




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Record of Proceedings, 27 November 2019

HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning) (12.26 pm): There are two things we know for certain at this time of year: Christmas Day will fall on 25 December and the LNP will attack workers. You can bet that the opposition leader, the deputy opposition leader, the member for Kawana and all the other members opposite will be relaxing at home on Christmas Eve, but when the Palaszczuk Labor government says that people who have to work should get a bit of extra compensation, it is a total disaster. It is one rule for the LNP and another rule for retail workers in this state. Having sacked 14,000 public sector workers after assuring them they had nothing to fear, having driven the unemployment rate to a peak of 7.3 per cent, and having worked themselves into a frenzy about the very existence of trade unions and the temerity of working people to want to organise to protect their rights, they are at it yet again.

The reform before the House to grant workers a public holiday on Christmas Eve after 6 pm is good policy. It is fair, decent and overdue. The LNP's position looks like it was composed by Scrooge himself. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition did not begin her contribution in this debate—I looked forward to it—with 'Bah humbug!' That is her vision for the lot of working people in this state—shackled to the retail counter, working to midnight as though it were any other day.

Christmas Eve has a special significance for the Australian community. It is a time for family and friends, for reflection and preparation, for wrapping of presents and finishing off Christmas decorations and, for many Australians, observing the important religious occasion of Christmas. I am sure many members of the opposition will be attending church on Christmas Eve. They will not be working, but those who are working and do not have the opportunity to observe the religious significance of Christmas should be compensated for that.

As I have said, Christmas is a time for family, friends and community. This bill does not spell the end of Christmas Eve trading; it just ensures people obliged to work are properly compensated for their labour and the disruption to their family life. We in this House have heard a lot about work-life balance and about what we as legislators can do to ensure Queenslanders have access to the kind of working conditions that promote a dignified life. It is all very well to champion the quiet Australians but, like every other LNP slogan, it is hollow and meaningless, because they are the people the LNP want to vote against.

This bill is for hardworking Queenslanders who do their very best to provide for their families—those hardworking Queenslanders who work in both the public and the private sectors. If we are to keep those workers from their families on what is arguably the most important night of the year, they deserve to be paid at an appropriate rate, just like they are on any other public holiday. The LNP's opposition to this bill is not just mean-spirited; it is deeply ideological. They have demonstrated again and again through their actions that they see working people as little more than unit labour costs to be discarded as easily as Christmas wrapping on Boxing Day.

Who can forget the thousands of public sector workers they sacked by email, Campbell Newman's pledge to get out the pooper scooper to sweep up the remnants of their shattered aspirations, or his even more bizarre claim that ex-public servants were approaching him on the street to thank him for sacking them?

The contributions of those opposite to this debate show that they have learnt nothing from those toxic anti-worker policies of the Newman LNP government in which many of them served. Mark my words: should Queenslanders suffer the unhappy fate of the LNP returning to office, those dark days will be visited upon Queenslanders again.

In the parliament today I want to pay tribute to the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association that has fought hard for this change. I declare in this debate that I am very proudly a member of the Australian Workers' Union, but the first union I joined when I was 15 years of age was the SDA and I am proud to stand with and for it in this debate. Just as it is in the LNP's DNA to go to war with workers, it is in the shoppies' DNA to fight hard for some of the lowest paid in our community. When I visit my local Big W at Underwood I am always recognised by my shop assistant mates and today I want to recognise them in the people's place—the parliament of Queensland. I stand shoulder to shoulder with the SDA when it comes to the fight against the LNP members whose priorities are all wrong.

At a time when even the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia has identified flat wages growth as the greatest threat we face to economic growth, the grinch from Nanango—the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the LNP—cannot see beyond her ideological blind spot to simply give workers a fair go. Our government, the Palaszczuk Labor government, and the Australian Labor Party will always look after the working people of our state who are the backbone of the Queensland economy. I strongly commend this bill to the House.