




Speech By
Jarrold Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Record of Proceedings, 26 October 2022

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.48 pm): The amendments contained in this bill with respect to workplace harassment are admirable and we support those amendments, but make no mistake, most of the amendments in this bill are driven by pure politics, an ideological obsession and a hate for competition. Ultimately, this bill is a bill to further entrench the Labor aligned union monopoly in Queensland and take away choices for teachers, nurses and other frontline workers.

The minister spoke about the five-year review. She was adamant to point out that it was an independent five-year review. It just happened that one of the people who reviewed it was a former commissioner and also union official and the second reviewer was Linda Lavarch, a former Labor Party Attorney-General who I understand either worked or was on the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union. There is no independence.

The fact that the minister can keep a straight face while trying to convince people that this was an independent review when it was conducted by former union officials and a former Labor attorney-general is not only embarrassing; it is disgraceful. It is simply not true that you can have an independent review if former Labor Party members of parliament are doing the review. It is biased and it benefits the unions they were associated with in previous lives. They did the review, but it is not only that: when the minister announced that she was going to conduct the five-year review into the Industrial Relations Act, she did it under the guise of the sexual harassment amendments. As admirable as those amendments are, they are but a small fraction of this bill. As I said, the rest of the bill is pure ideological politics.

The so-called independent review that the minister speaks about was not advertised and there was nothing on the website. In fact, I went to the Industrial Relations website to find the review. I wrote to the minister and asked, 'Where is this review? What groups have been invited to have a say on the review?' The minister wrote back to me and said that the review has been completed—but without any public submissions and without any public consultation. On the Office of Industrial Relations website there is a whole page dedicated to matters of consultation, but it just so happens that this five-year review is not there. That shows that this was a farce from the start.

Let me be abundantly clear and blunt. What has happened is that the Labor aligned unions are losing members to the Red Union supported NPAQ and TPAQ. They have gone to this minister and the government and said, 'Help and stop it—but not only stop it; we want you to outlaw these other organisations that teachers and nurses are choosing to join.' The Labor aligned union movement, which has a monopoly, has said, 'No, Minister. We are in charge and you will do these amendments.' That is the essence of this bill. That is the foundation of this bill.

Now, rather than just coming in here and moving said amendments, the minister said we will have an independent review. Do you know what, Mr Deputy Speaker? That was because she thought she would get away with it. She thought that nobody would worry about the issues at hand. When we look at the review, there is nothing on the website. I contacted some organisations that the minister

described recently as 'rogue entities'. I contacted some of those, as defined by the minister, 'rogue entities'. I said, 'Considering the amendments are directly related to your organisations, which are incorporated under the incorporated legislation, surely Linda Lavarch and the other reviewer contacted you for your views, to get your advice, to ask what you do and to ask how many have left the nurses' and teachers' unions and joined your organisation.' There was not one communication.

An opposition member: Are you joking? Not one?

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. The so-called independent review, which was designed to outlaw these apparent 'rogue entities', did not even afford them the opportunity of consultation. Minister Grace stood in here and talked about industrial relations and how important this bill is. For goodness sake! I would have a lot more time for the minister if she was up-front and said, 'I'm doing this because the union told me to do it.' That is what has happened.

An opposition member: Just say it!

Mr BLEIJIE: Just say it. Just be up-front. The minister and I have been battlers on this war front for many years. I have been the shadow IR minister and I have been the IR minister. Minister Grace and I have battled these issues for many years across the chamber. However, Minister, I would have more respect if you just came in here and said, 'The union wanted me to do it and I am doing it.' That is what has happened.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Lister): Your contribution will come through the chair and, Minister, you will stop quarrelling across the chamber.

Mr BLEIJIE: I turn to the elements of the bill that talk about strengthening protections against sexual harassment. As I said, the minister says that that is the basis of the bill, but it is a tiny element of the bill. With respect to that important issue, all they are doing is making it an objective in the Industrial Relations Act that one will not sexually harass a workplace officer, but there are no punishments. While they can make it an objective in the Industrial Relations Act, which they are doing in this bill, they are making out that it will support workers in this space. However, it will not have the desired effect that they are trying to achieve. If they were serious then they would legislate the offence in other legislation.

The Queensland Human Rights Commission is currently conducting a review into that very issue. Many of the submitters to the committee said, 'Why don't you wait for the Queensland Human Rights Commission to finish their review into the Anti-Discrimination Act so offences can be put in the legislation?' All this does is make it an objective in the Industrial Relations Act. That is all it does. However, it is a serious issue and that is why we support those elements of the bill.

I say to the minister that we cannot possibly support the other provisions of the bill that actually form the heart of the bill. If the minister were serious about having a genuine debate about sexual harassment in the workplace—

Ms Grace: 'Workplace'—that is the operative word.

Mr BLEIJIE: I said that—I suggest that these elements could have been taken out of this legislation and put into a different piece of legislation and then we could have, in a bipartisan way, worked with the minister to achieve the objective that she is trying to achieve. However, they have been put in amongst all the other bad things in the bill. There are many of those and I am going to go through them now.

The bill talks about the effective representation of employees and employers of registered industrial organisations. I will get to that. That is the unions. I will start with the employment standards. This relates to the gig economy and Uber, Menulog, Deliveroo, Uber Eats and all those sorts of things. They have all opposed these provisions.

Ms Grace: It does not affect them either.

Mr BLEIJIE: It does, which is why they have all opposed it, and through the committee report. Do members know what the minister has actually done with respect to this issue? The minister has put workplace standards for the gig economy in this legislation and then retrospectively written to the federal Attorney-General to seek permission to do it because it is a federal responsibility. This Labor government, under Cameron Dick, outsourced the industrial relations provision to the federal government, under Julia Gillard, when Bill Shorten was the industrial relations minister. Now they say they want to take back that provision but they legally cannot. The minister has put this in her bill and then realised that.

The explanatory notes state—

On 24 August 2020, the Minister wrote to the Commonwealth Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations—

Get this, Mr Deputy Speaker—

requesting in-principle agreement to amend the IC Regulation to permit the Queensland Government to introduce legislation setting minimum conditions for independent courier drivers modelled on Chapter 6 ...

It is in this bill but the federal Attorney-General had not approved it. It was in the bill before that.

What is next? What else are they going to drag back from the federal industrial relations system? What they are doing will actually hurt the workers in that economy and I can tell the House why. Let us look at the federal employment standards. I think Menulog were the first to put their workers under a federal award. What happened was that the federal commission changed the award so that a lot of those people cannot legally do split shifts. A university worker who works for Uber Eats, Menulog or whatever, cannot work in the morning and at night-time because the award conditions say you cannot do split shifts. Are those the conditions that this minister—

Ms Grace: It is a federal award.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is a federal award and this state minister has written to the federal Attorney-General to implement it in Queensland. The minister has written to the federal Attorney-General wanting this award condition to be placed in Queensland.

In fact, in her letter to the Attorney-General she says—

... permit the Queensland Government to introduce legislation setting minimum conditions for independent courier drivers modelled on Chapter 6 of the New South Wales IR Act. The Commonwealth Attorney-General requested that draft legislation and outcomes of consultation on the same be provided ...

That is why a lot of those organisations are opposing these particular provisions, because they say their workers will be worse off under these provisions than they currently are. If there are edits or amendments that need to happen in that space, it should happen at a federal level. That is why, under the industrial relations system we have under the Commonwealth—and the Labor state government outsourced that responsibility to the Commonwealth government and so that is where the debate should be had for a nationally consistent approach. What we will have now is different approaches for this gig economy across different jurisdictions. That will not work.

Let me get to the heart of this bill. As the minister said, these are rogue entities. This is what this bill is about. This is empowering the union monopoly to continue in Queensland. I attended one of the committee hearings. I challenged the Queensland Council of Unions representative there—and all the unions were lined up—who is absolutely opposed to these other organisations having any input into the industrial relations system, the QIRC or the Industrial Court.

At a public hearing I asked whether the representative could advise the committee what the affiliation fees are for each union? She said, 'I don't know. I will have to take it on notice.' I asked that question and that particular union representative took it on notice. She told the committee that she would take it on notice and come back to the committee. There is nothing in the committee report which details the affiliation fees of the Queensland Council of Unions. Why is that? It is because they do not want people to know. They do not want the Queensland public to know what these Labor aligned unions are paying in affiliation fees to the Queensland Council of Unions. I put to the House that the reason the Queensland Council of Unions does not want anyone to know what these affiliated unions are paying is because it is a lot of money. Where does the Queensland Council of Unions' money go? It goes to the Queensland Labor Party. That is where it goes.

When I challenged the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union by saying, 'You are giving money to the Labor Party,' they said, 'We are not affiliated with the Queensland Labor Party.' They may not be officially affiliated with the Queensland Labor Party but they are certainly an affiliated entity of the Queensland Council of Unions. I put to the House that they are funnelling and channelling their money through the Queensland Council of Unions to the Labor Party. Do not believe—

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Members to my left, order!

Ms Grace: Prove it. Go and say that outside.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am about to. The nurses union in Queensland would have us believe that it is not affiliated with the Labor Party and does not campaign for the Labor Party. I will table for the information of the House two different flyers. One is a standard corflute billboard titled 'Talking political', authorised by the QNMU. It is against the Liberal-National coalition government. I also table another flyer being handed out at election booths by the QNMU: 'We support Labor's plan to fix aged care'.

Tabled paper: Bundle of photographs regarding Queensland Nurses and Midwives Union (QNMU) federal election material [1759](#).

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members to my right, order!

Mr BLEIJIE: The QNMU would have people and the hardworking frontline nurses believe that they do not participate in political campaigns. Here is the proof that they do. They participate in political campaigns. I put it to you that the QNMU do not campaign for the Liberal National Party of Queensland. They funnel their money through to the QCU. That is where they are putting all their money.

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members for Waterford, McConnel and Thuringowa, order!

Mr BLEIJIE: We have a situation in Queensland where we have all these unions affiliated and non-affiliated with the Labor Party. One has only to look at the ECQ disclosure log to see the Queensland Council of Unions' huge donations to the Labor Party. The Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union donated \$110,000 to the Queensland Council of Unions.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Get this; are you ready for this? When was that donation made? It was made on 9 October 2020. What happened in October? That is right, there was a state election.

Ms GRACE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. There are two members who are interjecting who are not in their seats. I suggest that if they want to interject they sit in their appropriate seats.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask members to return to their appropriate seats if they want to interject.

Mr BLEIJIE: On 9 October the Nurses and Midwives' Union gave the Queensland Council of Unions \$110,000—just a few weeks before the state election. On 8 October 2020 the Queensland Teachers' Union, the QTU, gave \$115,000 to the Queensland Council of Unions—three weeks before the state election. I put to the Queensland Council of Unions representative at the committee hearing whether those donations that the nurses union and the Queensland Teachers' Union gave to the QCU were used for political campaigning. She admitted and basically said, 'We exist to campaign against the Liberal National Party in Queensland.' That is the reason for their existence.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the House to please come to order. I will be giving out warnings.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Queensland Council of Unions representative essentially made out that their priority in life is to campaign against the Liberal National Party.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am continually being interrupted by the Attorney-General who is deliberately interrupting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Attorney-General!

Mr BLEIJIE: We have a situation where the Queensland Council of Unions did not disclose how much of the hard-earned union money of teachers and nurses is essentially funding the Queensland Council of Unions. I put it to the House that the Labor Party is being funded through a scheme that channels money from unions, that may say they are not affiliated with the Labor Party, through the Queensland Council of Unions to the Labor Party.

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members to my right, cease all interjections.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is what is happening.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nanango, order!

Mr BLEIJIE: The Labor Party campaigns are being funded through funds from teachers and nurses in Queensland who do not know where their money is going. They do not know where their membership fees are going. If we look at the membership fees associated with joining the QTU or the QNMU, it is at least \$400 more than it costs to provide a core service.

Mr Smith interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bundaberg, order!

Mr BLEIJIE: We have other organisations out there providing the core service of advocacy for teachers and nurses as these teachers and nurses have chosen to join another organisation because they are not happy with the QNMU and the QTU. The members are choosing to flee these organisations.

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Attorney-General, order!

Mr BLEIJIE: We know that to provide these services the QTU and the QNMU are essentially charging their hardworking frontline members about \$400 more than it costs to provide these core services. If we look at that \$400 paid by a nurse or teacher member—and there are 17,000 members paying an extra \$400 per annum—that is being forced to be given to the Labor Party.

The real money at stake is the 120,000 nurses and teachers who are threatening to join a cheaper union: 120,000 times \$400 is \$48 million per annum, and that is the crux of this. There is a situation in Queensland where teachers and nurses on the front line believe they have to join the Teachers' Union or the QNMU, but there is a better way and there is another way. Members are fleeing the QNMU and the Queensland Teachers' Union in droves because they know they can get better service from other organisations like NPAQ and TPAQ—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Members, I have asked multiple times for the House to come to order. I will be warning people.

Mr BLEIJIE: I would plead with teachers and nurses in Queensland to seriously start questioning their membership in the QNMU and the QTU because the hard-earned money they are making from their job is being funnelled and channelled to the Labor Party and they do not know it. That is what is happening. When I said previously that the Queensland Council of Unions basically said their sole objective is to campaign against the Liberal National Party, the minister was giving all these hand gestures to indicate, 'That's correct. That's right.'

Ms Fentiman: Absolutely.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. She said 'absolutely'. I would put it to the House—

Mr Harper interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Thuringowa, you are now warned under the standing orders.

Mr BLEIJIE: I put it to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the majority of teachers and nurses on the front line just want to get about and do their job for students in our schools and patients in our hospitals. They would be horrified to know that essentially \$400 of their union dues is being channelled and funnelled to the Labor Party. That is a disgrace. If I were them, I would be questioning their unions about their expenditure. We know that the Queensland Council of Unions refused to tell the committee how much affiliation fees are and how much they are getting. They refused to tell the committee that hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations to the QCU from the Queensland Teachers' Union and the QNMU are then funnelled to the Labor Party. Nurses and teachers cannot be certain that their hard-earned funds, their membership dues, are not being used for political purposes. They absolutely are.

The Labor Party talked about freedom of association. The Labor Party is happy to have freedom of association just as long as they associate with a Labor aligned union. That is their mantra. They are happy to have freedom of association as long as it is with a Labor aligned union that channels the money to the Labor Party, because they fund their campaigns and ministers are in their seats because of union members. Members in this House from the Labor Party are only here because of preselections and dodgy deals done with union officials. That is the existence of the Queensland Labor Party. That is how it is. That is why Minister Grace does the bidding of the unions in this House every time she moves amendments to industrial relations legislation.

I put to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that nurses and teachers should have the right to be represented by anyone they choose to have advocate for them in the QIRC. They are going to be denied that right because of this industrial relations bill. This Labor government is lining their own pockets. Monopoly unions will continue to exist in Queensland and they will fund Labor Party campaigns, just as we have seen political gerrymander donation laws under this Labor Party. They have done everything they can to ensure their electoral success, whether it is stopping people donating to the Liberal National Party—

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, order!

Mr BLEIJIE: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Attorney-General is quarrelling constantly throughout my speech. Maybe she needs a glass of water. I think she needs a water to calm down.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Order!

Mr SMITH: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I believe that the member for Burnett just said very misogynistic and unparliamentary words and I wonder if he will withdraw his comments.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! Member for Burnett, I did not hear your comments. We can review the audio or I will ask you to withdraw.

Mr BENNETT: I withdraw.

Mr BLEIJIE: Minister Grace previously said in her contribution that organisations are still free to register for the Industrial Relations Commission. No, they cannot, because under the 'conveniently belong' rule if there is a union already established dealing with nurses or teachers, another organisation will not be allowed to register. I take the interjection of the minister rubbing her hands together. What is she saying? You are happy to accept—

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Lui): Member for Toowoomba South, you are now warned under the standing orders.

Mr BLEIJIE: We have the minister now rubbing her hands together. 'Great monopoly. Beautiful monopoly,' she says. That is the heart of it. I hope that teachers and nurses on the front line can be shown this so they can know their money is being channelled to the Labor Party. If they do not want it channelled and funnelled to the Labor Party and if they want a choice of advocate group in Queensland, there are other options available and it is not the Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union and it is not the Queensland Teachers' Union. The 'conveniently belong' rule essentially means that another organisation cannot register in the Industrial Relations Commission if there is an industrial organisation already registered. Other advocacy groups have used incorporated association legislation because workers want them to. Workers want the choice to say to NPAQ or TPAQ, 'We want you to represent us.' This government says, 'No, you don't have'—

Ms Fentiman interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Attorney-General, I have called you to order multiple times. I will now warn you under the standing orders.

Mr BLEIJIE: I put it to the House that Queensland teachers and nurses have woken up to the facts about their unions. They have chosen to flee those unions in droves and go to other places. Because they have, guess what happens? The \$300 to \$400 a year they are taking from those unions is not being funnelled back to the Labor Party, so in the last 12 months the unions have gone to the Minister for Industrial Relations and said, 'Our bottom line has tanked, and as minister you need to change the legislation and get us our money back. You need to change the legislation and stop all forms of competition in this state.'

In the 14 years I have served in this place, this would be the most purely politically, ideologically driven, union-favouring bill I have ever seen debated in this House. They do it with glee. They do it with cheer because they know this piece of legislation will guarantee that more unions will give more money to the Labor Party and ministers will get plum jobs on \$350,000.

Mr McDonald interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the member for Lockyer. Labor Party members will be rubbing their hands together. Nurses and teachers—and other organisations, I might add—across the state have woken up to the fact and turned off the tap to these union movements. They are now saying, 'We don't want to be associated with these unions.' The education minister does not trust her teachers to make a choice and say, 'No, I don't want the Teachers' Union. I want another advocate group.' She will not give them that right and she will not give them that choice. That is shameful and disgraceful. That is putting your own ideology ahead of every teacher and teacher aide in the state.

This is such an issue that the Crime and Corruption Commission recently released a report and asked for submissions on the influencing practices. I submitted to that, and I table a copy of that submission which has not been made public before.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 29 July 2022, from the member for Kawana, Mr Jarrod Bleijie MP, to the Crime and Corruption Commission, titled 'Submission to Influencing Practices' [1760](#).

It talks about the influence the union movement has over the Queensland Labor Party. It expresses my concern and that of many people, including workers in the industrial relations office of this minister. It is shameful what this Labor government is doing. The only way we will change this, to give choice for workers, is to change this government in two years time.