




Speech By
Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Record of Proceedings, 1 April 2014

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (8.12 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

This bill gives effect to the findings of the government's review of the national model workplace health and safety laws, which came into effect in Queensland on 1 January 2012. The government has had concerns about the impact of these laws, including unanticipated or inequitable compliance costs. We can all appreciate the advantages of harmonised national model laws but not where they are a drag on Queensland's economy. The Newman government was elected on a platform that included rebuilding the Queensland economy and getting our state back on track, and this is something we are determined to do. We want Queensland to have the safest workplaces in Australia, but this will not be achieved by choking businesses with paperwork and unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape. This is achieved by government working cooperatively with businesses to assist them in identifying and managing the risks to achieve safer workplaces.

The results speak for themselves. There has been a substantial reduction in the serious injury rate in Queensland of approximately 19 per cent over the five years from 2007-08 to 2011-12. This includes significant reductions in the serious injury rates in our priority high-risk industries of construction, agriculture, manufacturing and transport. In the construction industry, there has been a 25 per cent reduction in the serious injury rate over the five-year period; in the manufacturing industry, the reduction rate has been 29 per cent; and, in the transport industry, a 22 per cent reduction; and, in the agricultural industry, a 21 per cent reduction. The projected serious injury rate for the 2012-13 period is expected to decrease by almost five per cent, despite public commentary that we are trashing worker safety in this state. This is a great result, and I want to thank Queensland employers and workers for their ongoing efforts to ensure that workplaces in Queensland are safer. I also want to encourage them to continue to have workplace health and safety as their business priority.

As part of the government's review, I chaired two industry roundtables and met with industry stakeholders and representatives to hear firsthand their concerns about the workplace health and safety laws. During the review, the construction industry raised serious concerns about the misuse of right of entry provisions by union officials which they report is a daily occurrence and causes significant distress for the industry and disruption on business. While this is mainly an issue for the construction industry, other industry sectors noted the complexity and confusion created by inconsistency between right of entry provisions under the Work Health and Safety Act and the Fair Work Act, which I might add is a federal Labor piece of legislation.

The construction industry's concerns are confirmed by complaints the workplace health and safety regulator has received about union right of entry disputes. In 2011-12, workplace health and safety inspectors responded to 57 right of entry disputes at construction workplaces. Most of these disputes related to entry without prior notice to inquire into a suspected contravention under the Work Health and Safety Act. Inspectors found that, while some notices were issued, overall none of the issues identified were considered to be an immediate or imminent risk to workers or others at the workplace.

Most construction businesses, even the large ones, usually decide the pressure and confrontation that would come from challenging unions—militant thug unions—on the matter of right of entry would just be too much and further impact on their commercial interests. The Grocon matter in 2012 was a classic example of this and was most likely a costly exercise for Grocon to challenge the behaviour of the unions. This matter is still before the Supreme Court of Victoria.

In December 2013 a judgement by the Federal Circuit Court of Australia found that union officials had contravened the Fair Work Act, which provides that union officials exercising particular rights at the work sites must not intentionally hinder or obstruct any person or otherwise act in an improper manner. The case centred on the behaviour of certain union officials after entering a construction site on Albert Street, Brisbane, in February 2010 and the disruption that occurred when they were purportedly there for safety issues. Since then, there have been other disruptions at major construction sites in South-East Queensland where safety concerns have been used for industrial purposes.

Recently, work was disrupted for two days at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital after unlawful entry by union officials. This resulted in the Fair Work Commission issuing an order prohibiting industrial action at the site for one month. The Commonwealth Fair Work Building and Construction Authority has ordered an investigation into the conduct of union officials at the Brookfield Multiplex construction site at Indooroopilly Shopping Centre. Multiple complaints have been received that safety concerns were being used by the union to enter into retail outlets in order to coerce small operators into signing union enterprise bargaining agreements. It is no secret that union militant thugs in Queensland are using workplace health and safety as a measure of industrial disputation. The Commonwealth Fair Work Building and Construction Authority, as I said, has ordered an investigation. We had unlawful disputation at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital site and the Fair Work Commission has issued an order prohibiting industrial action at the site for one month.

At the Pacific Fair redevelopment on the Gold Coast, claims of unsafe work conditions resulted in disruption and work stoppages at the site. However, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland inspectors found that there were no serious health and safety risks requiring notices to be issued. In fact, they found that consultative mechanisms were working well at the site and health and safety matters were being identified and resolved collaboratively. These sorts of unnecessary disputations impose significant costs on the construction project. We cannot afford this problem any longer. Something needs to be done now.

The LNP government had already responded to the concerns of industrial lawlessness on construction sites by introducing the Implementation Guidelines to the Queensland Code of Practice for the Building and Construction Industry, which were effective from 1 July 2013. This government has also established the Building and Construction Compliance Branch within the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. The BCCB is responsible for monitoring, auditing and reporting on compliance with industrial relations laws on state funded infrastructure projects. It also responds to notifications and complaints of interruptions to work site productivity such as unlawful industrial action. More action is required. There is no place for union officials who abuse their powers and engage in inappropriate behaviour in workplaces.

Mr Pitt: Change the Industrial Relations Act then.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am really looking forward to the opposition's contribution to this debate tonight considering, as I said, that the Sunshine Coast University site was shut down but the Fair Work Commission said, 'Get back to work,' and, 'You can't have unlawful industrial disputation for a month.' We have had the Grocon issue with the Children's Hospital site. We lost \$7 million of taxpayers' money. We have had the Indooroopilly Multiplex site, and let's not mention the fact that there is a current standing royal commission into union corruption and governance in this country. Let's not let that get in the way of a good story. I am really looking forward to the opposition's contribution tonight about unlawful industrial disputation and the fact that there is a standing royal commission in relation to union corruption. Let's not mention the HSU. Let's not mention Craig Thomson. I look forward to the debate that is about to ensue in which the Labor Party opposition will get on their feet and they will defend the unions till the cows come home. Despite all the evidence, despite all the facts, despite the

taxpayers losing millions of dollars a year because of unlawful industrial disputation with workplace health and safety used as an industrial disputation measure, they will still do that. Do members know why? It is because their preselections rely on it. Their preselections rely on what they say in this place. If they come in here—the member for South Brisbane and the member for Mulgrave—and attack the unions or tell the truth, God forbid, they will not be preselected.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I hear all the interjections from over there. In the last 48 hours the federal Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Tanya Plibersek, has said that unions should not control the Labor Party any longer. Bill Shorten, ex-union official and current Leader of the Labor Party, said at the beginning of this year or early last year that there should be inquiries into union corruption, particularly on construction sites. So I am really looking forward—

Mr Pitt: I thought this was a safety bill. I thought this was a safety bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: I say to the member for Mulgrave that this is the workplace health and safety bill. What are we doing? We are stopping militant union thugs, supported by the Labor Party, from using workplace health and safety as an industrial disputation method in Queensland. That is what we are doing. That apparently is what the federal Labor Party wants to do—both Bill Shorten and also the deputy leader. I really caution the member for Mulgrave, who has drawn the short straw for this debate tonight, about coming in here and standing up for the unions. I take the theatrical interjection from the member for Burleigh. The member opposite is the puppet for the Labor Party. He drew the short straw for coming in here—

A government member: Crystal ball.

Mr BLEIJIE: I do not have a crystal ball, but if I did, it would say that the member for Mulgrave is about to make a contribution that will defend the unions and say that we are attacking the rights of the workers, Work Choices—all this sort of stuff. I can see it all. I could have written the member's speech. It is about to happen.

The reality is that the Queensland Labor Party has no choice, particularly because Cameron Dick is back in town. The opposition leader and the member for Mulgrave in particular as the shadow Treasurer know that, when Cameron is in town, he will not stand for that sort of incompetence in the shadow Treasurer. He will want some competent people in his team, not like the member for Rockhampton. Those who are over there will not stand the test of Cameron Dick when he is leader.

I proffer some advice to the Labor Party in Queensland. They should take some advice from Bill Shorten, their federal leader who said that there are issues in the unions. Although he said we should have a royal commission, we should have a police inquiry into unions, Tanya Plibersek, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Labor Party, certainly came out in the last couple of days saying that the unions should not have the say that they do in the Labor Party.

So I say to the member for Mulgrave that, when he makes his contribution, he should do so as a member of this House, not on behalf of or channelling his union thug mates. He should do it as a member of this parliament and as the member for Mulgrave sticking up for the constituents in Mulgrave, not because his preselection will shortly rely on a union militant thug being flown from Brisbane or wherever they are in the Labor Party to support his preselection.

The member for Woodridge does not have to worry about her preselection because she has said that she is clearing the way for Cameron Dick, who happened to get the gig without a preselection, might I add. So much for local say in that preselection! Let's see just how much sway the unions still have in the Labor Party. All honourable members on the government side can imagine what the speech that is about to be delivered will be like. It will all be about this government attacking the rights of the workers and supporting unions in this state rather than sticking up for the workers in this state, rather than sticking up for one of the four pillars of the economy in property construction and letting projects go ahead—and the best thing for a worker is to have a job in Queensland. The best thing for a worker is to have a construction job in Queensland. It does no good for the worker if the construction company goes out of business because of \$7 million in industrial disputation. No-one wins: the worker does not have a job and the employer does not have any work, but that is the Labor way. They challenge the construction companies and challenge the big developers. They might have a win on the front pages of the newspapers, but then no-one wins. Their supporters do not win because no-one will have a job at the end of the day if a construction company in this state collapses.

Mrs Scott: What is your unemployment level?

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Woodridge. The economic growth—

Mr Kempton interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Cook. That is the best contribution that the member for Cook has ever made since coming to this place. That is the first time we have heard the member for Woodridge interject. I take the interjection. Let me tell the member for Woodridge what the economic stability in Queensland is now. Australia has 1.9 per cent economic growth. What does Queensland have? It has 4.1 per cent economic growth. The average in Australia is 1.9 per cent and Queensland is storming ahead because of the efforts of the Premier, the Treasurer and the parliamentary team on the government side. The Queensland economy is powering ahead because of this government, not because of the Labor Party.

Mr Byrne interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the laughing interjection from the member for Rockhampton. The member for Rockhampton is laughing away. He is laughing because he has not experienced the Labor Party regime. He did not experience the Paul Lucases, the Anna Blighs, the Robert Schwartens and the Andrew Frasers of the world. He did not experience their economics. When the member for Mulgrave was in the cabinet coming up with those very important decisions to drive the Queensland economy, they drove the Queensland economy down. Everything they touched wrecked the economy in Queensland. We are rebuilding the economy. We are rebuilding the economy based on the four pillars, and property construction is a major part of that. As a government, we will not stand—and nor will the people of Queensland—for union militant thuggery on work sites any longer.

If the Labor Party want to take a lesson from anyone else and they do not want to listen to me, that is fine; they should take a lesson from Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd, who introduced the fair work legislation, and guess what? They put in place a requirement for 24 hours notice to be given for unions to enter work sites. So now I am going to be accused of copying the federal Labor Party legislation. If that is what they are going to accuse me of, that is fine. However, they will stand up in this place in about 44 minutes time—when I have finished my contribution—and they will bleat and they will moan about these laws but at all times they will stand up for the union militant thugs of the Queensland unions. When we are talking about union militant thugs, we are talking of course about the CFMEU, the ones who continually go on to construction sites in Queensland. Time and time again I have heard of the complaints from the construction industry.

You only have to talk to the honourable health minister about the children's hospital site. The Queensland taxpayers lost how much money? Have a guess how much money the taxpayers lost in Queensland because of union militant activity. \$7.5 million. That is just the taxpayer; that is not the company. I take the silence from the opposition as an acceptance that that is all just part of doing business in Queensland with the unions. The rort on construction sites, the union militant thuggery, will and must stop.

I am very pleased to advise honourable members that I attended the Master Builders Association of Queensland lunch the other day with Nigel Hadgkiss, who is the new commissioner for the federal body which will be the reintroduction of the ABCC that the coalition government has announced. He too has the same determination to make sure that this type of activity is not happening. In the last two years I have seen good construction sites and projects in Queensland being shut down because when one of their union militant thuggery mates is in court they shut down because of a workplace health and safety issue, and they all run down to the Commonwealth courts to have their protest. It is not about safety; it is about sticking up for their militant mates on the construction sites. This will ensure that those responsible for workplace health and safety in Queensland are the inspectorate of the workplace health and safety regulator; not militant union thugs who stop our construction sites and lose millions of dollars for the Queensland taxpayers.

For the last 10 minutes I have digressed in this debate—which I do not ordinarily do in a second reading speech—but I want to highlight the point that the honourable member for Mulgrave drew the short straw because he is not the shadow minister for this debate. The Labor Party sent him in here to defend the CFMEU and the right for unions to come on sites and shut them down. The best thing that we can do for workers in this state is to make sure that they have workplace health and safety officers on site with the inspectorate being the ones responsible and for making sure that there are obligations on all employers to create the safest environment in which an employee can operate. And lo and behold, it will come as a surprise to the opposition that the best thing that an employee can have in this state is a job on a construction site because if they do not have a job, they cannot provide for their families and others.

The preselection of the honourable member for Mulgrave will be determined on how favourable his speech tonight is to the unions. We have not heard whether he has been preselected yet, but I suspect he is about to get the nod. The unions will be watching his speech tonight or watching it on instant replay tomorrow to make sure he says the right things. If I was the member for Mulgrave facing a battle of preselections—because if it was based on competency, as shadow Treasurer he would not win the prize—without relying on local members of the Labor Party but the hierarchy of the ALP, I would back the unions because they will back me. That is the Labor way. That has always been the Labor way. That has been the way of a few other members in this place. But certainly that is what he will be doing, and I fully anticipate it will be a government-bashing exercise. I would suspect Work Choices might even get a mention. All I need do is remind the honourable member of the Fair Work Legislation and make sure that the member for Bundamba's mate Peter Simpson at the ETU, when he wants to enter a construction site as the militant union thug that he is, gives 24 hours notice. It is Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd's legislation. If it is okay for the federal Labor Party, why is it not okay for the state Labor Party?

If I have been completely premature in my attack on the member for Mulgrave, I apologise. If he is going to stand up in 38 minutes and support the legislation, I will stand up and I will withdraw everything I have said about the member for Mulgrave. But I suspect not. The member for South Brisbane is the numbers lady over there, but I do not know who she is doing the numbers for anymore. Whether it is Cameron Dick, herself or Palaszczuk, I am not quite sure.

Mr McArdle: Who is Cameron?

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the honourable minister for water. Who is Cameron? Well, we know who Cameron is. I will bet you they do not want to know who Cameron is. I take the interjection from the member for Caloundra, because the honourable member for South Brisbane will be wondering who is going to have the goods after the next election. Is it Cameron? Is it the opposition leader? Where does she fit into the arrangement? But I guarantee the minister one thing: it will be whatever is in the interests of the member for South Brisbane.

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order. Not only is the minister misleading the House, but he is also making offensive personal remarks and I ask for him to withdraw them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order! Minister, would you withdraw your comments, please.

Mr BLEIJIE: I was being complimentary. I was saying she could be leader!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, the member has asked for them to be withdrawn. Could you withdraw your comments, please.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker. That was the biggest compliment I have ever paid to the member for South Brisbane: that I see her as a leader. But I take the point of order and I will not do it again.

Mr Byrne: Desley for PM!

Mr BLEIJIE: I will throw my support behind the member for Rockhampton.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I see the member for South Brisbane flashing the *Qweekend* magazine around. Oh, she wishes she was on front page of the *Qweekend* magazine! I think I have seen the member for South Brisbane on the front page of the *Qweekend*, but I have not seen Anastacia Palaszczuk on the front page of the *QWeekend*. There are two things that are guaranteed in life, and of course we all know that one of them is death. The other thing that is guaranteed is that that mob over there, as the good show *Yes*, *Minister* said—

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, you would want to hear this, member for South Brisbane. This is particularly relevant to the member for South Brisbane—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am waiting for silence. I seek your protection, Mr Deputy Speaker. As was said in *Yes*, *Minister*—and I can imagine the member for South Brisbane saying this—'You have got to get behind someone before you can stab them in the back.' Cameron Dick has ruled out a challenge already and he is not even in parliament yet!

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: I did not refer personally to anyone.

Ms TRAD: I ask for you to rule on relevance. I know it is quite peculiar, but the Attorney-General seems to be going on a bit of a flight of fancy.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, I would ask that you please remain relevant to the long title of the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I do find it interesting that the member for South Brisbane would ask for a ruling on relevance, considering that she just took a point of order of personal imputation and asked for a withdrawal she seems quite happy to get into the debate through the interjections.

Those opposite do not like the fact that Queenslanders are awake to the idea that the Labor Party is run by union militant thugs.

Mrs Miller: Rubbish!

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Bundamba. I suggest to honourable members that they look at the Electoral Commission of Queensland disclosures in terms of donations and see who is donating money and who donated money in 2012 to the member for Bundamba. If the member for Bundamba can stand in this place and say that she has not had anything to do with the unions, then I will be shot down.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am not jealous. I can assure the member for Bundamba that I am not taking donations from unions. There were not only donations from unions in Queensland but also donations from other unions in other jurisdictions. We know who the member for South Brisbane, when she was the puppet master in the Peel Street head office, took donations from on behalf of the Labor Party.

I have digressed for half an hour. I admit that I have gone off subject in the last half an hour. In the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, I think it is important that we put on the record what I suspect the members of the Labor Party will be talking about. I suspect that their contribution to this worthwhile debate will be very much about government attacks on workers, which is not true. We have a great workplace health and safety regime. As I said earlier in my contribution, we have had a reduction in workplace health and safety incidents. I have developed a really good relationship with Mal Meninga, who is the Queensland workplace health and safety ambassador.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Order!

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Mal Meninga is Queensland's workplace health and safety ambassador. Tragically, he lost his father to a workplace injury. I am very pleased that Mal Meninga is on board with us going to the Zero Harm at Work leadership forums. I thank the honourable members who have represented me at those particular breakfasts that we are holding. Recently, we have had the workplace health and safety awards where we have acknowledged businesses that are doing the right thing by their workers. No-one wants an injury at the workplace. That is why we have the best workers compensation scheme in Australia making sure that every worker has statutory entitlements to workers compensation. We have a workers compensation environment that encourages employers to hire people, getting more Queenslanders on the job.

Mrs Miller: Winding back.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Bundamba, who is saying 'winding back' workplace health and safety. The Labor Party, in introducing the fair work legislation, put in a 24-hour notice period for unions to enter particular sites as well. If it is okay for the federal Labor Party, it should be okay for the state Labor Party. That is what we are doing. We will make sure that we live in a state that does not have militant union thugs operating at these construction sites.

Mr Pitt: You don't even understand what the federal legislation does.

Mr BLEIJIE: I caution the member for Mulgrave to be very careful—

Mr Pitt: Don't you warn me about anything, mate.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am not your mate. Let me say to you, member for Mulgrave—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister and member for Mulgrave, I ask you to refer to each other by your parliamentary titles.

Mr BLEIJIE: My caution would be to the member for Mulgrave that, before he gets up and reads a speech that was prepared by the 23 people sitting on level 9, there is a—

Mrs Miller: You can't even get that right.

Mr BLEIJIE: They have more than 23. There is a royal commission occurring as we speak in relation to union corruption and governance. It will be very interesting to see what comes out of that royal commission and the witnesses who come forward. I would caution the member for Mulgrave against enthusiastically going into overdrive in support of particular unions tonight, because it may be that those words of encouragement and union support come back to bite him. Of course, without anticipating the royal commission's findings, what I hear on the grapevine is that there are some very interesting stories—very interesting stories—coming out about the construction industry, including union militant activity that will be subject to a royal commission.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: If the member for Bundamba wants to contribute to the royal commission, then she will probably have the opportunity to do so. If any member knows more than anyone else in this place about the inner workings of the unions, particularly the ETU, it would be the member for Bundamba. I suspect that the member for Bundamba knows exactly what union thugs get up to, because for her whole career she has relied on the strong support of the union movement. If we talk about merit based appointments, the member for Bundamba got into this place because of the work of the unions and the behind-the-scenes, dodgy deals that were done—going from the office that she worked at and the little support that she gives now. That is how the member for Bundamba serves in this place.

On this side of the House we have people who have had real jobs—not just jobs as ministerial advisers to former Labor Party politicians or union thugs; real jobs. We have had people on this side of the House who have worked in the construction industry—people who have worked in real jobs and who understand the issues and the union thuggery and militant activity that occurs.

Mrs Miller: Don Lane.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is why this legislation—

Mrs Miller: Leisha Harvey.

Mr BLEIJIE: The member for Bundamba ought not talk about former politicians who went to jail, because I only have to mention her master and that was Gordon Nuttall. If the member for Bundamba wants to rattle off a list of politicians who are in jail, she only has to go and have a cup of coffee with him at Woodford prison, or wherever he is. Like in *Star Wars* she was the apprentice to 'Chancellor' Nuttall. Gordon Nuttall was training the member for Bundamba to be all that she is today. The member for Bundamba, who sits in this House today, is the result of the training of Gordon Nuttall and she thanks Gordon Nuttall very much for all of that training.

Mrs Miller: Leisha Harvey, Don Lane.

Mr BLEIJIE: I hear the member for Bundamba rattle off the names. I suspect that there are more former Labor politicians' names that we could rattle off than the member for Bundamba could. I think her close friend—

A government member: Merri Rose.

A government member: D'Arcy.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, D'Arcy. I take that interjection. Merri Rose.

A government member: Keith Wright.

Mr BLEIJIE: Keith Wright. That is right.

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take all the interjections from the government members of all the former Labor politicians who have been to jail, including the master and commander of the member for Bundamba. We thought it was the unions, but it was actually Gordon Nuttall. He taught the member for Bundamba everything she knows about health in this state.

A government member: Kaiser.

Mr BLEIJIE: Kaiser. No doubt, the member for Bundamba would have been outside earlier this evening at the protest and speaking—

Mrs Miller: Absolutely.

Mr BLEIJIE: Absolutely—on a megaphone. While the member for Bundamba, in her 15 minutes of fame, had the stage, did she have the heart to remind everyone that she was the apprentice to Gordon Nuttall, who now serves time in jail? Did she have the heart to tell people that she was part of a government that never paid its nurses, that never paid its allied health professionals and that it cost over \$1 billion to fix the health system? Did she have the heart to tell the crowd out the front of Parliament House tonight that Anna Bligh, her former leader, said that the health system was sick and that it needed a—what do you call it?

A government member: Jumpers.

Mr BLEIJIE: Defibrillators?

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: That thing. Did the member for Bundamba have the heart to tell people that Health was a sick system? She did not have the heart to give all the ins and outs of the militant union activity that she knows all too well? Again, they will battle for their preselections and they will be on the phone to the likes of Peter Simpson of the ETU and so forth working out what dodgy deals can be done.

That is everything that the Labor Party is going to say about the bill tonight. Let us look—

Mrs Miller interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I can assure the member for Bundamba that I wait with anticipation.

As I said earlier, we fully appreciate and acknowledge where the Labor Party will come from. They will do anything and say anything in this House to back their union militant mates. They have not learnt the lesson from Bill Shorten or the deputy opposition leader, Tanya Plibersek, that the unions should get out of the Labor Party. The Deputy Leader of the Labor Party, Tanya Plibersek, went one step further—and I would love to see what the Queensland Labor Party position is on this—and said that if you belong to the Labor Party you should not have to be forced or mandated to join a union. I remember when Annastacia Palaszczuk, the opposition leader, was talking about the reform of the Labor Party. She said that in Queensland we should still have input from the union movement. That is not what Kevin Rudd said. Every other Labor Party division in Australia apart from the Queensland Labor Party is going away from union militant thugs. It relies on them so much. It has to attach itself to it. It cannot rip that bit of Velcro apart. It cannot rip the bandaid from the wound, and say it rejects union militant thugs in this state like Bill Shorten has, like Tanya Plibersek has, like every other Labor Party in this nation has. It cannot do it.

I feel sorry for the member for Woodridge who has not stood the latest test of union militant thuggery. Cameron Dick, the white knight, the saviour of the Labor Party, will come riding into Woodridge and save the Labor Party from the current opposition leader. That is what is occurring. We all know it. Those opposite cannot deny it. There is one thing we know: the union movement has brought in Cameron Dick to give the Labor Party some form of credibility in this state. Cameron Dick will bring back to the Labor Party some form of credibility. They will not get it from South Brisbane, they will not get it from Bundamba, they will certainly not get it from Mulgrave, they will not get it from Rockhampton and people gave up a long time ago wishing they would get it from Woodridge. They will certainly not get it from the member for Mackay. We all know they want to be leader, but the only one who is going to lead the Labor Party is, of course, Cameron Dick. In question time this morning when the opposition leader was speaking there were a couple of interjections from this honourable side of the House. The interjection was 'Cameron Dick'. One could see the opposition leader switch to defensive mode.

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, you have actually ruled on relevance before and the Attorney is straying.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): What is your point of order?

Ms TRAD: Relevance. He is not speaking to the bill and has not for some time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for South Brisbane. Minister, I would ask you to keep your comments relevant to the long title of the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: For the benefit of the House, I am trying to draw a nexus or connection between union militant activity, Labor Party leadership and, more particularly, the commentary from the federal division of the Labor Party in terms of these very issues. If we look at the nexus even closer, it is a fact that the federal Labor Party introduced laws which required unions to give 24 hours notice. That is what this bill does. I take the point of order from the honourable member for South Brisbane.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have satisfied myself that I have drawn a necessary connection between all these issues in what I have been speaking about for the last 40 minutes. This bill contributes further to the government's reform in the construction and property industry. We have four pillars of the economy. We talk about agriculture, tourism, resources and construction. I acknowledge the honourable tourism minister and the wonderful job she is doing in the tourism sector. There has been \$1 billion, I am advised, from September to September last year in additional tourism spending. Well done to the minister and her team.

This bill requires the unions to give 24 hours notice when they want to enter a work site. As I said, if anyone is going to shut a work site down in Queensland it is going to be a Queensland workplace health and safety inspectorate not union militant thugs. As I have said, the current unlawful conduct suggests that stronger sanctions and penalties must be attached to any behaviour that breaches the notice requirements or breaches the right of entry provisions. The bill will also increase the penalties for noncompliance with workplace health and safety entry permit conditions and introduce penalties for failure to comply with the entry notification requirements to reflect the seriousness of these activities. Given the already high cost of building in this country, these amendments are expected to have a positive economic effect and will be welcomed by the business community and in particular the building and construction sector.

For consistency, the bill will require at least 24 hours notice before any person, such as a union official who is assisting a health and safety representative, can have access to a workplace. This closes a loophole that currently exists where union officials come onto projects without appropriate notice and without following proper right of entry processes. The amendment will prevent this current abuse by union officials. The bill will also remove the power for health and safety representatives to direct workers to cease unsafe work. The Work Health and Safety Act establishes a framework for resolving work health and safety matters before they become a serious and imminent risk to health and safety. Health and safety representatives play an important role in this framework and retain wide ranging powers, including the ability to issue provisional improvement notices to rectify health and safety risks. However, in the event of serious and immediate risk to health and safety the statutory right to cease work should remain the decision of the worker rather than at the discretion of a health and safety representative. In the event of a genuine emergency, the worker needs to take action as their representative may not be available to provide that advice.

Business representatives also raised concerns about the cumulative compliance costs associated with red tape. Not only does this government hear these concerns, we are determined to follow through and reduce the red-tape burden of excessive regulation. The bill proposes amendments to address concerns about red tape. The review also considered a range of national model codes of practice that could be adopted in Queensland. Harmonised model workplace health and safety laws and codes have advantages but stakeholders considered there is a need for some scope to vary the model codes when they can be more relevant to work practices and conditions in Queensland. For example, for forestry operations in Queensland there are unique hazards that need to be addressed in a code of practice, including working in conditions of high temperature and humidity and the hazards posed by the prevalence of vines and trees. The act does not currently permit flexibility and the bill will rectify this issue.

This is not about making change for the sake of it, rather it is about ensuring Queensland's regulatory framework is pertinent for Queensland. The bill also makes a technical amendment to the Electrical Safety Act to provide that the maximum penalty for offences in the electrical safety regulation can be no more than 300 penalty units, replacing the current maximum of 40 penalty units. This will ensure the Electrical Safety Act is consistent with the maximum penalty for regulations made under the Work Health and Safety Act and nationally consistent penalties can apply to electrical safety offences.

This bill is not about lowering safety standards. Every Queenslanders deserves the right to go to work, do their job without interference, get paid and be treated fairly. We believe Queensland workplaces should be safe, but this is not achieved by allowing union militant thug officials to misuse powers under the banner of safety or choking businesses with unnecessary red tape. The changes I have outlined in this bill will restore balance to the system and foster safety, fairness and productivity in Queensland workplaces. I thank the parliamentary committee for reviewing the bill. I table a copy of the government's response to the committee's recommendations and I commend the bill to the House.

Tabled paper: Finance and Administration Committee: Report No. 39—Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014, government response [\[4823\]](#).