



Queensland Council of Unions

Working with Queensland unions who represent over 350,000 workers in Queensland
on industrial, political and social justice issues

15 April 2018

Dodgy labour hire operators on notice as new laws start on Monday

Monday 16 April will be D-Day for employers as a new licensing regime becomes law to prevent dodgy labour hire operators ripping off and exploiting vulnerable workers.

In Brisbane today people of community, faith and unions, coming together in the Queensland Community Alliance, will share stories about labour hire experiences and celebrate the government's focus on ensuring fair treatment of these workers, many of them from multicultural communities.

WHAT: Highlight need for new labour hire laws to be effective in protecting vulnerable workers

WHO: Members of communities common in labour hire – South American, Pacific Islander

WHEN: 1.45PM, Sunday 15 April (media interviews); 2.00PM Dancing & celebration.

WHERE: St Finbarr's Church Hall, 202 Waterworks Road, Ashgrove.

Queensland is now the first Australian state with laws requiring mandatory licensing for labour hire operators.

Queensland Council of Unions Assistant General Secretary Michael Clifford said a concerted union and community effort last year had succeeded in establishing the first labour hire licensing laws in an Australian state jurisdiction.

He said regulating the labour hire industry was necessary to stamp out rogue operators engaging in massive wage theft from vulnerable workers.

From Monday, the new legislation will:

- require mandatory licensing for labour hire operators,
- require a fit and proper person test before labour hire operators are issued a licence,
- require regular reporting by licensed labour hire operators,
- provide for strong penalties for any breach of obligations,
- create a compliance unit to provide education, monitoring and enforcement.

"The impact on law abiding business will be negligible, as the reporting requirements should not be onerous for an organisation complying with the law," he said.

"Regular reporting and potential inspection will hold the labour hire operator accountable for complying with a range of other laws, such as the Fair Work Act, taxation law, workplace health and safety, as well as workers' compensation and proper payment of superannuation entitlements."

Sergio Duran was a contract cleaner who had direct experience with labour hire exploitation.

"When I was working as a cleaner I didn't get my payslips. I worked 12 hours and only got paid for 3 hours. I was employed on an ABN was paid \$15 per hour instead of \$30 per hour.

"I worked in a hotel and my boss stole \$10,000 from me and my five colleagues because he didn't pay us. It's hard to speak about this when your boss can tell you not to turn up to work tomorrow," he said.

Mr Clifford said workers, community representatives and union delegates last year spent weeks securing pledges of support from MPs calling for the nation-leading legislation *Labour Hire Licensing Bill 2017* to become law.

"Before these laws it was easier to start a labour hire firm than getting your licence to drive, and that wasn't right. We needed to change the rules around labour hire!

"We've heard shocking stories of workers on labour hire arrangements being underpaid thousands and thousands of dollars across all sorts of industries and sectors, and it's got to stop," he said.

Unions have long campaigned about the misuse of labour hire and the adverse impact it has on workers' conditions of employment, wages and quality of life, as well as the financial future of their families and communities.

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Media Release