




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR STRETTON

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WORK HEALTH SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (4.23 pm): I rise in support of the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Workplace health and safety and workplace rights are very important to me and every MP on this side of the House—the right to fair day's pay for a fair day's work, the right to be treated fairly at work, the right to go to work and come home safely, the right to be listened to by your employer or manager, the right to be treated fairly and, importantly, the right to be represented by a real trade union. None of the rights and conditions that have been won by workers in Queensland have been given fairly. They have been fought for and won by real unions and their members and enacted by Labor governments.

This bill is another example of Labor enacting legislation that supports workers and their right to go home safely to their families. We are strengthening workplace health and safety laws in Queensland and building on the substantial safety reforms of 2017 which introduced the offence of industrial manslaughter and established the independent Work Health and Safety Prosecutor. The impact of workplace fatalities on loved ones, friends and colleagues is immense. The pain and grief is unimaginable. As other members have done in this debate, I extend my deepest condolences to the families and friends of workmates and workers who have lost their lives at work. We must do all we can to ensure that workers are protected in the workplace and that employers comply with health and safety laws.

It is disappointing that those opposite continue to oppose legislation that supports ordinary Queensland workers. Indeed, since being in opposition what is their record? They voted against labour hire licensing laws. They voted against paid domestic and family violence leave. They voted against industrial manslaughter laws. They voted against industrial protections for workers subject to sexual harassment. They voted against portable long service leave for community services workers. They voted against the wage theft inquiry, which led to wage theft becoming a criminal offence. They even voted against Easter and Christmas public holidays after 6 pm. Not only are they anti worker; they are also anti Christmas.

It is really no surprise that those opposite are arguing to weaken workers' safety and workers' rights by propping up fake unions that are unregistered and unregulated. They do not act in the interests of workers, and they have only been set up by LNP linked operatives to undermine workers' rights by splitting the workforce. It is the oldest trick in the book when it comes to industrial relations, although we have not seen such a sophisticated and devious approach until now. I am not surprised that it is linked to some well-known LNP members. These red unions are a tangled web of entities and incorporated associations that fall under the mysterious umbrella of the Red Union Support Hub. They are deliberately obscure in their ownership structure to hide from accountability and to hide who is pulling the strings. I am sure that a few people on that side of the House might be pulling the strings. Interestingly, all of the red unions are co-located at 41 Campbell Street, Bowen Hills, in the News Corp building. Recently one of these fake unions, the TPAQ, had a case thrown out of the Federal Court;

that is how great that fake union is! I am sure it was very tricky, but they did not understand the distinction between state and federal jurisdictions. I wonder if the member for Callide understands that he is a state MP and not a federal MP.

Fake unions will take your money and try to convince you to leave a real union, and that is about it. It is their whole reason for existing. It has nothing to do with choice and everything to do with weakening workers' rights. That is why I am pleased to see recommendations in the bill from the Work Health and Safety Act review report that clarify what entities or persons may assist workers and act as their representatives in relation to workplace health and safety issues, ensuring they are a relevant union with the rules to cover that person's industrial interests and excluding entities purporting to represent the industrial interest of workers but that really have absolutely no idea what they are doing.

An important part of the bill is that it strengthens and promotes the role of health and safety representatives, including clarifying powers they can exercise and functions they can perform in the workplace. It promotes consultation about workplace health and safety between workers and their representatives, and it clarifies the rights that workplace health and safety entry permit holders can exercise at a workplace to assist workers. This is important because, in many cases, the most important part of any workplace health and safety system is that workers must feel confident enough to speak up. They must be able to raise issues at any time without fear of reprisals or discrimination. They must feel that when they raise issues they will actually be addressed by management and be taken seriously.

It is so important for good workplace health and safety that a good workplace health and safety culture exists. In fact the worst thing in any workplace is a culture where most workers do not open their mouths to speak up about hazards, especially hazards they see on a daily basis. This bill seeks to improve consultation and communication between workplace health and safety representatives and workers, which will go towards improving that culture.

I also want to add that I am a very proud former union official. I am very proud of the time I spent representing workers in Queensland. I conducted many meetings about health and safety, and I represented workers who had raised safety concerns. I am well aware that what is sometimes written up in a safety system, in a policy document or even in legislation is pretty far from what is happening on the ground. I think it is fair to say that in pretty much all recent workplace deaths or incidents around Australia there was somewhere a safety system or a hazard identification chart. Systems are important, but it is not systems that save lives. It is the daily work of people on the ground working out small solutions to small problems.