




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.56 pm): With only four minutes remaining until we move to the private member's motion, I will make a contribution before—

Mr Stevens: You can come back.

Mr MILLAR: I will come back and speak again. As members can see in the committee's report, our statement of reservation states—


The non-government members after careful deliberation and intense scrutiny of this proposed Bill are convinced the Bill is flawed in its construction and it is damaging in its outcomes.

Members only had to listen to what the member for Kawana had to say to understand why we believe that this bill has damaging outcomes. We recommended that the Industrial Relations Bill be returned to the department for repair, reconstitution and proper consultation. I believe there are about 85 amendments in relation to this bill.

This bill will have a major impact on rural and regional Queensland, and certainly in the area that I cover in the seat of Gregory. Let me start with small business. I represent one of the best tourism industries in Queensland—outback tourism. There is not a more unique tourism opportunity than outback tourism. This bill will have a major impact on small businesses to the tune of \$53 million. The CCIQ told us that this will have a \$53 million impact on small businesses, not to mention the foregone productivity. Hospitality business will see their hourly wage rate on this day increase by 43 per cent, and for retailers that figure is 25 per cent.

This decision comes with zero consultation—there was absolutely no consultation—and this is coming from a Labor government that prided itself on the fact that it would be the consultative government. Labor said, 'We will consult with everybody. We will not rush in and make decisions. We will consult with people continually.' What happened to that? What happened on this issue? Why didn't they consult with business so they could understand the impact that this will have on small businesses in regional Queensland?

This will impact on the electorate of Gregory that I represent because one of our major tourism products is outback tourism. Can members guess when this will start? It is Easter. That is when we open the doors and we want people flying to the outback, coming out in their Winnebagos, bringing their families. Small businesses in regional Queensland, in outback Queensland, will continue to survive through tourism, but now the government is whacking a \$53 million bill on businesses across Queensland to operate on Easter Sunday. I find it absolutely unbelievable that the government did not consult with those people. That is not to mention the \$100 million that the Local Government Association estimated this would cost them—\$100 million. Rates will go up and jobs in regional Queensland will be under threat. Regional councils and outback councils do not have the opportunity of having a huge rate base.

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (7.44 pm), continuing: As I said before the dinner break and before the six o'clock motion, the cost of the IR Bill on small business and local government is absolutely astonishing. It would be more accurate to call this bill the 'Merry Christmas Union Bill'. If there was ever any doubt that this government is ruled by unions, this bill removes that last shred. I encourage anyone who is taking an interest in this debate—and I encourage those opposite—to read the submission to this bill from the LGAQ. It states clearly that this bill creates a whole new system of industrial relations in Queensland that will not only shut down job creation but also actively lead to job losses.

I have eight local governments in my electorate of Gregory. All of them are major employers. Indeed, for many small business in my electorate, it is the wages of council employees that have kept them afloat through the drought in the region, with high unemployment and low incomes. I am talking about the Barcoo, Barcaldine, Longreach and Quilpie councils. Those councils are employers in my electorate of Gregory. When local government is telling you that this bill will make a bad employment situation worse, how can a responsible government proceed with such flawed legislation?

Worse still, the LGAQ says that the cost that it will have to carry as a result of this pandering to unions will lead to rates increases. I am telling members right now that \$100 million is being put on local governments. Where else are they going to get the money? As members know, the Barcaldine, Barcoo and Quilpie councils do not have a huge rates base. Where else are they going to get the money?

Mr Rickuss: I don't think they do know that.

Mr MILLAR: They do not know that. I am telling the members opposite right now that the rates issue is already a white-hot-anger issue in terms of the cost of living in country Queensland and the cost of doing business in country Queensland. This government is making a deliberate choice, which will result in escalating power prices and vehicle registration charges that increase at twice the rate of inflation and rates increases as a direct result of this legislation. This legislation is a betrayal of country Queensland and country councils.

As the LGAQ says, this legislation promotes the cause of trade unions and does nothing to promote the cause of working families. In order to promote trade unions, this legislation deliberately undermines freedom of association. This legislation deliberately, by law, imposes additional costs on councils and their communities. It deliberately cuts jobs and deliberately increases rates.

This legislation removes the rights of Queensland citizens to transparency and accountability. This is a government that is finding that accountability cramps its style and that of its mates. Under this legislation, there is no more register for political spending, no more register for credit cards, no more register for grants and donations and loans. There is no more disclosure of political spending, no more disclosure of remuneration and benefits for the highest paid officers. Why would the government do this unless it intended to make use of the changes? It is lining its pockets and those of its mates along the way—all paid for by Queensland workers who had no say in it. There is no way to resist, because this bill erodes the independence and the decision-making capacity of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. These are all deliberate choices made by this government and they should make Queenslanders very afraid. Like Victoria, our state and our public life are about to be thoroughly pilfered to benefit a few.

I will finish by speaking briefly to the other element of this bill, which I mentioned before, and that is the gazettal of Easter Sunday as a public holiday. That gazettal sounds innocuous, but it is going to cost small business a fortune and, yet again, it is going to cost jobs. We have already heard that it is going to cost nearly \$53 million. That does not include the forgone productivity. Hospitality businesses will see their hourly wage rate on this day increase by 43 per cent and for retailers it will increased by 25 per cent. How do the members opposite think small businesses and tourism businesses in regional and outback Queensland are going to cope with these increases? Why do the members opposite need to increase their wages bill? Why do they need to increase their costs? It will cost them dearly.

In the electorate of Gregory, Easter is huge. In fact, Easter in the Outback is a major festival that marks the beginning of the outback tourism season.

Mr Elmes: The sunflower festival.

Mr MILLAR: I take that interjection from the member for Noosa, who is a well-known Emerald boy. He knows the Easter festival. He has been to many of them, certainly out at Fairbairn Dam in the early 1980s. I am sure that he has some great stories to tell about the Easter parade and the Fantastic Damtastic at Fairbairn Dam. I am sure he has some good stories to tell us over a beer or two.

From the sunflower festival on the Central Highlands to the Easter Fun Day in Windorah's desert sands, right across Gregory, towns and communities put on festivities from rodeos and race days to balls and parades. Literally hundreds and hundreds of people visit the region to enjoy the festivals. For

small business it is busy, busy, busy. The newsagents sell more lotto tickets, the local pubs sell more counter meals and the bakeries and the coffee shops make more money to carry them through the long, hot summers.

Ms Pease: So they make more money; they can afford to pay their workers extra money.

Mr MILLAR: This is just so typical.

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr MILLAR: I take that interjection from those opposite. This is what those opposite do not get. I remember at one of our committee meetings I asked one of the major union delegates from the council of unions, 'What about those small businesses that can't afford to do it?' Do members know what he said to me? He said, 'Well, maybe they shouldn't open.'

Ms Boyd: Yes, that's sound logic.

Mr MILLAR: That is typical of the Labor Party. You would rather see small business shut down—not employ anybody, not get money going around the town—to get your industrial relations legislation through. It shows where we are going wrong with this legislation. I am struggling to find how you would see that as a sensible argument, that businesses should just shut down. Shut all businesses down on Easter Sunday, stop businesses being able to make money, stop businesses from being able to employ people, shut them down; is that your answer? That is sadly the wrong answer to try to keep the economy going.

I hope small businesses are listening to this and pick up on the fact that the Labor Party thinks it best that they just shut their businesses for the day. Let us just shut down Queensland for the day because of the IR legislation! I do not get it. This legislation, which does not give anyone a day off who did not already have Sunday off, means those small businesses will make less money next Easter because their wage bill will soar. Some of them will not even bother to open. I take the interjections from those opposite that they should just shut down. We should shut Queensland down for the IR bill to the loss of everyone and especially their employees.

When rates go up, when council puts workers off, when Easter in the outback is not quite what it was for your business, remember the deliberate choice of this government. They chose this to benefit them and their mates. They chose to change the playbook so Queenslanders cannot see what is going on. They chose this because they do not care about the cost to working families across country Queensland. I do not support this flawed legislation.