




Speech By
Hon. Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Record of Proceedings, 18 February 2016

MOTION

**Royal Commission into the Trade Union Governance and Corruption, Palaszczuk
Labor Government Response**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (6.36 pm): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the member for Kawana, Queensland's most incompetent, worst ever attorney-general and industrial relations minister. His woeful ministerial legacy is a litany of failures—botched judicial appointments, the leaking of confidential discussions and the notorious youth boot camps fiasco. It is no wonder those opposite kept him in hiding throughout 2014. I do not think we heard one word from him for six or eight months during the campaign. But now he is out of the deep freeze and he has been unleashed as part of the LNP's latest assault on unions and workers.

The member for Kawana was part of a government that introduced the most draconian industrial relations laws Queensland has ever seen—a government that attacked the day-to-day conditions, take-home pay and jobs of hardworking Queenslanders, that stripped away penalty rates, that eroded conditions, even stripping workers of annual leave periods. Nothing was off limits for the LNP when it came to attacking workers. They even stripped away workers' common law rights, going against the recommendations of their own parliamentary committee. With this shameful record, it beggars belief that the member for Kawana is now in this chamber lecturing us on industrial relations.

I remind the member for Kawana that the trade union royal commission was set up by the federal government. State governments were not consulted about the terms of reference for the royal commission or about its conduct. This was a politically charged royal commission that commenced in 2014 and ran for 21 months at a cost of almost \$80 million, with over 500 witnesses. Its final report was only handed down on 30 December last year, comprising six volumes and 79 recommendations. There was also a confidential volume never made public.

Queensland has not been formally asked by the Commonwealth to respond to the 79 recommendations. What is more—I believe that it is outrageous—the federal government is yet to provide a formal, official response to its own royal commission. The federal Minister for Employment, Michaelia Cash, has not written to me, corresponded with me or telephoned me. In fact, she has not made any effort whatsoever to seek a response from me or this government on any recommendations contained in the report. The member for Kawana seems to be far more interested in our response than in any response from his own federal colleagues. The royal commission's recommendations are largely directed at a range of amendments to the current Commonwealth legislation and recommendations only ask that the state give consideration to some of those recommendations. It is hard to give any consideration when we do not know exactly what we are to consider. I will say that again: recommendations relate to current Commonwealth legislation, not state legislation. We do not have the Commonwealth's official response to consider, so it is quite preposterous for the member for Kawana

to be demanding an official response from the Premier at the next sitting day. Unlike those opposite, any laws we introduce will apply equally to both sides—employers and unions—and any official found to have done the wrong thing will face the full force of the laws. Equally, any employer, business figure or politician who breaks the laws should face the consequences. Can members imagine the outcry from those opposite if disgraced former federal minister Stuart Robert had been a CFMEU official who had engaged in the same sort of conduct—gold Rolex watches, flights to goldmines on the public purse, conflicts of interest, trips to China? They would be calling for ICAC, and I support those calling for ICAC. What I can say is that this government will always stand up for workers. Those opposite are frozen in their hatred of the union movement. So I say to the member for Kawana and those opposite: let it go, let it go, let it go. I urge members to oppose the motion.