



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2020

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Budget, Worker Protections**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (9.46 am): The Palaszczuk government has a long and proud history of backing Queensland workers. I am pleased that in the budget we strengthened worker protections by employing eight additional frontline inspectors to ensure compliance with labour hire licensing laws and to stop wage theft. Some \$6.1 million will be invested over the next four years to pursue targeted campaigns in a broader range of sectors and locations, including the construction, security and contract cleaning industry as well as regional Queensland. I am also pleased that we have committed up to \$5 million for medical research into improving the health and wellbeing of workers suffering from occupational dust lung disease.

These important initiatives build upon the significant areas of reform we delivered for Queensland workers and their families in our first two terms of government. It was the Palaszczuk government that brought in the nation's first labour hire licensing laws that protect workers from exploitation at the hands of unscrupulous firms. We also made deliberate wage theft a criminal offence and are making it easier for Queensland workers to recover lost wages. We introduced paid domestic and family violence leave by legislating an entitlement of 10 days paid leave and paid pandemic leave as well.

Worker safety is also a key priority for the Palaszczuk government. We enacted industrial manslaughter laws—the first state in Australia to do so—set new world-class safety standards for Queensland's major theme parks and the amusement ride industry, and led the nation in response to the threat of silicosis. Our government is committed to ensuring workers injured or made ill as a result of their work are provided with the support and care that they need. That is why we restored all rights and entitlements stripped away by the Newman government, including restoring the rights of injured workers to access common law compensation and many improvements to Queensland's workers compensation system.

While I am on my feet talking about our impressive record of backing Queensland workers, next week it is anticipated that the Morrison government will introduce a far-reaching bill amending the Fair Work Act. There is an obligation under the agreement with the Morrison government that federal industrial relations minister Christian Porter must meaningfully consult with states and territories on any proposed changes to federal IR laws. To date, as IR minister, I have not had any formal consultation on the content of any changes being proposed. This is not good enough. The Morrison government must honour our agreement and properly consult. Any changes must include improvements for workers and their workplaces, particularly in the area of casual employment. The Palaszczuk government has and always will stand up for Queensland workers. I am proud to serve as the industrial relations minister who will continue this important work for four more years.