




Speech By  
**Patrick Weir**

**MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE**

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### **LABOUR HIRE LICENSING BILL**

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (12.53 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Labour Hire Licensing Bill 2017. I do this as a former member of the Finance and Administration Committee which conducted the inquiry into this very matter. For me and the non-government members, our position on this legislation has not changed. This legislation is a heavy-handed approach to the misbehaviour of a small number of labour hire operators. Simply imposing a licensing system on the industry will not resolve the problem. There is already legislation in place to address misbehaviour in the industry and to prosecute these rogue operators should that legislation be enforced. Just recently, there were two labour hire services in the Lockyer Valley that were prosecuted for underpaying employees. If the processes are followed, it can be enforced.

If the minister is concerned that there are rogue operators out there, then it would be better to allocate further funding to the Fair Work Ombudsman and increase the inspectors and resources on the ground. This was a common complaint during the inquiry—a lack of enforcement of the existing legislation. Will a licensing system stop the housing problems that we heard of in some areas of the horticulture industry? These are local government issues. What about the transport issues that we heard of. Will it address them? No, it will not.

Whilst recognising that there is a small number of rogue operators that need to be stamped out, many industry groups stated that this legislation was not the answer and would be a major impost on honest operators. This was of particular concern to groups such as AgForce, Growcom and QFF whose members simply could not survive without labour hire workers. When fruit and vegetable crops need to be harvested, they need to be harvested quickly and there needs to be a large number of employees on the ground over a very short period of time. It is simply beyond the capability and scope of most of these small farmers to put a workforce like that on the ground and supervise them over that period. Labour hire is essential in that industry.

Nobody wants to see employees exploited. If this legislation was the answer, then it could be supported but it is not. The truth is that this legislation is not designed to fix any of these problems. This legislation is simply designed to allow the unions into the labour hire industry in an effort to bolster their numbers and bolster the Labor Party campaign funds.

I have listened with interest to the contributions of those opposite. The member for Mackay was the first one to acknowledge that not all labour hire firms are rogues—the first one. Listening to some of the contributions from that side of the chamber could make one think that these labour hire workers turn up to work on a long chain with rings around their necks. I have not heard hysteria like that since the Vegetation Management Act, when all members lined up to vilify and run down landowners. This is exactly the same hysteria. I have not seen anything as bad as that since that legislation came into the House.

The recommendation from the former inquiry was to work with COAG to address these issues and work to achieve a whole-of-government response, but that does not suit this government's agenda. This is the thin end of the wedge. This is not about regulating the labour hire industry; this is about

getting the union in there and boosting union numbers and getting extra funding for the Labor Party campaigns. This is not about regulating the labour hire industry; this is about destroying it. This is about the union takeover throughout the labour hire industry. This legislation is only a union encouragement and should be seen for what it is and voted down.