




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

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LABOUR HIRE LICENSING BILL

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (9.52 pm): I joined the Labor Party 23 years ago first and foremost to ensure Queensland workers got a fair go at work. That fair go at work should not be for a privileged few in full-time permanent work; it should be for all working people. We on this side believe in tolerance and respect and in standing up to protect workers from exploitation and mistreatment.

While there might be some occasions when it makes business sense for other reasons, in my experience contracting out and labour hire is primarily about cutting the wages of workers, taking away their job security, making them more compliant and leaving them unsure whether they will have work the next day or the next week, and undermining the employment security of other direct employees.

Some of the stories we have heard about worker exploitation are appalling. We saw cases where farm workers were forced to work entire days harvesting fruit without food, drink or pay, as well as being forced to live in isolated dilapidated accommodation. I have seen firsthand how unscrupulous—

An opposition member interjected.

Dr MILES: Listen to this story. I have seen—

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Miss Barton): Order, member for Kawana. Could the minister please direct his comments through the chair and not across the chamber.

Dr MILES: I have seen firsthand how unscrupulous contracting arrangements can lead to worker abuse. In 2014 I met a worker engaged as a contract cleaner. She told me of a man who had forced himself onto five women in locked rooms, including herself. He offered them lifts home with the expectation of sexual favours in return. He threatened them with deportation if they resisted—

Mr Mander interjected.

Dr MILES: Are you listening to this story?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

An opposition member interjected.

Dr MILES: Swear on a pile of Bibles.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I am calling the House to order. Both sides should come to order. Member for Everton, your interjections are not being taken and I have asked the minister to direct his comments through the chair, not across the chamber to other members. The minister has the call.

Dr MILES: He threatened them with deportation if they resisted and, if they complained, he fired them. This was not at just any workplace: this was at the Brisbane airport, one of our most respected corporate citizens. Too often companies believe that by using labour hire instead of directly employing staff they can avoid responsibility for their treatment. No worker, male or female, cleaner, teacher or nurse, be they on a farm or at an airport, deserves to be treated that way.

Despite what those opposite said tonight, despite their attacks, I am proud. It was my union, United Voice, which raised the alarm bell in that case. It is shameful that, after hearing these stories, Tim Nicholls and the LNP could not care less. The parliamentary Finance and Administration Committee inquiry into labour hire found serious and systemic issues of mistreatment and exploitation related to labour hire arrangements. This bill delivers the government's response to that inquiry. I am proud that Queensland is leading the nation in becoming the first jurisdiction to introduce a bill to establish a mandatory labour hire licensing scheme. I am proud to sit on these benches with the member for Brisbane Central, who is delivering on these commitments. Queenslanders would not forgive us if we overlooked workers' interests and failed to put them first. They will not forgive those opposite, Tim Nicholls or the LNP for opposing this bill. I commend the bill to the House.