



Speech By  
**Brittany Lauga**


**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 13 June 2017

## **MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

### **Regional Queensland, Employment**

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (11.54 am): I am a proud Central Queenslander. I was raised in Rocky and my husband and I are about to start our family there, but the Central Queensland region is not what it used to be. Permanent jobs are disappearing, communities are becoming ghost towns, local businesses are closing and schools are shrinking. It does not take a rocket scientist to find the culprits of regional Queenslanders' dwindling fortunes. They are precarious work, offshoring and casualisation.

What the LNP and Mr Turnbull tout as progress and competitive edge is killing our regional communities. The victims are real people, not numbers on a spreadsheet, and their stories are heartbreaking. Natalie, a young boilermaker I met last week, got her ticket working at Aurizon. She told me, as tears rolled down her face, about how scared she is for her future after Aurizon announced mass sackings last week. Paul, a local miner I met, is employed on a contract basis. Every year, in the month leading up to contract expiry time, Paul and his family are filled with worry because they do not know if he will have a job or not. My brother, Lewis, was in a casual job and is desperate to find something permanent in order to give him and his family security and certainty. Everyone knows someone like Natalie, Paul or Lewis who has been made redundant or is in insecure work.

Casualisation of the workforce is a scourge on our society. It eats away at workers' rights and entitlements, scraping away at the dignity in work, leaving workers with uncertainty and no confidence. Jobs are going overseas and local jobs are no longer secure. We need good jobs here in Australia. We need permanent, secure jobs that families can rely on. We need good Australian jobs for the benefit of working people, their families, local businesses and local communities.

Within a matter of days of Aurizon announcing it will be sacking 180 workers from the Rockhampton workshop and contracting up to 40 train driver positions at Stanwell, the company commenced the casualisation and contracting out of its workforce. Aurizon workers told me that contractors have already started appearing on site, being inducted by Aurizon to commence work. Shame on Aurizon. I am calling on the federal government to amend the Fair Work Act so that companies like Aurizon cannot get away with sacking permanent workers one day and blatantly casualising their workforce the next. We need the federal government to regulate labour hire, reshore work that has gone overseas, set mandatory local minimums for all major work, use local workers first, allow casual workers to become permanent and save our penalty rates.

Recently published financial results show that Aurizon predicted underlying earnings, before interest and tax, of almost \$1 billion. The CEO, Andrew Harding, rakes in \$1.7 million a year in salary and is eligible for up to \$6 million in bonuses, while hundreds of Central Queensland workers face the unemployment queue. There is no reason other than corporate greed for Aurizon to sack its permanent workforce and blatantly replace it with contract and labour hire workers.

The Palaszczuk government is doing its bit by making important changes to regulate the labour hire industry in Queensland, but more needs to be done at the federal level to stop the casualisation of our workforce. Despite widespread evidence of roting and the growing exploitation of Queensland workers employed through labour hire companies, Malcolm Turnbull refuses to act. Casualisation of the workforce has a huge impact on job security, pay and conditions of Australian workers. Capricornia MP Michelle Landry and the Turnbull government need to take action to stop the flow of workers out of the full-time workforce and into casual employment.

Casualisation of the Australian workforce is growing, and Australia is second only to Spain within the OECD in terms of the number of casual employees. Since 2012, 113,000 fewer Australian workers have full leave entitlements. Full and permanent employment gives dignity and gives families certainty and a positive outlook. Annual leave, sick leave and permanency are critical for maintaining a healthy and productive workforce, and the erosion of such important conditions of modern employment is a catastrophe for Australian workers. Ms Landry and the Turnbull government should consider the impact that casualisation of the workforce has on local parents who can no longer take time off to spend with their kids and do something to prevent casualisation eating away the basic rights at work.

In October my husband Wayne and I will become parents for the first time. I want our daughter to grow up in a Central Queensland that has a prosperous future and a strong community. If Mr Turnbull does not do something to fix this problem now, my dream—which is shared by thousands of Central Queenslanders—will be lost to history, the result of poor policy decisions by a cruel LNP incapable of standing up for Central Queenslanders.