



Speech By  
**Tim Nicholls**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 May 2016

**MOTION: CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATIONS**



**Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.58 pm): I move—

That this House:

1. notes that more than 900 workers took part in an illegal strike at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital site at the behest of the union masters in the CFMEU and ETU late last week;
2. notes that the opening of the new 738-bed facility has already been delayed under the Palaszczuk Labor government;
3. notes that lawlessness and militant union activity has been rife in the construction sector since Bill Shorten abolished the Australian Building and Construction Commission in 2012;
4. notes that Queensland has more strikes in the construction industry than the rest of the country; and
5. supports the reintroduction of the Australian Building and Construction Commission to restore the rule of law to Queensland construction sites, creating jobs and boosting productivity for thousands of workers.

The issue of union militancy and illegal strike action is, unfortunately, not a new one to public policy discussion at a state level or indeed on the national stage. However, the fundamental point remains that when Labor governments are in charge, union bosses reign supreme and wreak havoc on worksites and jobs across this nation. The federal election has been set for 2 July and that is on the back of the Commonwealth Senate's rejection of legislation that would have seen the reintroduction of the Australian Building and Construction Commission. The federal Senate, with Labor and the hotchpotch of Independents and Lazarus—

**Mr Costigan:** The motley crew.

**Mr NICHOLLS:**—the motley crew, as the member for Whitsunday points out, is refusing to countenance the rule of law on building sites across Australia.

The reintroduction of an Australian Building and Construction Commission would in fact see the rule of law reintroduced on those building sites. The ABCC was a body born out of the Cole royal commission, conducted over a number of years, into the building and construction industry which found that lawlessness was rampant across the industry. It was established by the Howard government in October 2005 to enforce the rule of law on sites in Queensland and across Australia. Who was the destroyer of those important reforms? It was none other than Bill Shorten, that well-known mate not of the Australian worker but of union bosses throughout Australia and a man who wants to be prime minister of this country. Bill Shorten is no mate of the workers in Australia. Just ask the almost 5,000 workers in Cleanevent who were done out of \$400 million as a result of the dud agreement that Bill Shorten entered into on their behalf. He sold them down the river.

Moving to 2016, what we know is that Queensland has more strikes in the construction industry than the rest of Australia. People used to say that Victoria was the hotbed of strikes in Australia, and just think about the MCG, major road projects and the dam that cost three times as much. No longer

does Victoria hold that mantle; Queensland now has more strikes. That is not just my view or the view of the LNP opposition; it is the view of those in the industry. Corlia Roos of the Master Builders Association of Queensland states—

The re-establishment of the ABCC will strengthen the construction sector, which in turn will benefit all Queenslanders.

More than 50% of all working days lost in Australia are in the construction sector. This is an extraordinary amount which forces up the cost of building tax-payer funded schools, hospitals and public infrastructure by as much as 30%.

That is almost a third more because of the rank lawlessness of the union movement in the construction industry. She goes on to say—

It is a construction watchdog to enforce the rule of law for union bosses and employers who do the wrong thing—no union or employer should be above the law.

Only yesterday Master Electricians Australia issued a statement regarding the dispute at the Sunshine Coast University Hospital site in Kawana. It said—

The ABCC is essential to productivity on construction sites around the country—that's why we're supporting the Turnbull Government in the call for it to be reinstated.

Unlike those opposite, we recognise that the construction industry is one of the key pillars driving economic development and activity in this state, creating jobs and building important public infrastructure that improves our standard of living.

The latest in a long line of projects that have been stalled by union bosses is the Sunshine Coast University Hospital, which was commenced under the LNP. Believe it or not, this is not the first time there has been such a delay in the construction of a major public hospital; it also happened at the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital during the final stages of its completion. The Labor government has a record of not stopping this lawlessness across worksites and industrial relations policies since it was elected some 15 months ago. We know the role of the CFMEU and ETU in opening doors to Labor government ministers' offices. We know that the Labor government owes its existence to the union movement and, whether it is state Labor or federal Labor, nothing changes. Government policy is dictated by union bosses and self-interest, and political self-interest comes ahead of governing the state in the interests of Queenslanders. Only the LNP can get Queensland going.