



Media release

Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships The Honourable Curtis Pitt

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IR reforms to restore fairness in Queensland workplaces

Fairness will be restored in Queensland workplaces as the Palaszczuk Government rolls out a comprehensive raft of industrial relations reforms.

Treasurer and Industrial Relations Minister Curtis Pitt said the reforms would restore important safeguards for state and local government employees.

"Campbell Newman's arrogant LNP government stripped away vital safeguards and conditions from Queensland's public sector workers," he said.

"They reduced job security and created a climate of uncertainty in workplaces throughout the State.

"They fundamentally altered the framework of negotiations to remove enterprise bargaining as the core of our system.

"They made it harder – near impossible – to bargain in good faith to maintain or expand many of the features of existing enterprise bargaining agreements.

"Our reforms will ensure the hard fought and won working rights of Queenslanders lost under the previous government are returned.

"This is in line with our election commitment to restore fairness to Queensland workplaces."

Mr Pitt said the government's IR reforms included:

- Reinstating employment security for public servants;
- Protections against the contracting out of government services;
- Restoring immediate right of entry provisions for WHS permit holders where there are suspected safety concerns;
- Restoring the independence of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission;
- Re-establishing the Electrical Safety Commission; and
- Returning Labor Day to May from 2016.

"We're reversing a number of significant changes the previous government made to the Industrial Relations Act 1999," he said.

"These changes are necessary because Campbell Newman's attacks on Queensland workers were so extreme and unfair, attacking the day-to-day conditions and take-home pay of hardworking Queenslanders.

"The LNP went further than any government in Queensland's history in stripping away workers' rights.

"They introduced changes under the guise of 'harmonisation' with Labor's federal Fair Work Act. In reality, all of the employee rights contained in the Fair Work Act are out, while all the requirements and productivity clauses are in.

"They not only stopped workers from bargaining for their current rights, they also prevented workers from negotiating for their conditions in the future."

Mr Pitt said the award modernisation process which commenced under the former government and had been suspended on 17 March.

"Further award modernisation was suspended until legislative amendments are in place that remove or amend award modernisation provisions and prohibitions on content in industrial instruments," he said.

"This will allow parties to undertake a proper consideration of allowable material that should be contained within awards.

"Changes to legislation to be introduced shortly mean that awards that have had conditions stripped out under the guise of modernisation – such as local government – will be brought to an early end.

"In their current form, these laws can be used to strip out things like penalty rates and erode conditions that had previously been included in EBAs such as annual leave periods.

"I met with the Local Government Association of Queensland earlier this week to get a better understanding of their concerns on this issue.

"We will keep them informed as we progress these changes. My message to local councils is that bargaining on outstanding EBAs should be suspended until the legislative amendments are made.

"The award modernisation process will recommence in the second half of 2015, once the IR legislation is amended and awards already 'modernised' will be re-made to allow for new bargaining to commence.

"We'll also establish an Industrial Relations Reference Group including academics, government and union representatives to undertake a wider review of the State's industrial relations laws – which were last comprehensively reviewed in 1998."

This review will make recommendations to the Government for legislative reform for introduction in the first half of 2016.

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