



Speech By  
**Brittany Lauga**


**MEMBER FOR KEPPEL**

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**MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Keppel Electorate, Big W Store Closures; News Contracting and Logistics**

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (2.21 pm): Firstly, I want to acknowledge all employees of Big W in North Rockhampton and Yeppoon after Woolworths announced these two stores are being targeted for closure. It is very sad news which will no doubt affect hundreds of local staff and their families. I really hope they do not close because it would have a huge impact on our local economy. If they do, I hope that all Big W employees receive their entitlements and employees are supported throughout the closures.

I rise today to talk about News Contracting and Logistics, a local welding and fabrication company based in Yeppoon which, together with Rockhampton based labour hire company Champ Resources, travelled to the Philippines recently to bring sheet metal workers from the Philippines to Central Queensland. News' corporate manager, Matilda Chapman, appeared on a promotional video for the Philippines recruitment company where she said—

I have probably been a bit disillusioned in the recruitment sector over the past three or four years in Australia with work attitudes, ethics and sense of entitlement that comes from a lot of the Australian workforce, which is a negative thing to say, but it's a reality.

It is one thing to justify the use of foreign labour with a skills shortage, but it is completely un-Australian to say that our workers are self-entitled, that they lack work ethic and to then try to fill Australian jobs with foreign labour because you have a problem with Australian workers. How dare she tar all workers with the same brush? I for one will not stand for this. How dare this woman stereotype and slander our local workers. If she is not prepared to give local people a go, I suggest that she pack up and leave. Why isn't this company investing in training and development of local people—of Australian people—to support them into jobs? I guess they are of the same mind as the federal government, which does nothing to develop our local workers except slash money for TAFE and training. They are cheating local apprentices, trainees and experienced tradespeople of further training and job opportunities.

Another similar case is when rail giant Aurizon sacked hundreds of Central Queensland workers, including train drivers, and then gave permanency residency to 11 foreign train drivers, refusing Australian workers the opportunity to take those positions. What a rot! We need good Australian jobs for the benefit of working people, their families, local businesses and local communities.

I am proud that the Palaszczuk government led the way in 2017 by becoming the first jurisdiction to introduce a labour hire licensing scheme. Those opposite argued against this, regurgitating the rhetoric of big business and dodgy labour hire operators—rhetoric which attacks workers' rights and entitlements. They said in their dissenting committee report to these laws that action was not warranted or efficacious. I can tell the House that every single day I hear stories from local workers, whether it is about dodgy labour hire operators or the thousands of cases where local workers cannot afford to have time off sick or spend Christmas with their families because, despite working for months or years, the boss will not make them permanent. A national licensing scheme for labour hire would be the best

outcome, but there is continued absence of national leadership on this matter. In fact, because of Senator Hanson's deal with the Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government, federal laws to act on this issue have been voted down.

Central Queensland has some of the highest levels of casualisation and dodgy labour hire in Australia, so one may wonder where the member for Capricornia is on this issue. One would think that the Nats would be standing up to the Libs in Canberra on this issue. She is in complete denial that 457 visas are even an issue, declaring that it is naive to suggest that the 457 skilled migration program is flooding the national labour market. When she is in Queensland Michelle Landry says that she is standing up for battlers, but in Canberra she stabs them in the back. She has done it on penalty rates. She has done it on pensions. Now she has done it on labour hire. Her time in Canberra is about to come to an end, because I will be fighting every day to ensure that the people of Central Queensland have a Labor government in Canberra that will work with the Palaszczuk government to restore job security and dignity in workplaces across Central Queensland.