




Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (3.43 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2017. Together with other LNP members I do not support this bill due to the fact that this legislation is really only about union empowerment and political payback by this Labor government to its union masters. There is little doubt that this Labor government is beholden to extensive union influence, including a number of unions with a track record of criminality, lawlessness, illegality, bullying, coercion and intimidation. To see this we only have to look at the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption headed up by former High Court Justice of Australia Dyson Heydon.

This proposed legislation is flawed as per the submissions of both the Queensland Law Society and the Queensland Bar Association. This legislation was drafted following the final report of the best practice review of Workplace Health and Safety Queensland which was published on 3 July 2017. This review made 58 recommendations.

It is important at this stage to note that this review was brought about in response to the tragic incidents and fatalities that occurred at Eagle Farm Racecourse and Dreamworld. These tragic incidents occurred on 6 October 2016 and 25 October 2016 respectively. The Dreamworld incident did not involve the death of any worker, but, as we remember, it involved the deaths of four visitors to that particular theme park. I certainly offer my condolences to the families of those involved at the time.

Mr Tim Lyons was appointed by the Hon. Grace Grace MP, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, to undertake a best practice review and also to consider and report on any potential measures, both operational and legislative, that could be undertaken to address the matters raised in the terms of reference. Mr Lyons was supported by a tripartite reference group which provided advice on the matters that were to be considered. However, for the benefit of those in the House who do not know Mr Lyons, he is in fact a former ACTU official who resigned in 2015 as the assistant secretary after failing to replace general secretary, Dave Oliver.

Mr Walker interjected.

Dr ROWAN: I take the interjection from the member for Mansfield. At the time of his resignation he said, 'The ACTU and unions must be more active in workplaces and the community.'

Mr Lyons's report made 58 recommendations, with the majority relating to operational improvements for Workplace Health and Safety Queensland or the Workplace Health and Safety Board. The issue of most concern about the release of the discussion paper was the fact that it was done on the afternoon of Thursday, 13 April 2017. Due to the four-day Easter break, the Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland, together with interested stakeholders, had only two full business days to review a 104-page document and consider its full implications.

It is important to understand that when reviewing such a document in an adequate manner, those interested and affected organisations needed to consult with members, review the sources and have face-to-face consultation with the reviewer. Noting that they only had two working days, this was simply not possible.

At this point it is also important to note some of the issues that were identified by the stakeholders after their short review of the discussion paper. Stakeholders noted that worker fatality rates have fallen substantially during the past 15 years both at a national and state level. The CCIQ strongly opposed the introduction of an additional punitive discrete offence of industrial manslaughter. The expansion of the Industrial Relations Commission as a proposed change to fix an issue which is not broken was also noted. The proof of this is that under the current arrangements disputes are handled by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. As highlighted in the best practice review, only a limited number of disputes have been lodged, indicating that this is a non-issue.

Stakeholders did not support moving away from federal harmonisation and noted that if this were to proceed it could serve to decrease Queensland's appeal to business, increase red tape and duplicate criminal burden aspects. We also know that a full review of the national system is due in 2018. Both the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association of Queensland opposed new industrial manslaughter offences and advised that the current framework and system of penalties is sufficient.

I reiterate that I and non-government members unconditionally reject the presentation and form of this defective union empowering legislation before the Queensland parliament, particularly in the absence of a regulatory impact statement. On this side of the House we believe that workplace health and safety is a shared responsibility between employers, workers, unions and safety advocates. The LNP absolutely believes in the dignity of work and the absolute right of all workers to go to work and come home safely to their families at the end of each and every working day. However, there is no other state in Australia that has the offence of industrial manslaughter.

It is vitally important that we work where we can to achieve national consistency, particularly given that many employers operate across state boundaries. The Liberal National Party is proud of our record with respect to workplace health and safety and, as we released in September 2014, workplaces were safer under the LNP. In the first two years of the Liberal National Party government, workplace fatalities reduced by 21.3 per cent, general injuries were down by 8.2 per cent and serious injuries reduced by 6.1 per cent. This proud record was achieved by increased investment in injury prevention programs and via government inspectors increasing their inspection rate on worksites by 15.2 per cent. As our shadow minister, the Hon. Jarrod Bleijie MP, the member for Kawana, mentioned in his speech, we appointed some terrific workplace health and safety ambassadors.

The reviewing parliamentary committee could not agree that the bill be passed. I would encourage all members of this House to read the statement of reservation submitted by non-government members of the committee. This flawed legislation should be seen for what it is and rejected. This union dominated Palaszczuk Labor government continues to implement an ideologically unbalanced agenda which is anti jobs, anti infrastructure and anti family whilst continuing to demonise some of our most important sectors and industries whilst also jeopardising community safety through their weak law and order policies.

What we have seen from the CFMEU again just recently has been unbelievable—threats to sexually harass and physically punish those refusing to support the CFMEU's three-month siege at the Oaky North mine. It will be interesting to hear whether Labor and Greens candidates with union linkages in the upcoming state election, including in my own electorate of Moggill, repudiate such disgraceful union behaviour.

Only the LNP has a plan to build a better Moggill and a better Queensland through creating jobs, incentivising small business to employ more young people, tackling cost of living by freezing family car registration and putting downward pressure on electricity prices. Only the LNP will deliver a balanced and fair industrial relations framework here in Queensland. I urge all members to reject this flawed union dominated Labor legislation.