




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR

Record of Proceedings, 18 February 2016

MOTION

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

 **Mr KING** (Kallangur—ALP) (6.24 pm): Mr Speaker, I rise to oppose the motion moved by the member for Kawana. The member for Kawana seems to be obsessed with trade unions. Rarely a day goes by in this place without the member for Kawana mocking and sneering about those organisations that represent workers in this state. Who is a worker in this state? Police, firemen, nurses, teachers and, yes, electricians, to name a few. The LNP makes all sorts of unwelcome and vile insinuations about these organisations but never looks at organisations that represent business or other groups.

When a group of people with a similar interest forms a group to have a louder voice of representation to balance the power dynamic between parties, this is collectivism. When workers do it we call it a union. When businesses do it they call it the chamber of commerce or the Retail Traders Association. These groups are the same as a union as far as I am concerned. One of the members of the previous LNP government was a member of such a representative group and he got himself into serious trouble, but I have never seen the member for Kawana take issue with this. I call this an obsession. When a group of individuals unite and pay a fee to join a group who then elect a leadership body and have a rank and file membership who have a say in making decisions, then I would call that body a union or something which seeks to emulate one.

I think the LNP meets this criteria. Even though they came much later to the game than unions or the Labor Party, perhaps they really are just a try-hard union themselves. Maybe the LNP's obsession about unions is just jealousy because, as much as they try to copy it, they will never accomplish what the union movement has done for its members. Queensland's Industrial Relations Act provides for the strong and accountable regulation of state registered industrial organisations which have every right to exist and represent workers, despite what the LNP and its cheer squad may think.

Queensland has been noted in the royal commission as providing an effective regulatory environment for registered organisations. The Queensland government is committed to maintaining and promoting a strong and effective industrial relations system. The trade union royal commission was set up by the federal government for its own purposes—purposes that I still question—as conservative governments always seem to have similar inquiries which cost the taxpayer a staggering amount of money and deliver very little credible evidence.

We are yet to hear a formal response from the federal government since the release of the report in December 2015. Since then all we have had are general drip-fed comments in the media about the report, but we have not been provided with any details about the findings and recommendations. In fact, some of it is so secret that only select people can view it. You would imagine that if it were the silver bullet that the Abbott-Turnbull government alludes to, they would be screaming its details from the

rooftops. How can members opposite expect a response in the report 'to each finding and recommendation'? Those are their words in this motion, Mr Speaker.

Those opposite want from us a formal response—point by point, recommendation by recommendation—but their colleagues in the federal government, to whom this royal commission report is directed, still have not done so. We have not been consulted. The federal minister has not written to our minister with a list of requests. They have done nothing other than try to resurrect the ABCC.

This notwithstanding, the recommendations made in the final report of the Royal Commission into Trade Union Governance and Corruption relating to the misconduct of certain individuals in trade unions should be pursued by the relevant authorities, not in political witch-hunts by those opposite. Any proven illegal conduct should be dealt with according to the law, not kangaroo courts created by a former attorney-general.

Trade unions save workers' lives. I am sure I am not alone in this place in my feelings: even one workplace death is too many. Yet this LNP opposition continues to want to deny unions the right of entry to investigate accidents in the workplace. We saw that this week. At the International Workers Memorial Day last year in Brisbane, on 28 April, we remembered 41 workers who had died at work already that year. In 2014, 185 workers lost their lives at work. No-one should go off to work with any expectation other than that they will return home to their families safe and in the same physical and mental condition as they left. I cannot understand why members in this place would want to water down an opportunity to save workers' lives.

The Queensland government respects the vital role played by trade unions in promoting a healthy and well-balanced industrial relations system in Queensland and nationally. I encourage all members in the House to oppose the motion.