




Speech By
Jonty Bush

MEMBER FOR COOPER

Record of Proceedings, 20 March 2024

MOTIONS

Labor Party, Together Union

 **Ms BUSH** (Cooper—ALP) (5.31 pm): I will start by pointing out that the colour blue also means to be cold, aloof and uncaring. I wonder if perhaps that is a more appropriate colour reference for those opposite? I rise to make a contribution—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order, members!

Mr de Brenni interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the House, when I am on my feet there will be no interjecting across the chamber. You are warned. Members, if I am on my feet I expect the chamber to be silent in the shortest time possible. The level of interjection and gesticulation across the chamber is unparliamentary. I ask that it cease.

Ms BUSH: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I rise to make a contribution to the amended motion. I welcome the motion because it gives us an opportunity to talk about the constructive working relationship that we have with the Together union, and, in fact, with our various unions. We do not shy away from the fact that we have that positive working relationship with unions.

That relationship has delivered incredible outcomes for Queensland's workers and the Queensland economy. If people are working an eight-hour day and a 40-hour week, they can thank a union. If there is paid annual and sick leave so that people can take the breaks that they need, they can thank a union. Paid domestic and family violence leave is something that the Together union and its members fought so incredibly hard for. In terms of workplace health and safety rights, people can be safe and protected at work and they can thank their union for that. There is sexual harassment and anti-discrimination legislation so people can work free from vilification and harassment—people can thank a union for that. On behalf of union members and all workers, I take offence at LNP attempts to try to bring unions into disrepute and suggest that they are some kind of thugs walking around trying to disrupt business. It demonstrates just how out of touch LNP members are.

Fewer than half of union members are women. Increasingly, they are young people. It demonstrates why the LNP has a women's issue and why it has an issue with young people. Unionists are cleaners, hospitality workers, teachers and nurses. They are those manufacturing our buses right here in Queensland. They are the sparkies helping with our energy transformation towards renewables.

I am a proud member of the Together union. I joined the Together union, in fact, in 2012. What else happened in 2012? I would like to give a shout-out to Campbell Newman, because I have him to thank for my union membership and, in fact, perhaps for being here. I was working at the Brisbane City Council at the time he was lord mayor. It was an incredible time. What he did at Brisbane City Council in terms of the sacking of all the staff was extraordinary. I and my colleagues were given notice pretty

much on Christmas Eve that our contracts would end two years short. It was extraordinary. It was enough for me to take out my membership with the Together union. I thank them for their support through that time. Then what happened? He went on to become premier.

Ironically, I was working in the state government at that time and we all know what happened. It felt as though he followed me and tracked me down at the department of justice. It was extraordinary. He sacked not just me but 14,000 of my mates—14,000 public servants were sacked. It was extraordinary. People were walking around with boxes and being told to pack up their desks. I was working for Victim Assist in the department of justice—for all of the crowing from the member for Everton about looking after victims—and was told to come off my maternity leave a week after I had given birth to reapply and reinterview for my role with a range of other people. That is what we were living through at that time and that is why I am a proud member of the Together union.

In relation to the Together union organising third-party advertisements, it is a matter for the union. It is absolutely their right to be undertaking that kind of organising. If the Together union has decided to campaign on issues that are impacting its members and the community such as cost of living and the environment and choosing to highlight elected members in that campaign, the natural conclusion is that those members are viewed by that union as champions of those issues. That is something we on this side of the House are proud of. No-one is debranding. We are proud members of the Labor Party. If we want to talk about debranding, I have two words for those opposite—Scott Morrison. Let us think about that time and the debranding occurring in the Liberal Party.

The workers of Queensland owe a lot to our mighty union movement. Workplace reforms have been achieved largely through the organisation and collective action of our unions. I welcome the Together union's campaigning on issues important to my constituents such as cost-of-living impacts.