




Speech By
Bryson Head

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

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WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HEAD** (Callide—LNP) (12.23 pm): Well, well, well, if it isn't the Labor Party once again lining up to legislate another protection racket for their political donors! What an absolute disgrace, but more on that shortly.

I preface this speech by reiterating the words of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Kawana. Every member of this House fundamentally believes that every worker has the right to go to work in a safe workplace and come home to their families at the end of every shift. I do not think you will ever find any member of parliament who suggests otherwise. I note that the member for Stretton in his contribution yesterday suggested that the Labor Party thinks that but failed to acknowledge that every member of this House believes that. That is something the LNP certainly believes in.

Safety in workplaces is of course paramount, and one would assume that amendments to a health and safety bill would be focused on safety. However, this bill is less about keeping workers safe and more about the government paying their dues to their union masters. Further, as mentioned yesterday by the member for Kawana, the bill is based on reviews that were undertaken by several former union officials. In Labor world, appointing your best mates to do your bidding is apparently 'independent'.

At the public hearing for these bill amendments, the Red Union Support Hub asked why they were not consulted about the proposed legislation. They noted that they were the largest stakeholder with the highest percentage of representation at the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, yet they did not know anything about the inquiry until it was brought to their attention by the deputy chairman. Once again, this is typical of a Labor government that is more worried about how things look than how they are. If this was about worker safety, they would have proactively consulted with all stakeholders and not just their mates.

It is funny, though, that they did not consult with the Red Union Support Hub when it is specifically them that they are targeting with this legislation. They are doing this by amending to exclude representation by other entities such as associations of employees or independent contractors who are not registered as unions under the Fair Work Act or Industrial Relations Act. It is funny because Labor changed those laws so this particular association could not come under that act. Such is the link between this bill and further outlawing the Red Union Support Hub, the CFMEU's submission included a footnote saying—

The CFMEU has no difficulty with such drafting being undertaken in a manner which excludes "red unions".

They said this, yet the CFMEU did not want to talk about red unions when they were in front of the committee inquiry into this bill. Specifically, when asked by the member for Southern Downs, Mr Ravbar from the CFMEU said—

I am not going to have any commentary about other unions, including Red Unions.

Even the CFMEU noted that they are in fact unions. He continued—

My only concern here today is for the interests of the CFMEU.

The member for Southern Downs then said—

But you put it in your submission. You specifically stated it and singled them out.

Of course the member for Redlands as chair and a union member ran a bit of interference in trying to move the conversation on. Mr Ravbar said—

I am not concerned about other Red Unions. They have never bothered me. If you are doing your job, why worry? I have always had the view that if you are doing everything right, why worry about anything in life?

What a comment. This is a strange series of events and highlights the cloudy, secret agenda going on here. That said, I certainly agree with Mr Ravbar's final comments. If only Labor and their union mates got on with the job, they would be representing workers so well that they would not have to change the rules to stop them bleeding members.

I have spoken in the past about Labor introducing legislation that should be called the 'Protect our mates bill'. Once again, here we are. Let us call this bill 'Thank our donors and pay them back bill'. Labor members are no doubt licking their lips at this one, saying to their union masters, 'Keep the money rolling into our bank accounts because we'll make sure the workers of Queensland are forced to dig into their pockets and roll money into yours.' This is all being done under the guise of workplace health and safety. Further limiting the ability of other entities to represent workers directly reduces the ability of a worker to make a sound choice in who is representing them in workplace health and safety matters. This is yet another nail in the coffin of freedom of choice in this state. Labor try to say they are all about choice but apparently only when that choice is the same one they are making—and, boy, I could talk about that all day.

Mr Sullivan: Oh, please do!

Mr HEAD: I take that interjection. Amend the standing orders and let us speak for longer then. Our hardworking nurses, teachers and other professionals want a representative who backs them and offers a service at an affordable price. We are acutely aware of the cost-of-living crisis we are experiencing thanks to the Miles Labor government, which is in the grip of chaos and crisis. This continued attack on workers is clearly an attempt to further punish the nearly 15,000 nurses and teachers who have already left a registered union because they do not want to contribute their membership to the ALP. Perhaps unions should be looking inwards as to why the majority of workers do not want to be part of their movement.

I know a fellow by the name of Fred who is a former copper and works at a coalmine in Central Queensland. He has turned up to a union office and demanded that his fees are only the portion that does not go to the Labor Party. I commend Fred for doing that. I wish more union members would do it. I know of a specific case that we have raised with this minister several times where the education department has failed a teacher—

Ms Boyd interjected.

Mr HEAD: I take the interjection from the member for Pine Rivers, who I understand might be warned.

I know of a specific case that we have raised with this minister several times where the education department has failed this teacher, and the union has failed this teacher. The minister was more interested in palming this workplace matter off rather than addressing the systemic failures in the process for workplace matters within the education department. I will certainly be bringing this to the attention of the government yet again through the current education minister.

The bill also allows a union to enter workplaces and intrude upon WHS matters irrespective of the wishes of the workers involved; in other words, allowing union thugs to turn up without the workers even wanting them to. To make matters worse, they do not even have to comply with workplace health and safety requirements, including site inductions or exclusion zones. They can even turn up without the relevant paperwork filled in properly. If they cannot get the paperwork right, what chances do they have to properly represent workers? Further, it was noted that these amendments mix health and safety with industrial relations, creating a lawyers' picnic. Even the CFMEU made that comment.

To tie this together, about Labor and their union cronies, we know that in the last few weeks the AWU has donated over \$60,000 to the Labor Party here in Queensland, and that is in the middle of the cost-of-living crisis. Going through the ECQ website, there are hundreds of thousands of dollars in

recent donations to the Labor Party. What does the Labor controlled committee report recommend? Recommendation 5 states—

The committee recommends that if the bill is passed the OIR consider undertaking an awareness campaign so relevant organisations and workers are fully informed about the changes to who can lawfully represent workers under new definitions contained within the bill.

In other words, Labor want the state funded, the taxpayer funded Office of Industrial Relations to actively promote unions that explicitly donate to the Labor Party. This is a complete abomination and a slap in the face to the hardworking mums and dads of Queensland.

The member for Kawana also tabled a very interesting email which reiterates what I already hear from many other teachers and nurses across Callide. It states—

While the Queensland Government Commitment to Union Encouragement Policy encourages union membership amongst State government employees, TPAQ is not covered by the provisions of the union encouragement policy as it is not an industrial organisation.

That email would be more correct if you changed that last bit to say, 'as they do not donate to the Labor Party'.

So, if you as a teacher in Queensland want a true representative body, then join the TPAQ and you will get real representation without your money funding this tired, old Labor government that is more worried about how things look than how they are.

Mr Hart: Their priorities are all wrong.

Mr HEAD: I take that interjection from the member for Burleigh. The Labor government's priorities are all wrong. They are all wrong in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, a health crisis and a housing crisis. They are more worried about how things look than how they are, and propping up their union cronies.

To the teachers, nurses and other staff across Callide and Queensland, ask yourself this question: why would Labor outlaw one of the only employee advocacy associations that exists which does not directly fund the Labor Party?