




Speech By  
**Dr Christian Rowan**

**MEMBER FOR MOGGILL**

---

Record of Proceedings, 17 June 2020

## **COMMUNITY SERVICES INDUSTRY (PORTABLE LONG SERVICE LEAVE) BILL**

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (11.39 am): As the Liberal National Party shadow minister for communities, shadow minister for disability services and seniors and shadow minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships, I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Community Services Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Bill 2019. As any Queenslanders involved in the community services sector can attest, whether they are part of the for-profit or employed within not-for-profit non-government organisations, this sector has rapidly grown and continues to undergo significant changes, particularly thanks in part to the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

In my various portfolio roles as a Liberal National Party shadow minister, I have been particularly fortunate to regularly see the substantial and vital contribution of those employed in the community services sector, be they Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community support services, mental health services, disability and respite support services, seniors community support organisations or the vital work that has been done by those involved in violence prevention support organisations. Before continuing, I take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the outstanding work by all involved in the community services sector who have been quite literally at the forefront of providing and maintaining crucial support to Queenslanders who have needed it most during the recent unprecedented COVID-19 health and economic crisis.

Queenslanders who dedicate themselves to the service and support of their fellow Queenslanders are people whom we simply cannot commend highly enough. Indeed, as our state's recent history has shown, working for the support and betterment of the lives of others, whether or not we know them, is a quintessential Queensland trait. It is for that reason that those employed in this sector deserve to have their dedication and service not only recognised but also rewarded and appropriately remunerated.

Analysis has shown that workers in this sector are less likely to accrue a long service leave entitlement due to a high mobility between industry employers and the potential for insecure employment. The community services sector simply cannot afford, both metaphorically and literally, to lose the incredible depth of knowledge and skills of such workers. It is ultimately in the best interests of all community service organisations that the knowledge, skills, expertise and dedication of such workers is retained for the benefit of the sector and the provision of all of these services throughout Queensland. As such, given the high levels of structural labour mobility and impacts on workers accessing a long service leave entitlement, this legislation seeks to establish a portable long service leave scheme for workers in the community services sector. In enabling portable long service leave for this sector, I note that the application of this scheme will 'cover workers performing community services work, including contract workers, engaged by an employer that is established for, or with the purpose including, providing community services; and, apply to both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations in the community services industry'.

Once this scheme is enacted, workers in this sector will be provided with a portable long service leave entitlement of approximately 8.6 weeks after 10 years of service. I note that, whilst the application of this scheme will not be retrospective, workers already employed within this sector will gain access to this entitlement after seven years of service.

In its examination of this bill, the Queensland parliament's Education, Employment and Small Business Committee received 23 submissions from a range of stakeholders in the community services sector, including employer organisations, employee organisations and peak industry bodies. This was also in addition to the 29 written submissions that were received in response to the regulatory impact statement released in September 2018, with a further 320 letters received from workers in the community services industry and members of the Services Union supporting this scheme.

As reported by the Queensland parliamentary committee, the consultation process showed broad in-principle support for a portable long service leave scheme in the community services sector. That being said, some legitimate concerns were raised by stakeholders during the consultation process. Chief amongst these concerns included calls for greater clarity on the scope of the proposed portable long service leave scheme, particularly given the meaning of key terms used in the bill such as 'community services' and 'community services work, worker and employer'. I also note that the committee understood the views of some stakeholders and their concerns in that the scope of the scheme was not sufficiently clear. The committee, however, was ultimately satisfied by further advice provided by the Department of Education that the scope as drafted in the bill is appropriate and will allow for flexibility in the community services industry.

At a time when Queensland workers and families face an unprecedented health and economic crisis, what Queenslanders need and deserve right now is certainty, especially when it comes to employment and associated entitlements and benefits. Unfortunately, what we see from the Palaszczuk state Labor government, particularly when it comes to workers in Queensland, is a Labor state government sending mixed messages on wages and awards and unfairly picking winners and losers when it comes to Queensland's industrial relations system. The amendments that the Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations tabled only last night—indeed some 51 pages of amendments inserted into a bill that is only 77 pages long—are an insult to Queensland's hardworking frontline staff including our nurses, teachers, ambulance officers, health professionals and others including serving members of the Queensland Police Service.

These workers have been asked to go above and beyond during the COVID-19 health pandemic. That is exactly what they have done and what they continue to do on behalf of all Queenslanders. Now, rather than supporting these workers and acknowledging their incredible contribution, service and even sacrifice to our state, the Palaszczuk state Labor government has failed to honour enterprise bargaining agreements negotiated in good faith. That is why the Liberal National Party will be opposing the Palaszczuk state Labor government's wage freeze on frontline workers.

The boast of the Labor Premier and the state Labor government that they are the friend of the worker, that they are committed to jobs in Queensland, has been finally exposed for the duplicitous claim that it has always been. The Palaszczuk state Labor government needs to do so much more to not only create jobs but also protect jobs, especially when Labor continues to keep our borders closed and send mixed messages on the border despite the expert health advice of Australia's Chief Medical Officer. The Palaszczuk state Labor government proudly claims that it has a plan to unite and recover for Queensland when in fact it is seeking to divide and destroy. The Palaszczuk state Labor government is dividing Queenslanders, destroying our economy, destroying jobs and destroying Queensland's future. It is simply not good enough. Hardworking Queenslanders deserve better. Our hardworking frontline workers deserve better.

The Liberal National Party understands the importance of honouring enterprise bargaining agreements. The Liberal National Party also understands the importance of providing long service leave entitlements and the portability of these for community services workers and the need not only to enshrine these entitlements in legislation but also to support and fund the scheme with due diligence and oversight by the Queensland state government.

In conclusion, I thank all submitters for their contribution to the consideration of the legislation by the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee. I also thank all parliamentary members of the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee for their careful examination of this legislation and the committee secretariat for their preparation and submission of this comprehensive committee report to the 56th Parliament. It is only the Liberal National Party that will stand up for workers in Queensland. It is only the Liberal National Party that will create jobs and protect jobs in Queensland.

It is only the Liberal National Party that will provide sound economic management to ensure that our services and our departments in Queensland are delivered for the benefit of all Queenslanders. It is only a Liberal National Party government in Queensland that can get Queensland working again.