




Speech By  
**Julianne Gilbert**

**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

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### **INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL**

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (9.47 pm): I rise to contribute to the Industrial Relations Bill 2016 debate. One of the most important things that we can give people is the dignity of work to enable them to support themselves and their families. They must be fairly remunerated for the duties carried out. Queensland is a fair society and our workers need to be protected to ensure that they are treated fairly in their workplace. Employers also need to know their obligations and their rights. In some countries that I have visited where there is inadequate protection for workers with reasonable minimum standards you find the working poor. We do not want that for our state. Without decent industrial relations laws workers are at the mercy of some rogue operating employers.

Some employers when they believe that the industrial relations laws are watered down do unfair things to people. That is when you hear stories of young people who get called in to work when there is no work and they just get to sit around and then are sent home without any pay. This is not the society that we want. We want dignity in our workplaces. The former Newman government set about attacking the working conditions of Queensland workers. The industrial relations laws need to be restored and updated.

During 2015 the Palaszczuk government approved an independent review of the state government's industrial relations laws and tribunal to provide recommendations for the industrial relations reform. This was an election priority for the Palaszczuk government. This is the first major review of the state industrial relations laws since 1998. The review was chaired by Mr Jim McGowan AM with representatives from key stakeholders, unions, employer organisations, the Queensland Bar Association and the Law Society.

The Industrial Relations Bill 2016 seeks to give effect to recommendations of the review report. The key proposals made in the bill include 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.

The state's industrial relations legislation needs to be fair and balanced and it needs to support the delivery of high-quality services, economic prosperity and social justice for Queenslanders. The bill will achieve that for employees and employers by providing a guaranteed safety net of fair, relevant and enforceable minimum employment conditions through the Queensland Employment Standards; preventing and eliminating discrimination, bullying and other unfair treatment in employment; and promoting collective bargaining, including by providing good-faith bargaining and establishing the primacy for collective agreements over individual agreements.

The most productive workplaces are ones where there is respect between the employer and the employee. The key objective in clause 4(e) of the bill provides for promoting productive and cooperative workplace relations, including by recognising mutual obligations of trust and confidence in the

employment relationship. In exercising its functions, the QIRC is required to further the objectives of the act. The provision will promote a standard of ideal conduct for employees and employers. The objective is given effect through the range of protections in the statutory framework.

Remuneration for an employee's toil must be fair and not discriminate against any groups of workers. This bill strengthens the requirement for awards, including bargaining awards and certified agreements, to provide for equal remuneration for work of equal or comparable value. The equal remuneration provisions enable the QIRC to hear an equal remuneration case on application. The QIRC is required to ensure that new awards are subject to an equal remuneration test, which calls up the remuneration principle that is currently a statement of policy of the QIRC. In certifying or making bargaining instruments, the QIRC is required to be informed about the steps taken by parties to provide for equal remuneration. Also, when varying an existing award, making a determination or other functions relating to wages, the QIRC may give directions to parties to obtain and provide wage related information.

This bill is good for industrial relations. It is good for workers and for workplaces. I commend the bill to the House.