

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release: March 18, 2025

NURSES FIGHT FOR FREEDOM OF CHOICE AGAINST UNION MONOPOLY

The Queensland Nurses for Choice and Health (QNCH), supported by the Nurses Professional Association of Queensland (NPAQ), will take a bold stand for nurses' fundamental rights at the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission (QIRC) next Wednesday, advocating nurses' and midwives fundamental right to choose their representation. These laws, implemented by the previous Labor government under Grace Grace, have denied healthcare workers the freedom to choose an organisation that aligns with their values, particularly one that explicitly refrains from funding political parties or elections. The Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union (QNMU) have declared spending close to half a million in member funds on their "Put the LNP Last Campaign." How much is legally undeclared we may never know.

"This fight is about the fundamental human right of choice, a right systematically denied to Queensland nurses and midwives," stated Kara Thomas, NPAQ President. "The former Labor government deliberately created a system that channels influence and financial resources to their affiliated union, directly undermining nurses' and midwives rights to independent representation."

The existing legislation attempts to force Queensland Health government nurses who don't vote for the ALP to accept representation by the ALP supporting unions during enterprise bargaining, regardless of personal preferences. This monopoly allows the QNMU to collect inflated membership fees while directing substantial funds towards political campaigns.

"We stand with the founding members of QNCH to challenge this unjust system," Thomas continued. "Nurses and midwives deserve the freedom to choose who represents them at the bargaining table, not a government-imposed monopoly that prioritises political interests over the needs of healthcare workers," stated Michelle Southwell, Secretary of QNCH.

The current registration process is a sham, designed to deny competition, undermining worker representation. This registration process must be changed so that workers, not union officials or bureaucrats, decide which union represents them and are not forced to support a political party they do not endorse.

NPAQ, representing approximately 20% of Queensland's nursing workforce, contends that the current "closed shop" arrangement intentionally erodes workers' freedom of association to safeguard the power and financial interests of politically aligned unions.

"This isn't about politics – it's about justice and fairness for all nurses. NPAQ members pay substantially less in fees because we do not fund political parties and deserve equal representation rights. We're taking this action to restore choice to the thousands of nurses who have been silenced by this system."

Furthermore, the system devised by ALP's Grace Grace leaves Queensland workers without representation at the QIRC unless they pay money to ALP-aligned unions. Workers are denied the right to choose who represents them, sometimes even denied a lawyer. The right to representation free from funding the ALP should be a focus of the new Government. We note Grace Grace formerly worked for the QNMU in her break from Parliament.