




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNELL

Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2019

MOTION

Labour Movement

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (2.02 pm): I move—

That this House joins together on 1 May to recognise and celebrate the historic achievements of the labour movement in improving the lives of workers in Australia and notes and supports the initiatives of the Palaszczuk government in improving the working lives of Queenslanders, including providing safer workplaces and secure jobs for Queenslanders by:

1. taking urgent action on silicosis in the manufactured benchtop industry;
2. reforming workers compensation arrangements and processes to support victims of black lung and other dust lung diseases;
3. introducing industrial manslaughter laws;
4. establishing nation-leading labour hire licensing laws;
5. initiating a parliamentary inquiry into wage theft;
6. legislating 10 days paid domestic and family violence leave;
7. appointing a stand-alone workplace health and safety prosecutor;
8. calling for the Fair Work Commission to provide real wage rises for our lowest paid and oppose cuts to penalty rates;
9. returning Labour Day to where it rightly should be in May; as well as—
10. repealing the attacks on working Queenslanders by the Newman government including by:
 - (a) reversing the cuts to front-line services and the sacking of 14,000 public sector workers;
 - (b) reinstating the rights of injured workers to take common law action by removing the LNP's unfair, arbitrary threshold;
 - (c) restoring the bargaining and workplace rights for our nurses, teachers, police, doctors, firefighters, ambulance officers, teacher aides, school cleaners and thousands of other public servants; and
 - (d) returning workplace entry rights to help protect worker safety in dangerous work sites.

I am very proud that today marks May Day. Since the 1890s, 1 May has been celebrated as International Workers' Day in recognition of the struggles and achievements of workers and their unions in improving working conditions. Next Monday once again after many, many years I will proudly join the annual Queensland Labour Day march. I will be there with the Premier, other members on this side of the House and thousands and thousands of union members. It will be one of the biggest Labour Day marches around Australia.

Mr Bleijie: Sorry, I can't make it.

Ms GRACE: Member for Kawana, I will take that interjection. We are more than happy to receive your apology. Thousands of rank and file union members will celebrate the achievements of the Labor movement here in Queensland, Australia and internationally. How proud are we in this state? The Labor movement has achieved the eight-hour working day; annual holiday leave, sick leave and other leave; a decent minimum wage; penalty rates; and the wonderful occupational superannuation that we brought

into this country. Workers are benefitting from this in their retirement. None of the achievements enjoyed by workers came easily and they were not handed to them by benevolent employers: they were achieved through the hard work and persistence of the labour movement banding together, acting collectively through their unions and in the workplace and through the election of representatives to public office.

One of the best things that we can do for workers is give them a job, and in this state we have given them 192,000 since we were elected. These are not just any jobs: these are jobs in secure and well-paid positions. We have a very proud history when it comes to industrial relations in this state. At the next federal election, which is coming soon, a choice will have to be made about stagnant wages growth under the current federal LNP government. The Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government has failed to act on anything to do with workers. They have failed to act on rampant wage theft, which has been reported and is out of control. They have failed to address entrenched low wages growth. Wages have flatlined to the point where the inflation rate was zero per cent in the last quarter. That is a disgrace.

There has been no action on national labour hire licensing laws. 'No, that's all right. We've heard about the dudding that's going on there, but we'll let them continue.' They have refused to help families who face domestic violence and refused to legislate 10 days paid family leave like we did here in this state. They have even failed to provide inspectors in the workplace. There are fewer inspectors now than when we had industrial relations in this state in 2005. That is an absolute disgrace. They have appointed employer after employer to the Fair Work Commission to the point that it now has one-third worker representation and two-thirds employer representation, so they are stacking it. This is the other one I love: when the ideological royal commission into unions came up they found nothing, but they voted 26 times against the banking royal commission, which saw CEOs dropping like flies. They found nothing as a result of the union inquiry, but they voted 26 times against the banking royal commission.

We know that when it comes to supporting workers the Palaszczuk Labor government has delivered in spades. We also know that those opposite have stood by and done nothing to lobby their federal counterparts to step in and support Queensland workers. Their strange ideological bent against unions and workers is atrocious. Federal Labor has already committed to support working people, including a commitment to establish a national labour hire licensing scheme. We were the first state to do it; they are going to follow us. A Shorten Labor government will restore penalty rates for low-paid workers. We said no to that; they are going to bring them back. They will ensure that labour hire workers receive the same pay as those they work beside—and that is the way it should be—and support a real wage increase for workers in this country. Wages have flatlined. The rules are stacked against workers.

If you want to change these things, if you want to bring in what the Palaszczuk government has brought in, if you want to address decent workers compensation, vote Labor. Under the stewardship of the member for Kawana, all those workers with coal workers' pneumoconiosis and silicosis would not have received common law rights because of their five per cent threshold. That is a disgrace. We got rid of it. Vote Labor: that is what workers need.

(Time expired)