



Speech by

DESLEY BOYLE

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard 9 November 2000

COOKE INQUIRY

Ms BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (6.19 p.m.): I am pleased to second the amendment moved by Minister Braddy. I thank the member for Caloundra for providing the opportunity tonight for me to talk about the tremendous contribution Minister Braddy has made to Queensland through the very fine legislation which is the Industrial Relations Act 1999. While I am tempted to respond to the union bashing that members on the other side of this House engaged in with their not so hidden agenda of breaking the union movement—always raising, as they do, that ridiculous spectre of the AWU as some kind of bogeyman—I will resist that temptation and instead address the really important elements of the Industrial Relations Act 1999 that, thanks to Minister Braddy, all of us in the Beattie Government can take some credit for.

One of the important things in that legislation is the establishment of an independent industrial relations task force. It was from that base and through widespread consultation with all of the players involved in industrial relations—not just with employer bodies and not just with unions—that we were able to undertake the best review that there has been of the Queensland industrial laws and on the basis of that set the Bill in place.

In the end we adopted a substantial majority of the task force recommendations. However, the Bill also introduced other important and progressive changes that the Government considered a priority. Some of these more innovative features of the legislation reflect the changes that have occurred in the work force, such as new statutory rights for conditions of employment for all Queensland workers. Very clearly, we have seen significant changes occur over the last 10 to 15 years in what typifies a normal working arrangement. For instance, in 1999 it was reported that only 37% of the work force was employed in a typical 9 to 5 Monday to Friday job. This change in the pattern of work hours is still unsettled and has brought requirements that all of us in this House should attend to for a more flexible response to the work force issues that arise.

That is where Minister Braddy's Bill has led the way. The new laws brought Queensland into the new millennium with regard to such issues as the increase in female employment, the development of new and emerging industries, higher levels of casualisation, part-time and contract work, increasing levels of work intensification and the need for workers to balance work and life despite the exigencies and pressures of life in the nineties and now in this new millennium.

A further consequence of the growth in non-standard types of employment has been the unparalleled growth in dependent contractors and workers engaged under contract for services in traditional award regulated areas. These industries include cleaning, security and building and construction. As the member for Cairns I know that that certainly applies to the regional areas of Queensland.

In response to these changes, the laws for the first time in Queensland's history codified essential community standards of employment such as annual leave, sick leave, long service leave, carer's leave, bereavement leave and parental leave for all Queensland workers regardless of whether they are covered by an award or an agreement. The legislation, I am also pleased to remind honourable members, recognises pay equity as an industrial issue and updates the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers to include equal pay for work of equal or comparable value. A review is currently under way.

The other areas of reform included in the Act were the invigoration of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission which, for the first time in 80 years, has a full-time president.

There are many, many more elements of that Bill of which we should all be proud, but this is an opportunity for me to pay particular tribute to Minister Braddy for the good work that he has done and to pay particular recognition to the fact that this is his last term in Government and that with only some six months to go there may not be many more opportunities to recognise how his experience, his balanced approach and his determination to face all of the conflicting parties—employers and the many different unions involved—have lead to the steady development of a balanced and fair approach that will leave Queensland with a wonderful legacy long after he has moved into his retirement and is having, I hope, a whole lot more fun than he has in this House on many occasions.

This is my tribute to him. I am proud indeed to be part of the team with Minister Braddy.
