




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL

Record of Proceedings, 27 November 2019

HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (3.22 pm), in reply: I thank honourable members for their contributions to the debate on the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. This bill is for workers such as Luke Ahern, who has had two Christmas Eves off in 22 years; Brett Carpenter, a shiftworker, who has been working Christmas Eves for 21 years; and Rhonda Jenner, who is looking forward to this bill passing because it will mean the first Christmas Eve she has had at home for eight years and it would be excellent to spend time with her family.

When we consider the contributions from both sides of the House, we do not have to be Einstein to work out that the only side of this House that supports workers and a balanced approach is the Labor government. This Labor government will continue to deliver for hardworking Queenslanders. Honestly, I could not believe the member for Kawana could outdo himself but he outdid himself in his contribution to the debate. His contribution was bordering on hysteria. We are all used to the union bashing from those members opposite. We heard it time and time again during this debate. That is just par for the course now. That is all the member for Kawana had. There was no substance.

Yesterday the member for Kawana decided to raise the level a notch or two with wild, baseless allegations and assertions about corruption, that somehow we are pro union but anti worker, that there will be jobs lost because maybe some businesses, which currently decide not to open anyway, may not open and so somehow it is jobs lost without understanding that this legislation has nothing to do with somebody losing their job. There was also the usual name-calling and character assassination. It was absolutely unbelievable.

In his contribution the member's smoking gun was a payment disclosed by the SDA—and I acknowledge Chris Gazenbeek and his delegates who are in the gallery—on 5 August. Somehow this is corruption—'We're going to the CCC,' or whatever. The fact is that the payment of \$3,850 disclosed by the SDA was a standard annual payment from the union for its delegates to attend the state ALP conference, which this year was held on the weekend of 23 and 24 August. For the benefit of the member for Kawana, let me say it again: it was a standard payment for delegates, such as the SDA has in the gallery this afternoon, to attend the state ALP conference. Honestly, the contribution from the member was bordering on hysteria. The craziness that we heard was absolutely unbelievable.

The member for Kawana referred to amendments to bills. He referred to a bill in relation to racing that I inherited. I will give the member for Kawana one statistic. When he was a minister he introduced two bills and then moved 169 amendments to those two bills. When it comes to moving amendments to bills in this House, the member for Kawana still holds the record. He should enjoy it while he can.

There is no doubt that making Christmas Eve a public holiday has been canvassed quite broadly—in the RIS, by the parliamentary committee. Many workers, including members of the SDA and their delegates, have campaigned for this amendment and this Labor government is proud to be

delivering it. Christmas Eve is a special time of year. Not one of the members opposite acknowledged that Christmas Eve is a special time of year for families and friends—not one of them. Their contributions were all about business trading, profits and losses. Unbelievable economic analyses were made.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Ms GRACE: I say to the member for Clayfield that it is a family time. He should get on board. His children who work for Tabcorp are being paid under the agreement. They get penalty rates because of that union agreement. They deserve the benefits that they get under that agreement and the member for Clayfield should never forget it. That agreement is there because of the union.

I do not know where the members opposite have been, but businesses make decisions about Christmas Eve. Last year I remember seeing quite a lot of businesses closed on Christmas Eve because people wanted family time. In addition, I remember walking past a business in my electorate where there was a blackboard out the front that said, 'We are closing today because we want our staff to enjoy family time. Thank you for your patronage. We will see you on Christmas Day.' That was unbelievable. There are good employees out there who do that. I saw that and businesses will make such decisions all the time based upon their—

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Order! Member for Clayfield, your interjections are not being taken.

Ms GRACE: If the member for Clayfield would listen, the point I was making is that businesses will make decisions for a number of reasons—the benefit to their workers, the benefit to their business. If businesses can trade and make a dollar, I will tell the member that they will trade. If business owners want to spend time with their family, they will also spend time with their family. Those decisions will continue to be made. This bill protects workers in that area. It gives those workers an opportunity, under the relevant legislation, under reasonable circumstances, to be able to decide whether they work or not. They are given that protection. At the same time, in line with their award, or their agreement, they will get penalty rates.

I remind members that we are talking about a special time of year and we are talking about six hours. After listening to those opposite, the whole sky will fall in. I do not know many businesses, small or whatever, that open until midnight anyway. Whether they trade or not trade are decisions that businesses make based on the circumstances that they find themselves in.

As I said, I do not know where these people have been around Christmas Eve, I do not know where they are or what they are doing, but I see a lot of businesses making decisions when there are no public holidays. Businesses make decisions on whether to trade on Easter Friday, Easter Monday or, as the member for Clayfield mentioned, Anzac Day. Businesses make decisions on all kinds of public holidays and this will be no different. The scaremongering from those opposite is laughable.

Even the member for Maroochydore could not bring herself to mention the special requirements and the special place that Christmas Eve has in families, in homes, in religious institutions or in cultural events. Knowing her beliefs I was astounded that she could not stand up for family time on Christmas Eve.

Ms Simpson interjected.

Ms GRACE: In this day and age family time is special.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Order! Minister, resume your seat. The chatter has to stop. The interjections are not being taken.

Ms GRACE: We know the Christmas period, including Christmas Eve, has personal, social, religious and cultural significance—

Ms Simpson interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Maroochydore!

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. With respect to your ruling that the interjections were not being taken, I respectfully recall the minister questioning the religious beliefs of a member in this House. She was talking about the religion of a member in the House. The member was simply replying.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Kawana. I do not need your counsel. There is no point of order.

Ms GRACE: We know that the Christmas period, including Christmas Eve, has personal, social, religious and cultural significance for many in the community, as well as being an important time for businesses and for the provision of public services such as health and emergency services. For six

hours on Christmas Eve, from 6 pm to midnight, we believe workers have a legitimate expectation and desire to take part in Christmas Eve events and enjoy that special time with family and friends. This should be recognised and protected with a part-day public holiday that allows workers to refuse to work in reasonable circumstances and for those workers who do have to work to be paid penalty rates that compensate them for missing out on that special time. The Palaszczuk government is always proud to be in the corner of Queensland workers. We are proud to demonstrate that once again in this bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Under the provisions of the business program agreed to by the House and the time allocated for this stage of the bill having expired, the question is that the bill be now read a second time.