




Speech By  
**Aaron Harper**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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Record of Proceedings, 13 October 2015

**HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (3.50 pm): I rise today to talk on the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. It has been said many times that we should not change history, but perhaps we should all learn to better understand it before making rash decisions. I refer to the previous government who went on to change public holidays—in particular, May Day, Labour Day, in Queensland. It certainly raised questions for workers. Was this out of spite? Did the Queensland government change this simply as an attack on workers or unions? Many think so.

Going back in time to 1891—and many members on this side of the House have said it before—to that first Labour Day march held in Barcaldine when those striking shearers marched proudly with flags and banners, those workers started this march based on the premise of an eight-hour working day, known in many countries as International Workers' Day or May Day—eight hours work, eight hours leisure, eight hours sleep. As more workers won the reduction in hours by solidarity and industrial action, May Day was proclaimed a holiday in all states, and of course it became known as Labour Day.

That first May Day march was followed with a march in Brisbane in 1893. Public holidays have been reviewed by previous Queensland governments like the Bligh government who in 2011 released a discussion paper about getting the balance right. The committee review, and significant consultation with various industry providers, provided the opportunity for all to have input into that review. We know that a number participated in surveys and what did they show? They showed that Queenslanders valued their history. They thought that given the historical significance of Labour Day it should remain as May Day.

Quite clearly the previous Newman government did not value the opinions of those people who participated in those surveys. Clearly the Newman government did not consider the historical importance of those early days back in 1890. Well, in an act that can only be described as arrogant, that government tried to change history. They managed to do that for one single term in government. The stark difference is that we on this side of the House do value workers and their contribution to building Queensland or looking after Queensland whether it be in health, education, transport, tourism, emergency services or many, many other professions. This government, the Palaszczuk government, does value workers and does value Queensland history.

As a proud member of United Voice, I have participated in many a May Day march with ambulance officers, joining thousands of workers in Townsville. In fact, in recent years gone by we proudly led and won the best, loudest and proudest United Voice contingent of the May Day march. It is an experience to walk down the street in those marches—many on that side of the House might not know this—to feel proud and to interact with members of the community who value your contribution and role you play in the community whatever you do from school cleaners, teacher aides, security officers, hospitality workers through to emergency services or allied health staff. Yes, these are the workers of my union, United Voice, who I will once more join again when we have righted this wrong and return May Day to its rightful place in history. I commend the bill to the House.