




Speech By  
**Mark Furner**

**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 4 June 2015

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

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (9.58 pm): I rise this evening to make a contribution to the Industrial Relations (Restoring Fairness) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. This bill amends the Industrial Relations Act 1999 and the Industrial Relations Regulation 2011. The policy objectives of the bill are to give effect to the government's election commitments and priorities relating to restoring fairness for government workers and restoring the ability of industrial organisations and their representatives to freely organise and access members so as to enhance and protect their industrial interests.

I have seen industrial relations legislation changes as each successive government changes since 1980. I can recall when the industrial relations minister Vince Lester first introduced in this place a form of individual contracts into Queensland providing for lesser conditions in the transport awards in this state for MiniMovers, a removalist company.

Then we saw the accords brought in by the Labor Hawke government allowing for award modernisation and bargaining in the workplace, moving away from a centralised award and wages system. Subsequently, we saw the federal coalition government bring in the Workplace Relations Act 1996, which provided for individual contracts and fundamental changes to workers and their representatives, placing hurdles in their way for fair representation in the workplace and the ability to bargain fairly. Back in 1997 the then Liberal industrial relations minister, Santo Santoro, once again in this place—

**Mr King:** I've heard that name before.

**Mr FURNER:** I will take that interjection. Santo Santoro was the industrial relations minister in this place and he mirrored the Workplace Relations Act 1996, creating the Workplace Relations Act 1997. There was no rocket science in doing this. He actually turned the act over and made three slight changes. That is how lazy that minister was. He turned it over, changed the title of the act to the Workplace Relations Act 1997, increased the notice period from 24 hours to 48 hours and changed the title of Australian workplace agreements to Queensland workplace agreements. They were the only changes those on that side could fundamentally do for industrial relations in this place. That is what credence they give to workers in Queensland.

The worst piece of industrial relations legislation was passed through the Australian Senate towards the end of 2005—Work Choices. Work Choices saw the back of the Howard government, as did the changes to the previous Industrial Relations Act introduced by the Newman LNP government. We are an egalitarian society built on a fair go for all, and this Palaszczuk Labor government today is correcting the wrongs those opposite created. As history repeats itself, as it did in 2008 in the Australian Senate, it follows tonight in this House that we as a Labor government will introduce fair and reasonable industrial relations conditions for workers—the workers whom we on this side represent.

We listened to the evidence given at the hearing. Example after example was provided either by those who gave evidence at the public hearing on this bill or by those who sent submissions to the committee. Mr Spreckley, representing the United Firefighters Union of Queensland, explained in his evidence that impediments were placed in the way of our firefighters receiving an outcome. He stated—

After just four weeks of discussion between the parties, the government prematurely referred the fire service bargaining to the QIRC. In a period of almost three years the QIRC still has not produced a final order resulting from that arbitration.

That is what those members on the opposite side think of firefighters. Furthermore, during that period, the pay rates of firefighters at the lowest classification levels actually fell below the minimum award rates. The overall result is that firefighter wages have slipped about 2.7 per cent behind the inflation rate over that period.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr FURNER:** Do not come into this chamber pretending you care for firefighters. Don't you ever do that, member for Kawana. It is little wonder that the United Firefighters Union and their members campaigned at the Redcliffe by-election and contributed to the landslide victory when Yvette D'Ath became the member for Redcliffe.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr FURNER:** The disregard you had for those members, claiming they were acting—you are a disgrace, such a disgrace. Dr Turnbull, from the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation, referred in his evidence before the committee to the tragic case of a 10-year-old girl who fell out of a top bunk, cracked her head and died of an intracranial haemorrhage. In the coronial inquest report, the coroner declared that one very significant factor was doctor fatigue. The young doctor concerned, who was a graduate of less than two years standing, had been on duty for 20 hours of a 24-hour shift and was clearly fatigued by that time.

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr FURNER:** If I want nonsense from you, I will come over there and squeeze your head. Further real-life experiences of the effect of those insidious LNP laws were provided through evidence from Ms MacDonald, a local government worker at the Mackay Regional Council. Ms MacDonald explained how she and her work colleagues lost many valuable conditions from the industrial award they work under—specifically, the locality allowance, fifth week annual leave provisions, job security and major change notification. She explained that as a single mother she struggles each day to assure her children that everything will be okay when she is unsure herself. Losing \$18.65 in the locality allowance, meaning a drop of almost \$1,000 a year, has had a significant impact on her family.

We heard tonight members opposite in this chamber talking about freedom of choice. What freedom of choice did Ms MacDonald have in respect of losing her locality allowance? What freedom of choice did Dr Turnbull have in working 20 hours of a 24-hour shift? What freedom of choice did the firefighters have in having their wages impeded and held up for three years? There was no freedom of choice at all. So the LNP members cannot come in here and lecture to us about freedom of choice. These scurrilous LNP laws which attack workers, their rights and their conditions will be corrected tonight. This year's Encore Score is out on the most hated public figures and it delivered second place to Tony Abbott, who just missed out on first to disgraced entertainer Rolf Harris. I encourage those opposite to remain off this list by coming over here and supporting this bill. I commend the bill to the House.