




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BROADWATER

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

 **Miss BARTON** (Broadwater—LNP) (10.28 pm): I rise to speak this evening to the Industrial Relations Bill. At the outset, I can say that I do not intend to canvass every single element that is contained in this bill. My colleague the shadow minister for industrial relations and the member for Kawana did a fantastic job earlier this evening of putting the opposition's case. There are one or two things in particular that I want to highlight and focus on tonight.

I join with my LNP colleagues in opposing this bill. I am disappointed that there are some provisions with respect to domestic and family violence leave. I note that the member for Condamine touched on that in his contribution. I think it is particularly disappointing today on a day where many members of this House are wearing white ribbons and many members of this House took an oath. We acknowledge the bipartisan support that reforms around domestic and family violence have had, but there are some very important and well-thought-out provisions that are contained in this bill that, quite frankly, the opposition were never going to be able to support. I think it is a real shame that we have a government that is looking to play wedge politics with such an important issue.

The issues that I wanted to touch on in my contribution this evening relate to the public holiday being declared for Easter Sunday as well as the state's ability to intervene and terminate industrial action. I will touch, firstly, on the decision to make Easter Sunday a public holiday. I am very, very lucky to represent an amazing part of Queensland. Over long weekends like Easter and many others, particularly in the lead-up to the Christmas period, my electorate—like so many others around Queensland and particularly on the coast—is home to many visitors and many tourists. Over the Easter long weekend, the Gold Coast is a very, very popular destination for tourists to visit.

Mrs Stuckey: It's a full house.

Miss BARTON: I take the interjection from the member for Currumbin and a former minister for tourism—the Gold Coast is indeed a full house over the Easter long weekend. One of the things we are really proud of not only in my electorate of Broadwater but across the Gold Coast is the fantastic offerings that we have—whether it is the many, many restaurants which are small businesses in my electorate or some of the larger entertainment and family tourist offerings that we have on the broader Gold Coast. It really concerns me that we are debating tonight as part of this legislation a provision that is going to make it so much more difficult for those small businesses which are tourism operators or hospitality operators, particularly on the Gold Coast. It is really disappointing that the House is debating a provision that will make it so much harder for small businesses in those tourist areas—whether it is the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, North Queensland, Far North Queensland or the Whitsundays. The government is looking to pass a provision that is going to make it so much more difficult for small businesses to be able to operate during their peak periods for tourists.

We know that if you make it too expensive for small businesses to be able to operate then they just will not open. I remember at Easter last year there was a lot of debate in the media on the Gold Coast around the fact that a lot of small business operators could not afford to operate over the Easter long weekend. That means that tourists who come to Queensland do not get the opportunity to see the

fantastic offerings of our many small business tourism and hospitality operators. It also means that those who work in those small businesses—those who work at the many cafes in my electorate, or the many restaurants and hotels that the member for Whitsunday has, or the many restaurants and cafes that the member for Maroochydore has on the Sunshine Coast—will not be able to earn any money because those places will not open.

We have to be very conscious of the impact that this provision will have particularly on small business, but I do not think any of us on this side of the House are really surprised by the lack of concern that Labor Party members have for small business in this state. We know that they do not understand small business, that they do not come from small business, that they are not small business. One of the things that we are really, really proud of on this side of the House is that we believe in small business. We believe in supporting and enabling them and working with them because they are the economic powerhouse of this state. We are seeing tonight the Labor Party looking to really attack our small business operators.

Mrs Stuckey interjected.

Miss BARTON: They are discriminating against small business operators—I thank the member for Currumbin—in tourist hubs from the Gold Coast up to the cape by making it so much more difficult for them to operate. That is really disappointing, particularly when we see just how important tourism is not only for the Gold Coast but across Queensland.

The other issue I want to touch on is the removal of the state's ability to intervene in or to terminate industrial action. We have seen consistently across Queensland that there are some unions which see industrial action not as a tool to raise what may be very genuine safety concerns but as a tool to disrupt business, to disrupt the economy and to disrupt job growth in this state. We have seen, particularly on the Gold Coast, the ill effects of this kind of industrial action. We just need to look at all the work stoppages that we have seen at the Commonwealth Games sites.

We have seen consistently that unions like the CFMEU are not using industrial action as a tool for which it was originally intended—to raise genuine concerns about safety on a work site—but they are using industrial action to disrupt job growth and to disrupt the economy. This is having very significant and serious consequences not only on the Gold Coast, where construction is a very significant pillar of our economy, but across Queensland. This has been a significant issue for many years. I am sure we all remember the abhorrent action that was taken during the construction of the Children's Hospital here in Brisbane. It beggars belief that an industrial organisation would wish to use the construction of a Children's Hospital to play politics. It beggars belief, but then again when it comes to the actions of organisations like the CFMEU I am sure to members on this side of the House it really does not come as a surprise.

We have seen in contributions earlier today and particularly after the election all of the acknowledgements of the unions and their union mates. We know that the Labor Party is of unions, for unions and by unions. The legislation that we have before us today is looking to strike through the heart of small business, through the heart of the construction industry and through the heart of local economies. Whether it is in the construction industry, small business or local government authorities, what we see very, very clearly tonight is that this government, like all Labor governments, is controlled and dictated to by unions.

I saw senior union officials earlier today in the parliament clearly looking to lobby those last few votes of the crossbenches because they know that this is all about what they want and it has nothing to do with what everyday Queenslanders want. This is not about protecting small business, and that is what the LNP will stand up for with respect to the Easter Sunday public holiday. That is what the LNP will stand up for when it comes to saying that the government should in some cases intervene and should have the right to intervene and terminate industrial action.

It is a shame that the government are playing politics around some of the domestic and family violence reforms in this debate tonight. They are clearly playing wedge politics by putting a provision such as the one they are including tonight in a bill that they know the LNP will not be able to support. It is disgraceful that this Labor government would play politics on this day with leave for domestic and family violence victims.