




Speech By
Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (11.54 am): I rise to address the Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. In the more than 13 years that I have had the honour of representing the people of Glass House in this parliament there has been a lot of legislation debated. There has been a lot that has been technical and had bipartisan support. There has been a lot that was not technical in nature but had the best interests of Queenslanders at heart. There has been vigorous debate around some of the aspects of that legislation. I accept that when those opposite are in government sometimes they bring in legislation that I am ideologically opposed to, but I hope that underlying all of that is their intent to make sure that this state is a better state through the legislation they bring into this House. We have very vigorous debate. I can probably count on one hand though those pieces of legislation that come into this House that are amoral, dishonest, underhanded, shady and vindictive. I add this legislation to that list.

The Attorney-General said we are implying that Labor has cosied up to the union. It goes far beyond cosying up to the unions. Those opposite are owned by the unions—lock, stock and barrel. Those opposite take their marching orders from the unions. They bring legislation into this House because of the unions.

Mr Stevens: Puppets!

Mr POWELL: They are the puppets of the unions. I take that interjection from the member for Mermaid Beach. They are totally infiltrated by the unions. Those opposite talk about the political membership of the associations. How many members of the CFMMEU or the ETU are card-carrying members of the Labor Party? I suspect every single one of them. If members want further proof of how infiltrated this Labor Party is by the unions we saw it this morning. They have also infiltrated the parliament itself. We saw on the balcony of Queensland parliament CFMMEU workers flying their flags. Is there no government building safe from these militant unions? Is there no workforce safe from these militant unions? There are staff in this parliament who deserve to know they can come to work and be kept safe. Instead we have protesters standing on balconies flying their flags, making gestures to staff and members of parliament alike that are inappropriate. I am calling that out. It is shameful and it should not continue to occur. Those opposite simply smile and continue to bring in this sort of legislation.

The Attorney-General also talked about how she had done some research on a number of websites. I have done some research too. At the end of the day this legislation is about removing the ability of non-Labor Party aligned employee organisations, what we call red unions, to represent workers in industrial relations matters. I thought the Labor Party had a proud record of allowing Queenslanders to represent their priorities. I went to the queenslandlabor.org website where it says: 'Working Queenslanders know that they once again have a government that places top priority in the dignity of work, job security and workplace health and safety.' They now need to add the following words: 'but only if you join a Labor aligned union that donates to the Labor Party'. It goes on to say, 'As a party, we believe in the values of equality, opportunity, fairness and reform,' but again they need to add, 'but only if you join a Labor aligned union that donates to the Labor Party'. It says, 'Labor ... has continued to

stand up for workers' rights, and a dignified life for all Queenslanders.' They need to add to that line, 'but only if you join a Labor aligned union that donates to the Labor Party'. At the end of the day that is what this is all about.

I have immediate family members who are members of these associations. Why? It is not because I am a member of parliament who happens to be in the LNP. No. It is because, as professional nurses and teachers, they have looked at what they want out of an industrial association that will represent them and what they want is the indemnity insurance—

Mr Langbroek: Cheaper indemnity.

Mr POWELL: Cheaper indemnity; I take that interjection from the member for Surfers Paradise. They want to know that what they are paying is going to achieve that and nothing more. They want to be represented in an apolitical manner. They do not want either party, Labor or the LNP, to be representing their views. They do not want to have to pay \$400 extra for the privilege of handing that straight over to the ALP.

Mr Furner interjected.

Mr POWELL: It is about money; I take the interjection from the member for Ferny Grove. It is about lining the pockets of the Australian Labor Party. This is about ensuring that they can continue to get their donations—hundreds of thousands of dollars—from the QTU, the QNMU, the CFMMEU and from all of the unions that continue to donate on a daily basis to the Labor Party and will continue do so.

I remind the voters in the electorate of Glass House and across the state that, on top of this legislation, we also have the donation cap laws that mean, for me and others in the party that I represent, the maximum we can spend is \$150,000 to continue to represent our constituents while those opposite can run a candidate, have the unions pile on and spend more than \$2 million doing the same. That is what this is all about. It is all about ensuring that they can continue to be funded—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Order! Pause the clock. Members, we have a lot of people on the list. Does anyone else want to join it? We will have silence, then.

Mr POWELL: They want to continue to be able to line the Labor Party's coffers so that they can continue to manipulate the outcomes of election campaigns here in the state of Queensland. We will get told that these recommendations were the result of a review. Let us put paid to that. It was a sham review. It was a Clayton's review. The media statement that was issued when the review was launched spoke only about sexual harassment. It did not disclose the true intent of the review to attack workers' rights to choose who represents them. Who was it chaired by? It was chaired by former Labor attorney-general and Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union director, Linda Lavarch. Who was the co-chair? It was John Thompson, who happens to have been the general secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions in 1995. If members want to know why this was a stitch-up from day one, it is because only selected organisations were invited to make submissions. The ones that this bill affects in particular, the red union associations, were not invited to make representations.

As other members have said, there are elements of this bill that we potentially could have supported were they in a separate bill, particularly those elements around sexual harassment. I reiterate what others have said: it has no place in Queensland workplaces and strengthening provisions in that area is well and truly supported. We do want to see all people respected. We want to see them treated with dignity. We want to see that occur for members of these associations, too. Those opposite are not extending that same courtesy to all teachers, nurses and frontline workers—workers who those opposite continue to go on and on about. They say they support them, but clearly not. Those workers have made a decision to join these associations and those opposite should respect that rather than criminalise it.

I want to touch briefly on the changes around gender-neutral language. Again, others will have used these words: I want to make sure that women do not have their identity erased. They need respect. They need to be valued and they need equality. By removing some of this language you are actually devaluing women. I have said in this chamber before that I am surrounded by amazing and incredible women starting with my wife, my mother, my mother-in-law, my daughters, my staff and my colleagues. I am surrounded by them. By changing this language you are devaluing them. I will not support that.

I come back to where I started: this is a further indication that the Palaszczuk Labor government is completely owned, completely infiltrated and completely at the service of the unions in this state. If it were not then we would not be debating this legislation. It is shameful, it is immoral, it is dishonest, it is underhand, it is shady, it is tricky, it is vindictive and it needs to be thrown out.