




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (5.38 pm): I cannot believe how appalled I am at this legislation, which is nothing short of a complete and utter abomination. I would like to think that any government of the day will always make decisions, at the very least, that they can argue will improve the lives of the average Queenslanders. That is absolutely not the case in this instance. The Labor Party will try to say that they are a party for the workers, but this bill just shows that they have not been a party for the workers for a very long time. This bill, the so-called Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, should be called the 'Protect Our Mates, Line Our Pockets and Protect Our Gravy Train Bill'. Never did I think I would see the day when the Labor Party introduced legislation that blatantly reduces the rights of workers in Queensland, but here we are. Many of those opposite, including the member for Bundaberg, are saying that there are fake unions and real unions. I would agree with the member for Bundaberg, because a fake union is one that does not care about the interests of its members and is beholden to the political agenda of its power-hungry Labor mates.

Want to know what a fake union is? Look no further than the QNMU and the QTU. I will give the House some statistics to back that up. In the last four years the QNMU has had 68 published decisions in front of the QIRC. Red Union Support Hub on the other hand—the very real and prestigious group of unions that those opposite are trying to shut down—has over 800 matters in front of the QIRC. The minister and the Labor Party have even acknowledged how important the Red Union group is with their own amendment which means that the Red Union can continue to represent its members on cases currently in front of the QIRC, and that is even after many comments made in this chamber that suggest the Red Union cannot represent its members properly. Yes, that is right: the Labor Party through its own amendment has acknowledged that the Red Union is actually representing its members a hell of a lot more than the unions that blatantly support the Labor Party. Why is this? Maybe the unions beholden to the Labor Party do not want to make their masters look bad so they choose to go soft on their members, go soft on the workers of Queensland, all in the name of politics.

Yesterday the member for Bundaberg said red unions should just register. If he had actually looked into it, he would have worked out that they cannot because of legislation from the Labor government. The statement of compatibility with human rights refers to this very legislation. I am of course talking about the 'conveniently belong' rule. Should an individual or group seek to form a new industrial organisation and seek registration, the individual only can if there is no existing registered organisation to which they could conveniently belong. In other words, the Labor Party has a complete monopoly on unions.

I have only been here for a few months and even I can do that basic research to understand that those opposite are completely misleading in their claims. Why are those opposite doing this? It might have something to do with money. It costs about 300 bucks to join a union. Have a look at the registered nurses union in WA run by Mark Olsen. The NPAQ with less scale can run it for 400 bucks. The QNMU charges over \$710. Where does the extra 400 bucks that the QNMU slugs frontline nurses for go?

Some 60,000 QNMU members times \$400. That is \$24 million a year—just a bit more than pocket change. Where does that end up? It ends up being spent on political campaigns to get the ALP team in cosy political jobs.

The claim by those opposite that these unions that they are trying to shut down cannot represent members is a complete fallacy. Fake unions such as the QTU and QNMU are so embarrassed by their complete incompetence of being a union that they have called on their Labor mates to ban their competition. If this was a bill so critical to protect workers, then why did those opposite have a direct crack at Red Union 28 times yesterday alone? That is right: Labor Party members referenced Red Union 28 times yesterday, and we do not even have today's count. I do thank them for so actively promoting what is a great union and one that represents nearly 600 nurses and teachers in Callide. To the nurses and teachers of Callide, thank you for all of your hard work. I will always have your back. You play a critical role in society and I am forever grateful for everything you do.

We know how bad the health crisis is at the moment, so rather than give nurses and doctors the support they need, here we have the Palaszczuk government stripping away their rights. The Labor Party does not want to fix the health crisis. Instead, it is trashing the choice of nurses. It is also offending mothers with this bill. The Maternity Consumer Network in its submission stated that it is deeply offended by some of the provisions in this bill. One of its concerns is updating terms such as 'maternity leave' and replacing it with 'birth related leave'. I will tell members a fact: regardless of this bill, Callide will still be without 'birth related services' thanks to the failures of the Palaszczuk Labor government and the Queensland health minister. The 'birth related services' in the electorate of Gladstone will still also be on bypass. That is the reality we face in rural and regional Queensland while the Palaszczuk government is here shutting down the rights of workers. This is the Labor Party in 2022 and a government that cares more about its own pockets and more about its mates than the mothers of Queensland.

If you are a worker in Queensland and have a problem with your employer, would you choose a representative body to defend your rights that either (a) is completely independent and only beholden to its members or (b) approved or appointed by your very own employer? No doubt most workers would know the answer to that, but for those opposite I will give them a bit of a clue: the answer is (a)! Imagine if the shearers back in the 1890s could have only been represented by a group dictated to by the pastoralists. Just imagine that for a second. That is exactly what this bill is doing. Those shearers would be rolling in their graves at the thought of this bill and they would be appalled that a so-called Labor Party is even proposing it.

For those who are still trying to draw a conclusion on how appalling this is, let me give a few examples of why this will negatively impact every single worker in Queensland. By changing 'industrial associations' to 'industrial organisation', it is stripping protected industrial actions from individuals and groups. A previous employer of mine had been making an error in relation to my wages and those of my colleagues. Some of my colleagues had been aware of this for several years but had no success in having it rectified. I understand right from wrong, so I acted. I stood up to our employer on behalf of me and my colleagues. One of my colleagues had been getting short-changed for so long they owed him nearly \$10,000 in entitlements. This bill stops individuals from choosing who represents them in the commission. It is an ALP union or nobody.

I will give yet another example of the difference between a fake union and a real union. The committee inquiry into this bill alone is proof of the pudding. The QNMU submitted 10 pages to the inquiry, with a few of them being more or less blank. The QTU—a union that supposedly represents teachers—submitted two pages: two whole pages, and one of them was a cover page. Here we have a so-called representative of teachers putting forward a submission on what the Labor Party claims will help the teachers of Queensland and the Queensland Teachers' Union only submitted one page of content. I even made a trip back to the printer because I thought, 'Surely not!'

In contrast, a real representative of teachers in Queensland worked hard because that is what it does for its members. The Red Union submitted 43 pages—43 pages—because it cares about the workers of Queensland. To every teacher, every nurse and every worker in Queensland, I am here today to fight for you and your rights. I care about you having access to appropriate representation and to be able to have your matters advocated on by who you choose. No employer—absolutely no employer—should set the rules on who their employees choose to represent them. Do not be fooled by the spin of the Labor Party. This bill takes away your choice. It takes away your fundamental rights. You have the right to choose who represents you and who your union is. Join a real union. Join the TPAQ or join the NPAQ because they will stand up for your rights and will not be beholden to a political agenda. I absolutely oppose this bill because I support the workers of Queensland.