




Speech By  
**Bruce Saunders**

**MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH**

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Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2022

### **INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (7.39 pm): I rise in support of the Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. I put on the record my thanks to the minister. I have known the minister, the member for McConnel, for a very long time. I think we go back about 30 years. There is no-one in this chamber more dedicated to workers' rights than the minister. My family and I have had a long association with the member for McConnel. I want to thank her for this bill. Once again she has delivered in spades for the workers of Queensland and, particularly, for my union. I disclose that I have been a long-time member of the Together union, which was formerly the QPSU.

**Mr Hunt:** Hear, hear!

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I take that interjection from the member for Caloundra, who also is a member and was a great prison officer. I also acknowledge the member for Hervey Bay. He was a senior public servant in my area and is also a very staunch Together member.

**Mr Millar** interjected.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I hear the member for Gregory. My family goes back a long way in the union movement throughout Western Queensland. The Holy Grail is, of course, Barcaldine to a lot of us in the union movement.

I thank the member for Redlands, the committee and the 35 submitters who made submissions on the bill. We heard members on the other side talk about an upper house. I do not think Queenslanders want more politicians. I think what we have now is working pretty well.

Last night the member for Redlands tabled a flow chart that I was very keen to see. I was sitting up the back with the member for Redlands when I saw that flow chart. I have seen a lot of flow charts in my life. This one looks like something from Mr Squiggle: 'Hey, Miss Jane, let's draw all these lines.' There are so many addresses on the flow chart that I am very confused by it. There is Mooloolaba, there is Maroochydore, there are offices in the *Courier-Mail* building, there are offices in the Valley. Where are the members supposed to go to see their organisation, or whatever you want to call it? Being a long-time union member I have always been involved in elections. We know who the president of our union is. We know who the general secretary is. We know the body that runs the union. We know that. But in this organisation, who is it? As I said, it looks like something that Mr Squiggle and Miss Jane have put together. I table that chart which, when you look at it, is very confusing.

*Tabled paper:* Organisational Chart titled 'QAS Group and NPAA Services Organisational Chart as at 2 November 2021' [1777](#).

If it is confusing for us, the lawmakers on this side of the House, can members imagine how confusing it must be for the members of the so-called association? It is not a union. We know that it is an association. We know that they say they are unions but they are not. They have no power to represent workers in the IRC. They talk the talk but they cannot walk the walk, unfortunately. Let us talk about unions and what has happened in this state. I cast back to 2012 when the Together union worked very hard—

**Mr Tantari** interjected.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I take the interjection from the member for Hervey Bay because he also saw public servants who were sacked. When you sit in a room with people who have been very loyal public servants for various governments over the years, whose belongings were taken from their desks and put in a shoebox, it is pretty distressing. People were on suicide watch because of the way they were treated. That is when a union comes in. That is when you see the true worth of a union. We saw how well my union, the Together union, supported and worked with the public servants—and the teachers and nurses through their various unions—throughout that dreadful time from 2012 to 2015. That is why people have faith in unions. That is why we have to ensure that the unions are accountable and that we have proper elections. By the way, for the information of those on the other side, those elections are run by the Electoral Commission; they are not run by the union movement. We know that. We have been involved in a lot of internal elections.

When you think about those things, you think about credibility. On that side of the House they are always talking about credibility. They are always talking about honesty. How did these people in this pyramid, this Ponzi scheme, these false unions or whatever you want to call them, get elected? How did the people in charge of these organisations get elected? Where was the vote? Was it a public vote? I did not see it and I follow a lot of things around Queensland. I ask everyone in this House: did anyone see a vote on who was elected? We know there are three people involved. Who voted them in? Did they vote in a hall or did they do it like Clive Palmer did when everyone had a few beers and said, 'Yep, you're the leader, Clive'? Did that happen? I am confused because in my Together union we have a vote that is controlled by the Electoral Commission of Queensland. We have candidates and we know who is running. We know who is in charge of our union and that is because of the laws brought in over the years by good state Labor governments. In our union, representatives come from the floor. They are former delegates and they are voted in. That is what happens.

This is good legislation because it protects the rights of Queenslanders. Those opposite will say that it is all about money grabbing, but it is not. It is about making sure that the workers are protected at all times. I can tell the House that they have not forgotten 2012. That is why it is important that we have a very strong union movement in this state to protect workers' rights and to protect workers.

This week is teachers week. I have a lot of time for teachers and I have a lot of friends at the QTU. I want to thank the teachers for all the hours they put in and acknowledge the union officials from the QTU. As I said, I have a lot of good friends in the QTU, particularly the QTU organiser in my area. He is a tremendous man who looks after his members.

**Mrs Gilbert** interjected.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I take the interjection from the member for Mackay. Scott is a tremendous union organiser. Scotty Welch makes sure he puts his union and his members first at all times. I see the minister nodding her head. No doubt the minister has had many conversations with the QTU organiser for the Maryborough electorate and the Wide Bay. That is what you get when you have a proper union. You get organisers who look after their members. That is what it is all about. It is about making sure the members are looked after.

The bill strengthens the protections against workplace sexual harassment and I think everyone in this House agrees with that. It supports the effective representation of employees and employers by registered industrial organisations. That is what we are doing. It maintains the integrity of and the registration framework for industrial organisations, which is what a proper union is—not a false union. That is what a union does. It looks after the workers. It is not about three people deciding that they will have a few beers in the back of a shed and make some money, forgetting about workers' rights. The bill also amends the Anti-Discrimination Act 1991, the Public Trustee Act 1978, and the Associations Incorporation Regulation 1999.

I have talked about my 'purple army', the Together union. A lot of the doctors who work in A&E and the office people who make sure that everything is processed properly are Together members. I have been in contact with some of them today, particularly some of the doctors. They are a bit disturbed about being called duds. When you have a car crash, a stroke or a heart attack you will present at a hospital and the doctors you will see will be Together members. They are not duds. Some of them have contacted me today to say that they were personally insulted by those comments.

**Mr Tantari** interjected.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I take that interjection from the member for Hervey Bay. Our electorates share some really good doctors and hospital administration staff who are covered by the Together union. We value our health workers. It has been a very tough two years with the pandemic. We know what the teachers, the nurses and the Together members have had to put up with for the past two years. The unions stood behind them and made sure that their workers were safe. The unions made sure that their workers had the right PPE. They made sure that their workers were looked after by a good Labor government, which is what the Palaszczuk government is. It is a good Labor government.

Before I wind up, I congratulate the minister once again. I have known the minister for many years. There is no-one who looks after workers' rights more than the member for McConnel. Thank you, Minister.