




Speech By  
**Annastacia Palaszczuk**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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**INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATIONS) AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (4.45 pm): First of all, I thank the work of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. I understand that the Attorney-General just addressed the series of recommendations and what the government was supporting and what it was not supporting. I have only just received the government's detailed response, so we will be examining that over the dinner break and we will be able to provide a fulsome response. But I did want to raise a couple of issues before I get to the substantive part of my speech.

The Attorney-General addressed an amendment that he is going to bring in, and I do note that the Attorney has offered a briefing over the dinner break on this large volume of amendments. But there is something I want to question in relation to an amendment that he is proposing for employee organisations to publish credit card and Cabcharge statements including statements of personal credit cards for official purposes which was not included in the original bill. My question to the Attorney-General is: is this going to apply to employer organisations as well or is the Attorney seeking to be discriminatory in relation to this amendment in that it will only apply to employee organisations? My concern here is that the government could be discriminating against one sort of organisation and not the other. If this is indeed the case, we have very, very grave concerns in relation to this matter.

At the outset let us be completely clear: this bill is a blatant attack on working Queenslanders and their representatives. It is designed for that specific purpose. It is a vicious attack on free speech and strikes at the heart of a modern democratic society. The Attorney-General claims this legislation is about transparency, but in reality these measures are designed to silence the voice of workers and their representatives by imposing impossible administrative burdens on organisations to exercise their free speech; forcing burdensome requirements on unions and elected officials, with disclosure requirements far beyond that of even company directors; imposing disincentives for union and business members to seek to be involved in senior activities of the organisation; reversing years of established practice to provide fair and free access for workers to join unions and to organise workplaces; making it harder for union representatives to access workers and represent their interests; giving power to managers at the expense of input from workers over their very right to have a say about their role and conditions; making it easier to recover money from workers without discussion, causing significant financial hardship, especially for affected low-paid employees; and changing the definition of 'worker' and circumventing the review into workers compensation that was handed down at the last sitting by the Finance and Administration Committee.

This legislation narrows what will be covered under WorkCover, meaning many workers will now no longer be covered, especially those in the construction industry. The shadow Treasurer and member for Mulgrave will be addressing this in more detail as he was privy to these discussions at the committee. He will be going into some depth in relation to why the definition that was proposed by both of the committees should still remain.

We do not need to come up with our own descriptions of the Attorney-General's position. By his own admission, he is introducing extreme measures. As the Attorney-General admitted when

interviewed by Steve Austin on ABC Radio, he introduced an extreme piece of legislation. It is nothing but an ideological attack on the rights of workers and employees to join an organisation and pursue their collective interests. To understand just how extreme this legislation is, not even Work Choices went this far. Not even Peter Reith went this far. Not even Thatcher went this far. Not even Joh went this far, and he was no friend of the worker. Just ask the thousands of SEQEB workers who were sacked.

**Mr Rickuss:** What about Thomson sitting down there in the federal parliament?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson):** Order! The member for Lockyer will cease interjecting. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. This legislation is so extreme there is not a similar example of restricting the freedom of industrial organisations participating in public and political debates in any other Australian jurisdiction that I can find. In fact, we are yet to find a similar example anywhere in the world. I challenge the Attorney-General to produce the evidence if he has the evidence.

Freedom of political expression is recognised in all Western democracies. It is a fundamental human right. To stifle freedom of speech is to apply a gag to the very core of our society. It tramples important history. In its very first session in 1946 before any human rights declarations or treaties had been adopted, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 59(1), which stated—

Freedom of information is a fundamental human right and is the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated ...

Freedom of expression is integral to the effective working of a democracy and public participation in decision making. No citizen can effectively exercise their right to vote—they cannot take part in public decision making—if they do not have ready and free access to information and ideas and are not able to express their views freely. Freedom of expression is therefore not only critical to individual dignity but also to participation, accountability and democracy.

**Mr Rickuss:** Accountability is the important one there.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Lockyer, I think that is quite a frivolous interjection, and I have already asked you and named you specifically to cease interjecting.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Violations of freedom of expression often go hand in hand with other violations, in particular the right to freedom of association and assembly. Many people will be familiar with the first amendment to the US Constitution, which prohibits any restriction on the freedom of speech. But the American Convention on Human Rights also protects the right to freedom of thought and expression, the right to receive and impart information, and for restrictions to be imposed on this right only for limited circumstances such as the reputations of individuals, national security or public order.

Freedom of political expression has been something people have fought for over the centuries. It is a right for which many individuals have made great sacrifice. It is a right for which people like Nelson Mandela spent decades in jail. People have died to protect this freedom. It is jealously guarded worldwide but apparently not so here in Queensland. In Queensland the Newman government strikes at the heart of freedom of expression. We have seen some evidence of this as of late. Early in the term of the Newman government we heard that community groups were required to sign agreements that they would not criticise the government before they could receive any grants funding. But the Newman government may well find that rights that have been fought for over centuries are not so easily expunged as originally thought, because what sets democratic societies apart from autocratic ones is that in a democratic society there is a presumption—in fact, there is an expectation—that citizens will be entitled to express their opinions about what the government is doing. Any attempt to curtail that right can only be seen as undemocratic or authoritarian.

Governments that act in this matter are governments that are worried about expressions of public opinion. They are governments that do things that they know citizens will not support. In Queensland we live under a system of representative democracy. As members of parliament, we are elected by our constituents to represent them in this parliament. We are answerable to our constituents every three years for how we go about this very important task. This is the same for other organisations in our society. Trade union officials are elected by their members to take action on their behalf. Boards of directors are elected by corporations to represent them at the boardroom table. Employer organisations elect their officials in the same manner.

The practical effect of this bill is to totally shut down and stifle political debate in the public arena about any industrial issue by the Newman government. Response to political issues, by its very nature, needs to be immediate and it needs to be responsive. By the time a trade union or an

employer organisation has put together a ballot, arranged for all members to receive a ballot paper, taken steps to encourage members to vote to ensure the 50 per cent plus one criteria is met and closed the ballot and then prepared the campaign which cannot be authorised until that ballot authorises it, the issue would be well and truly over. Laws would have already been passed.

There is one accurate thing in this bill, and that is the word 'transparency'. It is accurate because the intention of this government is manifestly transparent. This bill seeks to fetter the political activity of trade unions. It seeks to shackle and gag those charged with the responsibility for speaking out for some of the most disadvantaged workers against the excesses of a government with a massive majority that appears to have taken the majority as a mandate to attack workers and suppress their industrial rights.

The Labor Party will always support the freedom of speech, and we will always stand for ensuring that organisations representing workers can do so with the same sort of freedom that we enjoy as members of parliament. It is unthinkable in a Western democracy such as ours that a government can announce a decision that impacts on union members and the same government can spend millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on a public education advertising campaign, but a trade union cannot spend more than \$10,000 without first undertaking a ballot of members. This bill strikes at the very heart of freedom of speech. It strikes at the very heart of freedom of political expression, and it is happening right here in the heart of Queensland.

The ideological position of the government was laid bare in the submissions to the legal affairs committee and the one day of public hearings. It should be noted that the recommendation from the LNP members of the committee to pass the bill is in direct conflict with the overwhelming opposition from a wide range of organisations and stakeholders. In fact, when it appeared that one organisation supported the legislation, it was with a special caveat. That organisation clarified that it would support the legislation being passed so long as they were made exempt from it and the requirements did not apply to them.

The legal affairs committee tabled its report only two days ago. In case the Attorney-General missed some of the submissions or some of the testimony at the hearing, I would like to remind the House of some of the key points. I might correct the record: in my earlier comments in a debate I think I said that the report was tabled on Tuesday. My recollection now is that it was tabled late Monday afternoon.

To be blunt, if the Attorney-General is being sincere when he talks about consultation, he would actually take on board the overwhelming opposition to this bill and withdraw it immediately. Before going to some specific examples, I also want to make the point that opposition to this bill was not restricted to the edges of the legislation. Submissions were not concerned with tweaking parts here and there. What became crystal clear throughout the hearing was that industrial organisations, both employee and employer representatives, spoke with one voice and said that this legislation was beyond tinkering.

I will start with an organisation that, historically, has been more closely associated with the LNP side of politics than with the Labor opposition. Let me remind the House of the submission from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland began their submission as follows—

At the outset CCIQ wishes to state its disappointment and opposition to the passage of this Bill. As an organisation we were not consulted in its drafting, believe it to be ill founded, will prevent political debate and will make it more difficult for member organisations such as CCIQ to effectively perform our duties on behalf of our members.

CCIQ's concerns more specifically relate to the following areas:

This act is an attack on political discussion and an attempt to make it more difficult for employer organisations, unions and associations to perform the role that their members ask of them.

...

The Bill will ultimately undermine CCIQ's governance framework creating disincentive for business leaders to sit on CCIQ's Governance and Policy Boards as well as ability to recruit talented individuals.

CCIQ will be required to comply with additional red tape that duplicates its best practice internal processes and external financial governance and advocacy. The cost of compliance will impact on our financial viability and ability to maintain current workforce numbers.

The State Government has failed in applying its own best practice for regulation making through an absence of a regulatory impact statement.

This is just the beginning of the clear opposition in the community to this legislation. But it is a clear and unequivocal summary of the opposition to this extreme legislation.

I also note that the Queensland Trucking Association supported the CCIQ submission. Likewise, the Master Builders Queensland put in a submission. In relation to the requirement to disclose spending for political objects they said—

Like CCIQ one of the key functions of Master Builders Queensland is to represent the interests of its members and more generally the building and construction industry.

This provision which amongst other things requires reporting of any material/publication about a political matter will clearly impact on Master Builders Queensland's ability to represent our members and seek to influence the Government and Opposition regarding matters under consideration by Government.

This is a clear indication that this legislation goes to the heart of the ability of legitimate organisations to make their voices heard in our democratic system. Similar views were expressed by a range of representatives from the union movement. The Queensland Law Society submitted that they had serious concerns with the restrictions this legislation imposes on free speech. The society expresses the same concern about those provisions as is reflected in the explanatory notes to the bill, namely—

The proposal raises the issue of whether the legislation has sufficient regard to the rights and liberties of individuals and whether there is a breach of the implied doctrine of freedom of political communication and association. The public interest in the transparency and accountability of industrial organisations is seen to override this concern.

The Law Society's submission went on to say—

The Society has and continues to express concern about any measure which restricts the ability of individuals or organisations to inform the Government or the public on the impacts of policies, especially those organisations best placed to express those views.

They are the words of the Queensland Law Society. The LNP government is trying to silence opponents and stifle public debate by deliberately targeting those organisations with the greatest authority and expertise to express their views and to express their opinions. After confirming that they would want to be exempt from this legislation, the Local Government Association of Queensland said that if they were covered by the requirement their work would be dramatically curtailed. In relation to advocacy Greg Hallam said—

Certainly it is a very significant part of what we do. I have five full-time staff involved in industrial relations, three full-time advocates. The difficulty would be, to be honest, with the smaller councils and the Indigenous and rural and remote councils.

There are serious concerns about the constitutional validity of this legislation. There are obvious questions that need to be answered in relation to the parts of this bill that require industrial organisations to seek approval by a ballot of members before they can spend funds of their organisation for the purpose of informing public debate. There are very real concerns that the bill is so extreme that it impedes the well-established principles of the implied freedom of speech protected by the Australian Constitution.

I do not intend to provide legal advice in this speech but will say that it is obvious there are serious questions that raise legitimate concerns about the legal validity of core elements of this bill. Even if the legal concerns were not self-evident, we know there are serious questions being raised because the departmental representatives at the public hearing confirmed that legal advice had been sought going to the question of constitutionality. When asked if the advice would be provided to the committee, that request was completely denied.

My questions now for the Attorney-General to answer in his reply are: if the Attorney-General is so confident that this legislation does not encroach on the established constitutional right of freedom of speech, (1) will he confirm he has received advice that the legislation is constitutional; (2) has he received advice that there are risks that it is not constitutional; or (3) will he release to parliament the advice upon which he is relying?

This bill smacks of hypocrisy. How often do we see LNP members come to this chamber and rally against the so-called red tape? Every week we listen to them speak on this topic at the same time as they rip away the rights of vulnerable outworkers, environmental protections and the rights of local communities to have their say in planning decisions all under the guise of reducing red tape. Yet here we see a piece of legislation that is all about creating red tape for industrial organisations. The difference with this legislation is subtle but vicious. In this legislation red tape is not a side effect of the legislative purpose. In this legislation the red tape is the purpose of the legislation. The bill deliberately imposes such burdensome restrictions on industrial organisations spending funds of their own organisation that it makes their involvement in public debate and political discussion almost impossible. Week after week we also witness the LNP members proudly dedicate themselves to sacred institutions and the importance of freedom and liberty. They purport to believe in democratic principles, yet want to stifle debate and silence opponents in this state. In fact, they are so eager to silence their opponents that they are even prepared to silence their ideological supporters as collateral damage.

The definition of 'political objectives' is so broad that it encompasses almost everything a union or employer organisation does. In particular, what are actually industrial or workplace issues are being treated in this legislation as political. For example, if teachers ran a public awareness campaign about the workplace issues of teacher to student ratios, it would be considered a political objective. If nurses and allied health professionals produced materials raising awareness about the risk of outsourcing their jobs, that would not be treated as a normal workplace issue that obviously effects their job; no, that would be treated as a political objective. If public servants ran a campaign about the removal of job security, that would be considered a political objective even though it goes to the very core of their workplace rights and likewise for police officers, ambos or firies who, because of their front-line service to our community, are reticent to resort to striking as part of their industrial negotiations. This government is telling those Queenslanders in uniform that if they raise a public awareness campaign to get more police, ambulance officers and firefighters in the community, they will be captured under the provisions of 'political objectives'. As many people in the Attorney-General's department have no doubt already advised the Attorney-General, these cases highlight the danger in trying to regulate political activity through industrial relations legislation rather than through changes to the electoral legislation.

Has the Attorney-General actually thought about how this will be applied? I ask the Attorney-General to respond in his reply to some very serious questions. Does he seriously think the elected leaders of the Electrical Contractors Association did not have the support of their members when they ran a public awareness campaign about the dangerous practices of shonky contractors which were seeing kids killed in the insulation industry? Does he seriously think that members of the Public Service Union wanted to spend months on a balloting process before their union was allowed to spend the organisation's funds on a protest when it was announced that thousands of workers were going to be sacked? Is he seriously suggesting that police officers would not support the work of the Queensland police union in its campaign for better conditions for police officers?

Standing up for its members is not at the periphery of the work of industrial organisations; it is at the core of their reason for existence. It is the right of workers and unions to join together to promote their collective interests. It is also at the core of modern democracy, and those opposite should feel embarrassed about coming into this democratic institution and trying to drive a stake through the well-established principles of freedom of association and freedom of speech. With the stroke of a pen late into the evening of a parliamentary sitting, we saw the ripping up of job security and the sacking of more than 14,000 workers.

This Premier and Attorney-General are so obsessed that they want to introduce extreme legislation the likes of which the Western democratic world has never seen. Why? It is because they dislike workers and the unions which represent their interests. The LNP refuses to acknowledge that unions are democratic organisations. Union members freely join their union; they choose to pay membership fees; they can engage with the leadership of their union on matters important to their workplace and organisation; and they are able to vote for their union representatives. Union leaders are elected by the grassroots membership to represent those workers and to run the organisation. If members do not like a decision or the direction of their leadership, they have the right to themselves stand for elected positions. If they disagree with the direction of their union, they are able to leave it. The Attorney-General and the Premier—

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Byrne): Order, Minister! The opposition leader is not taking interjections.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Attorney-General and the Premier have given absolutely no logical explanation as to why union leaders, who were elected by union members in free and fair elections run by the ECQ, will not have the authority to run the organisation and expend the funds of that organisation to promote the collective interests of their members. The CCIQ made the point that the leadership of their organisation is already accountable to its members. Their submission states—

CCIQ has a Governance Board who are responsible for the long term strategic direction of CCIQ and corporate governance. In addition our advocacy work is overseen by both a CCIQ Policy Board and 8 Regional Councils who are responsible for ensuring that CCIQ's members have direct input into policy and advocacy development. This structure is in place to ensure transparency and accountability—

**Mr Newman** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Premier, if you are going to interject or have a conversation, do so from your proper seat.

**Mr Newman** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Down here.

**Mr Bleijie:** The Premier can interject from wherever he likes. Under Westminster tradition, a Premier can interject from any seat in the House. Look it up.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Despite the expert knowledge available to me, I am not sure of what the ruling is on that. We will find out. But in the meantime, can you just act like adults for a second or two?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you very much. I would also note that the Premier is able to participate in this debate tonight. There is a speaking list available, and I do not see that the member for Ashgrove is currently on that speaking list. Let us see if the Premier would like to participate in this debate. I would encourage it.

**Mr Newman** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Are you taking the challenge? Should I accept that?

**Mr Newman** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I take the Premier's interjection that he will be speaking on this bill tonight. I was about to quote the CCIQ. The submission states—

This structure is in place to ensure transparency and accountability to our membership for CCIQ advocacy activities and financial expenditure of the organisation.

**Mr Minnikin:** It didn't help the HSU.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The QCU made the same point. I refer to what QCU President John Battams said at the hearing of the legal affairs committee. I quote—

**Mr Minnikin** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I quote—

**Mr Bleijie:** Oh, come on—a bit of chit-chat. You can't stop your speech for a bit of chit-chat.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I will wait until there is silence.

**Mr Bleijie:** We must all be silent? In the people's house we all have to be silent, just because you are on your feet?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes. People are interjecting.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! The member is not taking interjections. It is not helpful to make snide comments from the back benches, so just keep your cool. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I quote—

... trade unions are representative democracies. Like any other organisation, whether it is a corporation, a soccer club or in fact the Parliament of Queensland, the members of the registered organisation elect their office bearers to run the organisation until the next election, the same as you guys face every three years. In no other organisation in a democracy I know of where, on each and every occasion, the organisation which wishes to make a major decision and involve itself in activity it is very much set up to do, you have to actually go back to the members and have a referendum ...

The Attorney-General will no doubt have us believe that he has listened to submissions and that is why he has been compelled to make some minor changes. The Attorney should acknowledge in his reply the important point that both employer and employee organisations made in relation to their submissions to the legal affairs committee. Their concern with the legislation was not about tweaking thresholds; they opposed the central tenet of this extreme legislation. Mr Maloney, secretary of the QTU, made this point clear when asked whether there was a threshold that would make this legislation appropriate. Mr Maloney said—

... we would not see a threshold amount, because the submission that we have made is that any constraints on political expenditure are best handled through the Electoral Act, or the Commonwealth Electoral Act and the reporting requirements there.

Mr Battams of the QCU stated—

We are not interested in talking about thresholds; it is the concept that we oppose. We believe that the whole thing about having to go back to a referendum each and every time that you want to spend whatever dollars does not add up in terms of a democratic organisation.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The Executive Director of the Master Builders Association, Mr Graham Cuthbert, made the point very firmly. When questioned whether changing the threshold could make the legislation acceptable—

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Feel free to jump up and speak, too, member for Nanango. Are you on the list?

**Government members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** He said—

... we have no ability to accept a threshold. The reality is that this organisation was formed in 1882 by five contractors who were upset with the terms and conditions of government contracts and the behaviour of industrial unions. They sought to get together to have someone represent their interests and influence outcomes. It has not changed in 130 years, and I do not believe that there should be ...

The Attorney is trying to raise fear about HSU allegations, and there have been several interjections in relation to that here tonight. Need I remind the Attorney that, to the best of my knowledge, the HSU does not exist in Queensland. If the Attorney was serious—

**Mr Bleijie:** So corruption at a national level doesn't mean it should be of concern in Queensland?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** We are talking about Queensland here. If the Attorney was serious about the issue of misuse of union funds for the personal gain of union leaders, what does that have to do with public campaigns and the right of organisations to free speech? Of course, it is obvious that the Attorney-General is using the language of misuse of funds as a cover to go after the rights of organisations to spend the organisation's own money to pursue the interests of its members. Running public awareness campaigns has nothing to do with any allegations of personal misuse of funds.

I note that the government's response to recommendations 9, 10 and 11 notes the political campaign expenditure that would be prohibited unless there was a ballot. The sorts of things we are talking about here for unions in relation to expenditure to run a political campaign on public advertising includes public opinion polling—so no ReachTEL polling for the unions to gauge interest about government policies—television, radio, electronic and print advertising, billboards and letterbox drops. If that is not curtailing freedom of speech, I do not know what is! Let us go through it again so all members are very clear what they will be voting on. Without a political ballot if it is over \$10,000, unions will not be able to conduct political advertising which includes public opinion polling, television, radio, electronic and print advertising, billboards and letterbox drops. You are shutting down freedom of speech and expression in Queensland by passing this bill tonight. That is what you are doing.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is what you are not telling Queensland about, Attorney: it is in the fine detail.

**Mr Bleijie:** I said it on radio!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is in the fine detail.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Byrne): Order!

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is now very calm in the Queensland parliament—just briefly!

**Mr Bleijie:** I've never seen an opposition leader need so much protection from a Deputy Speaker.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order, Attorney-General! I call the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you. Of course the LNP is continuing its deeply deceptive language. Just as it refused to say 'privatisation'—instead using the term 'contestability'—it is trying to frame this legislation as democratic. I am sure we will see the Attorney and the rest of the backbench that will follow stand up and say that there is nothing more democratic than members voting on every major decision—except of course that imposing such administratively burdensome requirements on fulfilling what is a core role for unions and employer organisations standing up for their members becomes almost impossible. It is drastically anti democratic to impose such restrictions that aim to silence legitimate voices in public debate.

If this legislation was actually supported by the community, the LNP would have announced it prior to the election. If the Attorney claims that the government has a mandate to rush through this legislation, I ask him to table in the House where the LNP said prior to the election that it would be taking these extreme steps. Of course, I doubt we will see that in the Attorney-General's reply

because the LNP made no such promise. Instead, it is arrogantly using its majority to rush through legislation against the interests of Queenslanders and against the universal opposition of employers and employees. You simply could not dream this stuff up! So ashamed is the LNP of this draconian legislation that it is now going to rush it through in one day, and in budget week. It is just so cynical, but perhaps it is fitting that the LNP is trying to once again hide from public scrutiny on a piece of legislation that aims to stifle public debate in this state. If the Attorney believes in consultation and actually listening, he would not be putting this bill forward. His extreme ideology is hurting workers, industrial organisations and the very fabric of democratic debate. There are serious, genuine concerns that employee and employer organisations have put to this government about flaws with the fundamental fabric of this legislation. But instead of taking it on the chin and accepting that perhaps the Attorney may have got it wrong, this government is still pushing ahead. Once again we see the Newman government arrogantly using its majority to rush this through and once again the LNP has confused a majority with a monopoly on wisdom.

The opposition is opposed to this legislation. It may come as a surprise to those on the back bench, but we are opposed to this legislation. We believe in the freedom of speech, in the freedom of political expression and in the freedom of association. That is what we believe in. Tonight this government is about shutting down any opposition or any debate or any freedom of expression in Queensland. We have not seen issues like this since the Joh Bjelke-Petersen era, and that is true. Employer organisations and employee organisations attended the committee hearing. From what I read in the notes, all of them were opposed to this legislation, yet this government intends to rush it through tonight. I will always stand up for workers in this state. This is the government that sacked 14,000 workers in its last budget. This is a government that in this budget its core centrepiece is the rising cost of household budgets in this state. That is the centrepiece; that is the core. Today the Premier could not even name one new initiative in this budget—

**Government members** interjected.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** What was the one new initiative? There is not one new initiative about lowering the cost of living.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Leader of the Opposition, refer your comments through the chair.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I look forward to the Premier's comments in this debate tonight. I would love to see where he stands in relation to this. Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. We will oppose this legislation every step of the way.