




Speech By
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LABOUR HIRE LICENSING BILL

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (9.38 pm): As a member of the Finance and Administration Committee it gives me great pleasure to rise tonight to speak about the Labour Hire Licensing Bill 2017. It has been very interesting to listen to speakers from both sides of the chamber here tonight. I respect the member for Mirani, Jim Pearce. Jim is someone I would classify as having good, old-fashioned Labor values. There is no disputing that.

Mr Mander: A true believer.

Mr MINNIKIN: I take the interjection from the member for Everton. He is a true believer. We have also heard the minister interject many times tonight and say that she is very proud to wear her trade union hat. That is all fine and well, but at the end of the day what we are looking for here is nuanced and balanced debate. The previous speaker made some very good points.

The member for Toowoomba South worked through the draft bill section by section and made some outstanding and very good points. Let us cut to the chase: when we look at the electoral cycle, we are now in the back end or the top of the ninth, so to speak. It is indeed time to pay the piper. It is absolutely screaming through every bit of ink that you see. As a member of the committee—and I will go through some of the submissions that we received—this is absolutely something that needs to be kicked into the long grass. This is indeed nothing more than a sap to the union bosses because we know that they are worried about losing control and, most importantly, access to workers. Fill in the gaps: what does that actually mean? It means a lack of future membership growth. It also means—kerching!—less donations to the Labor Party which then flows to fewer delegates to the state Labor conference.

In fact, as a member of the committee I want to play a little game for some of those who might be interested. If we go through the committee's review and listen to stakeholder comments, there were 41 submissions to the committee. In the interests of time, let me highlight some of the most notable: the Queensland Nurses' Union—support; Allens—raised several issues; and the AMWU—funnily enough—support and, as was said earlier, donated \$31,279 in 2016. In the interests of having a good time, let us continue: the Australian Sugar Milling Council—oppose; the AMIEU—funnily enough after giving the ALP in 2016 \$16,000—support; BHP Billiton—oppose the drafting; AgForce—oppose; Steps Group—oppose; Growcom—oppose; CCIQ—oppose; the Queensland Law Society—oppose the drafting; the National Farmers Federation—oppose.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Mr MINNIKIN: I can hear the bleating from the member for Waterford; bless her heart. Let me continue: the Housing Industry Association—oppose. There is a recurring theme. United Voice's donation, which led to it funnily enough supporting, was the princely sum of \$245,373.

An opposition member: That buys a bit of influence!

Mr MINNIKIN: It buys a fair degree of influence; it certainly does. I will finish it off with a token mere bagatelle: a small contribution of \$11,000 to the financially illiterate across the chamber also donated in 2016 from the MUA. The non-government members of the committee reiterate—we have heard two of them already, the member for Mermaid Beach and the member for Toowoomba South—our rejection of the need for this legislation as expressed in the findings from the inquiry into the practices of the labour hire industry in Queensland. The report to the House was tabled in 2016.

Mr Harper interjected.

Mr MINNIKIN: The bleeding heart from Logan will get his chance, but I can tell members what—

An opposition member: It was Thuringowa.

Mr MINNIKIN: I am sorry; we have someone who is a look-alike and sound-alike. I apologise very much to the member for Logan—I really do—on multiple fronts. As noted at this time, it was irrelevant that the inquiry produced no supporting evidence that a licensing regime would in fact address the problems of rogue operators in the highly successful labour hire industry, and this union directed Labor government would proceed with introducing labour hire legislation to further the interests of its union masters regardless of the outcome. This has occurred through this proposed legislation and the non-government members are still of the opinion that this legislation is a politically inspired opportunity by this government to generate more fees from the industry whilst at the same time promoting union membership. This legislation will not stamp out the abhorrent practice of unscrupulous rogue operators to any significant degree. It will simply stifle employment.

There was evidence of the existence of some unscrupulous operators in the labour hire industry. That is irrefutable—absolutely irrefutable—but this bill is a sledgehammer. As was said by the member for Kawana and maybe the member for Mermaid Beach in his contribution earlier and maybe the member for Toowoomba South, this approach uses a sledgehammer to crack a walnut to overcome the really small number of undesirable operators in the industry, and they absolutely deserve to be weeded out. There are no arguments on this side of the chamber about undesirable operators in the industry. They should be absolutely rejected every time. At the end of the day, it is both a complete overkill and a political excuse to seek greater union participation in the labour hire industry.

There is no certainty that rogue operators will in fact be defeated by this very legislation, and this was confirmed by departmental officers who fronted the committee. There is no national adherence to the regime inflicted by this particular legislation on employers operating in Queensland. It is yet another layer of bureaucratic paperwork, shuffling, delay and obtrusion designed by the union—via select government members—to halt and arrest the decline in membership on behalf of their union puppetmasters. In fact, allocating more funding to policing existing Fair Work inspectors would undoubtedly achieve greater results in eradicating dodgy operators. I repeat: the dodgy operators need to be addressed, but it would have been far more beneficial to allocate more funding in that particular area of public policy. That would make far more sense.

In fact, several employer groups that supported the establishment of a licensing regime under this legislation would probably be unaware of the longer term consequences of the legislation in terms of, for example, fees payable and union demands meant to satisfy licensing requirements in the longer term. In fact, despite the fact that there is a waiver provision in the legislation, there is still an undetermined catch-all philosophy—we are always wary on this side of the chamber of the dreaded catch-all philosophy—that may impact on disabled employment groups and other yet to be determined groups that will fall under the umbrella of this wide-reaching labour hire definition.

The third-party rights review in the proposed bill will provide trade unions and other third parties with a relatively unrestrained right to involve themselves in delaying and potentially overturning decisions which they should have no expectation or right to influence—none whatsoever. While employers see great advantage in utilising the effectiveness and the cost competitiveness of the labour hire industry, the union movement is obviously concerned about the industry's effect on its dwindling union membership. I have heard figures of 15 per cent. I read in the *Australian*—and I stand to be corrected—figures around about 13 per cent three months ago. State industrial relations 30 years ago when I was at uni were nearly around about 38 per cent to 40 per cent. How the mighty have fallen! It is about their ability to control matters in relation to employers' use of a union affiliated workforce.

This legislation is neither warranted nor efficacious. This legislation is specifically designed to enshrine a state based system of licensing labour hire firms which will further empower the union movement in its future control of the growing sector of the union movement. CCIQ's submission states—

... CCIQ does not believe labour hire warrant legislative intervention and increased regulation.

It went on to say—

The prospect of an additional regulatory scheme is particularly daunting for businesses already suffering from the cumulative compliance burden of workplace relations laws, workplace health and safety laws, and other legal requirements.

They went on to say—

Greater regulation of the labour hire industry would impose significant additional costs on already compliant firms.

What a pure stroke of genius from those opposite! It goes on—

Imposing another layer of regulation and business in Queensland would be a counter-productive measure towards achieving job creation and economic growth. To this end, the CCIQ believes this bill will add to an already significant compliance burden for businesses.

There is absolutely no doubt about that. They went to say—

It will undermine—

this is the so-called mantra of a job-creating government—

job growth, and create an unnecessary layer of legal requirements to which a sufficient safety net for temporary forms of employment already exists.

I repeat: at the end of the day there are members on this side of the chamber who do come from strong union families. Over many years we have respected greatly some of the basic rights and freedoms and we acknowledge that, but those opposite come into this place with legislation that is so shoddy that one can shoot holes through it. They present it in this chamber and expect it to be passed like any other piece of legislation that the minister has produced so far. However, it is so shoddy and so sloppy in its execution and framing that it will get what it rightly deserves. Along with the non-government members of the Finance and Administration Committee, we reject this wholesale. Absolutely, it should be kicked into the long grass.