




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Record of Proceedings, 13 September 2016

MOTION: AUSTRALIAN BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION COMMISSION

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (6.33 pm): I rise to oppose the motion. It is really predictable that we have just heard the member for Kawana speak for five minutes and at not one stage did he give this House one reason that any senator would support the ABCC. We heard a man who does not have any ability whatsoever to speak for more than 10 seconds in this House on any policy issue. He spent five minutes talking about Murray Watt, the member for Stretton, the member for Woodridge—anything other than the motion. The Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition should be ashamed for allowing that to occur in this House.

The ABCC issue is very important and not one to waste five minutes not talking about. It is interesting to note that the member for Kawana spoke about the issue as much as the federal government spoke about it during the federal election campaign. It was a nothing issue.

The members opposite want to force members to vote for something that has the most incredible coercive powers by which to compel ordinary workers to give evidence, to be interviewed with no right to silence, with no right to representation by a lawyer of their choice and with no privilege against self-incrimination. These powers would impact upon the basic rights of individuals who work in the industry—around one million workers across Australia—and their families.

As the Law Council has observed, the bill to reinstate the ABCC is contrary to the rule of law, yet we heard from the member for Kawana a five-minute contribution about anything other than the issue. He used to be the minister for industrial relations in this state. That is a disgrace. It is the reason the LNP is in opposition. The members opposite have still not learned their lesson. During the last state election campaign they locked him away and I predict that they will do exactly the same again.

When it comes to the ABCC, even the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights said that this legislation breaches fundamental human and legal rights. The members opposite are doing the work of Malcolm Turnbull and flogging a dead horse that is the ABCC. Based on the evidence, when the ABCC was in place, the number of injuries went up, productivity went down, and safety risks were at their highest. When the ABCC was disbanded, all of those issues improved. In fact, after the ABCC had been abolished, the number of workplace deaths halved. Yet, the member opposite did not even address the issue. Instead, he complained that certain senators are going to vote against the bill. The member for Kawana, the former industrial relations minister in this state, did not mention one reason the ABCC should be returned.

Mrs Frecklington: One hundred and fifty-eight thousand reasons.

Ms GRACE: I will take that interjection. It is a good one. I thank the member very much. The members opposite talked about the CFMEU dispute last week, but did we hear anything about the 55 workers who lost their jobs overnight in Victoria? They do not understand. The agreement that those

workers were under, which slashed their wages by 65 per cent, was approved in Perth by three casual workers. That agreement applies to workers in Victoria and Queensland. The members opposite do not even understand the federal industrial relations law. All the trades awards that are covered by the CFMEU are mentioned in that agreement. That is why the CFMEU took action.

Yet we hear nothing about what is soon becoming a national disgrace and that is the manner in which workers are being employed in this country. The layer upon layer of subcontracting is starting to become a national disgrace. I call on those opposite to join with me in holding a fundamental review of these practices since the hostile takeover by the Howard government of industrial relations laws.