




Speech By
Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (9.53 pm): What a lot of rot. There will be fewer jobs as businesses will be unable to afford the additional holiday pay that this government is bringing in without consultation. I believe in fair pay for fair work. This government is treating small businesses like second-class citizens. They are the ones who will not be getting a fair pay for a fair day's work, despite their investments. They have leases and other expenditure that is locked in and now the government is throwing another expense at them, without giving them any consideration. What a sham! The government talks about supporting tourism and small business, but the evidence is in this bill: they do not give a damn about small business and tourism.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! I ask the member to withdraw that word.

Ms SIMPSON: I withdraw. They do not give a fig about small business and tourism in this state. I represent a beautiful area of the Sunshine Coast. I already see what happens on long weekends and public holidays because of the additional rates of pay that small business people have to pay. They shut their doors. They do not employ people.

Ms Grace: Rubbish.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There are a lot of interjections and lots of very loud conversation. Please allow the member for Maroochydore to be heard.

Ms SIMPSON: I heard the minister say 'rubbish'. This minister has no idea, because this minister does not run a small business and does not pay the wages of people. In its notes on consultation, the government does not even mention the department responsible for tourism and small business. Why? Because they do not matter to it! The government has talked to the unions and it has talked to its mates, but those who will be paying the additional money, if they open their doors, have not been talked to. The department that is supposed to service those key areas of our economy has not been consulted, according to the explanatory notes to the bill.

I will explain something to the minister, who does not understand the economics of running a small business. Already they have to pay additional money to employ people on weekends. By putting in this additional public holiday, will they employ more people? No! In fact, many businesses will close their doors or, as I have seen often, the business owners themselves will have to narrow down the number of hours that they open.

Mr Costigan: They will be running around madly, doing everything.

Ms SIMPSON: Absolutely. That really upsets me, because not only are they paying the wages of the people we want to see employed; they are also paying fixed costs. They pay a lot of money for their leases and they pay a lot of other state government taxes, yet this government has not consulted with them. It has treated them absolutely like dirt. I want to see my tourism and hospitality industries flourish, rather than be hampered by the shackles of this government, which does not give a flying fig

about them. It is about time that the government paid attention to the hospitality and tourism industries in our state, rather than bringing in this disgraceful piece of legislation without even consulting with those groups.

I oppose this union-bullying job-destroying piece of legislation. This bill is further proof that the Labor government is more interested in keeping its union mates happy than in supporting small business and growing the Queensland economy. The Sunshine Coast has one of the highest proportions of small business in Australia. A higher proportion of our population is involved in trying to make a living through their own efforts and capital by running small businesses than many other areas in Australia. Small business people do not always make a lot of money. They are not wealthy. They work hard. That is why it is a real kick in the guts that they have not even been consulted by this government. It is a real kick in the guts that we have a minister who does not understand that, when you impose additional costs upon people, it will have the impact that they will employ fewer people.

In a media statement, the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland stated that the state government is damaging small businesses and the job market. I repeat: it is damaging small businesses and the job market. It says that the plans to create an extra public holiday will significantly increase the penalty rates paid by a large number of employers. The CCIQ estimates that on this day hospitality businesses would see their hourly wage rate increase by 43 per cent and retailers would see an increase of 25 per cent. That is substantial.

What world do those people opposite live in? That's right: it is not their money! Once again, their largess is with other people's money. Once again, the small business people—those businesses that are employing people and that are the job generators of the state—are being kicked in the guts by a government that does not give a flying fig about them. This decision comes with zero consultation with the business community and no regulatory impact statement. As I have noted, the government did not even mention the department responsible for small business and tourism, because they are not very important to it.

An opposition member: Which department are they?

Ms SIMPSON: That is right. They have ministers with business cards and titles, but they are not mentioned in the explanatory notes as having been consulted. I guess they do not matter, because the government did not care about them when it put together this piece of legislation.

The additional wage cost to the Queensland economy for the extra public holiday is estimated to be up to \$80 million. It is a lovely idea if you are not paying for it and this mob ain't paying for it. However, the economy will pay for it, and not only small businesses but also those who are not employed on that day because the employers will simply close their doors or curtail their hours. That will result in a loss of productivity as more cafes and restaurants close on a number of those days. We are already seeing that happen and this legislation will make it worse.

I do not know what world those opposite are living in, but obviously they are not paying attention to areas such as mine and those of many others—I know the member for Whitsunday was agreeing—because we see this in our communities. We want to see people employed. I know many young people who will not have jobs offered to them simply because the cost of wages will be out of the price range that businesses can support. That extra cost cannot simply be loaded on to the customers. It does not add up.

I note the objection lodged by the Queensland Hotels Association which said that there is no compelling evidence that Easter Sunday should be declared a public holiday. It stated—

The experience from other states shows that every party loses; businesses through loss of income, workers through loss of hours, community through loss of services and Governments through loss of taxes.

Once again, this mob has no idea. They are just going to do it. What about the additional wages cost that would be imposed on our burgeoning public sector? This cost is estimated at between \$4.8 million to \$13.3 million. With the current Palaszczuk government's public sector recruitment drive, who knows what that cost will blow out to. It is not their money, it is taxpayers' money that they are so good at spending.

Both the Brisbane City Council and the LGAQ asked the committee to make a recommendation against the bill and asked for it to be redrafted with proper consultation with stakeholders. Even the committee could not agree that the bill be passed. Both government and non-government members raised their concerns with regard to this legislation.

The LGAQ was a member of a review group and actively participated in the review. However, it commented that the group was chaired by a former trade union official, supported by a labour lawyer and dominated by trade union representatives. Thus, it is not difficult to assume that the outcomes from

the review heavily favour the interests of the trade unions. I believe in the role that trade unions should play, which is a servant, but they are the masters of this government. They are bad masters for Queenslanders because the balance is simply not there. We want to see balance. It needs to be fair for everybody, and this is not fair.

The legislation as proposed is not about workers' rights in Queensland, but about bullying workers to join unions through an industrial relations regime that would benefit union membership and give unions an enterprise bargaining monopoly. It would remove the ability of the state to intervene and terminate protected industrial action if there was a risk of significant damage to the Queensland economy or threat to the health and wellbeing of the local community.

This legislation would also remove the majority of accountability measures that were implemented by the LNP government to keep tabs on what union officials put on their credit cards and what donations they made to political parties. They will no longer have to disclose their spending for political purposes. They will no longer have to publish their financial register or disclose the salaries of the highest paid officers and board members. Where is the transparency and integrity? This bill is purely about this Labor government paying off what they owe to their union friends. That is not serving Queensland and not serving the workers well.

It is interesting that the minister will move about 86 amendments to her own legislation. What a shemozzle. What a mess. Unfortunately, that will cost. This mob cannot even put their legislation together and know what they are doing. It is causing damage to our economy.

(Time expired)