




Speech By
Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2019

MOTION

Labour Movement

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (2.27 pm): It is a pleasure to rise to speak in support of the motion moved by the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations to recognise the ongoing importance of the labour movement in Queensland and beyond. To recognise and celebrate how far we have come while acknowledging the work of the labour movement is far from done in this country. When I started my first job as a 14-year-old working nine or so hours a week after school and on weekends, I did so with a decent minimum wage and penalty rates, with a meal allowance and with minimum training and safety requirements—all of which were hard fought for and won for the benefit of people in this country by the labour movement. These entitlements and protections did not come easy. They were achieved by workers banding together, acting collectively through their union in the workplace, to achieve real change for workers in this country, and I thank them sincerely for their struggle. I am proud to be a member of the Australian Labor Party and this Labor government, which will always hold at our very core the values so aptly stated by Gough Whitlam to—

Promote equality, to involve the people of Australia in the decision-making processes of our land, and to liberate the talents and uplift the horizons of the Australian people.

These are values that equally drive the labour movement and unions in this state and country.

Over the past five years, we have dedicated ourselves to undoing the damage done by the previous LNP Newman government to the cooperative relationship between employers and unions and the workers they represent in this state. Although the opposition has remained openly hostile to unions and workers—as we are hearing again today—across the state, we worked alongside them.

We worked to restore employment security for Queensland public sector workers after the LNP shamefully sacked so many, introduced labour hire licensing laws to protect vulnerable workers from exploitation, restored the right for injured workers to take common law action by removing the LNP's unfair arbitrary threshold that disadvantaged over 9,000 of Queensland's most vulnerable and we have legislated an entitlement to 10 days paid domestic and family violence leave. We have supported decent real wage increases for the low paid in annual wage reviews before the Fair Work Commission. We stood up to support penalty rates for those workers who miss out on time with their families as they try to make ends meet. There have been so many more meaningful protections.

Although much has been achieved, there is still so much to do. I turn my comments particularly now to wage theft in this country. A fair day's pay for a fair day's work is an ideal that is deeply rooted in Australia's labour history and egalitarian values. To most, it is an indisputable right that a worker is fairly and duly remunerated in accordance with their effort and the law. It is not a right that everyone respects and it is not a right that everyone enjoys. Thanks to the Premier and industrial relations Minister Grace Grace, who had the courage to launch a parliamentary inquiry—and I thank the minister—into the cost of wage theft to workers in this state, we know that, with all the protections that I outlined earlier,

wage theft continues to cost Queensland workers up to \$1.22 billion in lost wages and \$1.12 billion in lost superannuation every year. Combined with an estimated \$100 million reduction in consumer spending and \$60 million in lost federal tax revenue, the overall economic loss could amount to almost \$2.5 billion stripped from the Queensland economy every year. Those are not just numbers. Real Queenslanders and Queensland families are going without what they are duly entitled to, with vulnerable young and low-income workers bearing the cruellest cost.

During the inquiry into wage theft, the committee heard over and over again that, while the state government is doing the heavy lifting, affected workers in the federal industrial relations system feel powerless to reclaim their lost wages and entitlements and have largely been left alone to do so by an under-resourced federal regulatory system. I know that Bill Shorten will work alongside us to fix that for workers in this country. The fight for fairness for workers in this country is far from over. The job of our labour movement is far from over. That is why I will be marching with my union, the Services Union, next Monday, that is why I thank the collective labour movement and that is why I will be marching with my two young boys so that they can thank the labour movement for the protections that will be afforded to them when they enter the labour market. We will work with them every step of the way.