

# NPAQ in call for union status

**Tayah Fellows**

The Nurses Professional Association of Queensland has called on the government to amend laws that block their bid to register as a union and participate in crucial enterprise bargaining negotiations.

In a letter to Deputy Premier and Industrial Relations Minister Jarrod Bleijie and Health Minister Tim Nicholls, NPAQ announced plans to form a sub-organisation, Queensland Nurses for Choice and Health, to advocate for their members at the bargaining table.

The push comes as NPAQ, which represents almost 20 per cent of Queensland's nursing workforce, seeks to challenge what it describes as a union "monopoly" created by 2022 amendments to the Industrial Relations Act.

NPAQ president Kara Thomas said the current framework unfairly sidelined their members and forced nurses to join the Queensland Nurses and Midwives Union.

"Enterprise bargaining laws in Queensland have created a monopoly where nurses are forced to pay inflated fees to the QNMU, which uses those funds to bankroll political campaigns instead of fighting for better wages and conditions," Ms Thomas said.

"Our members pay significantly less and deserve the same rights to representation."

Mr Nicholls, asked whether he would consider allowing NPAQ to participate in the negotiations, said: "It's not something that I deal with."

The 2022 changes, which removed "industrial associations" from the Act, restrict participation in enterprise bargaining and industrial action to registered unions and drew considerable criticism, with the Palaszczuk government accused of amending the laws to protect millions of dollars in union donations to the ALP.

A spokeswoman for Mr Bleijie confirmed there were no plans to reverse the legislation.

The QNCH, which has fewer than 100 members but is backed by NPAQ's nearly 12,000 membership, is expected to apply for registration with the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission soon.