




Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 6 September 2017

LABOUR HIRE LICENSING BILL

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (9.35 pm): I rise to speak of the urgent need for reform in the Queensland labour hire industry—an industry that is largely unregulated and presents an open invitation and a golden opportunity to dodgy owners who exploit their workers here in Queensland. It is time these organisations were held to account and that only those people who are fit and proper are entitled to be licensed to operate in this sector.

There are numerous reports proving that strict regulations are desperately needed in the labour hire sector, including a report earlier this year of a firm that was found to have underpaid their workers \$77,000 over nearly two months and a report of a former labour hire worker who had worked as a diesel fitter in the coalmining industry for over 10 years who says—

I wasn't allowed to become a permanent employee, I couldn't plan for the future and I had no safety net. When I wasn't paid correctly, there was no regulation or accountability to get it fixed.

This is disgraceful. When the LNP continues on its monotonous bleat about the unions being the destabilising influence in the operation of labour hire firms, it begs the question: is licensing of real estate agents designed to bolster union membership in the real estate industry? Are car dealers licensed so that union membership is supported in the car industry? Of course they are not. It should be remembered that it is unions, as well as other civil society groups, that have been at the forefront of uncovering much of the labour hire exploitation that has occurred. Unions are the backup to support the affected workers. That is more than we can say for the LNP.

There is broad acknowledgement that a national labour hire licensing scheme would be the most desirable outcome. However, the Deputy Prime Minister, who supports the LNP in Queensland—even though he may now be a New Zealand citizen—has made clear that the federal government is not interested in doing anything to level the playing field. In the absence of any action at the national level, the Palaszczuk government is doing all it can at a state level to protect vulnerable workers in our state and to clean up the labour hire industry.

A business-as-usual, carry-on-regardless approach is not an option in this state anymore. Yes, we do need the federal government to step in to help us ensure the Fair Work Ombudsman has the necessary power and resources to enforce compliance with the workplace laws we have. However, the existing approach is clearly not working, as report after report has uncovered similar damning evidence of exploitation of labour hire workers over a number of years. The recent ABC *Australian Story* on the tragic death of English backpacker Mia Ayliffe-Chung at Home Hill has once again put this issue in the spotlight. I commend this bill to the House because it is a good bill.