

Summary of the QPSU Council meeting 18 March 2008

QPSU Council met on Tuesday 18 March 2008. 153 delegates were in attendance, plus observers. Council met at Royal on the Park Hotel, Brisbane.

Climate Heroes

The first event of the meeting was the reception of a special guest, Australian Conservation Foundation head Don Henry. Mr Henry praised the QPSU's new Climate Heroes initiative and spoke on the need of the current generation to do everything they could to combat climate change and preserve the environment for future generations.

A video of Mr Henry's speech, as well as more information on the Climate Heroes program, is available on the Climate Heroes website, www.qpsu.org.au/climate.

QPSU General Secretary, Alex Scott, spoke in response to Mr Henry's presentation, outlining the planned campaign, its objectives and methods, and emphasised that in addition to achieving traditional industrial goals, this campaign has its central objection the building of a more sustainable future for the sake of the planet.

QPSU President, Vivienne Doogan, announced her successful re-election, the election/re-election of the other members of senior executive, and the priorities and plans of the new executive.

A copy of the text of her speech is available.

Industrial Issues

A number of important industrial issues were reported on by the General Secretary. One issue was the state government's plan to contract out school cleaning and maintenance jobs via Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) arrangements and the combined campaign led by the QPSU and Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHMU) against the plan.

The General Secretary spoke about the importance of this campaign and the threat that if not stopped, this plan could spread to all 1,300 schools across Queensland, with a disastrous effect on wages, jobs and conditions, as well as safety and cleanliness at Queensland's state schools.

For more information about the combined campaign, please visit www.positivelypublic.com

The General Secretary also spoke about a key breakthrough in the issue of temporary employment.

The government has undertaken, after a long period of union pressure, to grant allow public sector temporary employees access to an appeals mechanism that will have the effect of granting them an equivalent to the implied permanency available to workers in the public sector. He mentioned that this will involve amending the Public Service Act, and negotiation continues with the Department of Industrial Relations on the form and scope of the amendments, as well as the operation of the appeals body.

Thirdly, he indicated that the state government's budget would likely be bringing significant cuts to areas of the public service. He said consultation is continuing with all government agencies about savings and potential restructures.

The Women's Committee report dealt with Emma Miller award recipient Eva Foster; the 2008 International Women's Day celebrations; the participants in the Ellen Matilda Nolan memorial project aimed at providing union organising experience to women; and the upcoming Women's Conference.

There was discussion related to Workplace Health and Safety. Council passed a motion in support of the creation of "industrial homicide" or "industrial manslaughter" as a criminal offence. There was also discussion of the results of a recent inquiry into Workplace Health and Safety representatives across the public sector. Council resolved to engage with the employer around Workplace Health and Safety related issues.

Council passed a constitutional amendment to extend notification periods for the union's Annual General Meeting (AGM). The effect of this amendment is to reconcile the discrepancy between the notice periods for motions to be moved at the AGM and notice of the meeting itself.

Committee formation; administrative and other matters

QPSU Council established a number of committees, composed partly of Council members and executive members. These committees were:

- Individual representation;
- Collective industrial issues;
- Union strength;
- Your rights at work oversight;
- Community engagement;
- Finance;
- Staffing;
- Legal;
- Ombudsman's committee;

Awards;
Workplace Health and Safety;
Climate change oversight.

Nominations for these committees were declared open, to close at 5pm on 31 March.

The QPSU Women's Committee is covered by a separate process.

Council also fixed honorariums for both executive and Council committee members.

The Individual representation committee reviews cases dealt with by the Membership Services Centre (MSC). Several individual issues were discussed.

The Finance Committee report mentioned the plan for the purchase of a new building in Brisbane for the union's use.

Staffing Committee gave an outline of the recent selection process for filling some vacancies on the union's staff.

Awards Committee has announced the winners of the Pat Cousar Memorial Bursary program. The winners of the bursary are being notified and the list of winners will be publicly posted soon.