



Speech By  
**Glenn Butcher**


**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

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Record of Proceedings, 13 June 2017

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Gladstone Electorate, Jobs**

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (12.26 pm): I rise today to speak about a matter of great importance in my electorate: the security of regional jobs. While our government is working hard to generate jobs in regional Queensland, we have companies putting corporate greed above the rights of workers and above our local community. Across the region we are seeing a push to casualise workforces, to undermine and to abolish conditions and to threaten the security of workers, their families and their families' futures. NRG in Gladstone is taking steps to terminate the enterprise agreement which provides job security to those workers, as well as decent paying conditions at the Gladstone Power Station. The hundreds of workers have rightly expressed deep concerns about this move.

The impact on workers of NRG's proposals at the power station includes: a reduction in job security for permanent employees with contractor clauses and wages to staff limitations removed; providing the company power to unilaterally change rosters and working hours, leaving workers no stability or certainty about the shifts they are about to do; a two-tier system for redundancy and superannuation for new and existing employees, making new staff second-class workers; and also a reduction in weekend penalty rates. Workers are not asking for anything unreasonable. They are simply seeking to maintain their current conditions. This seems pretty fair to me. NRG proposed the implementation of a skills based pay structure which has not been developed in consultation with the actual workers and then called for a vote from those said workers without any detail about the concept. The company wants greater power to make redundancies and contract out their work.

Job losses at NRG would have a significant flow-on effect in my community. The local economy across Gladstone will be hurt. There is no denying that my community has suffered from the impacts of the transition from the construction phase of LNG in Gladstone projects and follows a downturn of the resources sector in general. While we have some great projects on the horizon and we are working to diversify our economy in Gladstone, it is imperative that we actually maintain the decent jobs that we have in Gladstone, which is why it was so disappointing to hear of another company seeking to casualise its workforce and to sack workers and abandon regional Queensland. On 1 June Aurizon announced 300 job losses throughout Central and Northern Queensland. Many of these are permanent jobs that will go for good, while others will be converted into casual and contractor positions, risking the financial futures of hundreds and hundreds of regional Queensland families and their communities.

Queensland Council of Unions General Secretary, Ros McLennan, could not have said it any better. She stated—

The hard work and sweat of Queenslanders built and ran this rail network but now its private operator believes gutting regional communities is just another option to boost their bottom line.

Maintenance workshops in Rockhampton will be closed and redeveloped by the end of next year, affecting 181 workers, including electricians and fitters and turners. A further 126 train crew positions would be phased out in Central Queensland, to be replaced by 70 contractors. This will directly impact train drivers in my community, with 54 positions being lost in Gladstone.

These companies demonstrate little connection to Gladstone and our people. I know the impacts of this are being felt right across my local community. I have had NRG workers and Aurizon workers in my office and I have spoken with them at rallies. The stress this is putting on them and their families cannot be understated.

One Aurizon train driver told me of the anxiety of having to drive trains over the next 12 months wondering if he will have a job at the end of it while the company sits back and takes its time in making the decision that will change this man's future. The implications of this are far-reaching across my community. While companies are saving money and growing profits, workers lose annual level entitlements, have a reduction in their work-life balance and experience difficulty in obtaining finance to secure a roof over their families' heads.

For all the worry and anxiety being caused by these companies, the workers are pushing back. They are not just standing up for their rights; more importantly, they are standing up as comrades together to support one another. Hundreds of workers, families and community members, myself included, have been braving the cold mornings outside NRG and gathered together on the Saturday just gone to rally against Aurizon's plans. Workers and the Gladstone community stand united to send a clear message that they are willing to fight for their jobs and their community for as long as it takes.