Speech By

# Trevor Watts

## MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (MANDATORY CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OUTWORKERS) REPEAL NOTICE: DISALLOWANCE MOTION

**Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (8.47 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution against this disallowance motion. Tonight, we have heard a lot about vulnerable, low-paid workers, migrants and people who have difficulties with the English language. I am concerned that the members of the state Labor Party do not have any confidence in their federal colleagues. Their federal colleagues passed legislation a year before this code was introduced. The modern Textile, Clothing, Footwear and Associated Industries Award 2010 applies to all outworkers in Queensland. In general, the federal award provides protection to the code with respect to identifying all the parties in the contracting chain. In addition, the federal award contains very similar record-keeping obligations, for instance, a work record, including name, address, ABN or ACN and/or registered business name and address where the work is to be performed; the time and date for commencement and completion of work; a description of the nature of the work required and the garments, articles or materials to be worked on; the number of garments, articles and materials of each type; the sewing time for the work required on each garment, article or material; and the price paid for each garment, article or material.

I put it to members that if the federal government Fair Work Act cannot protect these vulnerable workers, then what is this code going to do? The federal government has resourced the act. It has the Fair Work Ombudsman out there. The act exists to enforce exactly these types of conditions on any employer who would take advantage of a vulnerable and poor language skilled migrant worker as suggested.

If the state Labor Party have absolutely no confidence in the federal Labor Party, if they do not think that their federal Labor colleagues can do it, then I would ask that they bring back some of the legislative capability to this House so that we can protect the workers. This code that has been objected to here today does nothing more than duplicate what the federal government already has in place. It is very, very simple. This code applies down the supply chain. If you are running a business in Queensland you have two levels of compliance. Even if something has been manufactured interstate it still applies. All this record keeping has to be kept here in Queensland. These poor vulnerable workers will be out of work because the business will not be able to compete with the two levels of compliance. The compliance at a federal level is the same compliance at a state level. If the state Labor Party do not think their federal colleagues have done the job properly then I urge them to lobby the Fair Work Act. If they do not think these workers are being protected by the Fair Work Ombudsman then I suggest they contact the Fair Work Ombudsman and ask him why he is not doing his job properly. The simple fact is that this is duplication, it is nanny state, it is overcompliance and it will drive manufacturing away from Queensland and these vulnerable workers, the workers that we purport to protect here in this House, that the Labor Party are standing up and saying are going to be so harmed and damaged by this duplication of regulation, will find themselves unemployed and manufacturing will be going on interstate and overseas. Why should somebody have to comply with two levels doing exactly the same thing? First we need to get rid of that furphy. It is simply not true

that these workers are vulnerable and not protected. They are protected by the federal act. If those opposite do not think they are protected by the federal act then that is something that should be taken up very seriously with their colleagues at their next conference.

I turn now to the compliance in Queensland and why we are removing it. It was introduced on 1 January 2011. I note that that is a year after the federal government had already protected the workers. So obviously the Labor Party here in Queensland got the idea from a very similar place to the federal government and then implemented it. There are a couple of things that the code applies to. I will just talk about the detail that is required from this code. I will go over it because I think it is very important that people understand that a business simply trying to get on with manufacturing, trying to get things made here in Queensland, is being forced to report the full name and address of the supplier, the date of agreement, including the agreement reference number, Australian Business Number, retailers and suppliers—members might think this is a repeat of what I said earlier, but that is not true. What I said earlier was from the federal act that applies to manufacturers here in Queensland and what I am now reading is the code. I know it sounds very, very similar. That is because it is. Details of the clothing products to be supplied must be reported, including articles or materials to be worked on, or seam type, fabric type, manner of construction and finish, including diagrams. If outworkers were used in the manufacturing of garments further details were required with respect to the name and address of each outworker and employer. What we find is a business that is trying to be competitive with other businesses both in Australia and overseas is struggling under the weight of red tape, totally strangled by red tape that the Labor Party would introduce.

We are a party that believes in individual rights. We are a party that believes in small business. We are a party that believes in not interfering with people's lives. We are certainly a party that does not believe in interfering in the lives of people who have already been protected by federal Labor policy. It is completely unnecessary for the Queensland government to have this. I am against the disallowance motion. I am against the nanny state that our Labor colleagues in this chamber would have us implement on the people of Queensland.