




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2019

MOTION

Labour Movement

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (2.12 pm): That was a good audition from the member for Kawana, but I think Elvis singing *Solidarity Forever* might have got him a role in the movie. What a great day to be talking about the labour movement. The date 1 May, or May Day, is the day we celebrate the great labour movement. Thanks to our Palaszczuk Labor government, our Labour Day holiday is back in May, where it always should be.

The history of May Day, or Labour Day, in Australia spans 150 years. It is an important annual event that commemorates the granting of the eight-hour working day for Australians and remembers those who struggled and succeeded to ensure decent and fair working conditions in Australia. May Day celebrates the achievement of work-life balance—eight hours work, eight hours rest and eight hours recreation.

I will provide a bit of history for those who do not get it. On 21 April 1856 stonemasons at the University of Melbourne marched on Parliament House to push for an eight-hour working day. An agreement with employers for a 48-hour week was eventually reached, and Australian workers welcomed the new eight-hour day. In Queensland, the first Labour Day celebration took place in Brisbane on 16 March 1861. The LNP when in government shifted the holiday celebrating this great and historic event out of sheer spite. Those opposite do not understand the labour movement. They revile unions, or at least unions that are representative bodies for workers. They have no problem with other non-labour representative bodies—I would call them unions too—like the chamber of commerce and AgForce.

Who is a worker in this state? They are police, firemen, nurses, teachers and of course electricians.

Mr Harper: And ambulance paramedics.

Mr KING: And ambulance workers. I take that interjection. We on this side of the House work for everyone in this great state. We understand workers and we will always do everything in our power to make sure every worker returns home safely, in the same physical and mental state they left home in.

Our government has a lot of runs on the board when it comes to looking after our workers. We have reinstated the rights of injured workers to take common law action by removing the LNP's unfair arbitrary threshold, as mentioned by the minister. The former LNP government in 2013 stripped away the rights and entitlements of Queensland's injured workers by introducing an unfair common law threshold. This threshold prevented workers with a degree of permanent impairment of five per cent or less seeking damages from a negligent employer. That affected 9,000 of Queensland's most vulnerable workers. In 2015 this government restored the rights of Queensland's injured workers to seek common law damages for injuries on or after 31 January 2015 to those 9,000 workers who were injured between 15 October 2013 and 30 January 2015 and were denied access to common law damages. We also

introduced an additional lump sum compensation entitlement to ensure these workers were not disadvantaged. As at 31 March 2019, approximately 760 injured workers had benefited from that statutory adjustment scheme and had received compensation totalling \$15.7 million.

We have also boosted electrical safety in the solar farm industry. The Palaszczuk government has acted to ensure we have the highest electrical safety standards for the rapidly growing solar farm industry. Our government's solar farm code of practice and new electrical safety regulation clarify existing legislative requirements for the industry and improve electrical safety by ensuring the mounting, locating, fixing and removal of solar panels is only performed by licensed workers under the act. It applies from 13 May 2019 to all solar farms with a total rated capacity of at least 100 kilowatts. You would think that electrical safety in the electrical supply industry was a no-brainer. The safety required when working with voltage levels in the hundreds of thousands is tight, and the consequences of failure to adhere to safety measures are catastrophic to both human life and our state's economy.

These are just a few things we have done to help workers in this state, and I look forward to the election of a Shorten Labor government that will bring the same level of commitment to supporting working people. Labor has already, as mentioned, committed to establishing a national labour hire licensing system, ensuring that labour hire workers will receive the same pay as direct employees they work alongside, and to restoring the penalty rates for low-paid workers—penalty rates cruelly cut under the watch of the LNP government.

This is the first year I can remember that I have not been able to attend Workers' Memorial Day, which was held on Monday, as I was at parliament. I did, however, find out the number of fatalities there have been. As at 21 March this year, 30 Australians have been killed—

Mr Molhoek interjected.

Mr KING: If the member listens, he might learn something. Already this year 30 Australian workers have been killed. We need to do everything we can to stop that occurring. I am proud to be part of this government that sticks up for workers. I proudly support this motion.