




Speech By
Peter Russo

MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK

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LABOUR HIRE LICENSING BILL

 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (8.51 pm): I rise in the House tonight to speak to the Labour Hire Licensing Bill 2017 and to recommend that the House pass this legislation. The bill addresses issues that for too long have been put on the backburner. The federal government has not had the courage or the moral fibre to take on the big end of town that for far too long has been taking advantage of vulnerable workers, so it is up to the state government to do what the federal government should be doing. Where the federal Liberal National government fail, the Palaszczuk Labor government has the courage to bring legislation to the Legislative Assembly to protect once and for all vulnerable workers who for too long have been exploited.

Not long before the Finance and Administration Committee report into the labour hire industry, the Victorian government conducted an inquiry with a series of hearings across its state into the industry and the cases of abuse by contractors against workers. Findings from that inquiry led to the state of Victoria calling on the Turnbull government to implement a national labour hire licensing scheme and to tighten provisions in the Fair Work Act, but Barnaby Joyce said that the labour hire industry and the questionable practices of some contractors was something for the states to control. Deputy Speaker, you may be asking why. The comments by Barnaby Joyce simply make no sense.

I will now briefly turn to the non-government statement of reservation which seems to be another example of union bashing for the sake of it. The statement of reservation states—

Allocating more funding to policing existing fair-work inspectors would undoubtedly achieve greater results in eradicating dodgy operators under current national laws—

I repeat, under current national laws—

than this legislation will achieve.

What we have here is the federal government saying it is the state's job and the state opposition saying it is the federal government's job. This from an opposition which says that it is the alternative government of this state. As we said in the government members' statement of reservation, it is disappointing that the committee has not been able to reach consensus on a bill that is designed to protect vulnerable workers from exploitation and improve the integrity of the labour hire sector. One would have thought that this is something all sides of parliament could agree on, but unfortunately that appears not to be the case.

The bill is an appropriate and much needed response to the evidence of exploitation in the labour hire industry. As the minister said in her introductory speech, for far too long and far too often we have all heard the stories of vulnerable workers being exploited at the hands of unscrupulous labour hire operators. These are good laws and they are sorely needed to help protect workers from exploitation and to help those labour hire operators that are doing the right thing. Regulation of the labour hire sector will promote greater transparency and security of labour hire operators, give confidence to those businesses which use the services of labour hire providers, and raise the standard of integrity and professional conduct across the industry. I commend the bill to the House.