



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Thursday, 23 April 2009

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT BILL

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (11.51 am): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Since the election of the Rudd government, there have been ongoing discussions between the federal government and the states about a national industrial relations system to replace Work Choices. The Commonwealth's Fair Work Act 2009 codifies the current situation in which the President of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission—to be renamed Fair Work Australia—and the heads of the state tribunals together discuss matters of interjurisdictional cooperation and enter into written arrangements regarding administrative support. Through the Workplace Relations Ministers Council, the states have made it clear that, if they are to join a national uniform system, there should be a place for state institutions in the delivery of that system, including state tribunals.

We are arguing that Queensland Industrial Relations Commission members could be utilised in the new Fair Work Australia industrial relations system. This could be done by making greater use of the current system whereby commissioners hold dual appointments to both the state and federal commissions. While the federal government has given no commitments about the final outcome it proposes, it has promised to discuss the utilisation of state institutions with the various states over the coming months. I seek leave to have the remainder of my speech incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The majority of the provisions in the Commonwealth's *Fair Work Act 2009* are to commence on 1 July 2009. As I mentioned earlier, that legislation highlights the role of the president of Fair Work Australia and the president's working relationship with the heads of the state industrial relations commissions. This raises some difficulties in Queensland with regard to dealing with the Australian Industrial Relations Commission or Fair Work Australia, because in this state it is the vice-president, rather than the president, who is responsible for most of the administrative functions of the commission.

The Industrial Relations Amendment Bill 2009 before us remedies this situation. The bill transfers the necessary powers from the vice-president to the president of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. The bill places the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission in the best possible position to take advantage of any national industrial relations system that may emerge.

The amendments before us will clarify the roles of the vice-president and president within the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission without interfering in its independence, changing the nature of its powers or fettering their use. The amendments will also strengthen the administration of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission by removing any confusion associated with the president and vice-president having various administrative responsibilities and will ensure that the status and seniority of the president's position is appropriately acknowledged. The amendments will align the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission with the administrative structure of industrial tribunals in most other jurisdictions.