




Speech By
Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (8.45 pm): I rise to speak on the Industrial Relations (Restoring Fairness) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015. I have been lucky enough in the last few weeks to have had quite a deal of union presence in my electorate; whether it has been at the train station handing out pamphlets to commuters each morning, whether it is constituents receiving robocalls or whether it has been direct mailing my constituents, it has been incredibly interesting.

I firstly want to thank the union for the increased name recognition. It has been fantastic, as I have had quite a good response from the electorate. I will talk about that in a moment. When you read the letter that was sent to all of my constituents, it is classic union stuff. 'The legislation was passed in the middle of the night.' I do not know if you noticed, but we did a heck of a lot of work in the middle of the night during the last parliament. I do not think we did anything during the day at all, if you listen to what the unions say. We did lots of things in the middle of the night, and of course we had our dedicated senior doctors who were tied to unfair contracts. Our highly paid doctors, who were on hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, were not capable of negotiating a contract on their own: they had to have a collective bargaining agreement. I am sure that many members in the House would have received visits from doctors during the campaign talking about some of the unfair aspects of the contracts until it was pointed out to them, 'Do you understand those things that you are worried about are in your current collective agreement?' 'No, I didn't realise that.' It really was quite embarrassing and much ado about nothing. It is an insult to intelligent people who earn hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to think that they cannot negotiate a contract on their own. It is laughable. This is the type of rubbish that unions continue to put out, but it does not work.

We did get a response in my electorate, and the first thing they rang me up about was that they were cheesed off about robocalls when they are trying to have dinner. If there is one thing I have learned since I have become an elected politician, it is: no robocalls. They do not like robocalls, so that is a little advice for the unions. The second thing they were upset about is that they felt that this union encouragement clause that was being re-introduced was something that went beyond the pale. Many of them supported unions, but they believed this was just going—

Mr Minnikin: A bridge too far.

Mr MANDER: A bridge too far. I take that interjection from the member for Chatsworth. Let me just put on the record that I support the principle of unionism. I was brought up in a family that was full of unionists. In fact, my mother claimed that she voted for me in the last election but I am not so sure about that. I support the principle of unionism, but I support freedom of choice more. I believe that people have freedom of choice in what they want to do. I do not support someone being coerced into union membership. I do not support the overreach that union leaders practise on a daily basis. They are more interested in sabotaging the employer than in being genuinely concerned about their members.

Let me talk a little more about what the constituents of Everton are saying to me. As I have mentioned already, they take great umbrage at this concept that private details are being passed on to unions. The clause states that managers in the public sector need to provide unions with details of new employees. We have not been given any detail about what this actually means, so people are quite concerned about that. As I said, many of them are strong believers in unions but they have said to me, 'Tim, this is a step too far.'

The other thing they are really concerned about is the repercussions that might come upon them if they do not join a union. What will it mean for their future employment prospects? What will it mean for their future promotion prospects? That is genuinely concerning people who are philosophically opposed to unions. That is a real concern.

Another concern is held by those in management positions who are incredibly uncomfortable about putting pressure on people to join a union. Let us look again at the clause in the union encouragement policy which states—

Passive acceptance by agencies of membership recruitment activity by unions does not satisfy the government's commitment.

Passive acceptance does not satisfy the government's commitment. What is the opposite of passive acceptance? Active involvement. They are to be actively involved in making sure people join unions. That is something they take great umbrage at.

We all know that union membership is plummeting. As the member for Nanango said earlier, union membership in this country is around 17 or 18 per cent. Outside of the public sector it is around 12 per cent. It is quite obvious that those opposite have been given the brief by those who backed them and put them into power that they have to do something about increasing numbers. The reason for the long list of speakers from the government side is quite obvious. They want it on record so they can show the unions: 'We have done what you asked us to do. We are repaying the favour and we are going to increase membership as quickly and as enthusiastically as we can.'

Those opposite talk about the fact that this is not a surprise, that this has been in place for 20 years. It was a secret and we disclosed it in 2012. We revealed what was happening. For decades this was happening and we exposed it. Now they are trying to bring it back again. The motto of this bill is 'restoring fairness'. For whom is it restoring fairness? It is restoring fairness for the union leaders, for the union heavies—the union heavies that these people owe their existence to.

Many of my constituents are public sector employees. They are very concerned about the privacy issues that are raised by this encouragement policy. They are very concerned about the repercussions on those who actually do not join the union. There are those in management who are philosophically opposed to unions but who feel that they have to go out there and actively promote a cause they do not believe in. I believe that is unjust. That is why I will be voting against the bill.