




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2013

MOTION: WORKERS' RIGHTS

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.55 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amendments to the opposition's motion. The key to this debate is the notion of a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, not the opposition's support of a bleating union movement's sense of entitlement. I am disappointed that tonight we have to continue to highlight the problems that existed in the state under the previous government instead of getting on with the real work of reforming this great state—a great state with great opportunity under the right government.

The problem has been those in our community who expect the state government to continue to pay and pay regardless of the financial climate or what the unions actually contribute. The state was close to a fiscal meltdown. We had a bloated Public Service that required the continued borrowing of money just to pay the wages and keep the lights on. The unions must want higher taxes, especially on the wealthy or small businesses, the real generators of employment in this state, with their continued push for job security and protests about voluntary separation packages that have been offered. I ask members to remember that, while the unions continued their deceitful campaign, the previous government had mismanaged the state, with debt heading to \$85 billion. We inherited an interest bill of \$100 million a week, or \$650,000 per hour, all the while being cheered on by the unions in this state.

No-one can argue against this proposition and certainly members on this side of the House do not. The word 'fair' is one of the fundamental concepts of industrial relations. Unfortunately, until recently bullying, industrial might and union secrecy have all been dominant in how unions conduct their enterprise bargaining. This government has introduced measures to ensure that fairness is extended to union officials' dealing with members and transparency in how union officials spend their members' money. Under the new laws passed recently in this place, Queenslanders can have greater confidence in the governance of industrial organisations. Following the Health Services Union scandal and in conjunction with the government's commitment to openness and transparency, these new measures enable Queenslanders to have greater confidence in the governance of industrial organisations. These measures cover both unions and employer groups. These changes benefit grassroots union members. Union members deserve to know how their membership fees are being spent. They also deserve to have a say on political advertising and campaigning. I am sure that there would be plenty of Together union members who would object to the spending of \$100,000 on a push poll earlier this year. If only they had the chance to have their say.

The Newman government believes in freedom of association for workers and the legislation supports workers' rights to choose whether they join an association or not. These laws also delete union encouragement clauses in Public Service contracts. If unions want to increase their membership, they can do that themselves. This government is not a recruitment agency.

Having greater accountability and transparency is in everyone's interest. It is time to put an end to the scandals and to let the light shine in. Under this legislation, four publicly available, retrospective

registers are set up and they are required to be kept up to date from 1 July 2012. Those registers include a register of material personal interest declarations, gifts and benefits given and received by officials and employees and a register of ballots for expenditure on political items costing more than \$10,000. The necessity for this legislation has been proven by disclosures provided by unions, as they are now bound to do. Those disclosures show that union officials spent more than \$2 million on credit cards last financial year. More than \$1 million of Together union membership fees goes towards paying the union bigwigs. Of course, the biggest bigwig of all, our friend Alex Scott, is on a pay packet of \$212,000.

Miss Barton: A lot more than you.

Mr BENNETT: A lot more than me. This is a man who last year stood in the way of 50,000 public servants covered by the core enterprise bargain agreement getting a pay rise of 2.35 per cent. Maybe the union officials could examine their own consciences and see if they are giving a fair day's work for the fair day's pay that they receive.