




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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**INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (RESTORING FAIRNESS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (4.44 pm): Today I rise to speak in support of the Industrial Relations (Restoring Fairness) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. Under the previous government, the rights of workers to collectively bargain were removed. The rights of workers to have their fair representation under the enterprise bargaining agreement process were removed. There was no negotiation with the previous government at the table. It simply did not exist. I know this because I personally experienced it, having been part of the enterprise bargaining agreement representing ambulance officers in the last two EBAs in this state.

In 2008, as a representative for paramedics, we were able to collectively bargain across the table on a number of key points with the Queensland Ambulance Service and the government of the day. Unfortunately, no agreement was able to be reached at that time and the matter was correctly referred to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. In the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission matters of interests from both parties were able to be tabled, evidence based research provided, multiple witness statements tabled and workplace visits conducted. I again stress that the evidence based research on the benefits of advanced and critical care prehospital clinical care interventions were also able to be tabled. Those discussions were in depth, particularly around the benefits of upskilling thousands of Queensland paramedics which provided improved prehospital care. As a result and with the evidence provided, that showed that there were direct cost savings to the community and the government of the day because, as the evidence suggested, those modern clinical interventions such as prehospital thrombolysis reduced patient length of stay.

For the benefit of those not aware of the clinical knowledge required to reduce costs in the overall patient journey, if the correct, planned and practised prehospital clinical interventions are performed this has a direct cost saving in patient length of stay. When you take into account the thousands of dollars required to care for just a single ventilated patient in an intensive care unit for a single night, it all starts to make sense. The Queensland Industrial Relations Commission carefully listened to all evidence provided and I believe made a fair judgement in determining wage increases for Queensland Ambulance Service employees during that time. I know this because I was one of those critical care paramedics providing substantive, comprehensive and quantifiable evidence.

However, in 2012 we again went in to what we believed would be negotiations with the government of the day—dare I say it too loudly in this place—the Newman government, and the reality of that situation was in very stark contrast to the previous experience that I have described today. What was experienced from day one with representatives from the public sector commission representing the Queensland government of the day seated on one side of the table was simple: they would be dictating terms and making it very clear to us that there will be no negotiations with the Newman government. The sheer hatred displayed by even having to sit at the table with some representatives from the union was almost tangible. However, as they passed a single piece of paper around dictating terms, they did so with glee and a seemingly arrogant approach to the entire

meeting. This was it, and I was the first one to receive it. My jaw hit the ground—a 2.2 per cent wage offer provided, with clauses inserted, paramedics agreed to remove existing roster arrangements, remove consultation and remove existing meal arrangements for the thousands of paramedics in Queensland. It was nothing more than an insult to every paramedic in this state. It is a shame that the member for Gaven is not sitting in the chamber today and someone should probably—

Miss BARTON: I rise to a point of order. I appreciate that the member is a new member, but it is a convention of this House that you do not reflect on the absence of a member and I would ask that he withdraw the statement.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, I take the point of order. Will you withdraw?

Mr HARPER: I will withdraw that statement, but can I refer to the—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will withdraw and resume his speech.

Mr HARPER: Okay. For a particular—

Miss BARTON: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Excuse me, but the member will withdraw.

Mr HARPER: I withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. I call the member for Thuringowa.

Mr HARPER: Yes. Members in this place have supported other work through their associations and in particular the EMSPA, of which a member in this place said in his maiden speech that he was the founding member. My point is that we in this House were told that that association represents thousands of Queensland paramedics. Yet not one single submission was tabled by that association—an association that represents thousands of paramedics. The hypocrisy! This hearing was supposed to be that association's chance to come along, with 1,040 other people, associations, individuals and unions. Thank goodness for United Voice, which ensured that paramedics were represented at the hearing. Representatives of United Voice bothered to show up. They put in a submission. Unfortunately, EMSPA did not get the chance to be represented. I do not know why. Here was its chance to be represented by its purported members on such an important and relevant industrial relations bill—a bill that restores fairness and ensures that we all get a fair share in negotiations.

I inform the House that out of those 1,040 submissions seeking the restoration of fairness in the industrial relations legislation, the submissions that were received were from people, unions or associations such as the Queensland Law Society, the Together union, the Fraser Coast Regional Council, the Australian Industry Group, the Local Government Association of Australia, the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation Queensland, Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland, the Australian Sugar Milling Council, the Queensland Community Services Employers Association, and United Voice. It is organisations like those—and there are many in Queensland—that want change to the industrial relations system in Queensland. Representatives of those organisations bothered to turn up and represent a good cross-section of the Queensland community and Queensland industries.

This process demonstrated clearly the out-of-touch and arrogant approach of the Newman government, which had just awarded itself a 22 per cent pay rise in stark contrast to its 2.2 per cent wage offer to the many thousands of workers in this state. That was disgraceful behaviour, out there for all to see. The good people of Queensland saw that behaviour and other concerning behaviour.

The Newman government would go on to ensure that the contracting out of services would be introduced to bring in some of the cheapest labour hire firms into various industries. That caused more problems than the LNP government thought it would. I use the outsourcing of patient transport services as an example. The criteria required for people to work in that industry were indeed worrying. All the applicants for such positions were required to have was the ability to speak English, a driver's licence and a first-aid certificate. Those qualifications are in stark contrast to the 400-plus staff who were employed by the Queensland Ambulance Service patient transport service, who were trained staff with a much higher level of training than a first-aid certificate. Their jobs were put at risk. With the introduction of such private services, I believe that patient safety could be put at risk. The people of Queensland deserve better. I believe that the restoration of collective bargaining will restore fairness and equity to all workers in this great state. I commend this bill to the House.