



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**

**MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL**

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Record of Proceedings, 23 March 2017

**MOTION: UNIONS**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (5.09 pm): I move—

That all words after 'House' be deleted and the following words inserted:

1. notes the comments by ACTU Secretary Sally McManus and supports the rule of law; and
2. notes the federal government's move to implement the trade unions royal commission's recommendations for criminal penalties for corrupting payments between unions and companies.'

Members opposite have to be desperate. Every time this parliament sits all we see from those opposite is continual motions on union bashing. It is getting so tedious that we just have to keep repeating and knocking the member for Kawana down. I thank him for the opportunity to wholeheartedly congratulate Sally McManus on her appointment as the first ever female secretary of the ACTU in its 90-year history. Having myself been the first ever secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions when I was elected in 2000, I acknowledge the significance of her appointment. Sally has been a tireless advocate for workers for more than two decades, leading the campaign for equal pay for community workers and being instrumental in the fight to stop the privatisation of Sydney Water.

I welcome some of the early priorities she has set out following her election to the position. These include: reversing the damaging and unfair penalty rate cuts in the recent decision of the Fair Work Commission; ensuring a decent minimum wage; and the need for stronger rights and protections for workers who are being exploited. I wish her all the very best at a time of significant challenges for Australian workers and the proud Australian trade union movement. I believe that her statement following her comments clarifies her position when she says—

Australian unions are committed to changing the laws at work because they are no longer strong enough to guarantee and protect workers' rights. We will do so through advocating changes to the laws and the rules that govern the workplace.

Congratulations, Sally; I wish you all the very best.

On this side of the House we clearly do not condone breaking the law under any circumstances. If the law is broken those who break it should face the full consequences, but let us remember that the rule of law goes both ways. Day in and day out we hear from those opposite about what unions are doing and what unions are not doing, but do we ever see them get up once to talk about the rules and laws that have been broken by employers every single day in the exploitation of workers and their entitlements? There has not been a word from those opposite in relation to that. We had the Fair Work Ombudsman's report on the 7-Eleven scandal, Dominos, Pizza Hut and the list goes on, particularly with labour hire firms, but do we ever hear any of those opposite talk about that breach of the rule of law? Never. It is always about union bashing and it always goes one way.

What we do support is changing unfair, unjust laws that are bad, and the best way to do that is to change the government. Those opposite would know how this feels. How many of them were there in 2012 and what brought them undone? Bad and unjust laws. The people of Queensland saw your bad laws and said a resounding no. Let's just go through some of them. The member for Kawana talked

about reforms to the workers compensation system. They imposed a five per cent threshold for common law claims against the advice of their own parliamentary committee, and do you know what that means? That means that today workers suffering from coal workers' pneumoconiosis would not be able to claim common law damages for simple CWP. That is what those changes did for those workers in the coal industry.

The member for Kawana had to come in here and repeal unconstitutional laws that required unions to ballot members for expenditures of more than \$10,000 on political donations. They were the bad laws. Let's not forget the boot camps. Pink jumpsuits, anybody? Does anyone remember those? There were industrial laws that applied only to unions and not to employers in spite of the Scott Driscoll affair. What was going on when they were in government was a disgrace. Workers rejected their unfair and unjust laws. They were bad laws. We campaigned to change them, and now they are over there where they belong.