




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR THEODORE

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WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (4.07 pm): I rise to speak on the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I wholeheartedly support the idea of workers coming home safe. I wholeheartedly support the idea of a safe working environment. I have good friends who work in the construction industry and in the road construction industry. I have family members who work in those industries. Safety should be paramount.

One of the interesting things about this bill—I tried to bring this up during the committee process and I asked submitters for their opinions—is that we need to ensure that individuals who come onto sites are properly trained and that they understand the legislation and what permit holders are required to do when it comes to workplace health and safety. During the committee process I asked questions about the role of individuals who come onto sites to check safety issues. During the committee process I found out about these individuals' lack of necessary training. The Australian Meat Industry Council agreed with my comments that there needed to be better training of individuals who come onto sites so that they understand the laws and the workplace health and safety issues to better represent their workers. They suggested there may be an alignment with a certificate IV in some type of training process—or even a diploma—to ensure that individuals coming onsite are properly educated in terms of the workplace health and safety regulations before them. Conveniently, this bill leaves it out.

Another interesting fact brought up during the committee process was the fit and proper person test. You would have to ask yourself how many officials would fail that fit and proper person test. I did question some of the union officials. I also spoke to the Australian Meat Industry Council, and they wholeheartedly agreed that there should be some type of test to weed out individuals who are not there to serve the best interests of the workers. Having a fit and proper person test like most industries have would ensure that you get the right people for the job. That is very important.

When it comes to freedom of association, this is one thing I am quite passionate about. People should have the right to find an association they deem appropriate to represent themselves. When we look at the right of association, Australia is party to seven core international human rights treaties. The rights of freedom, assembly and association are contained in articles 21 and 22 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. People should have the ability to choose an association that represents their interests. People should be allowed to choose whether or not to be aligned with an organisation that does not want to align with the Labor Party.

As I said, I have a lot of friends in the construction area who are union members. They cannot sever their union membership because they know they would not have a job on those sites anymore. When it comes to the Teachers' Professional Association, it should be the fundamental right of an individual to have that choice. If they want to stay with the QTU they can go right ahead. If they want to stay with the Queensland nurses union they can go right ahead, but people should have the ability to join the professional association of their choice and not be blocked from being able to make that choice. Labor members do not seem to understand this issue. We are talking about having a situation in this state where individuals can have a fundamental choice of what they deem appropriate.

We keep coming to this chamber to discuss these issues. I have no qualms about unions. I have no qualms about what they do. Throughout history unions have served a role, but I am also interested in competition for those unions. Competition is important. As a society, we should be mature enough to give our citizens the right to associate with any organisation they deem appropriate. As I stated, I have no qualms about the minister being in a union, but I still deeply feel that a person should have the right to be part of any association they deem appropriate that fits them and their ethos.

We could debate this all night and fight over the same issue, but this debate will be cut. Again, we will quash debate on something that is very important to the rights of workers. I will leave my comments at that. I would just like to say it is very important that people have the right to associate with any association they deem appropriate for them.