




Speech By
Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.08 pm), in reply: I thank all honourable members for their contribution to the debate this afternoon and yesterday on the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment 2014. I also want to thank the CFMEU for its latest abuse of right of entry provisions and, again, for justifying exactly why we are debating this legislation today.

Honourable members may have noticed the front page story of the *Australian Financial Review* yesterday. It is quite interesting that the day we are debating union right of entry abuses and the support that they continually get from the Labor Party, the *Financial Review* publishes an article titled 'Lend Lease blasts CFMEU's "disgraceful" safety audits'. I will quote a couple of comments from the story and table it for honourable members.

Tabled paper. Article from the *Australian Financial Review*, dated 2 April 2014, titled 'Lend lease blasts CFMEU's "disgraceful" safety audits' [\[4863\]](#).

It is an exclusive written by Mr Dunckley and Mr Bleby. It states—

Lend Lease has blasted the construction union's use of safety rules as a cynical attempt to advance its industrial objectives and labelled Australia the worst country for industrial relations in the world.

Chief Executive of Lend Lease, Mr McCann, stated in an interview—

The cynical use of safety as a platform by the CFMEU is unacceptable. When it's used as a tool for other purposes we think that is a disgrace; we will resist that.

Further the article states—

Mr McCann said he believed the union targeted Lend Lease partly as a reaction to the court judgement. He said changes were needed immediately to improve the industry including the reintroduction of the Australian Building and Construction Commission.

He said—

We have 500 live sites [around the world] and by far Australia is the worst jurisdiction in which we operate.

Further in the article it states—

Grocon executive chairman Daniel Grollo also reacted angrily to CFMEU's move on Lend Lease. 'This is the problem. Only yesterday when they were clearly found to be out of step with community standards and judicial standards and they were being held to account, today they go straight away to safety.

Further in the article it states—

Fair Work Building and Construction director Nigel Hadgkiss said his agency was closely monitoring the Lend Lease situation.

The employment minister Eric Abetz said—

The actions of the CFMEU leadership today, the day after it was found guilty of criminal contempt of court, suggests that it is completely unrepentant and will not change its behaviour. Bogus safety claims should have no place in the building industry.

Honourable members, if there is any indication of why we are putting this legislation into the House it is those claims. The day we start debating this law the CFMEU, having been found guilty of

criminal contempt in the court, start the safety reasons again. At the Sunshine Coast University Hospital there have been issues around safety being used for industrial disputation purposes. It is one of the oldest tricks in the book for the unions.

It is interesting that the member for Mulgrave led the opposition attack on the bill that we are debating today. It is the first time in two years as Attorney-General in this government that I have seen the opposition proffer one member of their eight to talk about workplace health and safety, workers' rights and unions. I have here the speaking list from yesterday. On it is one member, the member for Mulgrave. I suspect the member for Bundamba and the member for South Brisbane have been told to not go in too hard in support of the unions in this debate. I suspect they have been told to be careful what they say. Is it any wonder when there is an article in the *Australian* titled 'Tanya Plibersek backs end to "crazy" ALP membership rule'.

We have seen the attacks on construction sites by the CFMEU—what we know as the BLF in Queensland—where valuable taxpayer money is being wasted; there was the article in relation to Lend Lease in the *Financial Review* yesterday; we have seen many cases around Queensland of workplace health and safety being used as an industrial disputation measure; and the Deputy Labor leader, Tanya Plibersek, has endorsed calls for the party to further cut ties with the union movement by winding back rules that prevent people from joining the ALP without a union ticket. The silence from the opposition on that is breathtaking.

I wonder if the member for Bundamba, a heavyweight in the union movement and a great supporter of Peter Simpson and the ETU, supports her federal deputy leader's position on the union movement. I wonder what the member for Woodridge is thinking when contemplating her retirement and Cameron Dick coming straight in without preselection. I wonder what the member for Bundamba really thinks about the deputy Labor leader's position on cutting union ties.

This legislation is about making sure that the unions stop using workplace health and safety as a means to stop construction in this state. We have a clear objective. We have four pillars of the Queensland economy. Construction is one of them. The union movement—the CFMEU and the BLF—continually stop these works progressing in the state of Queensland because of their militant thuggish behaviour.

In Queensland we are reporting some of the greatest workplace health and safety results. The unions would claim that it is because of their intervention, their involvement, their work stoppages, their illegal picket lines and walking off job sites and marching to the front of Parliament House. That is not the case. The case is that we live in 2014. Technology has changed. A lot of our old industries are now modernising the way they work and do business and the fact is that workers are safer on sites. The mechanisms and the processes that have been put in place are much safer.

This morning we released the state-wide strategic plan on asbestos risk management. I thank the member for Ipswich and other honourable colleagues who were at the launch this morning. We heard stories about how through awareness and education people can be more safe, not only in their communities but also in their workplaces. We look up to the likes of Tiffany Ward who is in her early twenties. Her arms were damaged in a factory. She is now one of our great safety ambassadors for workplace health and safety. She has a great family. They very much fly the flag for new practices and processes that businesses are putting in place.

We live in a world now where companies, including construction companies, have higher obligations and responsibilities when it comes to workplace health and safety. I see these companies on a weekly basis doing great things to improve workplace health and safety. We all want to make sure that anyone who goes to work can come home safely to their families and their friends without injury. One death in a workplace in Queensland is one too many. That is why these things have to be looked at seriously. To turbocharge and grow our economy we have to make sure that nothing is put in place to stymie development and growth. That is what unions do, particularly the CFMEU, that use militant thuggish behaviour.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the honourable health minister, who knows only too well about this in relation to issues with the Children's Hospital site. If memory serves me correctly, the taxpayers lost \$7.5 million through Queensland Health in terms of the delay in the construction of that project. There were illegal stoppages and picket lines all in the name of what the union termed a community protest. It was not a community protest. The fact was it was an orchestrated, militant union campaign with one thing in mind and that was to stop construction. Later on when some of their members were in court they stopped other construction sites in Queensland so they could march down to the Federal Court.

Mr Springborg: Standover merchants.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. So they could all march down to the Federal Court to try to intimidate the judicial officers hearing their matters with their loud protests out the front. The judicial officers will not be intimidated, this government will not be intimidated and Queenslanders ought not be intimidated by these militant union thugs. That is why this bill is so important.

I can assure the member for Gladstone that on this workplace health and safety bill—and the member for Mulgrave asked me about this—consultation has been ongoing for a year and a half. I personally chaired two industry round table meetings that included the BLF, the CFMEU and some other unions, as well as the Master Builders Association, the Property Council and other groups. I personally chaired those two round table meetings and after the meetings we held press conferences. We came forward with certain recommendations to look at the workplace health and safety laws. The reality is that the laws were harmonised by a former government, which created a lot of extra bureaucracy and red tape for business.

We have tried to look at some of the codes of practice that have not kicked off yet, how we can bring those back and whether we can stop some of those codes of practice. Certainly there was a high level of consultation, including with the unions. It is right to say that not everyone agreed with the outcome of the round table meetings, but the point is that we held round table meetings and everyone had a chance to have a say, not only once but twice. Not only did we hold two round table meetings, but also we set up little subcommittees. I recall directing the first round table meeting to create a subcommittee, including my department and union officials, to look at some of the other issues with respect to not only right of entry and what we are debating here today but also other issues on health and safety. Certainly, the unions were involved.

This morning when we launched the state-wide asbestos strategy, the unions were involved. I met the fellow from the CFMEU downstairs in the Premier's Hall, where we launched the state-wide strategy. Certainly the unions have been involved. I was not under any misinterpretation that the unions would not enthusiastically support this provision, which states that they have to give 24 hours notice. They can still enter a site, but they have to give 24 hours notice. If there is any question of an immediate health risk, Queensland Workplace Health and Safety should deal with those issues.

There has been a lot of debate about this. The member for Gladstone raised a concern about union abuse and the misuse of the entry provisions. We understand the concerns about cultural diversity amongst the workforce. I reassure her that the department has awareness and education campaigns. We can ensure that Queensland workers understand their rights and responsibilities in the workplace. Only this morning, just over 100 people attended the launch of the asbestos strategy. That is the sort of thing that we are doing. Mal Meninga is our safety ambassador and he travels around Queensland.

An honourable member: He is a great Queensland.

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes. He lost his father to a workplace incident. Mal Meninga is a safety ambassador at the Zero Harm at Work leadership forums that are operating right around Queensland. Trevor Gillmeister is a safety ambassador for asbestos and he was present at the launch this morning. There is Tiffany Ward and her tragic injury. We have videos and DVDs. The parents of Adam Sager were present at the launch this morning. A DVD about their story and asbestos risk has been released. I assure the member for Gladstone that, in terms of cultural diversity in the workforce, we have many programs operating around Queensland. We want to ensure that we use our safety ambassadors, such as Mal Meninga and Trevor Gillmeister, who go into the communities to talk to workers and employers about their rights and responsibilities in terms of worker safety.

This bill is about making sure that the state continues to grow and the economy continues to be turbocharged. Property and construction is a key pillar of the economy and that is what this government is about. I thank members for their support in this debate. I suspect there will come a time when other jurisdictions will follow Queensland's lead. It has been a discussion at the COAG meetings for ministers in industrial relations and workplace health and safety portfolios. I suspect that a lot of other jurisdictions will follow our lead. Indeed, prior to some recent elections in other states, some Labor jurisdictions were contemplating doing what we are doing. It seems that the world is moving this way and the only one not moving with the rest of society is the Queensland Labor Party.

I end where I started: if only the Labor Party Queensland division would take note of one of its federal Labor leaders, Tanya Plibersek, who has endorsed calls for the party to further cut ties with the union movement by winding back rules that prevent people from joining the ALP without a union ticket. While I live in hope, that will never get past the member for Bundamba, the member for Inala or the members for Redcliffe, Mulgrave and Woodridge. While the rest of the world, including the Labor Party at a federal level, is moving with the times and moving in this direction, unfortunately, the opposition is still stuck in the past. I commend the bill to the House.