




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

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WORK HEALTH SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr SULLIVAN** (Stafford—ALP) (3.30 pm): I rise today to proudly speak in support of the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I do so as a proud member for Stafford and also as a former member of the Education, Employment and Training Committee that has dealt with a significant number of IR reforms during my time in this place. This is just the latest step in the Labor government's proud support of Queensland workers.

As my entry on the parliamentary register shows, I am a long-serving and proud member of the Australian Workers' Union which covers a wide range of areas that are particularly relevant to this bill, including construction and mining. It also covers others that may not come to mind to start with, such as retail and people working in delis in shopping centres who deal with the machinery, the ovens and those sorts of things in a basic retail setting. It is important that we can empower those workers to protect themselves.

Before I continue with my contribution, I want to touch on some of the points raised in this debate and some of the lunacy. I want to reflect on them seriously. The member for Kawana specifically named and reflected on the integrity of someone like Deirdre Swan. She was not just a former respected union official; she was a long-serving commissioner and a very respected member of the QIRC—respected by employer and employee organisations alike.

A government member: True; respected across the board.

Mr SULLIVAN: She is respected across the board. It goes to show that the member for Kawana has learnt nothing. He continues to attack judicial officers and continues to attack independent decision-makers. It is absolutely disgraceful. Those opposite—all of them collectively—have learned nothing. Despite the fact they had to introduce 'Operation Boring' to try to keep the member for Kawana away from the media for six months before the 2015 election, they have learned nothing. He continued the same behaviour and what did they do? They promoted him and he has made it very clear that he will go back to being the same old member for Kawana that he was when he was Queensland's worst ever attorney-general. It is terrible.

In terms of industrial relations and overreach, I remember the constitutional overreach when he introduced the undemocratic legislation to try to stop unions talking in public, to try to silence unions from actually having a voice in democracy. What happened? It was overturned in a second by the courts and it came back here in a heartbeat and was overturned because of its obviously unconstitutional elements. The member for Kawana did not even have the guts to come in here and do it himself. It was poor old Jeff Seeney.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): I will ask that you withdraw that unparliamentary comment.

Mr SULLIVAN: I withdraw. The member for Kawana did not even come in and overturn the unconstitutional elements himself; he hid behind the then member for Callide, then deputy premier Seeney, who was introducing a land bill, a state development bill or something of the like. He had to do

it by way of amendments; the member for Kawana did not even do it himself. That was how they withdrew those obviously unconstitutional attacks and overreach against working people of this state. That is his history and it is the history that those opposite are doomed to repeat because they promoted him to deputy leader. That says everything to Queenslanders and it sends a shiver down the spine of public servants. It sends a shiver down the spine of Queensland workers.

In terms of the contribution of the member for Southern Downs, the notion that a head of jurisdiction would be consulted and have input into legislation in good government is good behaviour. That is absolutely what we do each and every time, whether it is the Chief Magistrate where relevant, the Chief Justice, the President of the Court of Appeal or the head of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. It is absolutely normal for a good government to consult the head of jurisdiction where it impacts their jurisdiction. For the member for Southern Downs to suggest that that is terrible behaviour shows a lot about what the LNP think about their relationship with the legal profession and with the judiciary. It is absolutely outrageous. We have had the member for Kawana attack a very respected commissioner of the QIRC. We have had the member for Southern Downs attack the President of the QIRC, a silk and a justice of the Supreme Court. They have learned nothing and they will continue to do that. It shows what they would do if, God forbid, they were on this side of the House. It is absolutely ridiculous.

I turn now to the absolute disdain that those opposite have for what workplace health and safety officers do. The member for Southern Downs said, 'They are there to cause trouble.' Saving people's lives in making workplaces safe is not causing trouble; it is making sure that the workers—he or she—go to work in the morning and come home alive. If that is causing trouble, I am happy that they cause trouble. If that is the view of those opposite, does that not say everything about their view of Queensland workers? It is absolutely disgusting.

As for the price of these fake unions, there is no wonder that they undercut proper unions' prices because they do not do anything. They do not have any representative rights. They do not abide by the standards of the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. The definition is 'industrial organisations' and those opposite forget that that includes employer organisations just as much as it does employee organisations. Those opposite might remember that there are really strict conditions in place for employer organisations including the organisation that the former member for Redcliffe ran into the ground for which he ended up spending some time at Her Majesty's pleasure. Those opposite might remember that it is employer and employee organisations that are properly regulated and are held to account, not these fake unions.

Those fake unions have said this in their own words, as I have said before, in a hearing in front of the committee. It was put to them that it seems that all of these so-called unions are run by the same people; they have the same secretaries, presidents or treasurers; they are located at the same place; and they have the same structure. It was put to them, 'Are you actually just a front for all of these bodies? Are you actually associated?' The answer put to us as a committee was, 'We are one and the same.' By their words, they admitted that they are a front for a fake union. As the member for Redlands said, we may as well talk to the Stafford Garden Club in terms of their ability and rights to represent workers in this state. It is an absolute front by their own words.

Ms McMillan: That's a bit harsh for the Stafford Garden Club.

Mr SULLIVAN: I take that interjection from my friend the member for Mansfield. I apologise deeply to the Stafford Garden Club. They should not be associated with such a fraud as a fake union. I apologise.

I think the monetary penalties make this effective legislation. If those who are responsible for making safety decisions think they are free and have no chance of being held responsible because they take out insurance, effectively the deterrence is removed. It is important. The whole purpose of the existing regime is that people have to have front and centre in their mind the workplace health and safety of their workforce. If they think they can be cavalier because someone else will pick up the cheque, that undermines the whole system.

I also support the role and work of elected health and safety representatives. They are there on the ground. They need to have the training and bravery to stand up when something is wrong and they need to be empowered to do that before it is too late. We do not want to have a coronial inquiry and then fix the problem. We want empowered elected workplace health and safety representatives to be able to do their job on behalf of their workmates and protect people so that they go home safe at night. That is what this bill is about, that is what this Labor government is about and that is what our movement is about. Those opposite can whinge and whine all they like, but we do not back away from it for a second.