



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL**

---

Record of Proceedings, 8 November 2016

**MOTION**

**Racial Discrimination Act**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (6.06 pm): I rise to oppose the motion. Tonight's motion moved by those opposite demonstrates the stark contrast in attitudes and priorities between Labor and the LNP members of this House and federally. I join Bill Shorten, who asked: how many jobs will be created by amending section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act? Absolutely none, and there are the priorities in this House. This side of the House is interested in jobs and a Queensland that is harmonious and working together. The other side of the House wants to water down race hate laws. That is the stark contrast we have here tonight. To put it simply, I do not believe there should be a right to be a bigot, full of hatred and intolerance, and strongly oppose any changes to that effect. If we are going to be quoting Commissioner Triggs, I quote her when she said that no civilised society should allow abusive statements to be made in public about a person's race.

This disgraceful motion speaks volumes about the priorities of those opposite. The member for Mansfield gets to push something those opposite seem disturbingly passionate about—that is, defending, to quote federal Attorney-General George Brandis, 'the right to be a bigot'. That is a strange issue to be passionate about. In fact, there are not too many LNP members I agree with, but I do agree with John Alexander who was the Liberal member for John Howard's former seat of Bennelong. This morning he said—

If you did a ranking of the top 10—

issues, that is—

and I'm used to rankings and top 10s, it wouldn't be in the top 100 ...

Let me tell members: on this side of the House it ranks absolutely zero, because watering down race hate laws is not something that this House will ever support. Let us not forget the fact that in 2014 Tony Abbott had to run away from his changes in relation to legalising bigotry because of the widespread opposition he received. His government learned the lesson and paid the price of alienating a great many of Australia's multicultural communities. The unhinged far right of the LNP will not be deterred. Now, they have Malcolm Turnbull in charge—a man who sold his soul to the far right to be Prime Minister. The far right is ready to give it another go not only in this House but also federally.

This motion demonstrates that the opposition is again taking its marching orders from the extreme right wing fringe that holds its party to hostage. Perhaps this is another attempt by the opposition to woo One Nation. We have seen the member for Buderim trying to woo One Nation. Maybe this is the opposition making another plug, because the Leader of the Opposition has not ruled out a preference deal with One Nation. Perhaps the idea for this motion came from those who want to do that preference deal.

As the multicultural minister, I know full well how much stress and anxiety the debate about watering down the racial discrimination laws causes in our multicultural communities. Now is not the time to be talking about this issue. This is an irresponsible and divisive motion and it comes at a time—

**Mr Boothman** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order! Member for Albert, you are a persistent interjector. I ask you to cease interjecting.

**Ms GRACE:** This is an irresponsible and divisive motion that comes at a time when our multicultural community needs to know that their elected leaders are unified with them against hatred, intolerance and violence. Australia's racial discrimination laws do not need watering down. The fact that the case regarding the QUT students was thrown out of the courts as frivolous proves that the system works. It is not broken. Those opposite claim that the Racial Discrimination Act curtails freedom of speech. I have a question for them: what is it that they want to say? They have parliamentary privilege in this House. What is it that they want to say that section 18C stops them from saying? The members opposite should come clean. They have parliamentary privilege. Two other opposite members will speak to this motion. The opposition members should put it on the record. What is it that they want to say that section 18C prevents them from doing so? I say to those opposite that we will not support this motion. We want a harmonious Queensland. We want a multicultural community that is proud to be part of Queensland.

*(Time expired)*