




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 29 October 2015

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Industrial Relations, Award Modernisation

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (9.45 am): The Palaszczuk government is committed to restoring fairness for workers that was stripped away by the LNP. Under Campbell Newman's award modernisation process, employees in councils were prevented from bargaining for some of the most important workplace conditions, such as job security and the right to be consulted.

Since forming government, we have worked very hard to restore fair conditions to local government workers with our industrial relations legislative changes. We know that these local government workers are hard workers, are often the backbone of communities—particularly in rural and regional areas—and some of the lowest paid workers. It is important we have conditions in place for those workers.

Unlike the LNP, that was determined to take away hard-won workplace conditions, we have been focused on ensuring that local government workers have a fair and decent safety net that rewards them for the valuable work they do. In June we made urgent and necessary amendments to the Industrial Relations Act which reversed the shameful changes made under the LNP government.

Our changes ensured fundamental rights and entitlements can be included in awards and bargained for in agreements. For those awards that had been modernised under the former government's restrictive regime, which included the Queensland Local Government Industry Award, the changes to the act require the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to review and vary those awards.

In July I issued a new ministerial request to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission making it clear that the award modernisation process was not to reduce or remove employee entitlements and conditions from what was available in premodernised awards. I will repeat that: the award modernisation process was not to reduce or remove employee entitlements and conditions from what was available in premodernised awards. I gave specific directions about this for the allowances and conditions for local government employees and that the QIRC must consider the submissions of the parties—that is, the local governments, the Queensland Local Government Association and the local government unions.

This government has done everything within its power and taken all available avenues to ensure that no local government worker is worse off under an award because they have had conditions removed or reduced. Of course, we on this side of the House, unlike the former LNP government, also value the independence of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. The tribunal is an important independent umpire which enhances a Westminster government.

The review of the award is a matter for the local government sector, including the LGAQ and unions, and the QIRC. However, I assure all local government workers that the award to be handed down by the QIRC will be closely scrutinised to ensure that workers are not worse off. As I have indicated to the unions—and I say this to all local workers in Queensland—if the requirements of my ministerial request have not been satisfied, the government will immediately take steps to address this, including appealing the award through the appropriate channels.