

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 916

asked on Tuesday, 13 October 2015

MR LANGBROEK ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE PROTECTION AND MINISTER FOR NATIONAL PARKS AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF (DR MILES)——

QUESTION:

With reference to the government's union encouragement policy will the Minister detail the total number of 'new starters' administered in the Environment and Heritage Protection section of the portfolio who commenced employment over the period June 2015 to September 2015, broken down by industrial instrument?

ANSWER:

I thank the member for the question.

The Palaszczuk Government made a commitment to restore fairness for government workers.

Union encouragement was one of the many conditions of employment rendered unenforceable during the former government's term.

The *Industrial Relations (Restoring Fairness) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2015* (the Act) is one of the ways the Palaszczuk Government has delivered on its commitments. From June 2015, the Act restored the ability for union members to organise and protect workers' employment conditions, including re-enlivening any provisions within industrial instruments requiring new employee details to be passed onto relevant unions.

These amendments were important because the former government went further than any Queensland government in history in attacking workers' rights.

The union encouragement policy was introduced in 2000 and worked well for twelve years before the former LNP government abolished it.

The union encouragement policy re-released in May 2015 provides for union members to meet with their representative in the workplace and new employees to have ready access to a union representative so that they can make an informed decision about whether or not to join a union. The policy operates subject to relevant legislation.

The implementation of the Policy is an agency responsibility, with the Policy applicable to all government workers.

Lists of industrial instruments, including those with application to the Minister's portfolio, can be located at:
http://www.qirc.qld.gov.au/qirc/agreement_award/certified_agreements/public_sector.htm.

The manner regarding release, timing and reporting of new employee details will vary depending on the specific clause in the industrial instrument. Not all industrial instruments require standard reporting.

Where a specific reporting obligation does not exist under the industrial instrument the Union Encouragement Policy applies. The first full quarter of reporting will be **July – September 2015** (noting the QON refers to June 2015 to September 2015).

The implementation of the Policy is an agency responsibility, with the Policy applicable to all government workers.

The total number of new starters employed under industrial instruments in the period July – September 2015 for the Environment and Heritage Protection section of the portfolio is thirty-six (36). All of these are new frontline staff. One of the new frontline staff was engaged to meet the Government's election commitment on saving the Great Barrier Reef.