



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Wednesday, 17 June 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

National Industrial Relations System

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.53 am): In these tough economic times, the Bligh government is taking tough decisions to ensure the Queensland economy continues to grow and jobs are secured. It was this commitment that I took to the Workplace Relations Ministers Council meeting in Sydney last week, where I announced Queensland's in-principle support for a seamless national industrial relations system for the private sector. Everyone would acknowledge the benefits of a national industrial relations system that regulates the private sector in terms of delivering certainty for workers and improving business productivity by reducing the regulatory burden on employers. A national system will help business grow, bolstering the Australian economy during the greatest economic downturn of the past 80 years.

However, in announcing Queensland's in-principle support, I made it clear these benefits would not be reached at the expense of Queensland workers. That is why our support is contingent on a number of issues being resolved to ensure our workers continue to get a fair deal. Referring the power for Queenslanders working in the private sector to be regulated under a national system is indeed a tough decision for any state government to make. However, in these tough times we must make tough decisions to secure our nation's economy and to provide certainty for employers and employees throughout our state and across our nation.

Therefore, it was with some surprise that I heard that the member for Southern Downs had come out in opposition to this sensible proposal. Let it not be forgotten that this is a man whose side of politics forced WorkChoices on the Australian people without consultation and without reference to the workers whose rights and entitlements WorkChoices stripped away. The National and Liberal parties failed to stand up for Queensland workers when the Howard government was stealing away their rights and entitlements. As all honourable members on this side of the House know, they failed to stand up for Queensland workers at the last election when they campaigned on a policy that would have put thousands of Queenslanders out of work, cut key services and brought our state to a standstill during the worst international economic crisis since the Great Depression.

Unlike those opposite, this government is committed to protecting workers during the dark and difficult days ahead, to cooperative consultation with the Rudd government to deliver the best outcomes for workers and our economy and, most importantly, to protecting Queensland jobs.