




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MOTION

Building and Construction Industry

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development) (4.45 pm): I am very pleased to speak in support of this motion. I wish to reflect on the contribution from the member for Everton. The member has the gall to come in here and say that public servants still wish he was the minister. He sacked 1,500 public servants in the public works department.

Mr Mander: I'm only telling the truth. It's embarrassing.

Ms FENTIMAN: You sacked 1,500 of them. They are not wishing you were still the minister.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, you will direct your comments through the chair. The member for Everton has some latitude given there is a bit of provocation. I ask that you come back to the motion.

Ms FENTIMAN: I am particularly pleased to speak in support of this motion as the small business minister. All small businesses should absolutely have the confidence to get paid in full when they deliver work on a job site, on time, every time. By industry, the construction industry has the highest number of small businesses across Queensland: 75,000 small businesses. Growing up on the Gold Coast I saw firsthand how tough it can be for subbies; how tough it can be in a boom and bust industry. I saw firsthand how hard it was to get reliably paid in that industry, even without an insolvent principal contractor. I know that because my dad was a subcontractor—a carpenter, a leading hand, a foreman. I am so proud to be a minister in this Palaszczuk Labor government because our building industry reforms represent the most rigorous in the country. I am particularly proud of that.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members to my left, I believe that the level of interjection is too high. I have allowed some backwards and forwards, but I want to hear from the current member on their feet.

Ms FENTIMAN: As I was saying, I am particularly proud of the work the Palaszczuk Labor government is doing to fix the damage caused by those opposite, particularly the member for Everton, whose reforms in this place actually meant—

Mr Mander: Reforms!

Ms FENTIMAN: Whose legislation when he was the minister meant that building companies no longer had to provide their financial information to the regulator. The regulator was not even allowed to ask for that information.

Mr Bennett interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Burnett, I will not ask you again to cease your interjections.

Ms FENTIMAN: We are fixing the mess of the LNP. When those opposite were in government they abolished the small business commissioner whose job it was to advocate for subcontractors to help resolve disputes. Eight months into the contract of the small business commissioner, the then small

business minister, the member for Currumbin, abolished the position. For their entire term in government we had no-one helping small businesses and subcontractors with disputes. It was a retrograde step and shows how little those opposite care about small businesses and subcontractors. That is just one example of how those opposite stripped advocacy from subcontractors. In exactly the same way, those opposite stripped powers from the QBCC preventing them from properly investigating a construction company's financial health. Now we are in this mess and we are fixing it.

We have now returned the powers that the LNP in government stripped away. We are undoing their damage by enabling the regulator to get financial information from head contractors and we have brought back the Small Business Champion. Once again, we have a voice at a national table and we have powers for the regulator. Many times the issue of the non-payment of subcontractors has been directly raised with our Small Business Champion and she continues to advocate at a federal level to ensure that our federal counterparts are doing their bit in this space.

Through our Queensland Building Plan, we have introduced fairer progress payment systems and adjudication procedures. We are doing our part to fix the mess of those opposite, who abolished the small business commissioner and prevented the regulator from asking for financial information. Despite the mess they made, they have the gall to come in here and pretend that they care about subbies and say that public servants want them back. I can tell them that public servants know that they have a lot to fear from an LNP government, given their record.

We are absolutely doing our part to support subbies. I am incredibly proud of our reforms in this space. I cannot believe the arrogance of those opposite who stand up and say that they stand for subbies and public servants. We are fixing their mess finally.