




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BILL

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (11.13 pm): I do not look forward to following the member for Whitsunday because he knows everybody in his electorate and he is a great local representative, so I can only hope to emulate his effort. I rise to oppose the Industrial Relations Bill. Ultimately, what is the fundamental purpose and need that the people of Queensland have for this bill to be brought forward? What is the big benefit in this bill for the mums and dads sitting around their kitchen tables adding up their bills? Is it that union officials will no longer have to keep a register of their political spending? Is it that their credit cards will not need to be registered? Is it that they will not need to register their loans, grants or donations? I am wondering how any of this is going to benefit those mums and dads, and why is it those union officials are worried about that level of transparency and accountability? The only reason you could possibly be worried about that level of transparency and accountability is that you are either embarrassed, have something to hide or would like to mislead the people of Queensland and your membership as to what it is you are doing with the money.

Why would you not want to publish a financial disclosure? I do not know why you would not want to do that. Why would you not want your remuneration known by your membership, because they pay that? The people of Queensland pay my salary and it is published. I do not have a big issue with that. I am happy for that to be published. These union officials are representing members who pay their fees. Why are they not entitled to know how much they are getting paid? I wonder how this piece of legislation is going to help the mums and dads of Queensland—the hardworking families of Queensland? How is it going to help them by making these changes that remove the accountability and the transparency that the union officials have to show? How does it help their members? How do their members benefit from having transparency and accountability measures removed? I do not understand how that is going to help them. It is interesting to read the LGAQ's submission, which states—

The LGAQ notes the government's reference to this bill implementing all the recommendations arising out of an independent review of the state's industrial relations laws and tribunals. The LGAQ was a member of the Review group and actively participated in the review; however, it is also important to record that the Group was chaired by a former trade union official, supported by a labour lawyer and was dominated by trade union representatives. Without denigrating the efficacy and capability of the Chair Mr Jim McGowan or his support staff, it is fair to say that the outcomes from the review, as expected, heavily favoured the views and interests of trade unions.

If the LGAQ is worried about that, we have to ask: why would it be worried about that and why would it favour the trade unions and what is the consequence for the people of Queensland when that happens? The consequence is that the union will use its power and coercive nature of getting people's membership and the ability to be able to hold the local government to ransom for various deals and the local government will have to yield because the power has been given to them to do that and when they have to yield they will have to spend more money and the mums and dads of Queensland will have their rates go up. That is the consequence. What we can say is that the government implemented a review and it stacked the review to make sure that it got the outcome that it wanted from the review so that it could extort the mums and dads of Queensland via their rates so that the union that does that

can make a donation and help in the preselection and the perpetuation of the members in the House here who will give those same officials more power to take more money off the mums and dads of Queensland, and so the system goes around one more time.

Ultimately, we are looking at a situation where we have a Labor government that is completely beholden to the unions. I note a video on the *Courier-Mail* site earlier today where there was a meeting held and it was very clear from the members of that union how they felt they need to control the entire political party of the ALP to ensure that the things they want—not the things the people of Queensland want but the things they want—are delivered to them. Of course, what do they want? They want to make sure that they get the transparency measures removed so that people do not know how much they earn, what they are spending their money on and where the credit cards are being used.

To me, it is a puzzle why a state government would remove its ability to terminate protected industrial action if there were a risk of significant damage to the Queensland economy and a threat to the health and wellbeing of the local community. I wonder how that is to the benefit of the people everybody here has been elected to represent. How is it to their benefit for the government to be able to say, 'We don't think we should be able to terminate protected industrial action even if it might endanger the health and wellbeing of your local community?' I would be very interested to hear an answer to that in the context of the benefit to the mums and dads and the working families of Queensland and not the union officials of Queensland.

We are really discussing the balance of power and where it should rest. How much power should a local government have? How much power should a state government have? How much power should an individual have? How much power should a union member have? How much power should a union organiser have? We are seeing the pendulum swinging away from the people of Queensland and to the union officials. As that pendulum swings away, who benefits the most from the union officials having more power and control over the people of Queensland and more ability to put their hands in people's pockets to take money out on a regular basis? It is not the people of Queensland; it is the people who get the money spent on them. Who gets the money spent on them? That is right: the Labor members sitting opposite. That is where their funding comes from. That is where their support base comes from. It comes from the very unions that they now wish to empower over and above the people of Queensland, over and above the local councils of Queensland and over and above the individuals who elected us to this place.

Again, I ask the question: why would the government not want to disclose political party affiliation fees? Why would the government not want to disclose spending for political purposes? Why would the government not want to disclose the remuneration and benefits of key officials in organisations? What is the point of hiding all of those things from the people who are funding them? I am a great believer in transparency and accountability. Unfortunately, in this bill I see the removal of a lot of transparency and accountability measures. The removal is for a very specific purpose and that purpose is not in the best interests of the individual mums and dads and families of Queensland; it is in the best interests of the union officials and it is in the best interests of those people who benefit from the union movement, who are the members opposite.

I very much caution the people of Queensland to see what happens next. If this legislation is passed, they will be the net losers. Some of their money will be transferred in the form of union fees to union officials and then transferred to the Labor Party so that it can empower the union officials to take more Queenslanders' money in the future and give the union movement more opportunity to bend them to their political will by using various forms of intimidation and bullying in the workplace.

I did not stand for that. I think that a well-run good industrial organisation would be only too happy to have these transparencies. They would not fear them at all and there would be no need for them to be removed. I see that this government has chosen to remove those transparencies. I do not think that that is in the best interests of the people of Queensland. That is why I oppose the bill in its entirety.