




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (2.33 pm): I rise to address the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, which would create a six-hour public holiday between 6 pm and midnight on Christmas Eve. Holidays are a time for family. If your family observes Christmas celebrations and if you are lucky enough to have the means to do so, 24 December is a really precious time: presents under the tree and the breathless anticipation of kids who do not want to go to bed for fear of missing Santa. If your family does not observe Christmas, then summer holidays are still special. It is an amazing time of year to enjoy our beautiful summer weather across the state with family and loved ones.

At the 2017 state election the Greens proposed four new public holidays including State of Origin Day and International Women's Day, which were, of course, criticised at the time as being absolutely crazy. I am honestly very pleased to see that Labor has picked up on this small part of our plan. They have gone for six hours as opposed to four days, but we will enjoy these baby steps. It is unusual to be able to quite so precisely calculate how much of the Greens' policy it is that Labor has pinched, but this time we have exactly one sixteenth. Of course there will be a financial impact from a new public holiday, and no-one is pretending otherwise. The effects will be different for different people: full-time and shiftworkers will get a day off; some service sector businesses will charge public holiday surcharges; and some will choose not to open, which will boost trade for others. It is a mixed bag, but let's look at it in context.

Corporate profits are at all-time highs. The share of national income going to wages is at its lowest level since the 1950s. There is a very good reason why we have 12 public holidays in Queensland; there is a very good reason why we have a five-day work week instead of six. Quite simply, the reason is that after a long struggle that was fiercely opposed by those in charge we came together as a society and decided that there are some things that are more important than work such as family, time to rest, time for learning and time for our loved ones. There has been much talk already today about whether folks who work on Christmas Day deserve penalty rates for giving up that special time with friends and family, and I agree that they do, but I believe that it is about more than that. It is about how we encourage and allow everyone to spend more time doing the things they love.

The reality is that we live our lives in the spaces that are created between work on weekends and holidays. While we are debating a new public holiday—a small piece of our lives we can reclaim from work—it is easy to forget the history. It was just over 70 years ago in 1948 that the two-day weekend began. Before that we had a standard six-day working week. In 1986, just over 30 years ago, Australians won the 38-hour work week. That number has not moved at all since then. On the other hand, as the member for Greenslopes mentioned before, productivity has nearly doubled. We produce twice as much per hour of work as we did in 1986. We are creating far more wealth, but for most of us wages are flat and we are still working as long.

In the context of this bill a few extra holidays might help, but the real solution is bigger and more ambitious. I believe the time is right to take the next step. Workers, the labour movement, families and civil society should begin to push for a four-day working week with no loss of pay. Obviously, this would

have to happen at a federal level and it will not be achieved overnight, but at the same time I believe that the state government should show some leadership by investigating a trial, perhaps within one of our great public hospitals or aged-care facilities. That would mean bringing on more staff to maintain current service levels. That is a big investment in jobs for those who need them, and it is great opportunity for Queensland to be a trailblazer. In fact, some businesses have already started trialling a four-day work week—or, as I prefer to call it, the three-day weekend. There is a genuine proven productivity benefit when workers are better rested.

I will conclude by saying again that I have no hesitation in supporting this bill. As I have outlined, I believe that we should aim to reclaim even more of our lives from work.