



Speech by

Hon. KEN HAYWARD

MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR

Hansard 11 June 1999

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

Hon. K. W. HAYWARD (Kallangur—ALP) (12.45 p.m.): The Industrial Relations Bill of 1999 reflects the changing and developing nature of Queensland society. It reflects the changes that are occurring in the way business is done in Queensland, the way people work in Queensland and those changes as we move into the 21st century in our State and, of course, right around the world. This Bill tries to examine the new ways of doing business and the changing nature of work and what that means for our society in general.

Of course, Queensland is the economic powerhouse of Australia. Queensland is uniquely placed to take advantage of the strengths that come to us—I think now we reflect on them through historical advantage, because manufacturing as we know it was centred in other States of Australia and much of that manufacturing is dated. But because we never were a State that was known for manufacturing, we are now able to focus ourselves seriously on the opportunity for new industries—new industries that will develop as we enter the 21st century.

I think the other strength of Queensland—and a number of members in this Parliament have reflected on this—is that Queensland is the small business capital of Australia. The business that has been established in this State in general is run by people in small business. Ninety per cent of all people who are employed in private industries in the State of Queensland work for small businesses.

That is the industrial relations climate and work environment into which the Industrial Relations Bill 1999 is being presented. It ensures economic advancement and social justice for all employees and, I think, for all employers. This Bill is about fairness—fairness for employers and fairness for employees within the context of that changing work environment that is occurring out there, but also within the context of how new business is forming with the technological age and the technological boom that we are engaged in.

There are a couple of matters in relation to this Bill which I would like to focus on, and I would ask the Minister to comment on them in his reply. As I said, this Bill reflects on a modern industrial climate. One of the issues that is important that needs to be addressed and about which I would like some more understanding is the issue of prescribed payments that are made to people. My experience in talking to people—not only employers but also employees—has been that a lot of pressure is now being placed on employers, particularly in the construction industry, to pay people according to prescribed payments. What happens, of course, is that issues in relation to taxation and the rates of tax somehow get mixed up with matters of working conditions. One of the strengths of this Bill is that it sets employment conditions. I would hope that this Bill does not focus itself on destroying or impeding the nature of the way people are getting paid in industries in Queensland.

The Bill specifies minimum employment entitlements. That is important. We are talking here about issues such as annual leave, sick leave and so on. Importantly, the Bill also focuses on the matter of overtime rates. As I said, I do not want to see matters to do with people's taxation getting confused with issues of industrial relations.

This Bill is important because it provides protection for workers. This Bill also provides protection for employers. It is a Bill which recognises the changing and developing nature of the way business and employment occur in our State of Queensland.
