



Speech by


**Trevor Watts**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

Hansard Tuesday, 30 October 2012

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

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (4.26 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Basically, the bill sets out uniformity of public holidays across Australia, bringing Queensland into line with other jurisdictions to reduce disruption for retail business, hospitality business, tourism business and other such ventures, which are very important, and to spread out our public holidays that currently are bunched up. A lot has been said here about history and other things. Some have said that we should not move things. Anzac Day is absolutely immovable. If you are going to have a public holiday on the first Monday of May, it will always be within one or two weeks of Anzac Day. Therefore, it will always cause disruption, it will always cause problems for business and it will always cause difficulties when rostering people, because you will have two public holidays within, at best, a 14-day period. The only logical thing to do is, in fact, move Labour Day, because of how it currently lines up with Anzac Day.

Obviously, in Queensland there is a history to Labour Day and a lot has been spoken about that. However, let us look at why in Queensland Labour Day was originally held on 1 May and why in other jurisdictions it is held on 1 May. People talk about tradition and history. In the northern hemisphere, May Day was a spring festival dating back to Roman times. It has been brought up to date in different jurisdictions and it has been legislated for, but it has always been celebrated as a pagan holiday. The suggestion is that Labour Day should always be tied to May Day. However, in the northern hemisphere Labour Day has been celebrated in May because there was already a May Day celebration. It is not the other way around. It is not that Labour Day had to be in May; it has been celebrated in May because it was already a public holiday in many jurisdictions and there was a call for an international march to celebrate eight-hour movements and other movements such as that.

In Australia that is not the case because many states celebrate Labour Day at other times. There has been some discussion that the Northern Territory celebrates Labour Day in May. That is actually not true. The Northern Territory actually does not celebrate Labour Day. They have May Day in May. Labour Day is celebrated in New South Wales in October and in South Australia in October. The Eight-Hour Day in Tasmania is in March, in Victoria it is in March, in Western Australia it moves around a little bit but generally it is in March. Conversely, the Queen's Birthday holiday is held in New South Wales in June, in South Australia in June, in Tasmania in June, in Victoria in June, in Western Australia usually in June, in the ACT in June and in the Northern Territory in June.

People have suggested that we move one holiday or the other. We cannot move Anzac Day and it will always collide with Labour Day if it is held in May. The only reason it was held in May is that it was the May Day holiday in many jurisdictions around the world. The obvious thing to do is exactly what has been put forward—that is to move the Queen's Birthday holiday back to June to line us up with all other jurisdictions and to move Labour Day to October.

It is not an attack on workers' rights. It is just bringing it into the modern world and lining the holiday up with jurisdictions across Australia. In actual fact, to get unionists up from other states will be much easier because they too will have a long weekend on that weekend in October. To suggest that it is an

attack on peoples' rights and all of the other things that have been suggested in the chamber today is an absolute nonsense. We are not taking it away.

We are not going to do what the Northern Territory does and not have a Labour Day. We are just saying that we will move it to October because it makes good sense for the people of Queensland. It makes good sense for people who run small businesses. It makes good sense for people who are in tourism. It certainly makes good sense for people who have been so used to having so many holidays at the start of the year and then have the long haul to Christmas after the Queen's Birthday holiday that has been in June historically.

Those of us who have children have had to deal with the situation where the public holidays do not line up with pupil-free days. For schools trying to do their scheduling around the public holidays of Easter it has always been difficult. I think it is a very sensible proposal. It has been done to help business. It has been done to unite us across the country with some public holiday weekends. I think, Attorney-General, that it is a good suggestion. Benefits will come to business operators and other people. I am sure that in a few years time the labour movement will be happily marching in October.

The people of Barcaldine always have the opportunity to have a local public holiday by moving a show day or something else. They are probably the only people who I think deserve some consideration in this. For them it is a historical event that happened in their township. They do deserve some consideration. It is an event for them. I can see how people would travel to Barcaldine for that event. But as for the rest of Queensland, I think the Attorney-General's proposal of moving the holidays to the proposed dates absolutely makes sense. I commend the bill to the House.