




Speech By
Jarrold Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (4.32 pm): Here we are, colleagues, in the last sitting week of the year. What better way to finish the year than to change the entire industrial relations landscape in Queensland! What else would we expect from a Labor Party beholden to union bosses? At Christmas time we remember the joyous, real occasion and real reason for the season, but we also know that it is a time for giving gifts. The industrial relations minister has effectively gift-wrapped 1,000 pages of industrial relations legislation, attached a big red bow and handed it straight to the union bosses with a ministerial note, 'Ho, ho, merry Christmas'. The Minister for Industrial Relations has wrapped the IR bill with a big bow and handed it to particularly Alex Scott. Merry, merry Christmas!

When this government debates workplace laws we see Michael Ravbar and other CFMEU grubs hanging around the parliament, just as we saw CFMEU thugs protesting at the front of parliament this afternoon. Thankfully, the storm washed them away. When those opposite debate workplace laws we see the CFMEU out the front and we see Michael Ravbar, who is subject to many police investigations—and more in the last two days. When this government looks at appointing inappropriate people such as former CFMEU official Bruce Watson to bodies such as WorkCover Queensland as its CEO, we see grubby Ravbar hanging around the minister's office and meeting with the minister about such appointment.

When we debate industrial relations we see other union bosses such as Alex Scott hanging around parliament. They come here to make sure the minister and government members are not wavering on the union position and just to ensure the minister's staffers know who is boss. I could not help but notice Alex Scott wandering the corridors of parliament yesterday, just ensuring the government is on spot with what he wants—and this bill is what he wants in this new industrial relations space.

This government is not about reviewing the industrial relations laws or amending the industrial relations laws. It is just ripping up the entire Industrial Relations Act of Queensland and replacing it with what we have here today. The minister will claim that this is because they conducted a review. I will get to that a little later. We know the real reason they did it: by repealing and replacing the act, they do not have to explain what is in the new act compared with what was in the old act. We know that all of the accountability and transparency provisions are in the old act and are not contained in the bill we are debating tonight.

We know that when Labor members come into this place to speak to the Industrial Relations Bill they will be thanking every comrade they can—thanking the comrades in red who were protesting out the front today.

Mr Minnikin: Preselection is on.

Mrs Smith: It is preselection time.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjections from two honourable members about preselection time. It is not only the time of Christmas and giving; it is also preselection season. We saw the men in red and the flags out the front this afternoon.

Mr Janetzki interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: As the member for Toowoomba South said, they are doing up the list of who has been naughty and who has been nice. We hear that the member for Bundamba has been naughty. We hear that the member for Bundamba is not on the nice list this year.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Linard): Order! Member for Kawana, I ask you to bring your comments back to the bill and remain relevant.

Mr BLEIJIE: As we debate the Industrial Relations Bill, in the season of giving and Christmas spirit we see the IR Bill wrapped up in a big red bow for Alex Scott and the union movement. We even see the likes of the member for—I was going to say ‘Greenslopes’ but he is not anymore; he is the member for Woodridge.

Mr Minnikin: He moved.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection: he moved. I have ‘Greenslopes’ written in my speech. It was not a deliberate attempt. The member for Greenslopes was on my mind, but he is not who I am seeking to refer to. The member for Woodridge was not such a fan of the union movement two years ago. We remember that at the Labor Party conference he debated and voted against a motion about union influence, but has he not become a born-again lefty! The member for Woodridge is a born-again lefty because he knows that if he is to have any chance at leadership of the Labor Party in Queensland he has to become a lefty. We even see the member for Gladstone—

Ms GRACE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I think we are going to have this character assassination by the member for Kawana. I draw your attention to relevance. We are talking about the Industrial Relations Bill, not the ALP and not what happens within party rules. I ask for you—

Mr SEENEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to—

Ms GRACE: Hang on. I am not finished yet. Madam Deputy Speaker, if I could finish my point of order.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is more of a speech.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, the member should have the opportunity to be heard in silence.

Ms GRACE: I ask that you rule on my point of order regarding relevance.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. I have heard your point of order.

Mr SEENEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, I advise the member for Brisbane Central that there is a reason the shadow minister gets 60 minutes: he is allowed to canvass a wide range of topics in the consideration of the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. I have heard the point of order and I have heard your additional information. I have already warned the member for Kawana once regarding relevance and I ask you to come back to the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. With respect to the Industrial Relations Bill, the essence of the Industrial Relations Bill is about collective bargaining of the union movement and we know members of this House are members of the union movement participating in collective bargaining. I think there is a direct correlation between honourable members who will be speaking in this debate tonight, the union movement and the influence of this bill, which I will get into in quite a little more detail later.

We know that the Labor Party government will dress these reforms up as being about workers’ rights. It will say that this is all about workers’ rights. Nothing could be further from the truth in this bill. In fact, this bill attacks workers’ rights and will lead to workers in the local government sector actually losing their jobs. The Local Government Association of Queensland, representing 77 council bodies in this state with a workforce of between 40,000 to 50,000 people, has warned that this bill will lead to increased rates for taxpayers and to sackings of local government employees. The Local Government Association of Queensland, representing the 77 council bodies, has warned that this bill will lead to job losses in the local government sector. That is why—

Ms Grace: Explain why.

Mr BLEIJIE: Excuse me?

Ms Grace: I dare you to explain why.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask that all comments be directed through the chair and there be no conversations across the House.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the Minister for Industrial Relations, who said, 'I dare you to explain why.' Well, I will. Not only will I explain why but I will table a document directly from the Local Government Association of Queensland. If the minister has become the expert on all things local government and she distrusts the Local Government Association of Queensland, then let her explain that and let her say so when she wraps up the debate tomorrow.

Ms Grace: No, I'm asking you.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection: the minister is asking me, and I will and the reason I will is because the Local Government Association has said some very unpleasant things about the Minister for Industrial Relations. Not only has it said some things about the Minister for Industrial Relations but so, too, has the CCIQ.

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Minister for Education is interjecting. The CCIQ, which I will get to a little later, has said some very interesting things about the industrial relations minister and this government. I know the education minister has a habit of reading out supportive things of oneself. You do not usually, with respect, read out your own references in parliament.

Mrs Smith: Self-praise!

Mr BLEIJIE: Self-praise is no praise; I take the interjection from the member for Mount Ommaney. You do not ordinarily get up in here and read out your reference or say how good someone thinks you are. Usually you rely on your colleagues to do that. You let your colleagues do that. You do not get up in here and say, 'Hey, I've got a letter here that says how great I am. Let me read the contents of that into *Hansard* so that when parliament finishes at midnight tonight I can go and read the things I said about myself in a positive manner.' The education minister does that all the time. She does it all the time. Not a week would go by where the education minister does not give herself self-praise from a letter she has received. However—

Ms JONES: Madam Deputy Speaker, I find that offensive. It is not self-praise. I have been reading into the *Hansard* praise of the party. Thank you.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, were you rising on a point of order that you had taken offence or was that your point of order?

Ms Jones: Yes.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister has taken offence to the comments. Do you withdraw?

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw.

Mr SEENEY: Madam Deputy Speaker, she did not ask for it to be withdrawn. She has been here long enough to know the right words to use. You have to say, 'I ask for it to be withdrawn.'

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister said—

Mr POWER: I rise to a point of order.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, can you take your seat for just a moment thank you. I asked the minister to clarify whether she had taken offence and was seeking a withdrawal and she indicated that that was the case. I asked the member for Kawana. The member for Kawana complied and withdrew. I now will hear the point of order from the member for Logan.

Mr POWER: Sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker, but you clarified the point that I was about to make.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you very much. There is no point of order and the member for Kawana has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: However, I can assure this House one thing the education minister will not be getting up and quoting from is the correspondence from the CCIQ and the LGAQ. That is one document the education minister is not going to jump to her feet and read out because it ain't any self-praise and it ain't any praise for the government. It is no praise for this Labor government. As I said, those opposite will dress this up as being about workers' rights and the Liberal National Party's trashy workers' rights and, 'We want an independent QIRC.' Nothing could be further from the truth in this bill, which, in the next 50 minutes, I will detail in great detail.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: The more they interject and the more the member for Logan interjects, the longer I will take and the slower I will speak. As I was saying, this bill panders to the union bosses—repaying favours for support at the last election, stripping away important transparency and accountability measures, increasing the cost on business which puts pressure on jobs, and significantly undermining the QIRC, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

How is it that the Minister for Industrial Relations brings a piece of legislation into this House which the LGAQ says will cost jobs in Queensland when she also is the Minister for Employment? The Minister for Employment is being criticised by the LGAQ for a bill in this House which will lead to job losses in Queensland. I would love an explanation: when the minister looks at herself in the mirror, does she wear the employment minister's hat or the industrial relations minister's hat or the former union boss's hat when she debates this bill? I suspect it is the former union boss's hat. If I have not made it clear already, we will not be supporting this bill and the changes in it—

Mr POWER: Sorry, but can the honourable member turn his microphone off and on? There is a lot of feedback.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is probably from you, Linus!

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. We can reset.

Mr POWER: I am trying to be helpful to the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, can you please turn your microphone on? We just reset.

Mr Saunders: That's better. Even your microphone dislikes you!

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Maryborough, you are joining the illustrious list with a warning under standing order 253A, and I will just mention that list so that everybody is on notice—Lockyer, deputy opposition leader, Mount Ommaney, Ferny Grove, Hinchinbrook, Leader of the House, Toowoomba South, Kawana, Gaven and Albert. Thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: As I said, we will not be supporting this bill and the changes in it because it only shows that this government and this industrial relations minister are not about the worker but more about keeping unions happy and currying favour with the union movement. In Queensland the state government is responsible for industrial relations of public servants, local government workers and tuckshop workers. We know, as we have debated it in this House before, that a large proportion of the remaining private sector industrial relations was referred to the Commonwealth by the Blich government. The bill before the House today repeals and replaces the entire existing legislation, which is a substantial act of some 900 pages.

We have come to this point following the establishment of a legislative reform reference group. We know this government is a review, not do, government, so this was one of the 150 or 200 reviews currently being undertaken by this asleep-at-the-wheel government. Rather than going through those on the reference group, I thought I would quote from the Local Government Association of Queensland's submission to the committee which reviewed the bill. The LGAQ submission states—

The LGAQ notes the government's reference to this bill implementing all the recommendations arising out of an independent review of the state's industrial relations laws and tribunals. The LGAQ was a member of the Review group and actively participated in the review; however, it is also important to record that the Group was chaired by a former trade union official, supported by a labour lawyer and was dominated by trade union representatives. Without denigrating the efficacy and capability of the Chair Mr Jim McGowan or his support staff, it is fair to say that the outcomes from the review, as expected, heavily favoured the views and interests of trade unions.

The government set up an independent review of the Industrial Relations Act, stacked it with former and current union officials and then implemented the changes from that review and said that it had an independent review. The LGAQ has called the government out on that. The LGAQ, which was on the review panel, has even said that members of parliament voting on this bill cannot essentially trust the recommendations of the review panel, because it was stacked from the start. We have seen that with many reviews that this government has undertaken.

Mr Walker: Standard process.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection from the member for Mansfield. It is the standard process of this government. The member is referring to his own shadow portfolio area where reviews that have been undertaken were stacked from the start.

Once again, we see a review undertaken to justify changes to the law, but the review was a complete sham. In fact, several changes that are being pushed through as part of this bill were not even considered by the reference group, such as the introduction of a new public holiday for Easter Sunday. That was never even considered as part of the review. When the minister introduced this bill, she stood in this place and talked about the extensive independent review process and then, lo and behold, said,

'By the way, we're also introducing a new public holiday in Queensland and that is going to be Easter Sunday.' We know that that is because of a secret little deal with the shoppies union on the side. That is why making Easter Sunday a public holiday made it into this legislation without being mentioned by the review panel in its report or even being a recommendation of that union dominated review panel. It was a deal with the shoppies union on the side.

At the time this deal was made I wonder if the shoppies union was told that the government had not, or had forgotten, to make an amendment to the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 to allow shops that cannot trade on Easter Sunday to trade? In this bill, the minister is declaring Easter Sunday a public holiday, but she has forgotten to amend the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 to permit businesses to trade on Sunday.

Mrs Smith: We had the racing bill, though.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection. We had the racing bill. The first bill the minister introduced was the racing bill. I think there were over 200 amendments made to that bill. The minister proposes to make 85 amendments to this bill. As I said, I wonder if the shoppies union was told, 'Yes, we're going to do the public holiday, but we forgot to amend the Trading (Allowable Hours) Act?' What would we expect from Labor? These are the same people, the same government, that gave us dams without pipes, pipes without dams, trains without seats, tunnels without trains and now a public holiday for businesses on a day they are not allowed to open on anyway.

According to the explanatory notes the bill sets—

... the key elements for the ... industrial relations system ...

- a set of minimum standards;
- collective bargaining as the cornerstone for setting wages and conditions;
- a set of individual rights to fair treatment;
- effective, transparent and accountable governance and reporting obligations for registered organisations; and
- an independent commission and court.

As outlined further in the explanatory notes—

The Bill:

- reframes the objects of the legislation around a fair and balanced system ... strengthens enterprise bargaining arrangements ... revises the regulation of registered industrial organisations and associated entities. The Bill provides that the financial reporting requirements—

and here is the clincher—

for industrial organisations and the training requirements for officers with financial management duties are similar with those of the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009.

I can guarantee this House that the provisions in this bill are not the same provisions that the federal parliament passed last week with respect to transparency, accountability and integrity measures for industrial organisations, including employee and employer organisations. The minister has put a little bow around this bill and said, 'We're copying the federal government's fair work legislation.' I bet it does not copy the legislation that was passed two weeks ago by the federal parliament, which essentially copies former LNP government policy with respect to union accountability and transparency.

The members of the Labor Party always ask, 'Why do we need transparency?' I recall a recent press conference that the Premier gave when another of many CFMEU officials was charged with particular offences and the judge made some comments about particular CFMEU officials. At that press conference the Premier was asked by one of the journalists, 'Is the Labor Party going to disassociate with the CFMEU?' The Premier looked shocked and amazed by the question. She asked, 'Why would the Labor Party disassociate with the CFMEU?' I have no idea! Probably because of a damning royal commission report into union corruption and governance in Australia of a couple of thousand pages. It could have been that. If it was not that, it could have been the over 100 CFMEU officials who, currently, are charged with offences under particular legislation throughout Australia. If it was not that, it could be the CFMEU in Queensland hauling documents into a horse float and taking it out to a farm.

Ms DONALDSON: I rise to a point of order. The member for Kawana may have heat stroke with his sunburn, but he has been asked to stay relevant and he has strayed again.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Linard): Order! I ask the member for Kawana to speak with relevance to the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: I suspect the member for Bundaberg now has a little more time on her hands. She could do two things. She could pay her bills on time and she could read—

Mr BAILEY: I rise to a point of order.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: With respect, member for Kawana, the member for Bundaberg has a right to raise a point of order. I will now hear the minister's point of order.

Mr BAILEY: The member for Kawana continually abuses standing orders by straying well off the topic. I request that he conform with standing orders and get back to the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes. Thank you, Minister. Member for Kawana, I warned you before when I spoke to you the last time.

Ms DONALDSON: I rise to a point of order. I find the member's comments personally offensive and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. I suggest that the member for Bundaberg ask the attendants to bring her a copy of the bill. If she wants to interject—and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I take the point that she has every right to do so—I suggest that she reads the bill. If she does, she will find in the bill lots of discussion about industrial organisations. Guess what? I point out to the member for Bundaberg that an industrial organisation is defined under Queensland legislation as an employee association—that is a union—or an employer association. I am talking about integrity and accountability provisions. I can also tell the member for Bundaberg that, ironically, I just quoted from the explanatory notes. The member for Bundaberg objected to me referring to the minister's own explanatory notes, the government's explanatory notes. I understand that the member is probably seeking some relevance in today's society but, really, she has to read the bill.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, can you please come back to the bill. I think personal attacks on other members in this House is unparliamentary. I ask you to speak to the bill.

Government members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: The members opposite continually, as they are now, interject in this debate. When I talk about transparency and accountability of the union movement, I do so because this bill has taken out the integrity and transparency provisions that are currently in the Industrial Relations Act. That cannot be any clearer or relevant to this debate as the sun comes up every morning. The government is getting rid of the integrity, accountability and transparency measures of the Industrial Relations Act in the state of Queensland. That is in this bill. Not only is it in this bill; it is in the explanatory notes. As I said, this bill—

Revises the regulation of registered industrial organisations and associated entities. The Bill provides that the financial reporting requirements for industrial organisations and the training requirements for officers with financial management duties are similar with those of the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act.

That is the passage that I quoted from the explanatory notes. The explanatory notes further state—

The Bill also enables the Industrial Registrar to partition the Local Government Industry Modern award into three awards based upon occupational divisions identified in the Award Modernisation Variation Notice issued by the Minister on 6 June 2016 pursuant to S140CA of the IR Act. This is an administrative function only and is done to assist employers and workers by making the document more user-friendly for each occupational division.

What the government does not state in the explanatory notes is the provisions it is scrapping. It is removing the ability of the state to intervene to terminate protected industrial action if there is a risk of significant damage to the Queensland economy and it is threatening or would threaten to endanger the health and wellbeing of a community. Honourable members will know in debates in this place that I have continually said that the industrial relations minister should intervene in matters pursuant to the legislation. On a number of occasions she denied having the power to intervene. Then, once at estimates, realised that she did have the power to intervene—

Ms GRACE: I rise to a point of order. The member for Kawana is misleading the House. At no point have I denied the ability to intervene under the federal workplace organisations act or the workplace—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): There is no point of order.

Ms GRACE: I take offence to the comments and I ask that they be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Was it a personal reflection on yourself?

Ms GRACE: Yes. I was misquoted and the House has been misled about something that I have said which is not correct. I take offence and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would it help matters if the member for Kawana withdrew?

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw. I will also write to you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, just withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: I withdraw, but I am advising you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I will write to the Speaker because the words I used were the minister's words. I will be writing because I believe the minister has now misled the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is your right.

Mr BLEIJIE: Those opposite do not tell us that they are removing the ability of the state to intervene, having denied in the past that anyone has the ability to intervene. The best way to ensure the intervention never happens is just to delete it entirely from legislation. They are deleting the power for the state minister to intervene. They are giving up on Queensland workers.

They are also removing the majority of accountability measures that were implemented by the LNP in government, including the register of political spending, credit card registers and the register of loans, grants and donations. It is interesting to look at the credit card expenditure of the union movement. These are the unions that fight for workers rights, yet they spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on entertainment expenses—wining and dining—and it is not at your local KFC, it is at the flashiest of flash Brisbane restaurants.

Mr Stevens: No Subways!

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. No Subways, no KFCs, it is at the flashiest of flash restaurants that the unions are spending their money. We also found out some of the heavyweights in the union movement are getting paid over \$200,000 a year. They are crying poor for their workers and yet their workers' union dues are paying these exorbitant allowances for meals in restaurants and so forth. They are getting rid of all that so we will no longer be able to see the Craig Thomsons of the world who used the credit card of the HSU to pay for prostitutes and all sorts of stuff. Those opposite are getting rid of those provisions so we will not see what they spend their money on.

They are getting rid of the publishing and updating of financial registers. They are completely hiding their agenda and their financial expenses. We put it in place so the members of the union could see where their money was being spent by the heavy hitters in the union movement. They are getting rid of disclosing the salaries of the highest paid officers and board members. They no longer have to disclose how much the union heavyweights are getting paid. They say that the members of the union movement ought not know how much their board is getting paid, yet in corporations all that financial information is open. Let the sunlight in as disinfectant. They are getting rid of the requirement to disclose the salaries. Why would you want to hide the salaries of your board directors? Why would you hide the salaries of the highest paid officers?

Mr Dickson interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Buderim. It is a cover-up. Why would you not want your members to know how much your board and your highest paid officers are getting paid? They are also getting rid of publishing the financial disclosures. They are getting rid of the pecuniary interest register of board members. They are getting rid of publishing the remuneration and benefits, disclosing spending for political purposes and disclosing political party affiliation fees. They are out the door; they are getting rid of that.

They are also undermining the independence of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. Just as the federal parliament passes legislation to actually have it in federal legislation, this parliament is being asked to repeal those provisions. In Canberra they just passed those accountability measures and we are being asked to get rid of those measures. As the world becomes more attuned to openness, transparency and accountability of financial affairs, the Labor Party is trying to hide the expenses of the union movement. The rest of the world is opening the books. That is a huge concern.

We restored the independence of the QIRC. The minister has said in press releases and publicly that the LNP attacked the independence of the QIRC. We restored the independence of the commission. We appointed a permanent, full-time president who was, in fact, a Supreme Court judge, as well as additional commissioners who have turned that place around. How can the minister and government members say that we were attacking the independence of the QIRC when we appointed a highly respected Supreme Court justice in Glenn Martin as president of the QIRC? When those opposite reflect on that, they are actually reflecting on the president of the QIRC, which I think is disappointing because the president, Supreme Court Justice Glenn Martin, has done a terrific job with his commissioners down there. In fact, this is a broken election commitment, undermining the independence of the QIRC by removing the ability of the commission to partition the local government awards through the modern award process and actually dictating to the commission how the process will be undertaken.

The minister for industrial relations has spoken publicly about the independence of the QIRC—we want an independent QIRC—yet in June this year the minister issued a direction to the QIRC because she did not like a result of the QIRC. She issued a direction to the QIRC to do A, B, C: 'You must do this. This is my ministerial direction.'

Ms Grace: It was upheld in the Supreme Court.

Mr BLEIJIE: It does not matter where it was upheld. The fact is the minister issued a direction. You cannot have an independent commission and then have the minister issuing directions—you must do this—because you did not like a decision.

Mr Krause interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Beaudesert. It does not look very independent. With respect to the local government awards and the amendments we see today, this has all come about because the unions did not like the draft modern award that was released and agreed to and have continually gone crying wolf to the minister every time the commission does not do what the unions want. What does the minister do? Agree every time with the union and promise to do what she can to help out her union boss mates; being, of course, a former union boss herself and knowing how the union works.

The LGAQ submission states—

The current government regularly cites as justification for their actions the alleged extreme industrial relations changes made by the former Newman Government, all of which have subsequently been eliminated, amended or restored with earlier legislation. Under this Bill, the Government promises just as extreme, if not more extreme, changes to the industrial system, albeit these changes promote the cause of trade unions, undermine freedom of association, impose additional costs on Councils and their communities, threatens productivity of councils, and further erodes the independence and decision-making capacity of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

They are not my words, they are the words of the Local Government Association of Queensland. How does the minister respond to those harsh words? It goes on—

It is considered that the new industrial relations framework proposed by this Bill, on top of the recent industrial forays by the state into direct management of the industrial relations regulatory environment of local government will:

- Lead to further job losses within the local government sector;
- At the very least stifle job creation activities within the sector;
- Impede productivity within the local government sector;
- Increase the risk of additional costs to the community, particularly for rate-payers.

That is from the Local Government Association of Queensland, which is one of the biggest employers in the state of Queensland. Seventy-seven councils collectively say that this bill will lead to further job losses within the local government sector, stifle job creation activities, impede productivity within the local government sector and increase the risk of additional costs to the community, particularly ratepayers. Rates are going up, jobs are being lost, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission's independence has been—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: The minister laughs. I am quoting the Local Government Association of Queensland. All the minister can do is laugh this off. Those are not my words; they are the words of the Local Government Association of Queensland, which represents 77 councils and the minister wants to laugh that off. I suggest she gets on the phone to all the mayors represented by the Local Government Association of Queensland and have a good laugh at them. If the bill is passed in its current form without amendments, the minister should ring up all those local government employees who are going to lose their jobs and have a laugh with them. She can see if they are laughing about losing their jobs because of her bill, which is what the Local Government Association has warned about: job losses.

Mr Power interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I hear the member for Logan down the back. Will he ring the local mayor and the people who will lose their jobs in the local government sectors because of these provisions and have a laugh with them? I do not think they are going to laugh.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! Those on my right will come to order.

Ms Grace: Are you serious?

Mr BLEIJIE: Yes, I am absolutely serious, because the Local Government Association of Queensland is saying that there will be job losses. That is serious.

Labor's continual interference in this issue will lead to job losses for local government workers. If they want to dismiss that and make their silly little interjections, thinking they are somebody in this place, they can do that. However, at the end of the day, we will ensure that the local mayors, the local councillors and the employees who work for councils will knock on their ministerial office doors and their electoral office doors, so that they can explain this to them. We will tell the people who lose their jobs that the minister laughed about that in the chamber. We will tell them about the little silly interjections from the Labor Party. We will tell them, 'That's what they thought about your jobs.'

Currently, just under 40,000 workers are employed by councils throughout the state. The government seems to want to dismiss all concerns that the Local Government Association has with this bill. The LGAQ is seeking that this bill be opposed. It further states—

The LGAQ on behalf of its 77 constituent councils strongly **recommends this Bill be set aside altogether** or at the very least **be amended** to provide a fair and modern industrial relations system that:

- Appropriately balances both the short and long-term interests of council employers and workers ...

It is clear that the Local Government Association is saying that this bill should not be passed, unless it is substantially amended. This bill is not in the interests of the 40,000 local government workers in Queensland, which goes back to what I was saying earlier that Labor is about union bosses rather than standing up for the rights of council workers.

In its submission the LGAQ added—

In addition, recent actions of the State Government to restrict the independence of the Commission on award related matters, has further eroded the confidence of the Local Government sector that the interests of Councils as employers will be considered fairly and objectively within the state industrial relations jurisdiction. Councils are concerned that unions are increasingly less willing to pursue industrial relations outcomes through the regulated industrial relations system in favour of seeking political intervention of a sympathetic government willing to utilise its legislative powers and considerable resources to achieve desired outcomes of unions.

Those are not my words; they are the words of the Local Government Association of Queensland. This bill is bad for local government and they are reassessing whether they actually want to stay in the state industrial relations system altogether. Because of how bad this legislation is, across the state local governments are considering whether they want to part ways with the state government and go into the federal industrial relations system. That is under active consideration.

Mr Minnikin: That says it all.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection from the member for Chatsworth. It says it all and it says a lot, no doubt. When this bill was tabled, the LGAQ accused the minister of betrayal. LGAQ Chief Executive Officer Greg Hallam said that the legislation made a mockery of the independent QIRC and slammed the laws as retrograde. In an article published in the *Courier-Mail*, Mr Hallam said—

The minister and not the QIRC has determined how many awards will apply in our sphere of government.

The article continues to quote Mr Hallam as saying—

The Minister has sidelined the QIRC from any deliberative role on the content of new awards, bypassing them in favour of the Industrial Registrar. The Queensland IR system is entirely political and devoid of any sense of impartiality.

Those are not my words; they are the words of the Local Government Association of Queensland.

Another ABC article posted online states—

“We have the Minister dictating how many awards there should be and the content of the awards,” Mr Hallam said.

“Why have an independent umpire in the form of the Industrial Relations Commission when the Government herself is going to make those determinations? It’s completely wrong and it takes away any faith that the system is independent, impartial or fair.”

...

“This is a cost that will be borne by the ratepayers of Queensland,” he said.

“This is a cost that means we have a much more cumbersome industrial relations system, many more awards, much more complexity, a much more costly system to administer.”

I have talked a little about how this bill will introduce the sudden addition of another public holiday in the calendar, Easter Sunday. For those who are aware—

Mr Power interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: You are a disgrace, mate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Order! Member for Kawana, resume your seat. The member for Logan will withdraw what I personally take to be an unparliamentary remark.

Mr POWER: I withdraw, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr BLEIJIE: For those who are not aware, Good Friday, Easter Saturday and Easter Monday are already public holidays. This will mean there will be four public holidays in a row. The cost of that change to small business in Queensland is estimated to be up to \$80 million.

Ms Grace: You just said they don’t open.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is an \$80 million tax on business in Queensland, which means they will be less likely—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: If the minister wants a more in-depth lesson in industrial relations under the allowable trading hours, she would be quite educated to know that many small businesses are actually exempt from the provisions of the allowable trading hours legislation. If the minister is saying they do not open or whatever the case may be, I suggest she look at the legislation, because there are exemptions that apply to small to medium enterprises in this state. The CCIQ—again, these are not my words—has estimated the cost will be up to \$80 million for small business in this state, which means that they will be less likely to open on the Sunday, that is, if they could. The Trading Hours (Allowable Hours) Act 1990 outlines that a ‘closed day’ refers to one of the following days: Good Friday, Easter Sunday, Anzac Day, Labor Day or Christmas Day. However, this bill amends only the Holidays Act to make Easter Sunday a public holiday. It does not propose to change the Trading Hours (Allowable Hours) Act to allow businesses to trade that do not have the current exemptions. This is another Labor bungle. There is no regulatory impact statement, either.

Rather than taking advice from this government, which knows nothing about business, let us look at the survey conducted by the CCIQ on 14 to 23 September this year on the impacts of making Easter Sunday a public holiday on real small businesses that employ real Queensland workers. They say that 27.6 per cent of all retail, hospitality and accommodation businesses that opened on Easter Sunday 2016 will close in 2017, with an average loss of gross revenue of \$10,739. A further 27.1 per cent of businesses that opt to remain open will reduce their opening hours on Easter Sunday 2017 by an average of 4.4 hours. Those businesses that are willing or forced to trade on Easter Sunday 2017, but are unable to reduce either opening hours or employment hours offered, will have their wage costs increase on average by \$3,225 and 61.8 per cent of businesses that will open on Easter Sunday 2017 will offer fewer hours of employment in their workplace.

That means that employees are going to get less money. It will have a direct negative impact on what they are actually wanting to do. The members opposite do not understand that if a business does not open no-one makes money. The employer does not make any money and the employee does not make money, but it is okay because those opposite have declared it a public holiday. They will not open. People will not get paid. That is what the Labor Party does not understand. If the small business—

Mr Power interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Member for Logan, you are getting very close to a warning.

Mr BLEIJIE: The members opposite do not understand that if a small cafe, in whatever electorate we talk about, cannot afford to open on Easter Sunday, the employees miss out. They grandstand and say, ‘It is a public holiday,’ but they are not going to get any pay. They would probably rather get paid 1¼ time on Easter Sunday than not get paid because they are not working on Easter Sunday. The members opposite do not understand that.

On average 7.2 employees in each business will be offered on average 2.4 hours less employment. The small business survey in Queensland indicates that there is going to be less employment on those days. Furthermore, of those businesses that opened on Easter Sunday 2016, 19.7 per cent now expect to close on Good Friday 2017, 12 per cent on Easter Saturday 2017 and 13 per cent on the Easter Sunday 2017. It is so unaffordable to open on four public holidays that they are now thinking about closing on all those public holidays.

The Labor Party will have a direct negative impact on all these employees in Queensland. They are not going to make any money because they are not going to be working on any of those days because the employer will not be able to afford to open the doors. That is the micro-economic benefit from this economic genius opposite on making Easter Sunday a public holiday.

It is all sentimental. We are going to have a public holiday, not realising the unintended consequences. No-one is going to make any money out of it, not the business nor the employee, because they are not going to have a job to go to because the cafe doors will be shut and the business will not open on Easter Sunday.

How is that for the tourism industry? How is that for Cairns? How is that for the Sunshine Coast that relies heavily on the tourism trade? How is that for the Gold Coast? How is that for Far North Queensland, regional Queensland, Toowoomba and the great outback Queensland? How is that for those areas where we have travellers and grey nomads going through and not being able to get a cup of coffee in the morning because businesses have a sign up saying ‘Closed for business; we cannot afford to open.’ But it is okay, the Labor Party will put a little glossy brochure out saying, ‘We have declared Easter Sunday a public holiday.’ It does not make sense.

On a macro-economic level, 4,998 retail, accommodation and hospitality businesses are now expecting to close their doors on Easter Sunday. Nearly 5,000 businesses will close their doors. Some 3½ thousand retail, accommodation and hospitality businesses will open, but will reduce their trading hours. Collectively, these businesses are estimated to lose \$32 million in gross revenue.

Of all employees who worked on Easter Sunday 2016, 40.7 per cent will receive either no or significantly fewer hours of employment. Some 24,939 employees will no longer work on Easter Sunday 2017.

Mr Walker: They are big numbers.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. Nearly 25,000 employees will no longer receive work on Easter Sunday. That is the economic genius of the IR minister. Let us help the employees by ensuring 25,000 no longer work and get any pay on Easter Sunday. A further 32,000 employees will have reduced hours of work. Nearly 50,000 people will have either no work or reduced hours of work. Collectively \$12.2 million in earnings will be lost to these employees. Regardless of attempts to offset wage rises through reducing hours of opening or hours of employment offered, the overall wages bill will rise by \$13.9 million. The total economic impact of the creation of an Easter Sunday public holiday in 2017 is estimated to cost just the retail, accommodation and hospitality sectors \$58.2 million. Someone has to pay for it. It is going to be the employees because they are not going to have a job on Easter Sunday.

We are opposing this bill as it is anti business, anti jobs and waters down transparency of registered industrial organisations—not only trade unions but employer organisations. Hardworking members of those organisations deserve to know and have the opportunity to find out how their hard-earned membership dues are spent. Now it is all smoke and mirrors and covered up.

We have to ask what the union bosses are trying to hide. We found out when we were in government and we made them publish their credit card statements. Thousands of dollars a year were spent on lavish dinners, alcohol and wining and dining. This is at a time when we have seen the federal parliament pass laws—just last week—to increase accountability and transparency through a registered organisations commission. This is, of course, in the wake of the Craig Thomson and Kathy Jackson scandal.

We also remember the \$45,000 that the AWU paid for Bill Ludwig's legal expenses that related to his position as a director of Racing Queensland. Of course, we all remember the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption and the actions of the corrupt pair of CFMEU Queensland officials, David Hanna and Michael Ravbar, who disregarded the law and destroyed documents to cover up their corruption and illegal activity on a whim—seven tonnes of documents at that.

The bill also inserts provisions into the Fair Work Act, such as the adverse action changes, that seek to introduce a scheme of uncapped damages being part of the Public Service arrangements, and which are retrospective up to six years. An adverse action does not include a dismissal or demotion, but may include transferring an employee to another position, starting an investigation process, issuing a warning letter, altering a roster, suspension or treating an employee less favourably than another employee. It also contains a reverse onus of proof, whereby employers must prove their innocence.

God help the director-general who sends public servant A a Christmas card and does not send public servant B a Christmas card. That is an adverse action. They can make a claim against the state for hurt feelings. This is going to cost hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars. It is a reverse onus of proof where employers must prove their innocence. If we have directors-general moving people around in the Public Service or issuing a warning letter because of misbehaviour or someone not doing their job well enough it could lead to an adverse action. I know why this is happening.

I can imagine the day after this bill passes the unions going into public servants' offices with a little glossy brochure with a business card from a lawyer and them saying, 'Sign here. We will represent you. Are you feeling unhappy today? Did you not get a Christmas card from the director-general? Here is how to sue the state.' The taxpayer will foot the bill. We are talking about 200,000 public servants. The taxpayer will foot the bill for these adverse actions against state public servants. As I said, this scheme will have untold detrimental effects, including the amount of damages that may be paid out and the relationship between managers and public servants.

I will briefly address the provisions in the bill which contain the 10 days of leave at full pay for family and domestic violence leave. The LNP supports the provision, as it is in line with the recommendations from Dame Quentin Bryce's *Not now, not ever* report which came from the task force established by the former LNP government in 2014. We would support these changes if they were brought forward in separate legislation, but they are not. We cannot support the rest of the bill as it is detrimental to the Queensland economy and the public servants and local government workers in this state.

Ms Grace: That's a good excuse, isn't it?

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the honourable minister. She said that it is a good excuse. I have just said that we support the provisions of the domestic and family violence leave given to public servants, but that is a few paragraphs of a 1,000-page bill. The Labor government will come out after

this and say that we voted against domestic and family violence leave. We are voting against an entire bill, but we do support those provisions. If the minister wants to take them out and put them in another bill we will happily support them.

I will now address the amendments that I will move in consideration in detail which relate to the local government modernisation process and the additional public holiday on Easter Sunday. We will be seeking to restore the existing provisions in the act in relation to the local government modern award process, restoring the independence of the commission in that process. Contrary to the government's statement that it is merely an administrative measure, it is not. Essentially, the award structure that will exist for local governments after this bill passes is that the registrar of the QIRC will partition the awards into three categories. It actually takes it off the commission's hands and gives it to the registrar of the commission to do.

Why have a commission if you are saying, 'We don't trust the commission to be able to do this, so we are giving the power to the registrar to make the partition'? This will have detrimental impacts. The minister's own legislation not only gives the registrar the power to do it but also says in one particular clause in the legislation that not only will the registrar undertake that directive but that 'A party to the relevant award is not entitled to be heard in relation to the partitioning of the award'. It directly says to local government employers, unions and employees that they are 'not entitled to be heard in relation to the partitioning of the award'. The legislation further says—

- (2) As soon as practicable after the commencement, the registrar must partition the relevant award by—
- (a) terminating the relevant award; and
 - (b) making 3 replacement modern awards (the **replacement awards**).

Then it says that the replacement awards must cover certain groups of employees—A, B and C—but not the commission. They are taking that power off the commission and giving it to the registrar. That is completely inappropriate. We have an Industrial Relations Commission to administer and decide on these matters. It is like a court. Whether the government like it or not, that is what it is there for. If they do not like the decision, they are stuck with it because that is the independent commission we have. People have to have confidence and faith in the independence of that commission. When you take from the commission and give to a registrar—a public servant in the commission—the power to partition those awards, then all accountability and transparency with respect to that administrative exercise goes out the window.

As I said, they have not put one reason forward for supporting the return for multiple awards. If, as the minister suggests, there is no change for workers and the employers prefer one award for administration purposes alone, then the minister should have no reason not to support our amendment. The argument that the reduction in awards from 19 to three represents a major benefit to local government is a complete furphy in that around 95 per cent of employees previously resided in three of those 19 awards—the three which coincidentally align with the proposed three awards. Moving to one award was of benefit as opposed to moving to three, as was recognised by the commission in its review. As was also evidenced by the recent census, moving to multiple awards poses a risk to the sustainable long-term employment of a local workforce. The question has to be asked why the government sees fit to prescribe the name, number and coverage of awards in local government in Queensland if it has never happened in Queensland or any other industrial jurisdiction in Australia, noting that the government also do not do it for their own employees in the state Public Service.

I turn to the final amendment that we will be making with respect to Easter Sunday trading. We will be moving an amendment to take that out of the legislation because of the millions and millions of dollars of impact on the Queensland economy. I wish to table a copy of a letter from the LGAQ that I received today, fresh off the press. Let me read some contents of it into *Hansard*. It reads—

Dear Mr Bleijie,

In respect of the *Industrial Relations Bill 2016* currently being debated in the House, the Local Government Association of Queensland's (LGAQ) position throughout the entire matter has remained consistent, that is, we are opposed to the Bill.

The LGAQ remains strongly opposed to the Bill for the reasons outlined in our submission to the Finance and Administration Committee ...

In the event that the Bill is not withdrawn or does not lapse, it is our strong submission that the following four amendments be moved during the consideration in detail stage of the debate:

They state that No. 1 is to delete proposed clause 165, No. 2 is to delete other clauses, No. 3 is to insert other clauses and No. 4 is to delete proposed clause 995. I table a copy of this letter from the Local Government Association of Queensland.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 30 November 2016 from the Chief Executive Officer, Local Government Association of Queensland, Mr Greg Hallam, to the member for Kawana, Mr Jarrod Bleijie MP, regarding the Industrial Relations Bill 2016 [\[2192\]](#).

The amendments that I have proposed that have been circulated are entirely in line with the Local Government Association and discussions that we have had with the CCIQ. I would encourage all crossbenchers and the government to support the amendments because they are in line with the Local Government Association of Queensland's request for those particular elements. They want those amendments because the Local Government Association of Queensland can see the adverse impact these particular amendments will have on their particular employees. As they said, you only have to look in the Local Government Association of Queensland's submission to the Finance and Administration Committee report where they state that there will be job losses and rate rises. Members should take note of that when deciding whether to vote for or against this bill tonight. We have an opportunity to ensure that that is not the case.

Everything is working fine in the Industrial Relations Commission under the current legislation. Everyone has a say. Everyone can go and be heard. When we have a bill that not only changes the commission to not having jurisdiction to deal with those particular matters and set those awards and gives that power to the registrar but also has a particular provision that says that employees and employers, being the councils and unions, do not have the right to be heard about such matters—do not have the right to be heard about the award structure or the three awards—then that is scary. Not only do we know that the legislation takes the power of the commission away; but it actually says that you do not have the right to be heard. They have no regard.

The industrial relations sector in this space has a huge monopoly with the union movement. In our collective bargaining regime, you have to be a registered organisation and one organisation can go and do collective bargaining with the government. That leads to a monopoly with particular unions, although we have seen the establishment of a few associations which I hear are taking many, many members from the union movement. I hear that there is a professional nurses association, for which membership is dramatically on the increase, offering a far better service than the Queensland Nurses' Union. We also know that the paramedics have set up their own independent association, taking many, many members from the union movement. I suspect that that will continue because, as workers across the state of Queensland see that union boss wages and salaries will now be hidden under this legislation and that credit card expenses will not be disclosed, I think workers will think, 'We want to be a part of an association that actually discloses where our money goes, discloses our political affiliations.'

This is about the industrial relations sector being monopolised and run by the union movement who, of course, funds the Labor Party in the state. We only have to look at the ECQ returns for the amount of money handed over to the Labor Party by the union movement—all forms of unions in Queensland—to see why the monopoly exists. The monopoly must end. I encourage these associations to continue to do the great work they are doing because they are taking away many, many union members. Workers see other associations offering a far better service with cheaper membership.

Ms Grace: What's their membership?

Mr BLEIJIE: Their membership is dramatically increasing, Minister. It is scary—not for me but for the Labor Party—that their membership is increasing. I hear the nurses are fleeing the Nurses' Union to be part of this new association that is being established because they are getting far better service than what they had.

Mr Seeney interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Callide. Wait till the teachers' association is set up. Wait for the teachers to flee the Teachers' Union. We oppose this bill. It is anti business, anti jobs, anti growth and anti workers in this state of Queensland. We will do everything we can to ensure that these amendments get through.

(Time expired)