



Speech by  
**Kate Jones**

**MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE**

Hansard Wednesday, 11 October 2006

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**MAIDEN SPEECH**

**Ms JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (2.30 pm): It is an honour that I be given the opportunity to move—

That the following address be presented to the Governor in reply to the speech delivered by Her Excellency in opening this, the 52nd Parliament of Queensland—

May it please Your Excellency

"We the members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland wish to assure Your Excellency of our continued respect for the Crown and loyalty to the system of government in this state and to tender our thanks for the speech with which you opened the first session.

"The various measures to which Your Excellency referred and all other matters that may be brought before us will receive our careful consideration and we shall strive to deal with them so that our endeavours may contribute to the advancement and the prosperity of the people of this state."

I am extremely honoured to be the first woman member to represent the people of Ashgrove and to be one of 30 women in the 52nd Queensland Parliament. The suburbs of Alderley, Enoggera, Grange, Gaythorne, The Gap and of course Ashgrove comprise the electorate today, which was first established in the 1959 electoral redistribution. The former member, the Hon. Jim Fouras, represented the electorate for almost 17 years. Today I would like to acknowledge Jim's significant contribution to the electorate and to Queensland through his parliamentary service. Jim had a long and distinguished political career and he held numerous positions, including Speaker of the House, Deputy Speaker and various shadow ministries.

I am also proud to be a member of the first fourth term Labor government in more than 65 years. The government's re-election is a testament to the leadership of the Premier, Peter Beattie, and the Deputy Premier, Anna Bligh, and this government's commitment to building a better future for all Queenslanders. We now have the lowest unemployment in a generation, the biggest infrastructure plan in our state's history and record spending on health, community services and education. We are investing in our children's future through the introduction of the prep year in our schools.

We often hear these statements, but what do they really mean? They mean real job opportunities for our young people, securing reliable water supply through our statewide water grid, better public hospitals with more doctors, nurses and allied health workers, and building schools which provide our children with the skills and abilities they need for their future. The strong result at the election locally clearly shows that the people of Ashgrove believe this government is best positioned to deliver in these key areas.

As outlined by Her Excellency yesterday, there are significant challenges for all of us in the years ahead. We have record population growth which has placed enormous strain on our public infrastructure. We are currently experiencing the worst drought on record. We have a federal government that continues to divert funding away from key public service areas such as education, health, housing and disability services. The Howard government has also introduced industrial relations laws which directly attack the Australian values of fairness and equity in our community, destabilising working families. These are tough issues and I know that the electors of Ashgrove care deeply about how this government will tackle these challenges.

We have a tough road ahead but, most importantly, we have a plan for the future. We understand that in this climate, now more than ever, we need visionary leadership and strong government. During the

next four years we will increase training places by 14,000 under the new \$1 billion Skills Plan. This government spends more on research and development than any other state. We are also leading the way on biotechnology and aviation. I am a strong believer in investing in emerging industries because they create the jobs of the future.

A former member for Ashgrove, Alan Sherlock, when making his first speech in 1987 highlighted the problem of unemployment in the local area, which had climbed as high as 20 per cent among our young people. Today under our government the unemployment rate in Ashgrove is around three per cent. We will ensure that through our prudent economic management we continue to grow Australia's strongest economy, that we maintain our AAA credit rating and retain our reputation as the low-tax state. We are planning for growth with the South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan, which is about not only delivering a strategic framework for future development but also protecting our green spaces such as Brisbane Forest Park and the quality of life we currently enjoy. I represent one of the greenest and leafiest suburbs in Brisbane, and I am committed to ensuring it stays that way.

Growing up in the area, I worked for one of the largest local family businesses—The Gap Family Markets. This family business is a real showcase of how well small business is doing in the current strong economic environment we have in Queensland. It is now called Zone Fresh and has expanded to four stores across Brisbane, employing more than 180 people. I want to take this moment to thank the owners, Sam Mangano and Darren Roose, for providing me with that opportunity and for supporting me during my university studies.

Spending on education and training is the most important investment a government can make to build a better future for our state. The significant investment by this government in The Gap State High School and my old school Kelvin Grove State High—and one of my former teachers is in the gallery today—has made a profound difference to the quality of education provided. Just look at the enrolment figures at The Gap State High School. Eight years ago there were around 660 students. The school is now projecting that there will be more than 900 next year, with 200 enrollees already signed up to start year 8 in 2007. Our local state primary schools have also benefited from the priority our government has given to education. The Gap State School now boasts a new world-class, multipurpose arts centre for students to develop skills in this key learning area. Hilder Road State School was one of the first schools to start the prep year trial in 2004 and has been used to train teachers from throughout Queensland. The principal, Josephine Bottrell, has been instrumental in leading facilitators to train administration teams and staff so that they can implement the early year curriculum guidelines across Queensland from 2007.

While the electorate of Ashgrove does not have a physical hub such as a major retail centre, one thing which I see evidence of every day is our strong sense of community. There is compassion and a deep commitment to social justice and equality. These values are ones that I share and will stand up for as the local member. Unmet need in areas such as mental health and disability services is a problem that crosses all socioeconomic barriers. Historically in Queensland, these social services were neglected by successive conservative governments and we have seen the same disregard by the conservatives in Canberra. I know that my government has a strong record in this area—more than doubling funding directed to disability services to improve care and provide respite to families. However, there is still so much need in our community and governments at all levels must work harder to support those families who are struggling to care for people with disabilities and mental health issues.

This strong belief in fairness and equity in my community is why so many people have approached me in the past six months about their concerns regarding the Howard government's industrial relations laws. Basic entitlements such as meal breaks, overtime, sick leave and a fair and valid explanation for being sacked from your job are under threat. As always, when legislation is intrinsically unfair, it is the poorest people in our community who are the most vulnerable. Last week one young man called at my office. He is an ex-student of The Gap State High School and is now in his second year of university. He has also just secured a job with a major Australian telecommunications company. He called me because he was concerned about the conditions in the AWA that he was forced to sign if he wanted the job. Such a fear is not confined to young people entering the job market. Many parents I met during the campaign—baby boomers in the main—are deeply concerned about the future employment conditions for their children. With the prevalence of casual and insecure working arrangements, parents are worried that many of their adult children will never be able to secure a loan to buy their first home. This is a real and justified concern and one that I share.

The erosion of security and fairness in the workplace are threats to our quality of life. Many families are already struggling to balance work and family. While I strongly support flexibility in the workplace, this should not be at the cost of basic rights. Surely no-one in public office wants to be responsible for passing on worse working conditions to future generations than those they inherited. I strongly support my government's fight to repeal the federal industrial relations changes and protect Queensland workers.

Finally, I would like to concentrate on an issue that affects all of us: protecting our environment. I am very fortunate that in my local community there are many active environmental groups, including SOWN—Save our Waterways Now—which has more than 100 members and is helping to protect and rejuvenate

over 23 kilometres of local creeks. There is a growing awareness in the community that our daily behaviour and consumption is having a direct and lasting impact on our planet through climate change.

Parents have written to me genuinely concerned about the future of their children. I believe that this growing alarm and public discourse creates a unique opportunity for government to lead the way in addressing these challenges. The Beattie government has already made a significant contribution by banning broadscale land clearing. This was not a popular decision in many parts of the state but it was the right thing to do. Over the next 20 years we need to continue to make the tough decisions about the kind of society we want to live in and the legacy we want to leave. The state government has an important leadership role to play in addressing key environmental issues such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions as I do not believe that the Howard government will do this.

If we are smart about investing in sustainable, renewable and affordable locally managed energy sources, it is my strong belief that Queensland will be able to harness new economic benefits and employment opportunities while making our state a healthier and better place in which to live. Just laying more bitumen for private passenger vehicle use is not the answer. We need to continue our strong investment in public transport.

I, like all the other new members of the 52nd Parliament, am deeply humbled and honoured by the responsibility I now have to make a difference to our community. But most of all, I am struck by the great sense of opportunity we have to contribute to decision making that will shape the future of our state. As the Leader of the House, the member for Rockhampton, told me, 'You will be a successful politician if you continue to remember where you came from.' Politics above all else is about people, and our side of politics believes that everyone should be given enough support so that no matter where they come from they should have every opportunity to achieve in life. This belief is why I first became involved in politics. It will be what I strive for every day I have the privilege of being a member of the Queensland parliament representing the people of Ashgrove.

I would like to conclude by thanking those closest to me, especially my mother who taught me these values and who made huge sacrifices in her life to give me the opportunities that she, as a young woman, never had. I thank my grandparents, Tony and Marie Harrison, whose work ethic and Catholic values taught me a keen sense of what is right and wrong and that no matter how much or little you have it is always important to stand up for those less fortunate than yourself. I thank my father, all my brothers, and Kerry and Jan for their support.

I would like to thank everyone who helped on the campaign team, especially John Battams, Paula Ridler, Terry Evans, Aileen and Henry Quayle, Bob Hill, Donna O'Donohue, Mike Smith, Rob McMurdo and John Hine. I must make special mention of the Bevis family who have for five generations in Australian history supported working people and Labor governments. I owe a great debt to Shane Bevis. I thank my loving partner, Paul, who, as Auntie Es would say, keeps me grounded. On that note I would like to thank everybody in Robert Schwarten's office. I start in this new job as the youngest member the Ashgrove electorate has had but I am confident that the experience and knowledge that I gained in that office will be invaluable.

I realise that I have been afforded a unique opportunity. The electors of Ashgrove have placed their faith in me, for which I am deeply honoured. I care about the community I grew up in and I will work hard to serve their interests and repay the faith that they have placed in me.