



Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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COMMUNITY SERVICES INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE) BILL

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (11.47 am): I was startled by some of those comments. I rise to speak in support of the Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill. As people may recall, at the 2017 election the Palaszczuk Labor government committed to investigating options for a portable long service leave scheme for the community services industry. The community services industry provides communities with critical support services for vulnerable Queenslanders, including support, education, information and activities to foster community inclusion and wellbeing, harm prevention strategies and, just as importantly in these current times, crisis management.

Long service leave is an employment entitlement that provides workers with an extended period of paid leave in recognition for long service with the same employer. Portable long service leave schemes provide the opportunity for workers in industries with higher mobility to receive an entitlement. The community services industry is characterised by a high level of worker mobility and short-term funding arrangements which have resulted in workers being less likely to acquire and qualify for a long service leave benefit compared to the broader and wider workforce. The introduction of a portable long service leave scheme will provide community services workers with a unique benefit and encourage skilled and experienced workers to join and remain in the industry long term. The scheme will lead to reduced recruitment and, most importantly, training costs for employers across the industry in the long term by developing a skilled and experienced workforce to draw upon and help reward and retain highly skilled and experienced workers to care for vulnerable people in our society.

The scope of the scheme is determined by the employer's purpose. If the employer has been established for, or with a purpose that indicates, providing a community service in Queensland, then the employer must register with the scheme. The description of 'community services' is provided in schedule 1 of the bill. The scope is broad to reflect the range of services considered by the industry to be community services and was informed by consultation with stakeholders and from a Deloitte Access Economics study of future workforce requirements in the Queensland community services industry.

The bill provides flexibility for the range of different roles and structure of employees in the industry, as well as administrative ease added for employers and QLeave. It also ensures an equitable outcome for employees within organisations that identify as community service workers despite not working in a direct frontline capacity and for those who perform multiple community service roles. Determining which workers to include in the employers return to QLeave will depend initially on the services being provided by the employer and then on what work is being undertaken by each worker. Employers and workers will be able to seek information and advice from QLeave about their individual circumstances.

The scheme will be funded by a levy system. This will involve employers paying an amount on a quarterly basis into a central fund. The levy is a set percentage based on an ordinary worker's wages. Based on forecasts which were relied upon when determining the appropriate rate at which to set the levy, the average weekly levy rate as of 1 July 2020 would be approximately \$16 for a full-time worker

and less than \$9 for a part-time worker. Ultimately, the goal of a portable long service leave scheme is to improve the attraction and retention of skilled and experienced workers so that the industry can continue to fulfil its vital role in delivering quality human services within Queensland communities.

The introduction of a scheme for Queensland for the community services industry is recognised as an investment in the industry that will help build, reward and retain a skilled and experienced workforce. It is estimated that in 2015 there were 44,495 community service employees throughout the state. The scheme will also provide an avenue for workers to access leave to ensure that they can have a recuperative break from work that is often physically and emotionally demanding.

In closing, I want to thank my committee colleagues and acknowledge the hard work of the executive and all who have contributed to this bill. I am proud to be part of a government which not only recognises the importance of providing a secure economic future for Queenslanders but also actions those beliefs in legislation. I commend the bill to the House.