




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 19 September 2019

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Christmas Eve

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.06 am): The night before Christmas has become as important to families, friends and religious communities as the day itself. Like many others in the community, for most of us in this House Christmas Eve is a night that we get to spend quality time with family and friends—

Mr Mander interjected.

Mr Dick interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Sorry, Minister. The member for Everton will cease his interjections and the Minister for State Development will cease his interjections.

Ms GRACE: Interesting. I would have thought that the member for Everton would have supported this as a religious—

Mr SPEAKER: I do not think we require any commentary, Minister. Please continue.

Ms GRACE: Like many others in the community, for most of us in the House Christmas Eve is a night to spend quality time with family and friends at church and religious services or other community and festive events or travelling to be with loved ones on Christmas Day.

There is a group of workers who do not have that luxury and have to work—in pubs and clubs, warehouses, hospitals and aged-care facilities, on public transport and across the emergency services. The Palaszczuk government believes that, because of the importance of the evening, these workers should get the extra legal protections and entitlements that come with a public holiday. That is why we sought feedback from the community on a proposal to create a part-day public holiday for six hours—from 6 pm on Christmas Eve.

By making Christmas Eve a public holiday, workers who are required to work would be entitled in reasonable circumstances to refuse to be rostered on and, if they work, workers would be compensated fairly in line with their award or agreement. The RIS attracted strong community support during public consultation, with 1,779 submissions received, 1,271, or 71 per cent, in favour of creating a part-day public holiday and 508 submissions, or 29 per cent, opposed to the proposal.

We received submissions from retail workers, bus drivers, mothers and religious leaders, just to name a few, who wrote of the ever-growing importance of Christmas Eve as a special time of year and the need to properly compensate those who were required to work. Some have been working every Christmas Eve for years, like Rhonda Jenner who said in her submission that a public holiday would be excellent to spend time with family. 'If this happens this year,' Rhonda said, 'It will be the first one I've had home with family for eight years.'

On the basis of the strong support from the community, the Palaszczuk government will move to legislate this new part-day public holiday. Queensland will be the third state jurisdiction to implement this measure, with South Australia and the Northern Territory making similar changes in 2012 and 2016

respectively. A 2013 review of the arrangements in South Australia found that there was a strong opinion that Christmas Eve held a special status in the community in line with it being recognised as a public holiday and a special time for busy families to spend quality time together.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, you are warned under the standing orders.

Ms GRACE: The interjections are really quite amazing, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, can I give you some guidance: if I have dealt with the situation I do not require any commentary.

Ms GRACE: Christmas Eve has become as special for quality family time and church and religious communities as the day itself and the Palaszczuk government's plan to enact a part-day public holiday for this special time in 2019 reflects this change in Queensland's community values.