




Speech By
Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR HILL

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2022

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (5.25 pm): I rise to speak to the Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I read with interest the committee report on the bill in relation to protections against workplace sexual, and sex- and gender-based harassment. It states—

A diverse mix of organisations expressed broad support for these changes, including: the Australian Christian Lobby ... Maternity Choices Australia—

and a number of other submissions. The committee report also states—

Although some submitters raised concerns about specific aspects of the amendments relating to workplace sexual, sex and gender-based harassment ... no submissions opposed them.

This is false. The Australian Christian Lobby's submission specifically states—

The Australian Christian Lobby has no opinion on the material aspects of the proposed amendments. In general, we welcome amendments that offer genuine protections against sexual harassment.

The KAP 100 per cent supports this as well. However, the ACL submission goes on to say—

We are however, strongly opposed to amendments that remove gendered language from the Industrial Relations Act. Specifically, we refer to proposed amendments to remove the terms 'maternity' and 'she' and replace them with 'birth-related' and 'the employee', this language is dehumanising and an insult to Queensland women. Maternity leave is a right afforded to women and an affirmation of the importance of mothers in a healthy society.

I table that submission.

Tabled paper: Education, Employment and Training Committee: Inquiry into the Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022—Submission No. 1, dated 1 July 2022, from the Australian Christian Lobby [1774](#).

The Maternity Choices submission also states—

That to entirely desex the language of the legislation when relating to matters that affect women risks making women and mothers invisible and would undermine the intent of the inclusion and protecting the rights of women in this area.

I table the Maternity Choices submission.

Tabled paper: Education, Employment and Training Committee: Inquiry into the Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022—Submission No. 20, dated 5 July 2022, from Maternity Choices Australia [1775](#).

It is another perfect example of the government cherrypicking and twisting what was actually said in the submissions specifically against this part of the bill. Ten years ago when the 'woke wars' first started if anyone had said we would be debating a bill to remove the words 'maternity' and 'she' from the industrial relations legislation, we would have thought they were stark raving mad. It is bizarre that in the Parliament of Queensland we are debating removing the words 'maternity' and 'she'.

The bill also includes complementary amendments to the Industrial Relations Act 2016, IR Act, regarding entities incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981. Put simply, this is the government's response to several organisations or entities that popped up over the last few years when the government's vaccination mandate resulted in the loss of employment for many Queenslanders. These Queenslanders could not get representation from their unions, so they were forced to turn to

alternative representation in their time of need. As far as we know, in a free and democratic state it is their right to do so. When people were desperate, when they were banished from all facets of society and barred from their job, they needed to turn to someone.

The first Australian unions were formed by free workers, or non-convict labourers, in the late 1820s. Unions spread across the country from the late 1830s, and between 1850 and 1869 about 400 unions were formed in Australia. My point is this: most unions started somewhere. Some were splinter unions who broke away from another union to meet the needs of the workers. Now we seem to be arguing over a bill that is seeking to stop new unions from forming in exactly the same way they were formed nearly two centuries ago.

I have the utmost respect for the union movement because I have seen three governments wiped out as a result of a powerful campaign by the unions. Members can cast their minds back to when the Goss government was kicked out. Goss came to power after kicking out the Liberal-National parties after over 40 years in government. Goss made out that we had cleaned out the cobwebs and come out of the dark ages, but then he started attacking the Queensland railway employees and started to close down railway stations and sidings. They were the biggest employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders across the state, but many lost their jobs. Then there was the Mundingburra by-election. The police and rail unions campaigned heavily, and Labor lost that by-election and ended up losing government.

Then it was the Bligh government that sold Queensland rail assets. I believe it also sold part of Forestry Plantations Queensland. There was a massive campaign by the ETU and the CFMEU. That campaign was so powerful because the government was doing the wrong thing by the people of Queensland by selling our profitable assets. The Labor government was kicked out of power and Labor was reduced to seven seats.

Then the Newman government came to power with 78 seats, having reduced Labor to seven seats. Then it came up with this bright idea to sell the Port of Townsville and our energy assets. The campaign from the ETU and the CFMEU at that time was so powerful that that government had its number of seats reduced from 78 to 42.

If a government is not going to do good or if a union is not going to do good, the people will kick them out. If the unions are doing their job—like the unions I have just mentioned—we have no need to bring in this legislation. We will be opposing this bill.