




Speech By
Corrine McMillan

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

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COMMUNITY SERVICES INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE) BILL

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (12.00 pm): This afternoon we have heard from the opposition in relation to the working conditions of public servants. Can I turn back time to a couple of years ago when I was principal at Glenala State High School. At that time I led more than 200 public servants in my community. As a school leader I have been leading public servants for many years. I remember the words of the Premier at the time which were 'Public servants, you have nothing to fear'. In my four and a half years as principal at Glenala High I dealt with a rapidly growing student population yet my teacher numbers were declining rapidly. This was in a complex environment. I was in a situation where many of our services that were providing support to my local students and families had their funding cut immensely—services like the Inala Youth Service, local accommodation services that provided support for my families and other support services in a context where many of our students suffered not just one issue of poverty, but existed on a day-to-day basis experiencing layers and layers of poverty. As we know, and on this side of the House we believe, one's future should not be determined by the postcode in which one is born.

I rise today to make my contribution to the Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2019 which is currently before the House. The many workers with whom I have worked in many communities across Queensland, as a teacher and as a principal, did not have the benefits that I had working for one department. Those workers I supported and who supported me through my career were working for a number of different employers, a number of different agencies, and because they did not have the fortune that I had of working with one single department they were not entitled to the long service that I was entitled to.

This bill seeks to establish a much needed portable long service scheme for Queensland's community services industry. Such a scheme will provide coverage for all workers employed by non-government organisations, employees that I spoke about in either the for-profit or not-for-profit sectors, whose predominant mission is delivering community services in Queensland and often to our most vulnerable communities. In addition, this bill will amend the Industrial Relations Act 2016 to confirm access to pro rata long service leave by employees who have been dismissed by their employer due to illness based incapacity.

This bill expands upon a 2017 election commitment and priority of the Palaszczuk government, of which I am proud to be a member, to investigate the options for the development of a portable long service scheme for our community service workers. Characterised by short-term funding and service arrangements which seldom ensure employment security, the community services industry employs approximately 45,000 workers. Workers employed in this industry are tasked with providing communities with critical support and services for vulnerable Queenslanders, including education, information, as well as harm prevention strategies and crisis management to foster community wellbeing. Given the industry's high level of worker mobility, transience and short-term funding arrangements, community service workers are relegated to a position where they are less likely to accrue and qualify for a long service leave benefit compared to the wider workforce.

Long service leave is an employment entitlement—an employment entitlement that I have had the great privilege of accepting over more than 25 years with the Department of Education. As a former principal and educator I understand and value the importance of our service workers and the vital service that they provide to our community. If I turn to my electorate of Mansfield, I think of organisations like Mt Gravatt Community Centre, Blue Care and TriCare, whose employees make such a valuable contribution to the lives of my local families. They provide employment, they provide care and they provide support to some of our most vulnerable Queenslanders.

This scheme was largely modelled on Queensland's existing Contract Cleaning Portable Long Service Leave Scheme and informed by the Victorian and ACT schemes. The development of the scheme was also informed by Queensland's portable long service leave authority, QLeave, which successfully operates two other schemes in Queensland: for the building and construction and contract cleaning industries. In establishing a portable long service leave scheme, workers who are provided long service in the community service industry will be able to enjoy the reward that workers in more employment-secure industries benefit from. Consequently, the bill proposes a scheme to recognise long service to an industry rather than continuous service with one single employer. Under the Industrial Relations Act 2016 the long service leave entitlement for 10 years leave is 8.887 weeks of leave. This scheme will enable workers to access a proportionate entitlement after seven years service in the industry, which I know, as a teacher, that our teachers are already entitled to if they do not meet the minimum 10 years long service leave entitlement.

To fund this scheme it has been proposed that employers pay a levy on an employee's ordinary wages and report on an employee's service quarterly. To secure the most beneficial entitlement for workers, actuarial modelling suggests that a levy rate of 1.35 per cent be paid on ordinary wages for a worker for the return period. To ensure that this industry is not unnecessarily burdened with an excessive levy, the bill requires that QLeave assess and report on the adequacy of the levy rate every two years. This levy rate reflects the extensive stakeholder consultation undertaken with both employer and employee organisations, peak bodies and service providers in the industry.

Along with the reward for workers, this scheme also seeks to advantage the community services industry by fostering a more skilled and experienced workforce, encouraging the most talented leaders in this workforce to remain in the industry, to remain in the workforce and to continue with great support for our local Queensland communities. This bill also ensures equal worker rights by allowing workers who have been dismissed due to illness based incapacity to access pro rata long service leave via an amendment to the Industrial Relations Act 2016. I am comforted knowing that our workers are afforded their deserved worker rights should they find themselves in need of a well earned break or a further extension of parental or carer's leave to look after their children or vulnerable family members when required. I commend this bill to the House.