



## Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations

18 June 2020

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Mr Alex Scott  
Secretary  
Together Queensland, Industrial Union of Employees  
Email: [alex.scott@together.org.au](mailto:alex.scott@together.org.au)

Dear Mr Scott

The Palaszczuk Government's number one priority has always been supporting and protecting jobs for Queenslanders.

We deeply appreciate the hard work and dedication of Queensland's public sector workers, especially those working on the frontline in the fight against COVID-19.

Upon commencement of the COVID-19 health pandemic, we acted decisively to ensure our public sector workforce was supported. This has included ensuring vulnerable workers are protected and accommodated, providing flexible working from home arrangements to facilitate social distancing measures and implementing a revised Health Pandemic Directive, with up to 20 days' paid pandemic leave and access to paid special leave.

Yesterday's legislative amendments followed over two months of discussions and consultation with public sector unions. During this time many options were explored, with the overarching principles of job security and maintenance and protection of certified agreements at the forefront of all discussions.

The Government is committed to the protection and maintenance of certified agreements and the hard-won entitlements and conditions contained within them as the primary vehicle within our industrial relations framework. The legislative amendments provide for this.

The amendments are contained in a temporary Chapter (*15a – Public sector response to COVID-19 emergency maximising employment security*) that will expire on 30 September 2020. The stated purpose of the new part is to maximise the protection of public sector employment and respond to the financial impact of the COVID-19 health pandemic.

The legislative amendments passed yesterday mean that:

- We have provided certainty of ongoing employment security for public sector workers through honouring all current agreements and settlement of all outstanding agreements within the terms of the current Public Sector Wages Policy;
- The timing of wage increases in all agreements will be adjusted to incorporate a nil wage increase for the 2020–21 financial year while honouring all other aspects of agreements for all our public sector agreements;
- We have provided a deferred wage increase to follow six months after the scheduled 2021–22 wage increase in all agreements;
- We have authorised the payment of a 2.5% wage increase to those agreements that have not received a wage increase in 2019;

- We have provided for the extension of a certified agreement's nominal expiry date if required to ensure wage outcomes as outlined above. This provides certainty and ensures all public sector workers have in-term agreements; and
- We provide for a streamlined agreement certification process to ensure all outstanding agreements can be settled and certified without delay.

These changes will mean that all public sector workers will be treated fairly and consistently, and will enter the caretaker period with in-term certified agreements that protect their wages, conditions and security of employment.

The Government has also approved action to ensure that public sector workers who retire are not disadvantaged by these arrangements in relation to their Defined Benefits Superannuation.

It was a particularly galling sight in Parliament yesterday to see the LNP attempting to pass themselves off as a friend of the worker by opposing the Government's legislation. In trying to score a cheap political point, the LNP has backflipped on its previous commitment to a public sector wage freeze and voted against important reforms to provide portable long service leave for hard-working and low-paid community sector workers.

We don't need to remind you of their record, both in office and in opposition, on critical matters that affect workers and the unions that represent them. The LNP is the party that has:

- voted against nation-first labour hire licensing laws;
- voted against the wage theft inquiry;
- voted against industrial manslaughter laws;
- voted against new state industrial relations laws that included a landmark paid Domestic and Family Violence leave entitlement of 10 days;
- voted against important reforms to provide public holidays on Christmas Eve and Easter Sunday;
- cut the rights of injured workers;
- attacked the award system;
- sacked 14,000 public servants – after telling them they had 'nothing to fear';
- stripped away long-held employment conditions of public servants including redundancy protections and entitlements;
- imposed a 16-month wage freeze which was ideologically motivated and not related to the extreme and unforeseen economic impacts of a global pandemic;
- introduced laws to stop the democratic right of unions to campaign on political issues – laws they had to repeal because they were unconstitutional; and
- never shied away from their plans to sell assets.

By contrast, the Palaszczuk Government has a long and proud history of working with unions to restore Queensland's frontline workforce and public sector employment security measures, ensuring public sector workers are afforded fair and reasonable pay and conditions and unashamedly protecting the rights of all working people when it comes to safety. We look forward to continuing this proud tradition for generations to come.

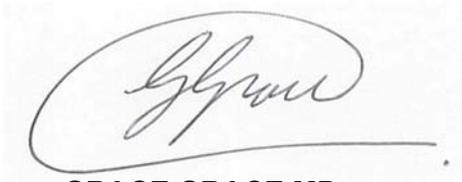
I would also like to reaffirm that the Premier has written to the Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal to ensure that Members of Parliament will not receive an increase this financial year.

Also, there will be no performance based payments to CEOs and Senior Executives in Government owned water, energy and transport corporations and statutory authorities.

In the coming weeks, we look forward to working with public sector unions to settle outstanding agreements and for the 2019 wage adjustments and the processing of the one-off \$1250 payments, where applicable, to be paid as soon as possible.

If you require additional information or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact me directly or alternatively your staff can contact Ms Sharon Durham, Chief of Staff of my office, on (07) 3719 7110.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grace Grace', enclosed within a light grey rectangular box. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**GRACE GRACE MP**  
**Minister for Education and**  
**Minister for Industrial Relations**