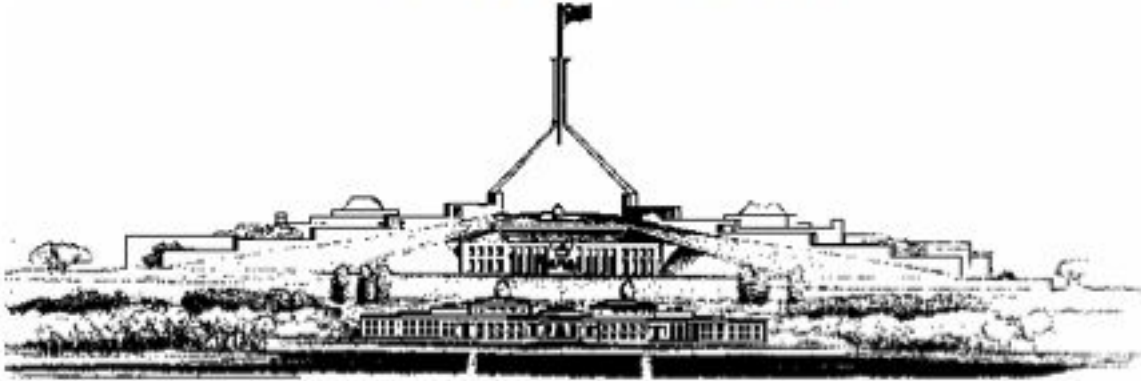




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Hindmarsh Electorate: Employment Conditions

SPEECH

Tuesday, 26 October 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Tuesday, 26 October 2010
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Questioner
Speaker Georganas, Steve, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mr GEORGANAS (Hindmarsh) (4.15 pm)—I rise to speak about allegations of worker mistreatment and intimidation at the Lilydale free-range chicken processing plant located in Wingfield, South Australia. These allegations, which were aired on the ABC television program *Lateline* on Thursday, 21 October, include underpayment, bullying, harassment, racism and breaches of health and safety laws. Many Australians purchase Lilydale free-range chickens because they are concerned about how chickens are treated and their wellbeing during their lives. But what about the lives and the wellbeing of the workers?

Lilydale employs a mainly migrant workforce and many of the workers do not speak English. Many are new arrivals to Australia and are not aware of their rights in the workplace. In the story aired on the ABC, *Lateline* interviewed an ex-Lilydale worker, Anyuon Mabior, who had been sacked after complaining about working conditions. I met with Anyuon some weeks ago after he was introduced to me by Dave Garland, the National Union of Workers' lead organiser in SA. Anyuon is a member of the Sudanese community, which is largely based in my electorate of Hindmarsh. Many other members of the community also work at Lilydale but have been too afraid to speak out. The NUW has been working closely with Anyuon and has collected many statutory declarations detailing workplace conditions, many of which describe practices which many of us would have thought had been relegated to decades past—things like being denied a break after 16 hours of work, or not being paid for hours worked overtime, or being the subject of racist slurs far too vile to repeat in this place.

Workers have also been discouraged from seeking help from the union and many were told not to join or talk to the union or they would be sacked. These messages fly in the face of Australia's fair work legislation and are of great concern. I have since attended and spoken at a rally in support of Lilydale workers organised by the NUW and supported by my state colleague Leesa Vlahos, Janet Giles from SA Unions, and Dr Joseph Masika, the President of the African Communities Council of South Australia.

I am pleased to note that the Fair Work Ombudsman has also taken up the matter and has launched an investigation into Lilydale's parent company, which is the largest chicken processor in Australia and which also controls other major chicken-processing companies. In a first for our new industrial relations system, the Fair Work Ombudsman recently granted the NUW the right to enter the site and inspect time and wage records of all workers. I congratulate the NUW and the Fair Work Ombudsman on their commitment to helping those who cannot help themselves, who cannot speak out or who do not know how to speak out. I look forward to the conclusion of the Fair Work Ombudsman's investigation. Every person in Australia has the right to work safely, to be paid the right wage for their job and to perform their work free of harassment, intimidation, bullying and racism. (*Time expired*)