




Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**

**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 27 November 2019

### **HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (2.17 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. The committee made one recommendation, and that was to pass this bill. I commend the efforts of the Education, Employment and Small Businesses Committee, particularly the chair of the committee, the member for Nudgee, for her guidance. I thank the submitters and witnesses for their evidence. I also commend Minister Grace and the Palaszczuk government for having the foresight to introduce this bill.

Consultation via a regulatory impact statement was open for 28 days. A total of 1,779 submissions were received, with a majority of 71 per cent supporting the proposal to declare Christmas Eve a part-day public holiday. In referencing the submission from Chris Gazenbeek, SDA Queensland branch Secretary-Treasurer—and I note his attendance and that of his members in the chamber today—it is noted that 89 per cent of SDA members want Christmas Eve to be a part-day public holiday from 6 pm until midnight.

The bill provides that the hours between 6 pm and midnight be designated as a public holiday to provide all workers with deserved time off with family and friends. The bill also provides workers with an entitlement to refuse to work in reasonable circumstances or receive a payment of public holiday penalty rates where work is performed after 6 pm until midnight on Christmas Eve. The bill provides entitlements consistent with other states and territories. Christmas Eve has many values and memories for many people, including those in the chamber.

My own values around the night are spending it with family preparing for the celebration ahead for Christmas Day and going to midnight mass or in later years evening mass at a local parish. Of course our family tradition in the past was that once the children were asleep we would uncover the presents that had been hidden for several days or months and place them under the Christmas tree. Also—and I am sure many of us would agree—time was spent erecting those swing sets, finding the tools to put them up and then finding leftover loose screws and nuts in the dark on completion, finding that some of the tools would not even fit and throwing the instructions to the wind. Nevertheless, we got through it and made those structures possible.

I am sure Christmas Eve holds many values for a lot of people privileged to have the time off before Christmas Day. However, there are thousands of workers who do not have the opportunity to spend time with their loved ones or to attend mass. Some of those workers are in retail, fast-food and warehouse businesses across a vast range of enterprises both large and small. Some of them are our police, our nurses and our frontline responders who watch over us during these festive times. I have had the privilege in my years before entering public office to represent many of those workers in both the police and the warehousing industry. They are hardworking, genuine, decent people.

Consistent with the opposition's dissenting report to this bill, followed by the tired old union-bashing rhetoric, each opposition speaker failed to realise the entitlement. Each and every condition provided to workers in this state, in fact in Australia, has been the result of unions seeking improvements to conditions of employment, health and safety, and superannuation—conditions that even we in this place enjoy.

Unions and Labor governments do not discriminate between workers. The entitlements from this bill will flow on to other workers regardless of their membership of a trade union. The Palaszczuk government governs for all workers. Conversely, those opposite cannot break from their DNA for once and support workers.

In conclusion, as a party that claims to support family values, I urge those opposite to think deeply about the values that they put on being together with their families over Christmas time and extend their support to this bill. I call on everyone to support these workers. Do not be a Grinch. Support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.