




Speech By
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MOTION: TRADE UNIONS

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (6.16 pm): It gives me great pleasure to stand here tonight to oppose the motion before the House. We have just witnessed some of the opposition's hysterical obsession and heard a diatribe of made-up statements in this House. I have had a long proud history with the union movement in this state that dates back to 1980. I have had a most fulfilling career that enabled me to be elected the first woman QCU general secretary in the then 115-year history of the peak union council. During many years as an official I worked with various governments, but in all those years I never encountered a more anti-union attitude, bordering on hysterical obsession, such as has been displayed almost daily by those opposite since the state election. And hasn't it been displayed tonight! They simply cannot get over the fact that they lost government. They have no policies. They now have no plans. They have no leadership. And surprise, surprise, what will they play? They will play the union card time and time again, trying to score lazy cheap political points.

In spite of what those opposite believe and whether they like it or not, unions have a legitimate role in a democracy and freedom of association is enshrined in our laws. Very well you might get up and say, 'I support unions', when in every minute and every opportunity available to those opposite they will denigrate unions. They make up stories, they make up motions about undue influence and they make up whatever they need to make up in order to give unions a hard time, because they have nothing else.

However, the clear message being sent by those opposite to workers throughout the state, which is really the concerning part as, indeed, was their actions towards the workplace during the three years of the Newman government, is that a worker's union membership and involvement right is not respected by those opposite and is at their peril. That is the message they sent QNU delegates who spoke out and they continue on their nasty path full of prejudice. Due to this unhealthy obsession against unions, fundamental principles of fairness and due process are being denied and discarded. The principles of innocence before being found guilty and that not all are guilty by association are being totally ignored by those opposite in this motion.

The trade union royal commission, the Heydon commission, which, I might add, is under a bit of a political dark cloud—there are accusations that this is a politically motivated royal commission—has handed down an interim report but has made it clear that evidence received by the royal commission is not the same as evidence in a court of law but based on the balance of probabilities. Therefore, to take any action before the final report and any outcomes of the recommendations are known is deleterious, unfair and pre-emptive.

No-one is above the law; we know that. As we have always said, everyone has a right to their day in court. It is up to the courts to decide their guilt or otherwise. Officials have rights and so do the unions to defend those rights should recommendations put them in a position where they have a right to do so. This motion is pre-emptive. It has been moved way before there is a need to do so.

It is interesting that those opposite were very happy to come in here when they were in government and appoint former BLF secretary Dave Hanna to various government boards when it suited them. I remember when we were first elected talking about 1 William and we had the member for Coomera and others yelling out across the chamber that it is a CFMEU building site. They were very happy when it suited them. When it does not, they want to discard all fairness and any sense of propriety and denigrate just for the sake of doing so.

It ain't going to wash with us on this side of the House! We will vote this motion down. Unions are democratically elected to protect all of the workers who elect them. They are there to do their job. Michael Ravbar has a right to represent his members and to have his day in court, the way any citizen of this country does. For those opposite to come in here and move motions about desisting meeting with union officials is unfair. It wrecks of arrogance and is totally unacceptable to this side of the House. This obsession must stop.