




Speech By
Nikki Boyd

MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

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MOTION: UNIONS

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (5.20 pm): Labor in government believes that when bad laws exist it is incumbent upon us to change them. We hear much from the opposition by way of union bashing. In fact, one would struggle to find a sitting week in which this kind of stunt is not part of the opposition's bread and butter. Perhaps the problem is not the fact that those opposite care about corruption and wrongdoing. Perhaps the overriding concern here is the track record of Sally McManus in mobilising an army of volunteers to doorknock and call their community during election times. Perhaps it is her track record to generate a groundswell of community support through this grassroots campaigning. Perhaps it is the fear that such a groundswell of support for values based policy, ignored by narrow-minded conservative politicians, threatens not only the agenda of those opposite also but their very existence in this place. The contribution to this debate by the member for Mount Ommaney—a love letter to the *Courier-Mail*, if you will—certainly adds weight to this theory.

As Sally says, the job of the union movement is to lead a movement of people who share a vision about the kind of society they want. My community tell me that they do not want jobs with insecure employment—

Mr Watts interjected.

Mr Minnikin interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Toowoomba North and member for Chatsworth.

Ms BOYD: My community do not want laws that impinge upon basic rights. My community do not want to see big business get a tax break while the little guy suffers. Rather than tackle any of these issues in the time afforded to the opposition each sitting day, we find ourselves back here going over the member for Kawana's old favourite—union bashing—as he gesticulates madly like Lord Farquaad. I wonder if this is playing out just as he rehearsed it in the mirror.

The Fair Work Commission's decision, which will strip the take-home pay of some 700,000 of the lowest paid workers—workers who rely on penalty rates to make ends meet—is bad policy. Any system in which the government of the day backs that in demonstrates and screams out to us that the system needs fixing.

Our democracy provides for the opportunity to change unjust laws. In fact, it is based on it. That is what we as legislators must do. That is what has consumed much of the legislative reform of the Palaszczuk government. Time and time again we see Queenslanders stand up together to the things that are unfair and unjust and demand something better. Indeed, I believe that is how the LNP went from a record majority squarely to the opposition benches. Once again, the conservative side of politics demonstrates that it just does not get it.

Like Sally McManus, I have organised workers—predominantly low-paid, under-recognised workforces and female dominated workforces. I have organised with workers to take protected industrial action. I am acutely aware of the limitations that surround the framework. The right to strike is a basic,

fundamental human right. Civil disobedience is based on respect for the rule of law. The United Nations has declared strike action to be one of the principal means by which workers and their associations may legitimately promote and defend economic and social interests. Our current laws in Australia put us at odds with international conventions and human rights. We are in breach and the International Labour Organization, the UN agency which oversees labour standards, makes sure we are reminded of that.

Australia's laws are out of step. They are flagrantly in breach of UN conventions. Going after workers and going after their unions is not the solution. The solution is a legislative one—one in the opposite direction to the one the conservatives are taking. We know that wages growth has stagnated. The divide between the haves and the have-nots is getting ever greater. People in my community are hurting. It is plain to see and it is tragic to hear. It is incumbent upon all of us as legislators to enforce the laws or repeal them. I urge the Turnbull government to put a stop to its dogged attack on workers and their unions. Australia has grown tired of it. I commend the minister's amendment to the House.