



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR MCCONNEL**

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Record of Proceedings, 25 February 2021

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Industrial Relations, Worker Protections**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister for Racing) (10.28 am): The Palaszczuk Labor government has and always will stand up for Queensland workers. That is why we are opposing provisions of the Morrison government's omnibus IR bill. Earlier this month we made our concerns clear in our submission to the Senate inquiry into the fair work amendment bill 2020.

This Palaszczuk Labor government will not stand by while Queensland workers are threatened with laws that weaken their job security and attack their wages and entitlements. Let me be specific. We oppose the bill's temporary flexibility provisions which are just shorthand for workers working longer hours without overtime payments and having their conditions changed without scrutiny. This government has consistently raised concerns about old zombie agreements that pay under award wages and conditions in industries like hospitality and retail where workers are already vulnerable to exploitation. The Morrison government's bill finally accepts that these agreements are unfair and need to go but does not feel strongly enough to get rid of them until 1 July 2022. Our submission calls for zombie agreements to cease with immediate effect. That is how one supports real economic recovery and wages growth.

For many years I have met countless ripped off workers like young hospitality worker Tara who told our wage theft inquiry that she had to work 12- to 14-hour days for free—without pay. She is a victim of wage theft. We are concerned that, although the Morrison government has finally acknowledged the need to criminalise wage theft, their proposal will water down our Queensland laws, reducing penalties for wage theft and excluding non-payment of super and long service leave as an offence.

The Palaszczuk government has a proud history of protecting Queensland workers and we will not stand by while the Morrison government undermines workers' rights and entitlements and fails to address the real issues of casualisation and precarious employment and low wages growth. True to form, the Commonwealth has yet again failed to meet their obligations to consult meaningfully on these broad ranging changes that will hit Queensland workers. It is simply not good enough and Queensland workers deserve better.