



Speech by

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (MINIMUM EMPLOYMENT AGE) AMENDMENT

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (8.58 pm): I am very pleased to speak on the Industrial Relations (Minimum Employment Age) Bill and I congratulate my colleague and good friend the member for Moggill for putting such a comprehensive and worthwhile bill before the House. In fact, I can relate very closely to the situation that the honourable member is in because, when I moved a bill in this place, before its completion the Labor Party indicated, albeit through a leaked document, that it intended to bring it in. In this case, the honourable member has had his idea stolen by members opposite, but with no attribution. At school or university this is called plagiarism but in politics it seems to be the norm.

This thieving of policy from the Liberal Party happens a great deal. In fact, I wish it would happen more often. I would love to come into this place and move private member's bill after private member's bill and run the government's agenda. It seems that in many instances that is what is happening. The Liberal Party says something and the Labor Party government puts it on glossy paper or in a media release with a government logo next to it and says that it was the government's idea.

There are two very important aspects of this bill. First, the bill finally puts into place the minimum age requirement to have employment in Queensland. Constituents and friends have said to me, 'I thought there was a minimum age.' Then when asked they say vaguely, 'I'm not sure if it is 14 or 15 or something like that.' While there are some exceptions to do with family businesses, the principle is to ensure that all children are mature enough to enter the workplace and that they will not be exploited when they enter the work force.

It is of the utmost importance that we protect our children from entering the work force before they are ready. Educationally children need to have enough time to devote to their studies in year 8 to be comfortable enough in their study patterns to be able to enter the work force in years 9 and 10. It is crucial that these lessons are learnt over a period of time and that a young adult is not heaped with too many life changes at once that may inhibit their development. There is no doubt that there are unscrupulous employers who use the power of saying such things as, 'If you don't want to work when we want you to such as Sunday nights then we might have to sack you.' Then irate parents ring up and say that they do not want their children rostered on. Then the children have to face the authority figure fearing that they are going to be victimised when they next turn up for work.

Moreover, socially a child needs to grow at this age. It is very important that they continue to socially interact on a regular basis as this is a time of significant change physically, mentally and socially. To thrust a child into the workplace at the early stages of development with people who are no doubt a great deal older could have detrimental effects on their development and wellbeing. Children for this reason are particularly vulnerable in the workplace. Just as it is important to ensure that the child is ready to take on the workload, so too must the workplace be ready and capable of dealing with the younger person. That is why it is still appropriate to allow younger children to work in a family environment with a workplace full of people they have grown up with and bosses, their parents, who can be trusted to give them the correct

standards to work under. It is also for this reason that the bill requires employers of young people to carry a blue card. This is a small but very important provision of this bill.

The bill is also very good because it regulates the type of work young people can do. There may be a tendency to employ young people because they are cheaper and ask them to do jobs that their expertise and/or physical development will not allow them to do safely. There are provisions in this bill that stop that, and I congratulate the member for Moggill for including that in the bill. All in all this is a very good and necessary bill. I encourage members opposite to continue their practice of pinching policy and support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.