

# 9 Common Myths

For too long now, teachers have had no genuine choice when it comes to representation. They've been bullied and coerced into joining a union that has become obsessed with politics, and less concerned about them. Very high fees, very poor support.

But the TPAA is on the scene – and the QTU is not happy about it!

Here are some myths and smears about us that you may have come across:

-  “Is not a registered trade union so it can't claim to be a union”
-  “Aren't even involved in EB11”
-  “Requires you to pay your own legal costs”
-  “Has fees which are not tax deductible”
-  “Is a private business/company and isn't subject to governance requirements”
-  “Can't support you in the workplace”
-  “Has no legal team to back you up”
-  “Is linked to right-wing politicians”
-  “Can't represent you in the commission”

**FALSE**

1. We are not and never claim to be a “registered organisation.” We are a professional association that goes far beyond the traditional union offerings and fit the definition of an “industrial association” under the Fair Work Act. In terms of delivering for members, the member experience, member services, and fighting for members, the TPAA is the most consistent and innovative union in Australia.

The freedom to associate is protected by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other conventions as adopted in Australian laws. Unfortunately, Queensland has legislated union monopolies by **denying new associations the ability to register** as so-called “registered organisations” – something unique to Australia in comparison to the UK, NZ and USA.

**We’re run by teachers, for teachers.** “Registered organisations” are often run by career bureaucrats “approved” by the public employers. Despite having fewer members (for now) we take on and fight five times as many cases as the registered trade unions.

2. **TPAA is heavily involved** in campaigning for EB11. We’ve committed to a 31% pay rise for QLD teachers! We believe that anything less than a 31% pay rise for teachers isn’t just insulting, but existential to the profession in Queensland. Any organisation, union or politician that would have you believe otherwise is **selling you out**. Read more about our EB11 campaign at <https://tpaq.redunion.com.au/eb11>.

3. If someone is a member before their workplace issue arises, they are 100% covered. **There are zero additional costs to the member.** In fact, often the result is a pay-out for the member.

4. All of our fees are **fully tax deductible** – they always have been! On top of being full tax deductible, our fees are also far lower than the QTU’s. We’re **30% more affordable**, savings teachers hundreds every year!

5. The TPAA is an incorporated society/association regulated by Consumer Affairs Victoria and is proudly served by the Red Unions. The TPAQ (QLD) is a company limited by guarantee, structured like thousands of non-profit charities and regulated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC).

6. We don’t force our way into workplaces as some sort of intimidatory tactic, but we can and often do come on site to represent our members.

**We have a different philosophy to other unions.** We want our members to work in positive, good workplaces. Kicking down the door is not a good way to resolve a problem with your employer.

If the employer, the Department of Education, is not respecting a member’s rights, we don’t need to see them in their office. **We’re happy to see them at the tribunal or court.** This strategy is reliable, as we have a reputation that lends the employer to knowing they should be on their best behaviour.

7. We have legal teams, Red Law and Red Union Solicitors, and often bring on external lawyers and barristers to cover cases that have escalated. These lawyers are **experts in industrial relations, underpayments, contractual disputes and discrimination in employment**. Other unions often ignore their members completely, withdrawing support altogether when it becomes inconvenient.

8. **The TPAA and other Red Unions are the only unions in Australia not captured and corrupted by politics.** In fact, we were specifically designed this way. **It’s in our constitution** that we are prohibited from providing financial or in-kind support to any political party.

**Alternatively**, other unions take huge advantage of their members to provide funding and campaign support to the ALP (that’s why their fees are so high). It’s all politics for them; that’s the way they think. An apolitical union that actually exists for members just doesn’t make sense to them, but it does to teachers!

9. **We continue to represent members in various commissions.** Most recently, we brought over 500 applications to the Human Rights Commission and many hundreds more to the Fair Work Commission. In circumstances where representation for covered workplace issues is not available to the TPAA directly, we can instruct the retained registered industrial agents or solicitors to act.

What’s really happening here is that certain governments have removed competition and political diversity from industrial relations to make it easy for the organisations that support them, either directly through financial donations or in other ways, like campaigning for them at elections.

**If the Government doesn’t stop workers being able to choose their own union, the money disappears. That’s what this is about.** But one thing is clear – no TPAA member will ever be left behind.

**Remember that the TPAA is PROVEN to fight for members, no matter the issue.**