




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (9.22 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Industrial Relations Bill 2016. I am particularly pleased to follow the member for Bulimba but, whilst I know the member for Bulimba may be genuine in her beliefs when it comes to unions—and she believes, as she said in her own words, there are good unionists—if we look at some of the findings of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption the extent of criminal conduct, harassment, bullying and intimidation has been truly staggering and that is one—

Ms Grace: Yes, more employers were charged than unions.

Dr ROWAN: I take the interjection from the member for Brisbane Central, but when we look at that it has truly been absolutely staggering. From a personal perspective, as I have said on a number of occasions in the House, the conduct of unions such as the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation and the Queensland public sector union in recent times in relation to harassment and bullying, particularly with regard to some of our most vulnerable medical staff such as international medical graduates and those on 457 visas, was truly unbelievable. It is important to remember that the conduct of unions and some of the senior leadership of unions not only in Queensland but also across Australia has been truly unbelievable. That is why we really need to see the Premier's leadership in repudiating the CFMEU and to see all of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption implemented in Queensland.

The Industrial Relations Bill 2016 was introduced into the Queensland parliament on 1 September 2016 by the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Hon. Grace Grace, and was subsequently referred to the Finance and Administration Committee for consideration. To provide some background, the objectives of the bill are to repeal the current Industrial Relations Act 1999 and to establish a new framework for industrial relations in Queensland. The bill also seeks to amend the Holidays Act 1983 to provide that from 2017 Easter Sunday will be a public holiday. As we are aware, the committee was required to report to the Legislative Assembly by 28 October 2016.

It comes as no surprise to my Liberal National Party colleagues that when Labor rewrites the whole industrial relations framework in Queensland it goes without saying who it will truly be supporting, and that of course is the union bosses, whom those Labor Party members opposite rely upon for both their preselection and their electoral financial support. The union bosses are truly running the Palaszczuk Labor government in Queensland. We have seen criminal elements of the CFMEU actively undermining our vital building and construction industry. Many officials of the CFMEU are guilty of illegal and unlawful conduct on various building sites including at the Royal Brisbane Hospital, the Brisbane Airport and the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, to name just a few.

If those opposite had any credibility, they would have urged their federal Labor colleagues to support the Australian Building and Construction Commission prior to the bill's introduction into the federal parliament. Having said that, it is great to see that the Senate has passed the Australian Building

and Construction Commission bill. The non-Labor senators in Queensland have managed to achieve that outcome, and congratulations go to the LNP senators for their strong leadership in ensuring that vital piece of legislation was implemented at the federal level. Relentless campaigns by the Palaszczuk Labor government in collaboration with the CFMEU and other militant unions to disrupt our construction industry and be de facto participants in criminal activities must not be tolerated in Queensland.

One of the key issues of this bill is the gazetting of an additional public holiday on Easter Sunday. This decision, which has far-reaching financial consequences for business, was done without any regulatory impact statement. It is important to remember that restaurants, cafes and catering businesses are an essential part of Queensland's economic and social fabric. The cafe, restaurant and catering sectors generate around \$5 billion annually in turnover for Queensland's economy. Restaurant & Catering Australia is the national industry association representing the interests of owners of 35,000 restaurants, cafes and catering businesses across Australia. As a leading representative organisation of over 11,000 hospitality businesses across the state, Restaurant & Catering Australia opposes the introduction of an additional public holiday on Easter Sunday, and there are good, sound economic and business reasons why it does so.

The creation of an additional public holiday has significant ramifications for the hospitality sector and in turn for both Queensland jobs and the economic productivity of our state. If a regulatory impact statement was included, it would have shown that service businesses such as restaurants bear a disproportionate cost burden on public holidays due to the intensity of their staffing requirements and their customer service focus. If Easter Sunday is gazetted as a public holiday, the additional wages cost to the Queensland economy for just that day is estimated to be \$80 million. The additional wage costs of this legislation to the Queensland public sector are estimated to be between \$4.8 million and \$13.3 million. PricewaterhouseCoopers identified that employers that operate on public holidays are subject to increased labour costs, with the impacts concentrated in those industries that operate outside standard business hours.

The Liberal National Party government in 2014 put in some 10 accountability measures including a register of political spending, disclosure of salaries of highest paid officers and board members, disclosing spending for political purposes and disclosing political party affiliation fees, to name just a few. The Liberal National Party and I see this legislation as a considered Labor government attempt to support union bullying in the workplace and to empower highly paid union executives who are trying to coerce, intimidate and force Queensland workers into joining a trade union despite freedom of association being a core tenet of our democracy. This is certainly a catch-22 situation for the Labor Party, as unions collect funds from their union membership and then a significant proportion of that money is then transferred to the Labor Party in the form of political donations. That is exactly why the Labor Party continues to back a framework of biased union monopoly in relation to its industrial relations legislation.

Like all Liberal National Party members, I believe that this bill is fundamentally flawed in its design and, therefore, its outcomes will be destructive for Queenslanders. Without proper industry and business consultation, this legislation simply cannot be passed. With respect to the design of this legislation, the fact that the review group was so profoundly weighted with union representatives speaks volumes with respect to Labor's intended biased outcomes. Out of the 44 submissions that were received, more than half of them were from unions, meaning that the outcome was a predetermined one. To see this we only have to look at the fact that there was absolutely no consultation in relation to the declaration that Easter Sunday would be gazetted as a public holiday.

To further weight the outcome, I note that, in May 2016, the Shop, Distributive & Allied Employees' Association, Queensland Branch, donated to the Queensland branch of the Labor Party an amount of \$38,341. It then took only three months for the minister, Hon. Grace Grace, to announce, without any consultation or warning, that Easter Sunday would be prescribed as a public holiday. The cost to the Shop, Distributive & Allied Employees' Association was only \$38,000, but let us not forget that that gazettal will cost the business community of Queensland at least \$53 million in additional wages. I can only repeat that this change comes without any consultation with the business community or a regulatory impact statement.

This legislation needs to be comprehensively rejected by all members of the Queensland parliament. What also needs to be rejected in Queensland is the left-wing socialist Greens-Labor alliance. There are other political parties in this place that are affiliating with crooked unions. I say to the Katter's Australian Party that, whilst North Queenslanders are keen to cull crocodiles owing to Labor's failed crocodile management strategy, it should be culling political donations from crooked unions.

Having travelled far and wide in North Queensland over the past few months, I can certainly tell members that North Queenslanders are absolutely keen for a government that invests in jobs and infrastructure. Like all of us on this side of the House, North Queenslanders want job creation, infrastructure investment, strong law and order policies, water and energy security, fair industrial laws, accessible health and education services and economic development balanced against a sensible and sustainable framework for the environment and associated conservation efforts.

I condemn the sinister left-wing Greens-Labor alliance and this government's biased, union dominated industrial relations agenda and associated legislation. We know that the Palaszczuk Labor government is beholden to union bosses. We regularly see CFMEU officials, including Michael Ravbar, coming on to the parliamentary precinct to give orders to various government ministers. This legislation is evidence of the Palaszczuk Labor government being beholden to its comrades in the union movement.

We know that, under this bill, workers in local government will be worse off. Job losses will occur. I ask members to ask the Local Government Association of Queensland. The Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland identified that the stripping away of transparency and accountability leading to job losses will be a potential outcome of this legislation. I condemn this legislation. It undermines independence, reduces productivity, transparency and accountability and will empower union dominance and influence in an unbalanced way in Queensland, leading to reduced economic activity.