




Speech by  
**Curtis Pitt**

**MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE**

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## **HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (4.13 pm): I join the Leader of the Opposition in opposing this bill. It highlights the characteristics that are fast becoming the hallmark of the Newman LNP government: they fail to be upfront with the people of Queensland, they make decisions without consultation or consideration of their impact and they try to rewrite history by making claims that are completely at odds with their previous position on issues. Let us explore these characteristics in further detail. We are here today under false pretences thanks to the sneaky Newman government. Why? Because we are debating a bill that should not even be before the House. That is because these legislative amendments were never part of the LNP's plans until they gained a massive majority in the chamber and decided they could run roughshod over the wishes of Queenslanders.

Changing public holidays was not part of Campbell Newman's so-called can-do policies before the election. It was not part of his seven-day plan, his 30-day plan or even his 100-day plan. The fact is that there was no mention of this before or immediately after the election. It seems that the Premier is drunk on the power of this majority. He continues to go well beyond the mandate he was given on 24 March. So much for governing with humility, dignity and grace! Of course, this is not the first time this has been done. The list of significant legislative and social changes being made by the LNP that were not mentioned before the election is growing longer and longer. For example, there was no mention of mass changes to Queensland's industrial relations landscape; or scrapping civil union ceremonies; or removing the job security of virtually all government workers, such as nurses, teachers, fire and ambulance workers; or re-criminalising altruistic surrogacy; or abolishing the Sentencing Advisory Council; or axing funding for the Queensland Working Women's Service; or sacking the Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman; or, recently, lifting the longstanding ban on uranium mining in Queensland. It is a pretty long list, but there is more. Before the election the Premier made no mention of sacking 14,000 government workers; or removing hard-won rights of teachers such as limits on class sizes; or closing the tuberculosis clinic at the PA Hospital; or scrapping the Cairns CBD upgrade; or scrapping the tenancy advisory service; or selling caravan parks that are home for hundreds of social housing tenants; or closing the Darling Downs Correctional Centre; or building a flash new building for himself and his ministers. And let us not forget that the Premier was silent about winding back Fitzgerald inquiry reforms to improve police training and reduce the risk of corruption; about shutting down Goprint; imposing extra taxes on the mining industry; and selling numerous government assets in the Brisbane CBD. It is a very long list for just six months in office.

The one thing that links virtually all of these cuts is the fact that there is no real policy basis for any of them; rather they are ideological. The Newman LNP government is just like every other tory government before it, implementing its ideological preference for small government and demonstrating its lack of compassion for workers and the disadvantaged. With two and a half years still to go, who knows what other nasty surprises are likely to be sprung on the people of Queensland by this callous and cold-hearted government.

Another feature of the Newman government's brief but disruptive administration is its failure to consult on significant reforms and changes such as these holiday amendments. As outlined in the explanatory notes for this bill, the government did not conduct any community consultation on the

legislation. Instead, it refers to consultation conducted by the previous Labor government in 2011 as justification. Unfortunately, this is somewhat misleading from the Attorney-General as the results of last year's consultation do not provide the support he claims. We will say more on that later. At this point I want to concentrate on consultation—or lack thereof.

The Newman government is becoming a serial offender when it comes to failing to consult properly. Let us go back to the last sitting of parliament where we debated the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. That bill was introduced on Tuesday, 31 July 2012. An email calling for public submissions on the bill was released on Wednesday, 1 August 2012 with a closing date of Monday, 6 August, allowing just three working days for stakeholders to consider the bill and provide responses. A public briefing was then convened on Wednesday, 8 August 2012. The committee report was tabled three working days later, on Monday, 13 August. These time frames were implemented despite the government conceding in the explanatory notes that, just like this bill, no community consultation had occurred. Despite the short time frames, five stakeholders provided the committee with submissions. It should be noted that the Queensland Law Society pointed out that it was possible the bill could have unintended consequences, but the short time frame had not allowed a proper and thorough analysis of the bill. The committee comments in the report state that it has become apparent to the committee from the comments made in submissions and the subsequent departmental response that lack of consultation on the bill had resulted in the misunderstanding by stakeholders of the intention of some aspects of the proposed amendments. The committee considered that this could have been prevented had appropriate consultation occurred. This lack of consultation is part of a distinct pattern of behaviour from the Newman government.

Short time frames have specifically been mentioned in reports by the government dominated portfolio committees on the following pieces of legislation introduced since the 2012 state election: the Industrial Relations (Fair Work Act Harmonisation) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, which included the Finance and Administration Committee comment that realistic consultation time frames should be set; the Penalties and Sentences and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, on which the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee commented that the bill would have been greatly enhanced if more time was allowed for consultation; and the Electricity (Early Termination) Amendment Bill 2012, on which the Finance and Administration Committee commented that the government should set realistic time frames for consultation. Let us not forget that the LNP government avoided committee scrutiny of the Parliament of Queensland and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2012 and the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. This behaviour makes a mockery of the Premier's commitment to open and accountable government.

As mentioned before, I want to address the LNP's capacity to say one thing at a particular time and then completely change its view without even the slightest hint of embarrassment. In doing some research to speak on the bill I decided to see what the LNP's position had been on the amendments introduced by Labor less than a year ago. My first stop was *Hansard*, but there was nothing there—no speakers from the LNP. Then I recalled why. That was because it was the famous LNP no-show, or as one of my former colleagues described it, the great LNP canteen stampede. For those who are new to this House I will elaborate. It was around lunchtime of 29 November 2011, that disgraceful day when the entire LNP failed to show up to vote in this chamber not once, not twice, but three times. Three bills went through the House during a half-hour period and the lazy LNP was nowhere to be seen.

Of course, this abrogation of duty came as something of a surprise to the LNP candidate for Ashgrove, who was quizzed about it at a media conference. What was his take on the situation? The ABC quoted him as saying—

The fact that people weren't in the chamber disturbs me of course, but the bottom line is that these bills were going to go through and we supported them.

And further—

We were going to support these bills, so the fact they have gone through this way is ultimately immaterial.

Here we are, less than a year later, and the LNP has completely changed its position. Suddenly, the changes that it supported last year now have to be amended. Why? Once again it is ideology. The conservative LNP government is hell-bent on attacking anything and everything implemented by Labor. That includes attacking the Labour Day public holiday, because of its significance to workers and its link to the Labor Party here in Queensland.

The Attorney-General claims that last year's consultation supports this shift. He contends that the views expressed by some 500 respondents that the Labour Day holiday should be shifted to October justifies the LNP's decision. However, he conveniently fails to point out that the consultation attracted not 500 responses, not 5,000 responses, but 24,505 responses. Of those responses, a massive 85.3 per cent, or about 20,800 respondents, supported shifting the Queen's Birthday public holiday to October. So it appears that the Attorney-General has considered the views of 500 against those of more than 20,000 and decided that the views of 500 carry more weight. It is no wonder that the Attorney-General lists Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen as one of his idols. That sort of arithmetic and logic would have gone down well in Joh's gerrymander. I oppose the bill.