




Speech By
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HOLIDAYS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (3.02 pm): Today I rise to speak in support of the Holidays and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. It is very difficult to deny that there is an entrenched power imbalance between employees and employers in this country. I watch with disdain as our society, through highly advanced times such as these, continues to see employers lobby and advocate for their ever-increasing profitability at the expense of some of the lowest paid and most vulnerable workers in our community. If ever we wanted a test case for the overuse and overreach of the entrenched power, we need only glimpse at the competing tensions explored through this committee's examination of the bill—a bill that seeks to provide protections and payment for employees on Christmas Eve.

Despite a brief participation in these proceedings I witnessed much reference by participants to the Christmas period, but we need to acknowledge that this period is not for 24 hours; it starts with Christmas Eve. Regardless of religious observance, this is a time of togetherness, a time to be with family and friends, a time to travel to loved ones, a time to attend religious and cultural events, a time to stop and rest. For so many in our community, it remains no different to any other time—a time of work, a time away from loved ones, a time to earn the precious dollars that do not stretch as far as they used to. For so many in my community and every community, Christmas Eve remains the persistent grind of work and toil. This bill changes that.

The bill recognises that this time of year is about more than profits and is about more than the daily grind. Christmas Eve should be a time when workers have enshrined protections to be able to refuse work. Christmas Eve should be recognised as a time when work attracts an additional payment. This bill recognises a cohort of workers who, by and large, have already been robbed of their penalty rates, who have been told by this country's federal LNP government that the work they do is now less valued. Now they are even lower paid, as the profitability of their bosses is more important and is the priority.

Mr Lister interjected.

Ms BOYD: I take the interjection of the member for Southern Downs. The federal LNP government did nothing to stand up for low-paid workers throughout the Fair Work process. Further, the Morrison government entertains continued calls from industry to keep cutting rates of pay in what is an atrocious race to the bottom, one that the LNP in Queensland obviously wholeheartedly supports.

Doom and gloom abounds when talking to industry representatives, while they are consciously ripping rates of pay off their workers. Industry cries foul that mum-and-dad small businesses would rather work themselves on Christmas Eve than pay others, would close their doors or would reduce hours. These are cited as 'dire consequences' by industry representatives who personify a one-eyed economic approach to community. They just do not get it. This is about affording people time for rest and family and about giving them proper remuneration if they elect to work. It is about enshrined protections if they choose not to work. It is about putting families before profits. It is a matter of morality.

Rather than industry seeing this as an opportunity for six hours in the day to say to staff, 'We value that you are here, that you have taken time from your family; we appreciate you,' we once again see these employer associations leap into vehement opposition. Not only is it the hand that feeds these workers; seemingly it is also the hand that will bite them. In an obviously twisted, dysfunctional, domineering relationship, we continue to see a line out the door of employers and industry groups happy to front up at every opportunity to throw their workforce under the bus.

Unrelenting in their pursuit to rip away wages through decaying industry penalty rates, these employer associations fail to appreciate that their strip and slash approach is the very thing that is threatening their profitability. We see industry groups hand on heart saying, 'We have not had the advantage of our workforce's penalty rates being decimated like we wanted, like we asked for, so we should be exempt because we have to pay one-quarter more on some days.' These very groups are banging on the door of the Morrison LNP federal government and saying, 'Right now, times are tough; help us go further with cutting our workers' wages.' I am willing to bet that the minute economic circumstances improve they will not be down there banging on the door of any government to pull the strings at Fair Work to reinstate penalty rates that they robbed from hardworking Queenslanders.

These very groups sat in a hearing to tell members of this place that their industry voice was not loud enough because through the RIS consultation process they had only one say and that their voice should be louder than someone who made an individual, concise submission. Some employer associations argued that, given the census data regarding religious participation, the existing public holidays provided ample opportunity, that employers through good management and rostering would accommodate the provision of leave. We know that this simply is not the case. It is not the lived reality for so many Queenslanders. It was not my reality when I worked in hospitality and in retail.

We are left with a vulnerable, underappreciated, often abused workforce becoming ever more vulnerable, underappreciated and abused. It is not okay. It is not a formula that will continue to see profits flow to the pockets of the powerful. It is bereft of morality and it needs to change. Workers in my community and indeed across the state deserve better, and it is in this government that they find that. I commend the bill to the House.