decade of these marches, the eight-hour day's march was formally changed to the first Monday in May in 1901 and gazetted as a public holiday by the then Queensland government. So for over 100 years there has been no—

Mrs Stuckey: So what?

Ms GRACE: I take that interjection from the member for Currumbin. 'So what?' she says. The history of this state cannot be compared to any other organisation and what we get from those opposite which demonstrates why they are over there is 'So what?' Well, I will tell you so what. For hundreds of years workers have been proudly marching with their families alongside their unions and never have they been threatened to have May Day changed in this state. It took a vindictive, nasty, get-even approach by the then Campbell Newman government to decide that history does not matter anymore, 100 years of marching the streets of Brisbane does not matter anymore, the fact that this was gazetted back in 1901 does not matter anymore. But guess what? 'We'll change and celebrate somebody's birthday when it is not really their birthday, because that matters.' Honestly, the irony is unbelievable. It was nothing more than a get-even, vindictive, anti union, anti workers sentiment that comes continually out of the mouths of those opposite.

After the brief history lesson that I have given them, in 1995 I was very proud to be elected the Assistant Secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions and in 2000 the General Secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions. We saw the numbers soar during the Labour Day marches as we prepared them and organised them, and particularly so during the MUA dispute and against John Howard's Work Choices legislation. We saw record numbers of workers marching to support their unions, their rights at work and the maintenance of fair workplace laws. They not only march in Brisbane

but also all over Queensland, and I know many members on this side of the House have marched proudly with their unions on those days.

As I said, if there was ever a sign of just wiping away history like they do not care, like it does not matter, it is the 'so what' attitude of those opposite. There is no reason why this should have been done. There was never an economic reason for it 100 years ago. The member for Mansfield is better than that. There was no economic reason for it 100 years ago. There has been no economic reason for it for the last 125 years.

There is a good reason why other states do not have Labour Day on the same day: because their history is a little different from Queensland. This is Queensland's history. It started in Barcaldine. It was sanctioned in legislation in 1901. It is written in the act. Go and have a look at it. Get yourself a good history lesson. Stop being so anti worker and anti union. Get with the pace. Labour Day will go back to where it belongs, and we on this side of the House are proud to support it any day of the year. I commend the bill to the House.