




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Workers Rights and Safety

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (9.46 am): Last week communities, workers and unions came together across the world for International Workers' Memorial Day and for the May Day celebrations. Those events celebrate workers' achievements and sacrifices for improvements in workers' rights and safety. Our government strongly believes that every worker has the right to go to work expecting to return home safely to their family and friends at the end of the day. Together with the union movement, Labor governments have a proud history of supporting workers and their right to return home safely. The former government's far-reaching changes to workers compensation and workplace laws reduced protections for Queensland workers and increased the risk of being injured at work, while in Canberra the Abbott government continues its attacks on workers and unions, prosecuting workers who speak out or take action in unsafe worksites.

Unlike the Abbott government and the former LNP government, we recognise the important role played by workplace health and safety representatives within workplaces in fostering a safer work environment. Here in Queensland, the Labor government is restoring fairness for workers, improving safety for Queenslanders at work and restoring the rights of Queenslanders injured at work. Our government will restore proper workers compensation by rebuilding the scheme to include rights for injured workers to access their legal rights by removing the threshold on whole-of-person impairment. We will reverse the LNP's shameful attack on injured workers that allowed a worker's compensation history to be used against them in future career prospects. We will introduce legislation for our firefighters who contract a scheduled disease, so they do not bear the burden of proving that it was contracted during their important work for our communities. We will reinstate the requirement for the regulator to be notified when a worker has been absent from work for more than four days due to a workplace injury.

Those reforms will restore our workers compensation scheme, ensuring Queenslanders who are injured at work get the support and protection they need to provide for their families and get back to work. This government believes that every worker has the right to a fair day's pay for a fair day's work, and the right to be treated with respect and dignity. The Newman government stripped away vital safeguards and conditions from Queensland's public sector workers. It reduced job security and created a climate of uncertainty in workplaces throughout the state. Our reforms will ensure that the hard fought for and won working rights of Queenslanders lost under the previous government will be restored.

This week there was a timely reminder of the importance of maintaining workplace rights in the modern economy. On Monday, ABC's *Four Corners* program raised some very serious concerns and reports of serious exploitation, including claims of harassment of workers in Queensland's food industry. The report raised potential cases of exploitation in the labour hire industry in Australia.

Our government will act on any concerning evidence of labour hire companies in Queensland acting outside the law to ensure that workers are properly paid, protected from this treatment and have a safer workplace. We will certainly be looking to ensure that these companies are compliant with workplace laws. Our strong message to labour hire companies is that rogue operators will not be tolerated in this state. This is more evidence of our government's actions to restore hard won workers' rights and protections.