




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE

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**INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (FAIR WORK ACT HARMONISATION NO. 2) AND
OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (5.04 pm): I rise to speak to the Industrial Relations (Fair Work Act Harmonisation No. 2) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. The explanatory notes to the bill state—

An objective of the Industrial Relations (Fair Work Act Harmonisation No. 2) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 is to reform Queensland's industrial relations framework to ensure it continues to meet the needs of employers and employees operating within the State's industrial relations jurisdiction.

The Bill responds to the recommendations of the Queensland Commission of Audit (COA); and the Blueprint for better healthcare in Queensland. In particular the COA recommends:

- The *Industrial Relations Act 1999* be updated to ensure it is modern, flexible and relevant to the public sector; ...
- Awards continue to provide the basis for public sector wages and conditions; however only matters not covered by legislation or public service directives should be included. The number of awards that apply in the public sector should be significantly reduced (Recommendation 131);

I have many concerns. For some reason or another there needs to be a massive change made to the Queensland Industrial Relations Act. We have seen mass sackings over the years. This has concerned many people right across Queensland, not only public servants.

John Howard won a lot of support from blue-collar workers, especially when he took a strong stance on the boats when he stopped the *Tampa*. The then Queensland opposition leader, Peter Beattie, was sympathetic to the boat-people cause and backed the boats. A lot of blue-collar workers at that time perceived this to be a betrayal of the Labor movement. As a result, John Howard won a lot of support.

The Industrial Relations (Fair Work Act Harmonisation No. 2) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is probably worse than Work Choices. Work Choices impacted so heavily right across this state. We saw a \$50 million advertising campaign. We saw a 700-page piece of legislation. I could not fathom why anyone would possibly want to go so far. John Howard lost his seat as a result of this massive campaign. Much of this bill relates to some of the issues John Howard was passionately pursuing. If he was not determined to have a massive change, he would not have had the massive \$50 million advertising campaign.

As we read through this bill we feel great concern. We see workers' rights to strike stripped. That is very important, because the working-class people do not really have much. The average worker will spend all his life paying off his house and by the time he dies he might end up with a new car, and that is about it. Just one little pay rise—a pay rise of \$3 a week—is very important to him. To have the right to strike and the right to collectively bargain taken from him goes against the fundamental principles this country fought very hard for. I believe that the Industrial Relations Commission must be independent from government. To more closely align the Industrial Relations Commission with what the government wants takes away what we fought for over the years.

This piece of legislation is very dangerous. I mention also the right of entry. I think this country needs to work with small business, but it also needs to work with unions. Small business is the backbone of this country. If every small business across this state was able to employ one person, we would solve the unemployment problem.

There needs to be a balance, but this is not balanced. This is going too far one way in the opposite direction. I cannot understand why we have to significantly change this. I only recently talked to working-class railway employees from Townsville to Mount Isa, and they have great concerns and fear for their jobs. However, they are more fearful of the direction that the LNP is going, especially as it is in part agreeing to the possibility of outsourcing their jobs and perhaps even selling or leasing the Mount Isa line from Townsville to Mount Isa linking the ports. There is great concern from the Public Service that saw 16,000 sacked. There is also great concern in that small programs have been removed. For example, there is the closure of the Healthy Lifestyle Program and the cutting of mowing vouchers for pensioners. As members might remember, at that time politicians passionately pushed to give themselves a \$57,000 pay rise. This harmonisation bill is to give this legislation closer unity with the federal government act, but the workers out there are scared and they are frightened. If a worker's right to strike is removed and the right of entry is removed and if unions are not able to negotiate in terms of fighting for the workers, then there will not be employment in this state. I just cannot support this bill and I am concerned about how far it is going, especially with regard to workers' rights.