




Speech By
Bruce Saunders

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

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

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (5.23 pm): I rise to support the Industrial Relations (Restoring Fairness) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr SAUNDERS: I will take that interjection, thank you very much. The peanut gallery is busy tonight.

This bill is about three things: restoring fairness to workplaces in Queensland; recognising that the LNP's broken promises to Queensland were wrong and need to be remedied; and ensuring that the people who deliver services to Queenslanders have the protection they need to speak out, can stand up for quality services and can support accountability and better government for Queensland.

This bill supports people who deliver services every day. It supports our correctional officers as they campaign against overcrowding and security risks at the prisons they work in. It supports child safety workers who have strived for years to have their workload managed appropriately in the interests of vulnerable children. It empowers medical officers and health workers who have stood up time and time again to defend the quality of our public hospitals and health systems against those who would sell them out and undercut them for a profit. Profit before people—that is what they stand for.

I say to those who are opposing the bill, 'Look past the rhetoric and talk to the people who deliver services in your electorates.' I know there are many stories from their electorates because we are getting them through our offices. Ask people to talk about the day they had to go home and tell their families that they did not have a job after Campbell Newman and the LNP promised them that they had 'nothing to fear'. I will repeat that in case they have forgotten—'nothing to fear'.

Talk to the people who were left behind after their colleagues were sacked, who had to work in offices that were understaffed and overloaded, who had their pay and conditions cut and who had employers threatening them that if they tried to change any of these things there would be more job losses in their department. Ministers received big increases. Maybe they should have driven down the streets of cities and towns like Maryborough and see what happened. It was made the Detroit city of Queensland through the efforts of the Newman government.

The people in the electorates of those opposite will tell them these stories. They are not faceless union bullies. They are people who are not out to violate anyone's privacy. But they are absolutely determined to stand up for the work that they do and people in the community who rely on their services. That this parliament should be supporting them and their aims is straightforwardly a matter of justice.

Let us have a look at the public record. In February 2012 Campbell Newman and the LNP in writing in response to specific questioning from a union delegate about provisions in awards and agreements and union rights said—

Mutually respectful consultation between senior management and unions is a practical and constructive way to do business. We respect the existing rights of the Together union and will agree to continue to include such rights in future collective bargaining agreements.

There was no caveat or mention of concerns with privacy. There was no suggestion that the same system that operated in Queensland for 15 years—the system that this bill restores—was some kind of threat. There was no LNP scare campaign then. This was the policy that the LNP took to the electorate in 2012. They should reflect on that. The last time the LNP won an election in Queensland was when they were clearly and directly publicly endorsing the union support of provisions that this bill reinstates.

The privacy justification has been plucked out of thin air with no basis in fact or law. Unions are covered by the federal privacy legislation in any case. It was the best thing the LNP could find in their focus group testing. The way they treated public servants in the three years they were in government and the way they still want to treat them now is deplorable.

Very few people in the LNP seem to understand or want to understand what this bill is about. Let us remind them tonight what it is about. This bill relates to clauses that are included in collective agreements and awards. That is provisions that employers and employees have both agreed to have been included. The provisions relating to union encouragement are a very small part of what the LNP stripped out. The bill restores those provisions. The LNP are still silent about the rights of workers to be consulted, the rights of workers to job security, the rights of correctional workers to have a say in their rosters or child safety workers to have their case loads kept at manageable levels.

In the specific case of senior medical officers, many of the award and agreement provisions that were stripped away from their agreement were in fact signed off by the LNP and the then minister for health, the now opposition leader, as part of the new collective agreement for doctors just weeks before. So that is why public servants turned on the LNP government.

The only reason you would want to remove clauses that an employer and an employee agreed to would be to enact an extreme anti-union, anti-organising agenda and to say to the people who provide services, 'Stop fighting job cuts. Stop fighting the privatisation of the services you provide. Stop raising the alarm about the health care being provided to kids in public hospitals.' But these workers—and it is a credit to them—were not intimidated. They stood tall and proud.

The people who provide public services in our state are passionate. They are hardworking, courageous people. They have suffered through three very difficult years—demoralising years, you could say—of cuts and destruction. However, they did fight back. They did talk to people in the community. They did knock on doors and they did act collectively across the state to change the government. If that scares the LNP, well it should. But the message for them should not be 'continue with your path of attacks on public servants and public services'. It should be 'change course, learn your lesson and respect the workers who are delivering government services in your electorates'. I, for one, will always support them, as all members should. Let's bring on the vote, and I commend this bill to the House.