



AWU Members' Info sheet

Public services under attack

2014-2015

Public services under attack

Since coming to power in 2012, the Newman Government has launched a series of attacks on public service workers. They have wound back the clock and applied outdated employment practices.

Pre-election promises to low paid, hard-working employees - such as cleaners and kitchen staff, grounds and maintenance staff, care assistants and clinical support staff - have been broken. At their expense, LNP cronies line up to benefit as the Government rolls out its privatisation agenda.

To protect public services and their workers we must overturn this Government's anti-worker legislation. We need communities to stand up and fight back for quality public services.

Representing over 13,000 public service members delivering frontline services in local government, health and disabilities services, the Australian Workers' Union, Queensland Branch (AWU), our members and supporters are committed to protecting Queensland's public services.

Join us in our campaign to **Stand up and Fight Back** against the LNP's assault on Queensland's public services, workers and communities.

Ben Swan

AWU Branch Secretary

➤ ***The public service has nothing to fear...¹***

This was Campbell Newman's pre-election assurance to public service workers. Condemning Labor's policy, he pledged his commitment "to ensuring Queensland's public servants are well paid and confident about job security".²

Since 2012, the LNP has cut more than 14,000 public service jobs and outsourced essential services to the lowest bidder. More job cuts and outsourcing are in the pipeline.

➤ ***There will be a simplified award system...one that protects the wages and conditions of workers.³***

The Government is 'modernising' all public service industrial awards. So far, it has unilaterally repealed key award provisions such as employment security, consultation, and union rights, and restricted and removed redundancy entitlements, bargaining and workload management.

Disadvantaged by an industrial system unilaterally determined by their employer, workers' terms and conditions are being cut across the board through legislation.

➤ ***Get on the train or get under it.⁴***

This was the message from Health Minister Springborg to health workers as he announced his plans for privatising public health services - not to a public audience, but to one made up of private companies dependent on outsourced contracts and hand-picked by the LNP.

Evidence shows that private companies make 'efficiencies' by reducing services, service quality, employees' terms and conditions, and even by relocating service provision abroad.

➤ ***We'll work with the unions⁵***

Yet from day one the Government has legislated to limit public service workers' right to organise. Laws have been created to limit workers' access to unions, curtail union support in the workplace and even outlaw union payroll deductions.

This Government seeks to win debates by silencing opposition. It has even told public service staff to stop openly criticising them in the workplace.⁶

¹ <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/you-have-nothing-to-fear-newman-tells-public-service-20110404-1cv6x.html>

² <http://tjryanfoundation.org.au/cms/page.asp?ID=169>

³ <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/bettersystemsbetterhealthcare/docs/award-modernisation.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/health-minister-lawrence-springborg-launches-health-blueprint-for-queensland-wayne-swan-says-its-an-attack-on-medicare/story-e6freoof-1226587038906>

⁵ <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/has-newman-broken-public-sector-promises-20120803-2314q.html>

⁶ <http://www.qt.com.au/news/doctors-and-nurses-told-stop-newman-bashing-hospit/1848761/>

Ben Swan

Queensland Branch Secretary
The Australian Workers' Union
Level 12, 333 Adelaide Street, Brisbane, Qld 4000
Phone: 07 3221 8844 | Fax: 02 8005 3300
Website: <http://www.awu.net.au> | Email: secretary@awu.org.au

AWU'S RESPONSE: STAND UP, FIGHT BACK!

Public services play vital roles in our everyday lives and underpin our local communities. Without public service workers, our local communities, economies and health and wellbeing would suffer.

Local workers help sustain local communities not only through their hard work, but also by investing their pay back into the community. Plus as part of the local community, they are more easily held accountable by local people.

Local jobs provide stable work for local communities, as well as the opportunity to develop local skills and resilience, and inspire future generations.

In response to the Newman's Government's continued barrage of cuts to public service workers' terms and conditions, the AWU has:

- ✓ Appealed the Newman Government's unilateral removal of workplace rights at the Queensland Supreme Court and then the High Court.
- ✓ Launched our community campaign 'Stand Up, Fight back' to help defend public services: <http://www.standupfightback.com.au/>. Our campaign is seeking to highlight the effects of the Newman Government's public service policies on communities and workers.
- ✓ Campaigned for federal legislation to protect public sector the terms and conditions of workers whose jobs have been contracted out to a private contractor.
- ✓ Publicly opposed changes to public sector terms and conditions and are continuing to fight to protect them.
- ✓ Held public rallies at Parliament and at key public services and politicians' offices against the Government's attack on public service workers.

AWU'S POSITION STATEMENT ON PUBLIC SERVICES

The AWU recognises the critical roles public services and public sector workers play in our communities and lives and calls for:

- ✓ **The end to the privatisation of public services.** These plans are a short-term political fix to cut costs, not improve services. Mounting evidence shows that privatising public services reduces service quality, destroys stable and local jobs, and cuts workers' terms and conditions.⁷ In the long run, privatised services end up costing taxpayers more as their so-called 'efficiencies' are one-off and unsustainable, whilst their profit margin is guaranteed. High-quality, accessible services must be delivered by the dedicated and skilled staff who live in the community they service.
- ✓ **Fair terms and conditions for public sector workers.** Frontline workers such as - cleaners, kitchen staff, maintenance and grounds persons and care and support staff - are low paid, hard-working employees. They are critical to the delivery of high quality services, yet their value is often dismissed and their struggle to make ends meet overlooked. As Government facilitates a 'race to the bottom' on service quality it is their pay, terms and conditions which are being attacked.
- ✓ **A fair and real negotiation process for public service industrial rights and conditions.** A one-size fits all approach to award modernisation and bargaining devalues the different roles and responsibilities of every public sector worker whether it be health, local government or disability services. The Newman Government's current approach shows a total disregard of public service workers rights, which have been long and hard fought through independent tribunals.
- ✓ **An independent arbitration process, which settles industrial relations (IR) matters impartially and fairly.** The Newman Government has introduced legislation which alters the rules of the game against public sector workers and in favour of the government. Decision making tribunals must be governed by non-political processes, applying fair legislation that respects the rights of both employers and employees.
- ✓ **The freedom of public sector workers to organise collectively with the support of their union.** This is a basic, internationally recognised right, which the Newman Government has curtailed. His government has even sought to silence the personal political freedoms of public sector workers by outlawing their public dissent. The LNP shows a complete lack of respect for the union movement, its members and the role it plays in supporting low paid workers and implementing work health and safety laws.

⁷ <http://awuqld.nationbuilder.com/>