




Speech By
Joseph Kelly

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

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WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KELLY** (Greenslopes—ALP) (3.37 pm): Apparently unions are not much good according to the member for Maiwar, but it is amazing how much time the LNP and the Greens spend talking about unions. If their memberships have shrunk so much and they are no good we must not be much to worry about, but gee the subject absorbs a lot of time in this place. I want to get on to the contribution to the debate from the member for Toowoomba North. I do not know whether he read the bill or he read the February edition of the HR Nicholls Society magazine, but I am pretty sure it was the latter rather than the former. I do not think he actually read the bill because the things he was saying demonstrated a complete ignorance of what is in this bill. He was referring to an AWU official showing up at a CFMEU worksite and walking in and shutting down that worksite. This bill is about elected workplace health and safety representatives who are elected from within the workplace where a relevant union has coverage, so the very description that that member put on the floor of the parliament today is completely and utterly wrong. I am not going to waste my time writing to you, Mr Deputy Speaker Krause, about him misleading the House because I am on my feet pointing out that he is wrong. He has just demonstrated his own ignorance of this bill. I will get on to the training that he talked about in a minute as well, but I am going to reserve that for the member for Kawana because he made some great statements in relation to that yesterday.

I absolutely support this bill. My uncle Alan Kelly died in a construction workplace accident in the 1970s. He was a good bloke lost to the family too early. I did not get to know him particularly well—I was too young when he died—but I am sure my parents missed him greatly. That is an experience that far too many Australian families would share, particularly working families. In my time as a nurse I have lost count of how many working people I have cared for who were injured or made sick as a result of the work that they were undertaking. It would also be remiss of me not to mention during debate on this bill the 220,000 nurses around the world who died as a result of caring for people during COVID.

I have been a workplace health and safety representative, elected by my colleagues; I have been a union delegate, elected by my colleagues; and I have been a union official. As a manager in organisations, I have always taken workplace health and safety seriously. Workplace health and safety is at the forefront of my thinking when I sit on various boards and management committees in the community. I am very saddened every single time I hear about reports of a workplace death because I think about my uncle.

I am proud to be part of a movement that has worked to ensure that every Australian worker is safe at work. This bill makes a number of really important improvements to our workplace health and safety system. It has provisions that improve the role of workplace health and safety reps. I know from personal experience that once you are elected as a workplace health and safety rep it can cost you both time and money to obtain training. This bill ensures that workers are not financially disadvantaged by attending that training. It will make it more likely that workers will take on those roles and undertake the necessary training, which means they will be absolutely more effective in their roles.

I take a little time to reflect on the WHS training. I start by rejecting the entire ridiculous contribution by the member for Kawana, particularly the statement he made about the training of workplace health and safety representatives. I did that training and it was not delivered by someone from my industry. That really did not diminish the effectiveness of the training because the training covered legislation, responsibilities, roles and obligations of workplace health and safety representatives. The training was not industry specific because the legislation applies across all workplaces. We were advised that there is some specific additional training that you can do in specific areas, but that was not the purpose of this training. Far from turning me into a rabid radical bent on destroying my workplace, which is what the member for Kawana was implying about people who do this type of training, the training actually made me understand how to work with employers or managers to prevent safety issues from harming or killing workers and how to deal with genuine safety issues in a legal manner. Perhaps if we had this type of legislation in the 1970s, my uncle Alan might not have perished at work. The contribution from the member for Kawana deserves no further consideration.

The provisions that better integrate health and safety representatives in the workplace are also welcomed. Empowering reps to request and receive information will help them perform their role and they will also be able to accompany permit holders or inspectors to stay informed about issues.

I turn to the contentious part of the bill. I think we should be extremely proud of the industrial relations system that we have built in Australia. It has evolved over time and has led to relatively peaceful and harmonious industrial relations in the workplace. Disputes have generally been resolved peacefully. We have also seen a more even distribution of wealth, which plenty of evidence tells us leads to much better social outcomes in terms of health, education, social cohesion and many other things. It has also led to ongoing prosperity across our society as workers are incentivised to increase productivity because they get a fair share of what they produce and they are involved in the decision-making processes of their organisation. As a society, we have not witnessed workplace disputes spreading into the broader society and we have certainly not witnessed worker-led revolutions as we have seen overseas. This may all seem a little remote from us in this day and age, but the reality is that that has been avoided because of our fair, robust and evolving industrial relations system.

One key element of the industrial relations system, while I believe is based on the ILO conventions, is the principle of not forming a new union where there is one that is convenient to belong to. It is a widely recognised principle in industrial relations and it is in place because it protects workplaces from competitive unionism, which, in the past in Australia and much more frequently overseas, has led to very bitter and protracted disputes that have been very detrimental to the workers and very detrimental to the businesses and the organisations, and in some cases so detrimental that they have led to death and destruction of property in society more broadly. The provisions in this bill continue that practice that has led to good outcomes for our state, for our nation, for workers and for employers and managers.

The LNP want to rail against this on the basis that registered unions tend to support or are affiliated with the Labor Party. When workers formed trade unions and then formed the Australian Labor Party, they had a pretty simple goal: to improve the welfare of working people. They knew that by doing that they would improve the welfare of the entirety of our society. When paid-up LNP members set up businesses such as the Nurses Professional Association of Queensland, they did so for a number of reasons. No. 1: they did that to make some money for themselves. No. 2: they did that to try to undermine the Labor Party. Let us look at who owns them and for whom they are making money. I will look at just a couple because I cannot go through them all. Graeme Haycroft, the architect of the red union phenomenon—I am going to call them the scab union phenomenon; I am not going to call them red unions—a member of the 'Joh for PM—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Pause the clock. Member for Greenslopes, could you please withdraw that unparliamentary language?

Mr KELLY: I withdraw. Remember him? He is the guy who has never done a single day of nursing in his life but has appointed himself as the spokesperson for nurses and midwives on behalf of NPAQ and spreads misinformation about nurses being forced to announce their white privilege. What about Jack McGuire, managing director? He has been a member of the LNP and was president of the QUT LNP club. Remember him? In questioning before the parliamentary committee that examined the IR bill, Mr McGuire, the managing director of the whole red union operation, could not name the positions he held within various fake unions. He had to take the question on notice.

I have no doubt that the decent hardworking workers who join those fake unions do so for a range of reasons, but they should know that they are joining an organisation that is not formed for their benefit. They are joining an organisation that is making people such as Graeme Haycroft rich. Those are the organisations they are joining.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr KELLY: Deputy Speaker, I am not taking the interjections of those people who are shouting over the top of me.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members on my left—

Mr KELLY: I ask that the clock be stopped.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:—your interjections are not being taken.

Mr KELLY: They should know that they are joining an organisation that is supporting the LNP, an organisation that since 2015 has significantly and consistently voted against—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr KELLY:—consistently voted against—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr KELLY:—consistently voted against the interests of workers.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members.

Mr KELLY: They have voted against labour hire licensing laws. They have voted against paid domestic and family violence leave. They have voted against industrial manslaughter laws. They have voted against industrial protections for workers subject to sexual harassment.

I am used to being yelled over by people who do not like unions. I will stand up for myself every single day. I will stand up for the rights of workers every single day. I will push for better laws that make sure we keep workers in this state safe so that people like my uncle can go to work and can come home and do not get killed. I am not afraid to stand up to anybody who wants to shout over the top of me in my pursuit of that goal of keeping the workers of Queensland safe.