




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACALISTER

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2022

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms McMILLAN** (Mansfield—ALP) (4.41 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Industrial Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022. The Palaszczuk government is committed to the transparent and effective representation of industrial interests within Queensland's industrial relations system, demonstrated by unions like the well-respected Queensland Teachers' Union. That commitment is underpinned by the framework of employee and employer organisations which are properly registered under the Industrial Relations Act 2016. Furthering the Palaszczuk government's commitment to ensuring effective industrial representation, this bill also makes amendments to the IR Act to address the misrepresentation of services by paid agents and some legal practitioners in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, the Queensland Industrial Court and the Industrial Magistrates Court.

At the outset, I declare that I am a proud member of the Queensland Teachers' Union of more than 27 years, a principal union representative of 13 years where I diligently represented my colleague principals on the Queensland Teachers' Union. The Queensland Teachers' Union is an Australian trade union with a membership of more than 48,000 teachers and principals in our Queensland government's primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, senior colleges, TAFE colleges and other educational facilities. The QTU has been registered under the Queensland industrial legislation since 1917—something that we are very proud of—after the system of registration of trade unions was introduced in this country with the Industrial Arbitration Act 1916.

Ever since registration was introduced, the emphasis has been on having one registered organisation to represent a calling, like teaching, in the commission rather than a multiplicity because that is how industrial relations is settled most efficiently and effectively. Over 100 years, the QTU was the first state registered union to: have equal pay for women incorporated in the award; achieve non-contact time for teachers; have arbitrated pay increases through cases detailing the increasing value of the work of teachers and principals; and have 10 successive enterprise bargaining agreements for schoolteachers, and 11 for TAFE, since the first in 1994.

It is no surprise that those opposite do not like the proposed amendments of the IR Act. When they were last in government they tried to regulate unions out of existence. They tried to put in place laws that distracted unions, like my union, the Queensland Teachers' Union, from doing what they do every day—turning up and fighting for better salaries and working conditions for their members.

I remember during the Newman years as principal of Glenala State High School when QTU representatives were denied access to staff on school grounds, ensuring that teachers did not meet with the QTU during work hours. What the LNP learned during these years was that they could not stop the QTU and they could not stop unions from doing their jobs.

Perplexed and desperate to break the union movement, they decided to join with some of their lawyer mates and came up with these so-called red unions—which although they call themselves unions are not and never will be anything other than a business selling membership. Why do I suggest this? Because that is exactly what they are. These organisations have stated that they will be never be

registered unions. In fact, they have said registration is an anachronism and is outdated. They say that registration gives one very little benefits. What they fail to say is that, as a registered organisation, unions have rules and regulations that they must comply with. This is one of the reasons that the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission found last year they were not a trade union. When the QIRC can say that one of these so-called red unions' legal, personality and corporate status is inconsistent with that of a trade union, we have a responsibility to ensure that these entities are seen for what they are.

Let us talk about what a real trade union does. It works with members to achieve improvements in working conditions. They are run democratically and they are member focused. The DNA of a union is one set up by the workers for the workers, not one set up by lawyers implementing a business model in an effort to disrupt the power of a group of workers campaigning together, acting collectively for safe and healthy working conditions and for pay that shows their value. Real unions use their collective strength to support their members, protect their members' rights and defend their members where necessary. They are also not afraid to tell their members the truth.

In my experience as a school leader, I may not have always liked the advice or information I received from the QIU, but I was grateful that I received it. I am grateful that rather than telling me what I wanted to hear my union told me what was right, and then if there was something that needed to change the QIU worked with me and my colleagues to campaign and bring about that change. I recall instances in my school when the union members in our school came together to force the department to do what was right for the safety and wellbeing of not only teachers and school leaders but everyone in my school. This is what democracy looks like.

Can I also tell members what else a real union does? It organises, it rallies and it gets real workers to turn out and support its campaigns. It does not rely on others to prosecute arguments. It does not get together with groups like the People's Revolution to march through the streets of Brisbane and try to intimidate and threaten individuals. I table evidence of the TPAQ calling their members to the People's Revolution anti-vaccination rally held on Wednesday, 31 August.

Tabled paper: Extract from the webpage of Teachers' Professional Association Queensland titled 'TPAQ—Teachers' Professional Association of Queensland' [1773](#).

Further, Malcolm Roberts recently published a video lauding the TPAQ. This is enough evidence that the TPAQ is an extreme right organisation peddling extreme right policies and that their mantra—protection without politics—is a farce. Not only are they politically aligned but they are politically aligned with the far right of Australian politics. Sally McManus, the ACTU president, supports this sentiment and was quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 1 October this year talking about organisations like TPAQ. She said—

These are fake unions run by LNP members and their associates set up to try and divide working people.

These fake unions should not be out there pretending that they can do what registered unions can. Of course, I should mention that TPAQ is not its real name; it is just a trading name. There was a decision in the Federal Circuit and Family Court on 1 September this year where they had to use their proper name—QTeachers First Inc.

Let's look at what these amendments do. They say that if you want to call yourself a union, then be a union. Be transparent about your membership and what you do with members' money. If you choose not to be a union, tell the truth about what you really can do for the people who are paying you money. These amendments are not about stifling choice, as those across the chamber would have you believe: it is about forcing their mates to be honest. The bill makes clear the distinction between organisations that are registered under the Industrial Relations Act and represent the industrial interests of employers and employees and other entities that are not registered under the IR Act and cannot properly represent industrial interests in the state's IR Tribunal and collective bargaining such as the Teachers' Professional Association of Queensland. Employer and employee organisations properly registered under the IR Act are subject to a range of stringent accountability and transparency obligations. This allows members of those organisations to have confidence about the exercise of these representation rights in industrial matters.

The IR Act sets rigorous reporting requirements for registered organisations to provide transparency and accountability to their members and demonstrate good governance practices. Unregistered associations like TPAQ are simply not subject to the same level of accountability and reporting. This opens the door to them misrepresenting their registration status and their ability or inability to represent the industrial interests of members. In making these changes to the IR Act, the Palaszczuk government further strengthens the stable, cooperative industrial relations system which has long been a feature here in Queensland and which delivers fair outcomes for workers and employers. I commend the bill to the House.