




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (4.05 pm), in reply: Firstly, I thank my colleagues for their valuable contributions to the debate on the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. As I mentioned earlier today, this bill contains two major components. Firstly, it meets an important election commitment made by the Palaszczuk government to restore the days on which public holidays are to be observed for Labour Day and for the Queen's Birthday. Secondly, it improves the process for obtaining high-risk work licences issued by the Office of Industrial Relations to make it easier for workers to apply and to achieve operational and financial efficiencies for government.

The observance of Labour Day in May gives proper recognition of the struggles and achievements of the Queensland labour movement on a date of true significance. Entitlements such as the eight-hour day, collective bargaining, fair and safe working conditions, and minimum wages would not exist in modern society without the labour movement, and it is important for this to be recognised on an appropriate day of historical significance. It is also important to remember that Labour Day does not just commemorate historical struggles. It provides a day for Queensland workers to reflect on the hard work ahead to ensure that they continue to enjoy those entitlements—entitlements such as penalty rates that are sadly under attack by the federal Liberal government. Penalty rates have existed for decades to compensate workers for the effects that working unsociable hours have on health, family and social life.

Celebrating Labour Day is a reminder of the importance of winning workplace rights and ensuring workers entitlements now and into the future. The member for Broadwater spoke of the importance of honouring the tradition of the Queen's Birthday. It seems some traditions such as the Queen's Birthday are worthy of the respect of those opposite. However, traditions such as Labour Day, which are important to Queensland workers, are not worthy of such respect.

Those opposite have spoken of the importance of harmonising public holidays with other states to boost productivity and tourism. Let us look at the evidence, as the member for Stretton did, about the preferences of the community. In 2011 the Bligh Labor government released a discussion paper called *Getting the balance right: a proposal on holidays in Queensland*. The discussion paper made a number of proposals including the movement of the Queen's Birthday public holiday to the second half of the year from 2012, with a Monday in October each year being the preferred option. The discussion paper directed stakeholders to an online survey where they could vote for or against the proposals and make comments in relation to them. A total of 24,505 people responded to the survey. The results indicated that 85.4 per cent of respondents, or 19,393 of 22,705 people, supported moving the Queen's Birthday to the second half of the year.

The member for Lockyer cited an example of lost tourism—namely, the Winternationals, a drag-racing event at the Willowbank Raceway—as a reason why this legislation should not be supported. It

would have benefited him to do some research. If he had, he would know that since 2014 this event had reverted to a Thursday to Sunday format. So the issue of the Monday public holiday is not applicable. It would be completely unaffected by the change of public holiday. It seems the honourable member is not completely across the details of the biggest event in his electorate. Inconsistencies between public holiday dates have existed for many years without measurable financial impact not only across the states but also across even local government areas within Queensland in relation to local show holidays.

The amendments that I moved during the consideration in detail stage of the debate provide for the change to the dates of the Labour Day and Queen's Birthday public holidays to commence from the date of assent. The original date for commencement of the bill was 6 October 2015, being the day after this year's Labour Day public holiday. As that day had passed before the bill could be debated by this parliament, it was appropriate to make this change.

The proposed new online process for applying for a high-risk work licence will leverage the existing Department of Transport and Main Roads scheme for taking, keeping and using digital photographs and signatures for transport licences. It will have a number of benefits for both workers and government. In particular, it is going to make it easier for workers to apply for a high-risk work licence, especially those living in rural or regional areas or those who might be fly-in fly-out workers. Of course, government will benefit by departments collaborating to use existing procedures and capabilities to process licences to improve the customer experience.

Those on that side of the House have put a lot of stock in consistency today, something they did not do when they were in government and have not been able to demonstrate here today in the House. Those opposite missed the point when they said that Queensland Labour Day does not line up with other states. Public holidays are celebrated across Australia on various different days. It is not unique for one state to celebrate a public holiday and other states to not celebrate on that day. It is the nature of living in a federation of states which celebrate their holidays on different days. I think the Australian community understands this and easily copes with those differences.

Queensland Labour Day is a day of historical and cultural significance to Queensland and particularly to Queensland workers. Since 1901 Labour Day has consistently been celebrated in Queensland on the first Monday in May. That is what I call a tradition. This is part of the significance. Overall, the provisions in this bill meet our election commitments made by the honourable Premier to honour the real Labour Day and to ensure that a public holiday to commemorate the hard-fought advancements of the labour movement is held on the first Monday in May. It is that simple.

The bill also improves the process for applying for a high-risk work licence to ensure this process is efficient and is practical for workers, employers and government. I commend the bill to the House.