




Speech By
Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (7.48 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Industrial Relations (Restoring Fairness) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill reflects an election commitment to restore fairness for government workers as a matter of urgency. It was a promise to the public servants of Queensland made by this government, and by every member on this side of the House, to repair the fundamental breach of trust effected by those opposite when they promised prior to the 2012 election that workers had nothing to fear and then delivered an entirely different scenario in government.

My community, like much of Queensland, is still feeling the effects of the mass sackings and undermining of employment conditions carried out by the former government. It is not just the scale of the job cuts that were so damaging; it was the way in which they occurred: bereft of any dignity for the human cost of such policies or recognition of the dedication and service of the individuals involved. Public servants and workers in general are not numbers on a page to be moved when convenient from one accounting column to another; they are individuals with skills, experience, hopes and aspirations and should be treated with dignity.

The bill before the House will reinstate employment conditions for government workers that were lost as a result of changes to the Industrial Relations Act made in 2012 and 2013 by the former government; re-establish the independence of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission when determining wage cases; return the commission to its position as a layperson's tribunal, where employees and union advocates operate on a level playing field with employers; and restore the ability of industrial organisations and their representatives to freely organise and access members so as to enhance and protect their industrial interests. The extensive amendments made to the Industrial Relations Act by the former government stripped away safeguards and conditions from Queensland workers, state and local government and sent a message to public servants that they were expendable, that their service was not valued and, for 14,000 of them, that their services were no longer required. The former government's amendments rendered certain provisions, including those dealing with employment security, contracting, union encouragement and resource allocation, to be of no effect and rendered termination, change and redundancy provisions to be of partial effect, representing a significant erosion of employee rights and the removal of longstanding employment terms and conditions. This bill, and I commend the Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations for bringing it before the House so expeditiously, will restore the employment conditions for government workers that were lost as a result of the former government's changes to the Industrial Relations Act in 2012 and 2013.

Additionally, the bill will return the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to its status as a layperson's tribunal by restoring legal representation arrangements for parties appearing before the commission to be as they were prior to the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2012, ensuring that employers and employees operate on a level playing field and will, at the same time, also re-establish the independence of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission when determining wage cases.

The notice requirements introduced by the former government before an authorised industrial officer could enter a workplace and exercise legitimate right of entry powers provided under the Industrial Relations Act, far from promoting a cooperative relationship between employers, unions and the workers they represent, is openly hostile to it. I realise that is not surprising, given the former government was openly hostile to such cooperative arrangements and, it appears, remains so in opposition. This has impeded the ability of industrial organisations and their representatives to freely organise and access members to enhance and protect their members' industrial interests and is addressed in the bill.

I am very pleased to see that the bill will seek to repeal the former government's 2013 amendments, which mandated contracts for all senior medical officers and precluded senior medical officers from rights to unfair dismissal under the act. This bill brings an end to unreasonable and unfair contracts for doctors, reinstating the right for all doctors to collectively bargain. I note the damning nature of the comments submitted to the committee in this regard by the Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation of Queensland, and I quote—

The ensuing bitter dispute between doctors and the then LNP Government was a once in a generation crisis and has had lasting effects on the retention of senior doctors, with many leaving the system ... for interstate or private sector positions.

Many local doctors in my electorate and more broadly have raised with me the unfairness of the former government's amendments. It was an unprecedented attack on their right to collectively bargain, on their integrity and on their professionalism and this government is committed to addressing it.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Finance and Administration Committee, and particularly the committee chair, the member for Bulimba, Di Farmer, for their examination of this bill and the in excess of 1,000 submissions received. I appreciate that, with committee members holding such diametrically opposed points of view on the premise of the bill, deliberations would have been robust to say the least.

The recent election gave people the chance to decide the future they wanted and the opportunity for Queenslanders to judge the Newman government on its record. On 31 January, the community spoke loud and clear. They chose a premier committed to leading a government of consensus that would act in the best interests of Queensland, and their confidence was well placed. This government, under the strong leadership of the Premier, Deputy Premier and Treasurer, made a clear commitment during the election to restore those conditions for government workers removed by the former government and today is about delivering on that commitment. The proposed amendments to the Industrial Relations Act ensure Queensland's industrial relations system supports and promotes fair and just employment conditions for employees and their right to collectively bargain for those terms and conditions.

To conclude, I am glad to have had the opportunity to speak in support of this important bill. Many members of my community have contacted my office with regard to this bill: they wrote, they called, they approached me in the local community and they requested meetings to discuss their concerns and put their case as to why they think this bill is so important, and I listened. The former government callously sacked 14,000 Public Service workers and diminished the rights of those who remained. The former government treated the Public Service with contempt and, at the recent state election, they returned the favour. I commend the bill to the House.