




Speech By
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 1 April 2014

HOSPITAL AND HEALTH BOARDS AMENDMENT BILL

Motion: Declared Urgent

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (12.06 pm): I rise to oppose the motion put forward by the Minister for Health to again put another bill through this House at short notice. Queenslanders deserve better than a government which continues to run roughshod over our parliament. The Premier said after his historic swing against him in Redcliffe that he was going to start listening. He said that he has learnt his lessons. Since then all he has done is continue to show the arrogance of his government. This is a government that picks a fight with the Public Service. It picks a fight with the community sector. It picks a fight with the legal profession. It picks a fight with the medical profession. I am actually struggling to find any group in this state of ours where the government has not actively gone out and sought to show that it is a government that will do whatever it takes—and, sadly, that means not listening to Queenslanders.

This is a Premier who lacks the leadership to bring the community together. Actually he lacks the leadership to bring his own party together, but we can discuss that at another time. What we know is that they are using this process of putting this bill through the parliament in short order to again run roughshod over the democratic process that we have—to run roughshod over anyone who has a different point of view.

What we have here is a serious issue of the government introducing Work Choices style contracts in our state to senior health professionals. I note that the minister says senior medical officers have been consulted on this change. I would like to find out if all of them have. I wonder if ASMOF, who continue to be demonised by this Premier, support this. My guess is no. Certainly what they know and have made very clear is that they would like to see the Industrial Relations Act actually change in this state. This is a piecemeal option. This is to show, in terms of a public-facing media approach by this one-trick pony Minister for Health, that this is them apparently listening. Well, it is not. If they genuinely wanted to listen, they would give this bill—albeit I admit it is a two-paragraph bill essentially; it is very short. But at the end of the day that is not the point. We have seen time and time again in this House that they continue to push legislation through in a hurry without the opportunity for people to have any sort of scrutiny of it whatsoever.

I believe this is the 17th bill that has been declared urgent in this term of government by the LNP: seven passed on the same day they were introduced; three passed the day after they were introduced; and three passed two days later. When you start adding these things up, this is not a government that really wants to do anything in terms of listening to Queenslanders. As I said, this is a short bill and I accept that. But what we know is that this is the sort of bill you get when you make a mess of negotiations and erode whatever trust people had left in this government.

There are very good reasons why even legislation as small as this should be considered by committees and have proper scrutiny and analysis. The parliament deserves to hear what people's views are. You can understand why people might mistrust this government. This government has not

had a good record when it comes to negotiating employment terms and conditions with Queensland workers. In fact, it said to public servants before the last election that they had nothing to fear. From reports today we know there is shrinkage of the Public Service in Queensland by more than 15,000 since the LNP came to office. We know that we cannot trust a word they say when it comes to dealing with contract negotiations and enterprise bargaining in this state. Forgive us, Minister for Health, if we do not sit here and accept every time you move an urgency motion before the House that we should do exactly as we are told.

When reflecting on the urgent bills that have been passed through the House, let us have a look at what the member for Caloundra said. In 2011 the member for Caloundra said that he was appalled at the notion that legislation be rushed through the House. This is an urgency motion and I continue to speak on the urgency motion.

Mr RICKUSS: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Watts): Order! Member for Lockyer, what is your point of order?

Mr RICKUSS: Relevance. The member is straying from the relevance of this motion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind the Manager of Opposition Business to speak to the bill.

Mr PITT: I am not sure how much more relevant I can be when I just used the words 'urgency motion'.

Mr Rickuss: Only after I stood up.

Mr PITT: If the member for Lockyer wants to talk about irrelevance, I think he only needs to look in the mirror. This government is becoming irrelevant. As we heard from the opposition leader today, it is becoming the laughing stock of Australia. It is an embarrassment—

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PITT: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for your protection. In 2011 the member for Caloundra said he was appalled at the notion that legislation could be rushed through the House. He said that scrutinising legislation was—

... exactly what we are required to do as an opposition. An opposition is required to drill down into and to quiz and question the government on the clauses within the bill. We support the bill, but that does not mean that we do not have an obligation to drill down and ascertain the true intent of the bill and look at the various clauses and make certain they stand up to scrutiny.

The irony is that at the time the member for Caloundra made those statements he was the shadow health minister. Interestingly, we will never know whether this whole doctors crisis could have been averted if he was the health minister in Queensland when there was a change of government. He held that portfolio right up until the election. He believes in the scrutiny of legislation. It is a shame that the Minister for Health doesn't. It is a shame the Minister for Health will not also engage in proper negotiations and start again, as most people have suggested, instead of a ham-fisted approach to keep stacking on top a range of different issues that are not being addressed because there is a clear public outcry about the way they are handling, or mishandling, this doctor contracts crisis in our state. The opposition will not be supporting this urgency motion, and I do not think any other member should either.