




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

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HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (3.10 pm): As a member of the Finance and Administration Committee, I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which, in clauses 11 and 12, amends the Holidays Act 1983 and, in clauses 13 and 14, amends the Industrial Relations Act 1999.

Once again, this bill is not new legislation but contains the reversal of changes that were made by the LNP when it was in government. The purpose of these amendments is to change the date of two of our public holidays: Labour Day to return to the first Monday in May and the Queen's Birthday holiday to be moved to the first Monday in October. This change will mean that, once again, Queensland is the only state in the country to celebrate the Labour Day holiday on the first Monday in May. It will also mean that Queensland is the only state in the country to celebrate the Queen's Birthday holiday on the first Monday in October. These changes do not align Queensland with one single state or the ACT. The Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction that celebrates Labour Day on the first Monday in May. The Queen's Birthday holiday is celebrated on the first Monday in June in the ACT, the Northern Territory and every state except Western Australia. Once again, that means that Queensland will be out of sync with the rest of the country.

Historically, Queensland has had almost all public holidays in the first half of the calendar year. That has long been the subject of debate and how to share them across the year has been discussed at length. Some of these public holidays cannot be moved, such as New Year's Day, Australia Day, Anzac Day and the Easter long weekend. It is only Labour Day and the Queen's Birthday holiday that could possibly be changed. Common sense would suggest that these dates should be aligned with those of the other states for business, tourism and community fundraising opportunities.

This situation is compounded in the seat of Condamine, as all the show holidays fall in the first half of the year. Relocating the Labour Day holiday to the first Monday in May has widespread support among the union movement. All the unions that provided submissions to the committee supported the proposed amendment—all on historical and ideological grounds. Not one union seemed concerned about harmonising the holidays with those of other states to minimise disruption in the workplace or Queensland's economy.

This view was not shared by the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, which indicated it supported the retention of the public holiday in June and a public holiday in October. The Queensland Catholic Education Commission advised—

The prime intent of our submission and the key point that we wish to highlight is the spread of holidays across the school year and the evenness of that spread. The early part of the school year, especially from late March to early May, is vested in a number of holidays. Very often those holidays are on a Monday. In the interests of student learning and teaching, we would like to see those holidays remain spread, with both the June and the October holidays recognised.

The Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland stated that it supports national consistency in regard to the public holidays in order to minimise disruption to business, particularly for those who operate across state and territory borders. The Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland stated further—

The practical implications of this Bill to our mind are that it takes the Queen's Birthday out of alignment with all other states in June ... we lose consistency with other states in May, because we are putting a holiday in May. The issue for us—and the reason that we favour the retention of existing arrangements—is that we lose consistency of those holidays with other states.

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator suggested that due consideration should be given to align Queensland's public holidays with those of other states and territories, particularly New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT. The NHVR considered that coordinating public holidays across the country would best enable national delivery standards to be met.

The committee sought advice from the department on the impacts of the nonalignment with other states. The department advised that it had not done any analysis of the financial impact of celebrating public holidays on days from those of other states.

The committee received submissions from some regional council and event organisations. Long weekends provide an opportunity for many rural areas to hold large social and fundraising events as visitors have an extra day in which to travel to that event and back home again. The timing of these recent events, particularly any that involve livestock such as rodeos, campdrafts and pony club events, is important as heat stress can be avoided in the cooler months. The Queen's Birthday weekend is very popular for these events in the north of the state as the wet season is over for stock to be mustered and easily transported and the temperatures are lower. The Carpentaria Shire Council advised that the Normanton Show, Campdraft and Rodeo is traditionally held on that weekend, as is the Planes, Trains, Automobiles and Bikes Festival in Goondiwindi. The Gayndah Orange Festival has been held on the June long weekend for over 50 years as it coincides with the citrus season. These events provide an opportunity for communities to raise funds that are distributed in the local area as well as an important social outlet for all of those who attend. It would appear that tradition is important only when it is about Labour Day and the union movement. The majority of submitters, particularly the business community, the transport industry and education organisations, were opposed to moving the Labour Day holiday back to May. This amendment has virtually no support outside the union movement.

However, one thing that this government has demonstrated time and time again is that it is powerless to say no to its union bosses. This bill is another example of concerns raised by the community and industry running a poor second to the demand of the unions. Let there be no doubt as to who is running Queensland. Every decision that this government makes must have the union's blessing. This government owes its very existence to these union bosses and the funds that pour into its coffers from, for example, the CFMEU. The changes to the industrial relations, workers compensation and workplace health and safety acts have all been about increasing union presence on work sites and recruiting new members, giving in to their every demand—and this bill is no different. This amendment will not produce one extra job and has no benefit except for the union bosses to once again demonstrate their power over this government. There is no reason for this change. The non-government members oppose this amendment.

The next section of the bill contains an amendment to the Adult Proof of Age Card 2008, which would enable the Department of Transport and Main Roads to take, keep and use photos to be used for a high-risk work licence. These licences are required in certain classes of work, such as scaffolders, riggers, doggers and tower crane operators. At present, when an applicant has completed the necessary training, that person must then go to an Australia Post office, submit their application, pay their fee and supply a passport sized photo and have their identity verified. This amendment will allow this process to be done online, reducing delays and cost. The committee and all the submitters supported this amendment. This amendment is a practical and sensible one. Changing the Labour Day holiday back to May and moving the Queen's Birthday to October would disadvantage regional towns and communities and is totally unnecessary.