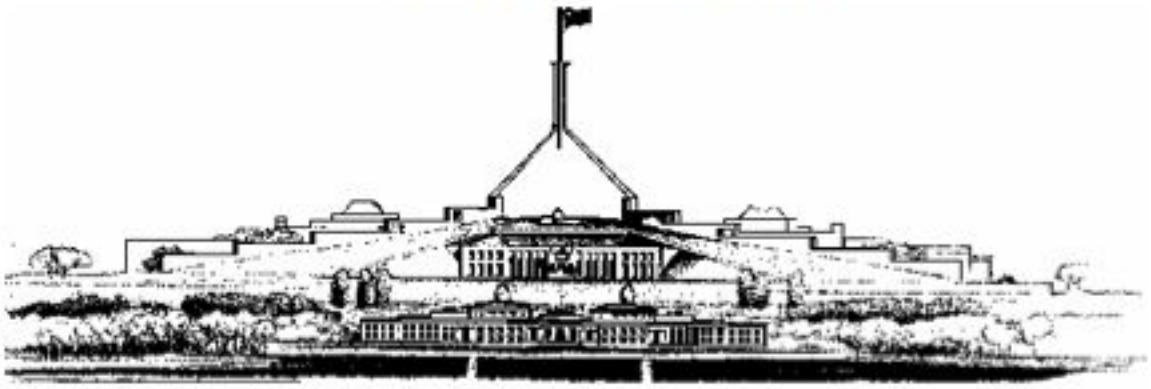
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH

Address-in-Reply

SPEECH

Thursday, 24 July 2025

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date	Thursday, 24 July 2025	**Source**	House
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Questioner		**Responder**	
Speaker	Campbell, Julie-Ann MP	**Question No.**	

Ms CAMPBELL (Moreton) (11:21): NSEO—that was the reason my grandfather was given when he was rejected by the RAAF at the beginning of World War II. It stands for 'not substantially of European origin'. He was a Chinese Australian. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were also given this designation and often turned away when they tried to sign up to defend a country that did not properly recognise them. I acknowledge them and all First Nations people as the traditional owners of the land we stand on here today, the traditional owners of the land on which we walk in all of our communities and the longest continuing culture on the planet.

I have long stood astride two different worlds. My roots lie in an ethnically diverse background, and my professional work and purpose has been to stand up for everyday working people. Hey, babe! Both are often taken for granted—overlooked for their contributions to build this country. And sometimes, despite the common ground between them, they are pitted against each other by those who seek to divide us, when in reality they share the same struggle. Many of them are economic outsiders who rarely see the proportionate rewards of their labour. I'm here, Margaret. This speech is for everyone who feels like what they give isn't what they get back, and it's clearly also for my daughter, Margaret. To the ordinary working people in this country, who often feel like the economy does not work for them: I will work for you. Whether it's Indigenous Australians, who have an unbroken lineage in this country stretching back tens of thousands of years, or people like my gong gong, Harry Hoy Pang Moo, who was born here but was a Chinese Australian, many of the country's institutions, in a time not very long ago, simply were not welcoming of anyone who didn't fit the mould. For many, that is a perception that remains to this day.

As an Australian with a Chinese and Canadian heritage, I am the first person of colour and the first woman to be Labor state secretary in Queensland. I am an outsider who decided to take on politics and institutions. I am now incredibly proud to be the first person of colour and the first woman to be the member for Moreton.

The opportunity to bring my experience, formed over many generations, to positions of influence is emblematic of the Australian Labor Party. Only the Labor Party enables outsiders to put their hands on the levers of power, to deliver the structural economic change that gives everyday Australians access to the engine room of the economy. My story is a road map for that possibility becoming a reality.

My family, the Moo family, immigrated to this country in the late 1800s, to Darwin. We have a Hakka ancestry. Moo Yat Fah started out as a labourer working on the construction of the Darwin to Pine Creek railroad. My por por's family the Lau Gooeys, also immigrated from China around that time. Her mother came by ship as a maid, and her father worked as a slaughterman in Melbourne. Gong Gong always kept chooks in the backyard that he would defeather and butcher himself. He loved AFL, Geelong in particular, and when he settled in Brisbane he worked as a carpenter and helped establish the very first Chinese club of Queensland as one of its early chairmen.

Por Por loved to play the piano, and she devoted her life to making sure that every one of her four children got a great education. When I was older she would call me to drive her to the Bi-Lo to get cartons on soft drink when they were on sale, cementing our shared love of a cheeky Pepsi Max for the ages and also allowing me to put the words 'cheeky Pepsi Max' into *Hansard*.

Gong Gong was eventually admitted to the Air Force. He reached the rank of flying officer and completed over 50 sorties with the No. 31 Beaufighter squadron, a testament to perseverance. His memory—and that of his siblings who also served in the armed forces—is now preserved in the awarding of bursaries in their names to schoolkids in my local community, at St Thomas More College in Sunnybank and at Runcorn and MacGregor state high schools. The children who receive those bursaries will never experience the slight of being characterised as NSEO.

I doubt Por Por and Gong Gong, who were very much outsiders in this country for most of their lives, could have ever dreamed that their granddaughter would be standing in this place honouring their contributions as Chinese

Australians. I am humbled and proud to be able to represent the most multicultural electorate in Queensland, one with over 39 per cent of people born overseas and almost 36 per cent of people speaking a different language in the home—from Mandarin to Cantonese, Arabic to Punjabi, Vietnamese to Korean and many more. I am one of the 15 per cent of people in Moreton with a Chinese heritage, and ours is a community that truly reflects modern Australia. Part of my mission as their representative in this place is to ensure everyone who calls our part of Brisbane home can reach their full potential regardless of their background.

Our community, on Brisbane's south side, has been fiercely represented in this place for the last 18 years by my dear friend Graham Perrett. Perhaps with the exception of literary prudes and parliamentary soccer referees, you would be hard pressed to find someone who doesn't like Graham. I give my heart-felt personal thanks to Graham, and I hope to continue his legacy—for clarity, not the legacy of his record-breaking ejections from this Chamber, but the legacy of a decent and kind member who cares deeply about our community and is focused on outcomes.

The opportunity of a federal Labor government is that we listen to ordinary people. We share their concerns as our own and we give them the opportunities to drive the economy and lead community. One night, in March this year, I found myself in a near-empty lot in the outer suburbs of Brisbane's south side, in the pouring rain and the dead of night, lit only by the spotties of a nearby ute. I had a shovel, and I was digging. No, this is not a privileged confession of misdeeds. It was a last-ditch community sandbagging mission. Cyclone Alfred was looming off Queensland's eastern seaboard, and we had been told just hours earlier that no more sandbags would be issued. So with more than 30 tonnes of donated sand, over a thousand donated bags and the help of a late call-up of the Yeronga devils AFL club, a spontaneous community led sandbagging operation began to help those whose homes needed protection.

This story is not unique—quite the opposite, in fact. It epitomises Brisbane's south siders. Through tough times and across the years, we are resilient, we muck in and we help each other. Our community knows the drill when natural disasters strike. Reverend Dave throws open the doors of the Oxley Uniting Church for respite. Karen and the Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre provide relief and waterproof document protecters. And, this year, Claire and the Sunnycare team opened their back lot to those who needed more last-minute sand. If our local communities understand instinctively that we cannot afford to leave anybody behind and that everyone matters, surely our national politics can do the same.

On my journey to this place I chose to study law. Fortunately, it was on the shortlist of professions that met with my Chinese mother's approval. I cut my teeth standing up for boilermakers, vehicle builders, printers, sheet metal workers, and fitters and turners, and I learnt a few things representing those working in the manufacturing industry. Firstly, the boilermaker is the natural enemy of the fitter and turner. Secondly, we must be a country that makes things. Thirdly, the contribution of working people to the economic story of this country is immeasurable and often overlooked.

In 2017, I was driving up the Bruce Highway. On this occasion my destination was the last bastion of the rail industry in our state, the old Walkers facility. When I walked into the shed, every hard hat represented a job under threat and a broader family hurting from the offshoring of train manufacturing. With those workers, we led a campaign to keep their jobs and to save their community, and a Labor government brought domestic rail manufacturing back to Queensland. It is a great example of an economic intervention that puts people first, rather than letting critical industries fail and skilled jobs go offshore.

In societies where governments have made different choices, we see that people have had enough and are using their power at the ballot box. We are witnessing a global phenomenon where economic inequality is rising, and trust in democratic institution is falling. But Australia has proven itself to be different, and now we have the opportunity to keep it that way. The people I now represent—like Maria, a teacher aide from Acacia Ridge, or Brian, a blind-cleaning company scheduler living in Annerley, or Ryan, an apprentice plumber in Salisbury—are the people who actually create the goods and provide the services that keep our economy moving. Too often they are denied the benefits of their own labour. Everyday workers have been asked repeatedly to bear the brunt of economic reforms in the national interest. The only times those reforms have succeeded are the laudable occasions when Labor governments have made sure that workers share in the benefits of reform by design and not as an afterthought. I am proud that this government has decided to tackle the economic reform challenge head-on and with a burning ambition to make sure that, in any reform, working Australians are deliberate beneficiaries and not unexpected casualties.

My dad is here today. Last December, Dad was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma and, after months of chemo, was given the all clear just in time to make it to my local campaign launch. My dad is a pretty stoic guy, but, like so many other families who face health challenges, it is a reminder of how lucky we are to be in this country and how important well-funded, accessible health care is.

My mum is here, too. When I was a little girl there was a red hardback book on the shelf. It was totally off limits, and I wasn't allowed to touch it. I found out its title later, 'A Review of the Promotional Hopes and Aspirations of Women in Queensland Primary Schools'. It was my mother's thesis. It was a time when the vast majority of teachers were women but most school principals were men. Women were the outsiders in our education systems even though they were doing most of the work. Her central hypothesis was that, while there were plenty of well-intentioned programs designed to support women into leadership roles, none of them had the teeth to actually make a difference. I think of this not as a lesson in affirmative action or women's participation—although those are both incredibly important—but as instructive on the need for teeth and guts to get things done.

Talk without action is the natural enemy of progress, and the hard bit of reform is doing the work to bring people with you. This is what Labor does. As an aside, my dad's thesis sat next to that book, but, frankly, I couldn't find a relevant life lesson linked to 'Comparative study of adult sexual behaviour and larval ecology of three commercially important portunid crabs from the Moreton Bay region of Queensland'! Sorry, Dad—but thanks for opportunity to put 'important portunid crabs' into *Hansard*!

My partner, Mark, and I moved to Acacia Ridge because we knew that Brisbane's south side was a great place to raise a family. We welcomed our beautiful daughter, Margaret, in 2023 and now live in Corinda doing just that. Mark is my best friend. He is one of the best humans I know. His favour is famously hard to earn, but I have come to know his stoicism is a function of saying only what deserves to be said—a lesson many in politics could heed. He is the Barbara Hershey to my Bette Midler and the Bogey to my locomotive—that's one reference for each of us, and I'll let you decide which is which. Also, thanks for the opportunity to put Bette Midler into *Hansard*! During the campaign Mark was and always has been a practical supporter: clothes laundered, dinner cooked and grounding advice at the ready. Conversely, I would describe Margaret's approach as loving but deeply indifferent—as we have seen today! Regardless of the good or bad of the day, I was greeted with a cuddle delivered without judgement. In politics, there is something very comforting about knowing that my mere presence in her eyes is enough. Thank you to both of you.

To those with the largest non-refundable investment in my success—Mum and Dad—thank you. To the cooker of many thousands of sausages—my brother, John—thank you. To the chief Margaret wranglers and givers of countless hours of support—my mother-in-law, Jenny, and her partner, Owen—thank you. To those who taught me about finances through cattle auctions and sixpence stories—my dearly departed grandparents, Cloriece and Jack Campbell—and to all of my extended family that supported me: thank you.

To my hardworking campaign volunteers, led by the bedrock of south side Labor, Sasha Maron: Thank you. To those who doorknocked in the blazing Queensland summer, hit the phones night after night, stood beside roadsides with pictures of my face and forced my participation in many a social media trend—Angus, Seth, Kane, Caleb, Lenne, Sebastian, Rudolf, Matt, Tom, Lesley and Marg, Kash, Martha, the Sottiles, the Gibson-Haynes, the Cunninghams, the Elverys, Uncle Jeff, Karleigh, Clare, John, Jane, Emma, Jen, Kylie and Sandy: thank you. To the world's best emcee, Lewis Lee: thank you. To the often-unsung Labor campaign directors, my friends Paul Erickson, Katie Flanders and the newest senator for WA, Ellie Whiteaker: thank you. To my union, the AMWU, and its Queensland leadership, the perpetually supportive parental figures Rohan Webb and Ann-Marie Allan: thank you. To the trade union movement, particularly Sally Gunner and the CPSU, Wendy Streets and the FSU, Peter Allen and the RTBU, Matty Journeaux and the Meaties, Gary Bullock and the UWU, Alex Scott and Together, Peter Ong and the ETU, and Josh Millroy and the TWU: thank you.

To my friends in no particular order—the supplier of my personal phone banking couch, the person who dressed as a rabbit for our Easter event, my political confidant of 20 years, Margaret's earliest play date, the smartest person I know, my canine contemporary, my late night phone call sounding board and she whose personal safety is always paramount in my mind—Shannon Fentiman, Alana Tibbitts, Ben Driscoll, Jackie Trad, Anika Wells, Evan Moorhead, Zoe Edwards, and Nino Lalic: thank you. I will let you decide who is who.

To my sisterhood of supporters, Laura Fraser Hardy, Emily Brogan, Cynthia Kennedy, Nita Green and the new member for Maribyrnong, Jo Briskey: thank you. To Labor leaders who have helped me along the way, Steven

and Stacia, and to Senator Murray Watt: thank you. To my fellow Labor representatives on the south side—Peter Russo, Mark Bailey, Leeanne Enoch, Jess Pugh, James Martin, Barbara O'Shea, Steve Griffiths and Emily Kim—thank you.

Mr Speaker, I'd also like to take the opportunity to thank a very special electoral neighbour of mine—you. I thank you for your support and congratulate you on your well-deserved re-election to the high office of Speaker. Most importantly, to the richly diverse, fiercely resilient and extraordinary people of Moreton, I am excited to work with and for you every day. For your support and trust, thank you. Lastly, I'd like to thank the Prime Minister. My apologies for your unceremonious mobbing when we visited Sunnybank's Market Square during the campaign. This is notable because the normal practice of Queenslanders is to run people from down south out of town, as evidenced by our recent State of Origin victory. Your warm embrace by our local community goes not only to the endorsement of your vision for this country but also to your accessibility as a leader who everyday people trust and outsiders can root for.

I know that the Prime Minister also believes that the economy must work for everyday people every day. If you're an Australian with an ethnically diverse heritage like my gong gong, the economy has to work for you. If you're a boilermaker working in the industrial precincts of Coopers Plains, the economy has to work for you. If you're a nurse raising a family and working shiftwork to care for someone like my dad, the economy has to work for you. When I joined the Labor Party, people who looked like me did not get to be campaign directors. When I was growing up, people who looked like me did not get to walk these halls—that is, until Penny Wong came along. My daughter Margaret entered this world as an Australian with a blend of heritages from Chinese, Canadian, Italian and British origins. Unlike my gong gong, she will grow up not with the weight of discrimination but knowing that the diversity of her background is a strength. Our job now is to make sure that her generation reads about the economic outsiders of this country in the history books, not the newspapers. Only Labor has the will, the teeth and now the opportunity to make that dream a reality.