Queensland’s New Fairer Workplace Laws

From 1 March 2017, Queensland has new workplace laws that deliver a fairer deal for hundreds of thousands of workers employed by Queensland and local Governments.

The Queensland Industrial Relations Act 2016 is the result of years of solid campaigning by Queensland union members to remove draconian and unfair LNP laws that attacked working rights and conditions. These new laws restore rights and conditions, make bargaining fair and recognise workers’ rights to organise.
Who does this apply to?

These new, fairer laws apply to the hundreds of thousands of workers who are employed by state or local governments in Queensland. These workers are covered by the Queensland Industrial Relations System.

This state system has its own laws, its own Industrial Relations Commission, its own Awards and Agreements, and its own wages and conditions.

Employees covered by this system include, (but are not limited to):

- Emergency Services Personnel such as firefighters, paramedics and police officers
- Public Servants
- Nurses, doctors and staff working in public hospitals
- Teachers and staff in State Schools
- Employees of TAFE Queensland
- Employees of Local Governments (Groundspeople, librarians, maintenance staff, call centre workers etc.)
- Employees of Government-owned entities (Parks & Wildlife, Stadiums, Tourism, and many more)

Please see the Queensland Industrial Relations list of awards for more information:
www.qirc.qld.gov.au/qirc/agreement_award/awards_online.htm

What do the new laws do?

The new laws restore fairness to the workplace system that covers the workers listed above.

During the three years of the Newman LNP Government (2012 -2015) many unfair laws were introduced that made it harder for employees to bargain on a level playing field, that restricted their right to organise and attacked their wages and conditions.
In 2012, the LNP Government undermined...

- **Job Security**
  Employees could no longer bargain for provisions that pertained to redundancies or dismissal in their Awards or Agreements.

- **In-house work**
  Employers and employees were banned from agreeing to put limits on contracting out — meaning jobs were lost to low-wage, outside providers.

- **Permanent Work**
  Employers and employees were forbidden from creating pathways to transform casual or temporary work, to permanent work.

- **Employee Say**
  Employees were robbed of having a say about their own training and workload management.

- **The Independent Umpire**
  The LNP put many aspects of the Industrial Relations Commission under government control and influence.

**The LNP also:**

- stripped Awards to bare minimums;
- favoured individual contracts over collective bargaining;
- made it impossible to take meaningful, protected action to improve conditions; and
- restricted workers’ rights to access their union.

In 2012, the Newman LNP Government introduced laws that saw significant restrictions on Queenslanders employed by the state or in local governments.
The Palaszczuk Labor Government has restored fairness to Queensland’s workplace laws with the Queensland Industrial Relations Act 2016 following the successful years’ long campaign by unions and their members.

The biggest blow to job security was that the LNP Government sacked more than 14,000 hard working employees of the Queensland Government.

The Labor Government has restored thousands of frontline jobs, particularly in health and education.

As of 1 March 2017, the new Act provides:

- **A fairer purpose**
  The new laws will promote productive and cooperative workplaces and will promote and facilitate security in employment and consultation.

- **Fair Awards**
  Awards will now provide “fair and just wages and employment conditions”. They won’t be the stripped back minimalist documents that failed to secure many conditions under the LNP.

- **Fairer Bargaining Rights**
  Employees, with their union, can now bargain for whatever conditions they feel are necessary for their jobs, including job security. Employees can now take effective, protected action to pursue better pay and working conditions and to protect their rights.

- **Respecting your right to organise and to representation**
  The laws promote collective bargaining, encourage fairness and representation at work through your union. They reflect the positive role that union members play in improving and maintaining workplace standards and safety.

- **New conditions**
  In an Australian first, Government Employees in Queensland now enjoy 10 days’ paid domestic violence leave that allows those affected by domestic violence to transform their situation, move house, change schools for their children and rebuild. There are also new rights to request flexible hours that assist people in their work/life balance.

- **Restoring the independence of the umpire**
  The laws under the LNP meant that the Industrial Relations Commission was not free from government interference. The independence of the Commission has been restored.
Queensland Unions.
Standing up for
Queenslanders at work.

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