



Speech By
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MOTION OF CONFIDENCE

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (1.11 am): I rise to support the motion of confidence in the Palaszczuk government. However, I wish to firstly place on record how proud and honoured I am to be once again representing the electorate of Brisbane Central as a state member of parliament and thank the residents for their support. I want to also warmly congratulate the member for Nicklin on his elevation to the position of Speaker in this 55th Parliament, marking the first time in a century that an Independent member has held such an honoured role. Having served on previous parliamentary committees with the honourable member I know that he will rise to the occasion.

This will be a significant week in the history of Queensland politics, not only because we now have both a female Labor Premier and Deputy Premier, to whom I offer my heartfelt congratulations, and have elected an Independent Speaker, but also because I believe Queenslanders have found a new confidence in this Labor government and in this parliament as we strive to deliver the highest standards of integrity, accountability and trust. Mr Speaker, I look forward to working with you in my position as Deputy Speaker to achieve this outcome and I also congratulate the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition and my fellow parliamentary colleagues.

This does not mean that there will not be robust debate or robust exchange of ideas and policies in this House as the Palaszczuk government gets on with the business of delivering on its election commitments. However, unlike the previous three years, this Labor government will listen, will be a more consultative and engaging government and the people of Queensland can have confidence that we will not continue the combative style of government practiced by those opposite that they witnessed and rejected.

Recently Kevin O'Leary turned 100. He is Australia's longest serving ALP branch member with 85 years of membership. He said, 'I know we never squib a fight. Never have. Never will.' After the devastating loss of the 2012 election Labor did not lie down and wallow in self-pity but set about, under the leadership of the Premier, regrouping and rebuilding our great party and we did not squib the challenge, fighting hard to win back the seats we lost in 2012. I believe the Premier recently compared the election win to climbing Mount Everest, a gruelling task but one that was achieved by a steady, measured and responsible approach to good government. I believe the people of Queensland can have confidence that the Palaszczuk government will not continue to govern in the combative space occupied by those opposite. We will not be picking fights for the sake of picking fights.

When I decided to run again for the seat of Brisbane Central I was asked why. It is really interesting that the member for Kawana has not stopped speaking since I rose, yet during the last six months where was the member for Kawana? Hidden away somewhere, I think. Apart from the obvious fact that I have a passion for politics, the area where I live and working with people, my main motivating factor was the actions of the previous government. I just could not sit back and do nothing. No-one was immune. Lawyers, the judiciary, nurses, doctors, public servants, firms, community organisations, workers, unions—haven't we heard about that tonight?—respected institutions, peak councils, corruption fighters, the list goes on, were all on the receiving end of the wrath of the previous

government. It was almost like they could not help themselves as they stumbled on, out of control on power due to their huge majority, thinking they were invincible. I had faith that the people of Queensland would not continue to support the actions of the previous government and I was not disappointed.

During the campaign many issues and concerns were raised by residents, businesses and community organisations and I was overwhelmed by their feelings of helplessness. They clearly did not like what was happening in their neighbourhoods, their suburbs and their state and were keen to hear of alternative policies and plans. During the past three years I was very proud to work for the Queensland Nurses Union, the largest union in the state, and saw firsthand the devastating effect on 1,800 nurses and midwives and their families who lost their jobs following the job cuts in front-line services in health. They clearly were not happy and felt let down with the payroll debacle. However, they felt totally betrayed by the job cuts that were intentional and totally opposite to what had been promised by the previous government prior to the 2012 election to increase the number of nurses and revitalise front-line services. They were told they had nothing to fear yet they were asked time and time again to do more with less. I welcome this government's policy to employ more nurses and midwives and for the first time to legislate nursing ratios to ensure the quality care and safety of patients. Queenslanders can feel confident that this government will deliver on the additional 4,000 nursing jobs for graduates over four years, 400 new nursing positions to ensure safe workloads and patient care and restore front-line services axed by the previous government.

Job cuts in the Public Service, education and health services totalling around 24,000 jobs lost occurred with no apparent strategy, no long-term vision and with no empathy for the careers destroyed and the workers and their families who were affected. Not only did workers lose their jobs, many were forced to apply for jobs that were well below the levels that they were currently occupying just to keep a position in the government. This occurred regardless of how many years of service they had in the Public Service which resulted in many workers ending up doing the same job with the same responsibilities but on lower levels of pay. In fact, on election day I had one such public servant in the exact position I have just described handing out Labor how-to-vote cards with me.

I look forward to working towards creating local jobs and am confident that this government's commitment to jobs through its employment programs will deliver the jobs now and into the future. We must do all we can to reduce the unemployment rate—currently standing at 6.5 per cent—left by those opposite. In delivering on our commitment for additional apprentices and trainees this government will also restore TAFE as a leading provider of vocational education in Queensland and revive our solar industry creating the jobs of the future. It was truly unbelievable that Queensland, the Sunshine State, had no solar policy.

Queenslanders can feel confident that this government will not sell our assets, but will use the profits that they generate to pay down debt in an economically responsible manner. The Not4Sale campaign did an excellent job in running a campaign that was in tune with the people of Queensland, who were not fooled that the leasing of assets for 100 years was not equal to a sale.

Since being elected I have met with most of my school representatives. They are passionate about education and know only too well that a good education is a key for the future of children and the future of the state. Although there are many issues regarding inner-city schools, particularly regarding being landlocked in an area that is fast growing, they can be confident that the Palaszczuk government will listen to their needs in an open consultative transparent manner, unlike their recent experiences in dealing with the previous government. I welcome Labor's commitment to recruit 2,500 teachers into state schools across Queensland to help reduce class sizes and restore the front-line education services cut by the LNP. Of course, they welcome a plan to allow teachers to continue doing what they do best, that is, teaching our children, where excellent teachers will be given the classifications they deserve.

My electorate can also have confidence that this Labor government will listen to school communities when it comes to the needs of local schools in a growing area. It beggars belief that, with all the apartments that are being built in the Brisbane Central electorate, a school was closed. The oldest school in Queensland, the Fortitude Valley State School, had survived over 150 years, yet it was not able to survive one term of an LNP government. Bad public education policy needs to be reviewed and I look forward to working with the new education minister, Kate Jones, regarding the process for addressing the mistakes of the previous government.

Workers can have confidence that this Labor government will restore the balance in industrial relations in this state from an LNP IR policy based on fear and intimidation and reducing the industrial rights of workers and their unions to an industrial relations platform based on cooperation and respect. Employment protections for government workers will be restored. The Palaszczuk

government will also restore common law workers compensation rights for workers who are injured at work through no fault of their own. Common law rights for injured workers had been a cornerstone entitlement under this state's workers compensation system for decades, yet did not survive one term of an LNP government.

I welcome Labour Day, fondly referred to as May Day, being rightly returned to May in 2016. In this state Labour Day had been celebrated in May since 1891 in a tradition spanning 120 years, yet it did not survive one term of an LNP government. If ever a clear example was needed of how unnecessarily vindictive and disrespectful the previous LNP government was, changing Labour Day for no good reason speaks volumes. The people of Queensland can have confidence that a Palaszczuk government will not throw away long-held traditions simply to score a cheap political point or because of a desire to somehow get even with the union movement for supporting Labor governments.

This brings me to the issue of Labor delivering on its commitments to the LGBT community. I believe that members of the LGBT community living in Brisbane Central have more confidence that this government will restore funding and review the rights stripped away by the previous government. I very much look forward to working with members of the LGBT community to deliver on all our commitments.

Overdevelopment and the problems it brings, such as parking and traffic issues, is an issue that is very relevant to the voters in Brisbane Central. This issue was raised with me time and time again. Many residents were deeply concerned that the LNP government, together with the current LNP Brisbane City Council administration, appeared addicted to development. There does not seem to be a development that is not approved or that they do not like, including an acoustic wall in the middle of Fortitude Valley that has greatly impacted on the units next door, which are now shadowed by an enormous 10-metre-high wall that is inches away from people's balconies, in what can only be described as a New York style development at its worst. Residents are greatly concerned that development approvals are given regardless of what is next door, the character of the suburb or how they will impact on the buildings adjacent. Those decisions are causing much angst in my electorate. I look forward to working with the Deputy Premier to address planning issues in my electorate, with the aim of bringing back a balanced approach, restoring residents' rights and respecting the surrounding buildings and character of our suburbs.

As the member for Brisbane Central, which contains one of our largest entertainment precincts, I look forward to working with the Attorney-General, the community and all stakeholders to achieve a balanced approach to liquor licensing and to address alcohol fuelled violence.

The community services area, whose members were concerned about the funding cuts they had experienced and their feelings of helplessness, can have confidence that Labor will honour our commitments such as to refund the Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service, the demise of which left Queensland as the only state in Australia without a free dedicated tenancy advisory program. I know that in my electorate the loss of that service had a detrimental effect on homelessness. TAAS's much-needed services were funded by the interest earned from the \$700 million in tenants' bonds collected since its commencement by the National's Premier Mike Ahern in 1988, but it could not survive one term of an LNP government.

The Palaszczuk government will deliver on its commitment to protect the Great Barrier Reef for future generations and will legislate to ban the dumping of dredge spoil in the Great Barrier Reef heritage area. No ifs, no buts: we must do all we can to save the reef and only a Labor government has the confidence of the people to do so.

I also welcome our plan to address the scourge of domestic violence. Queenslanders can have confidence that the Palaszczuk government will implement the findings of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence, headed by Dame Quentin Bryce.

In summary, I am proud to support the Premier's motion, I am proud to be once again representing the people of Brisbane Central and I am proud that they were smart enough to eject he who could not be named, the previous premier of Queensland, Campbell Newman. A Palaszczuk government will keep our assets, restore front-line jobs and services in health and education, protect our most precious resource the Great Barrier Reef, and create the local jobs and training places needed in this great state. I commend the motion to the House.