




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 12 November 2015

MOTION: TRADE UNIONS

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (6.05 pm): I rise to speak on this motion and reject it categorically. Being lectured by those opposite about decency, about ways of dealing with people and about consultation is absolutely laughable. The position taken by the opposition really does shine a light on some of the key reasons why they are now sitting in opposition. Once again those opposite have made unions a central issue for parliament. They are not here to discuss education, infrastructure, health or any other important policy matters. No, once again they have decided to waste the time of this House obsessing over the union movement. They are obsessed by unions. They are fixated on them in a very similar way to the way that some teenage girls are obsessed with Justin Bieber. It is that sort of an approach. They are absolutely obsessed with unions. Unions are not the boogiemanager. They really need to get this through their heads. They are made up of members of the community: nurses, teachers, paramedics, firefighters, shop assistants, electricians, office workers, plumbers and factory workers. These are everyday Queenslanders and every time they attack a union they are attacking everyday Queenslanders. They are working families, young people, people who care about issues, such as employment security, decent health care and quality education. I am proud to be part of a government that respects unions as genuine stakeholders, which is what they are.

I have previously informed the House in my capacity as the Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations that I am required to meet with many key stakeholders, including unions, employer groups, businesses and other peak bodies. As a responsible and consultative minister I will meet with these stakeholders often. I will not be told by those opposite, who are too arrogant to consult—and this is a principal reason why they lost government—whom the government can and cannot meet with.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr PITT: Those opposite try to paint a picture that this government is unduly influenced by unions. They have conspiracy theories that we meet with them all the time.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr PITT: The real story is that at the end of October, since forming government, in my capacity as the minister, my publicly available ministerial diary extracts show that I have had over 1,100 meetings, of which only 40 were with trade unions. But, of course, these meetings do not happen in a vacuum. I meet with stakeholders to consult, to listen and to solve problems.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mrs Smith interjected.

Mr PITT: This is a departure from the previous government that was out of touch. They lost touch with stakeholders, they lost touch with the public.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Minister, I do not want to disrupt your thought pattern and I apologise. Member for Coomera, you are now warned under standing order 253A. Member for Mount Ommaney, you are warned under standing order 253A.

Mr PITT: One thing the opposition was very good at—it was an expert even—was picking fights. It was very good at picking fights, particularly with Queensland's public servants. Since winning the election, the Palaszczuk government has been able to progress and settle a broad range of industrial matters involving public servants, because we have engaged with stakeholders. We have restored employment security for state government workers. We have restored a suite of other key workplace conditions for state and local government workers, such as their right to be consulted in situations of organisational change. We have settled protracted and outstanding enterprise negotiations with government owned corporations. We have approved a fair and reasonable public sector wages policy that has allowed us to settle protracted public sector wage disputes, providing pay rises to nurses, cleaners and teachers, amongst others.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr PITT: The member for Clayfield should get out a bit more and meet some real people. This motion shows the disdain with which the LNP holds traditional process and natural justice. Those opposite want to deny due process. They are happy to brand people guilty until proven innocent. If there are questions about the political agenda of the royal commission, the right places to deal with those issues are with the police and the criminal or civil courts. On this side of the House we respect that process. One would think that it should be obvious, but clearly it is not for those opposite. Until that test is met, the Palaszczuk government will not put itself in the place of police, prosecution, defence, jury or judge. Those opposite may want to cross that line, but the Palaszczuk government certainly will not.

Of course the government welcomes inquiries investigating malfeasance in an organisation. If after the proper investigative process and any recommendations that the royal commission may make there is proven to be a wrongdoing, I am sure the members of those unions would themselves welcome the outcomes. We have always said that, if someone is acting outside the law, the unions should get back to the core business of representing their members and those acting outside the law should be punished by the law. The problem is that those on the other side treated with disdain the decisions of hundreds of thousands of working Queenslanders who elected this government to support working Queenslanders. In doing so, they marginalised most of Queensland by picking fights with them, which is why they are sitting opposite.

I will end with this: the royal commission is on now. In this state we had a commission called the Fitzgerald inquiry, which led to the standing powers of a royal commission being there for the CCC. Hang on! It was not called the CCC; it was called the CJC and then the CMC and then the CCC, because they mucked around with the powers. We on this side of the House will not do that. We respect process, and that is why we respect what is happening—

(Time expired)