



Food Bill.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN [6.04 p.m.] (Inaugural Speech): I support the bill. I am deeply honoured to address the House tonight as a member of the upper House of the oldest Parliament in Australia. Tonight is the fulfilment of a childhood dream. I am indebted to the Australian Labor Party and many special people who have contributed to my dream becoming a reality. My family, who came from Orange, has been involved with the Labor movement for four generations. My great-grandmother, Johanna, doorknocked in support of many Labor candidates. Following in the footsteps of both my grandfathers, I have been active in the Labor Party and the union movement for many years. Jack Sweeney was a stalwart of the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen and Tim Griffin served on the executive of the Orange Eight Hour Association. One of my most precious mementoes is a gold medallion commemorating Tim's presidency of the Orange Eight Hour Association, which he wore as a watch fob. My grandfathers did not necessarily agree on their support of some candidates or, indeed, of Jack Lang, but their commitment to Labor principles could not be questioned.

I acknowledge my family who are here tonight: the Sweeneys—Frank, Kerri, Mark, Helen and Stuart, and also my extended family, the McCullums—Colleen, Felicity, Christian and my god-daughter, Jenny. Jenny has Down's syndrome. She told me recently that she is very proud of me. I am equally proud of her. She is a remarkable young woman and my close involvement in her development has been a very rewarding and sometimes challenging experience. When we talk about the power of potential we should never underestimate people like Jenny. Her ability to surpass our expectations has always surprised and thrilled us. Our journey through life with Jenny has been a wonderful experience that has enriched our lives and I am sure that she will continue to surpass our expectations.

Local government has been a major influence on my political life. My long association with Canterbury City Council has given me an appreciation of the essential and complex role local government plays in our system of government. At a time when structural reform is a topical issue, it is appropriate to reflect on local government's achievements to date and its potential to influence in a positive sense the day-to-day lives of local people. I am privileged to have served the people of the City of Canterbury as a councillor and Mayor since 1991. I feel a deep attachment to the Canterbury area. I take this opportunity to speak briefly about the history of what is now one of the most culturally diverse communities in Australia and to reflect on my memories of growing up in the area.

The first recorded land grant in the Canterbury area was registered in 1793 to Reverend Richard Johnson, the Chaplain of the First Fleet. It is hard to imagine today, but when settlement expanded, the Cooks River formed a barrier between farms south of the river and their markets on the other side. At this time the area lacked bridges, had no public transport and few roads. Canterbury Municipal Council was proclaimed in 1879 and the area continued to consist mostly of farms until the rail link reached Belmore in 1895. I recall reading excerpts from the Nuisance Inspectors Reports from the late 1800s, recording citizens being fined for driving without carriage lights in Beamish Street, Campsie, and young boys having to meet with the mayor of the day to discuss their unruly behaviour. The reports also revealed details of inspections of dairy farms and piggeries to ensure their compliance with relevant by-laws of the time.

After the Depression of the 1890s and before World War I there was a significant boom in Canterbury, with rapid growth and the further extension of the railway line from Belmore to Bankstown. The population at the start of World War I was approximately 22,000 and during the post-war years this figure increased to more than 79,000 in 1933. It was during this period that most of the current housing stock was built, as transport and communications systems improved. The first significant industrial building in the area was the Australian Sugar Company's Mill on the banks of the Cooks River in the early 1840s. This site was chosen because of easy access to wood for the boilers and fresh water needed for the production of molasses and spirits. The Gothic-style building, which is on the Register of the National Estate because of its national significance, is currently being adapted for residential use. I am proud of the role Canterbury City Council played in recent years to ensure the preservation of this irreplaceable national icon.

Another unique feature of the district is the Canterbury Park Racecourse, where the Sydney Turf Club has its headquarters. It is noted in the book *Change and Challenge*, authored by the noted local government historian, the late Frederick Larcombe, that at the first official race meeting two of the racing officials were members of the New South Wales Legislative Council. The racecourse of today continues to provide an important source of recreation and enjoyment both for horse racing enthusiasts and the general community. After World War II Canterbury's population started to become culturally diverse, with the arrival of many migrants from Europe. In the 1950s market gardens still existed in the area and Canterbury boasted a number of prosperous strip-shopping centres with at least one and sometimes two cinemas in each suburb. Most people shopped in their suburb and if more variety was needed, Campsie shopping centre provided it.

As children, my friends and I envied the people who lived in the stately mansion named The Towers, which was located in Forsyth Street, Belmore. To our young imaginative minds, this castle-like house, with its mysterious turret and expansive grounds and outbuildings, would have been a perfect place to act out our childhood fantasies. There was only one problem: we did not know the owner and did not get the opportunity to play in such an exciting and mysterious place. In more recent years The Towers has become part of the All Saints Greek Orthodox Grammar School senior campus, and has been lovingly restored to retain its historical significance. A typical family outing in winter was to attend rugby league matches at the Sydney Cricket Ground. I have been a committed league supporter all my life and share my support between the mighty Canterbury Bulldogs and my sentimental favourites, the South Sydney Rabbitohs. I have lived all my life in the same California-bungalow style house my maternal grandparents bought in 1940. After settling in Lakemba, my father worked as a rubber worker at Dunlop and then as a mail sorter at the General Post Office and the former Redfern Mail Exchange.

In 1987 I was honoured to become the first woman organiser with the Municipal Employees Union [MEU]. In this regard I must acknowledge the invaluable support I received from the late Joe Cahill. I take this opportunity to congratulate the present general secretary of the union, Brian Harris, on celebrating its centenary year. The MEU came from humble beginnings in the early 1900s, with the registration on 20 March 1903 of the Sydney Municipal Employees Union at the office of the Registrar of Friendly Societies under the Trade Union Act 1881. The New South Wales division of the Federated Municipal and Shire Employees Union was formally named on 27 November 1913. In 1991 the MEU amalgamated at the Federal level with two other unions to become the Australian Services Union [ASU]. It has been my privilege to serve as vice president and senior vice president of the ASU for the last eight years.

My eight years as Mayor of the City of Canterbury have made me very proud of the community I represent. Canterbury is known as the city of cultural diversity, and is the home of in excess of 130 nationalities from all over the world. My union and local government experience has given me an insight into a range of issues of vital importance to ordinary people. I have a particular interest in children and youth issues, ranging from the availability of affordable and quality child care to the provision of programs and services for adolescents and young adults. I am also deeply concerned about the level of domestic violence in our society, which often goes unreported, and the gaps in services to meet the special needs of people living with physical and developmental disabilities.

I am very proud of Canterbury City Council's success in tackling a range of social issues, including those I have just mentioned. With adequate financial and political support, local government is ideally positioned to play a key role in delivering local services in response to local needs, and I look forward to pursuing those and many other issues as a member of this place. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the many community spirited people in the Canterbury area. Volunteerism plays an important role in any community, and I think the issue for the future is to encourage more people to become volunteers and help provide that critical link in service provision.

My councillors have been very supportive during my time as mayor, and I wish to thank them, especially Mark Adler, Robert Furolo, Fadwa Kebbe and Brian Robson. Thank you also to my general manager, Jim Montague, for his loyalty to me as mayor and his dedication to local government. To the directors, the staff at council and those I have worked with on a daily basis—Kim, Lesley, Peter, Joe, Harry, Ron, Janelle and Andy—I appreciate your support. I thank Eric Roozendaal, Mark Arbib, Karl Bitar and all the members who have supported me during my years in the Labor Party. Although too numerous to name here, special thanks to all the members in the Canterbury city area. I am also looking forward to working with two of my former council colleagues, the Hon. John Hatzistergos and Tony Stewart, and my friends Christine Robertson, Morris lemma and Amanda Fazio. It is a great pleasure to see the McLeay family here in the public gallery this evening. Leo, Janice, Mark, Paul and Marten have been very staunch friends for many years. Leo has always been there for advice and support, and I will always value his friendship.

I close this speech by reflecting on my parents, Kathleen and Matt Griffin. Sadly, they did not live to see me win public office. My mother lost a 14-year battle with bone and breast cancer, and my father survived less than 2 years without her. Ironically, he suffered poor health for the last 14 years of his life after being severely bashed on the way home from work one night. Our family and friends were a wonderful support during this extremely difficult time when our lives resembled a revolving door between doctors and hospitals. Despite the adversity my parents faced, they never lost sight of their Labor beliefs and always managed to find the energy to support the party and assist friends and acquaintances in need of help. When I reflect on my mother and father and their strong commitment to Labor principles, I am reminded of the words spoken by Ben Chifley in the speech he delivered to the New South Wales branch conference on 10 June 1951:

I could not be called a 'young radical', but if I think a thing is worth fighting for, no matter what the penalty is, I will fight for the right, and truth and justice will prevail.

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