



OLLIE AMERENA

for President



**REAL WAGE RISES AND WORKLOAD REDUCTION!
PUT OUR LEADERS ON A WORKER'S WAGE!
FOR GREATER UNION DEMOCRACY!
FOR A STRATEGY THAT CAN WIN!**



Greetings QTU Members,

My name is **Ollie Amerena**. I am proudly representing **QTU FIGHTBACK** as a candidate for **QTU President**.

QTU FIGHTBACK is a dynamic group of dedicated unionists committed to maximising the collective strength of our members to advocate for better working conditions. In our recent efforts during Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBAs), we championed **the use of industrial action and strikes to compel our employer to provide tangible workload reductions and wage increases above inflation**.

If elected, one of our paramount objectives will be to fortify the democratic structures within QTU. This entails fostering debates at branch and sub-branch meetings, where members can voice their opinions on the executive's recommendations for accepting or challenging EBA offers. This shift from mere "information sessions" to open debates aligns with our **vision of an empowered membership**.

Reflecting on a QTU email from June 2022 regarding EB10, **which emphasised addressing the rising cost of living and teacher shortages**, many members may now question whether these goals were met. We urge all QTU members when casting their ballot to consider their own experiences over the past year:

1. Have your **finances** improved compared to previous years?
2. Have you noticed any improvements in addressing the **teacher shortage**?
3. Has your **workload** significantly decreased?

While serving as a QTU representative at Sarina SHS, myself along with other QTU representatives and members successfully exerted pressure on the department to take action, this was achieved by **members seeking directives to stop work** due to the **teacher shortage**. This **industrial action** ultimately led to the implementation of the "**Flying Squad**," which served as the predecessor to the **Rapid Response Team**. Members need to continue to fight for long term solutions.

Through ongoing negotiations, including the department's attempt to thwart the stop-work meeting via the Industrial Relations Commission, Sarina SHS received a visit from multiple high ranking departmental employees including at least one involved in the Enterprise Bargaining process. This meeting, at the school and attended by QTU members at the school, played a **pivotal role in securing the TR2-3 \$900 payment inclusion within EB10**.

It has become abundantly clear to me in my grassroots activism in numerous campaigns related to teacher housing, workload issues, and shortages, that the most effective avenue for bringing about change within our profession is the **strategic use of our collective industrial strength**. Without the effective and assertive actions of the union members led by the workplace's representatives at Sarina SHS, the department would likely still hold the ridiculous stance expressed by the Director General of Education in 2021 in an estimates hearing that "*There is no statewide teacher shortage.*"

Despite the department's current promotion of "Equity and Excellence,"

it is ironic that they only address the teacher shortage under pressure from QTU members. It is important to note that this shortage disproportionately affects low socio-economic schools in regional, rural, and remote areas.

As a union, we must ensure that teaching remains a respected profession within the community and remains attractive in the job market. To achieve this, we must secure wage increases that surpass inflation rates, akin to **the recent wage increases granted to NSW teachers**. Workload concerns need to be clearly addressed in our industrial agreements, rather than relying on vague "Advisory" bodies and "Reviews".

While QTU FIGHTBACK boasts a strong Facebook presence, we have **faced arbitrary and improperly applied policies** of dubious validity. These hinder our communication with members. **Changes to policy after the election declaration have further exacerbated this challenge**. Attempts at without-prejudice negotiations are underway with QTU General Secretary. We have sought legal counsel and instructed the filing of an application before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission if the negotiations are unsuccessful to ensure compliance with industrial relations law concerning the election.

The QTU FIGHTBACK's platform is accessible at qtufightback.org and the QR code provided. Your vote for QTU FIGHTBACK Candidates, including Ollie Amerena, Tim Arnot, and Bec Barrigos will help shape the future of our union. Consider also voting [2] Madonna Johanson for Honorary VP.

This information supplied is the opinion of Ollie Amerena.

TIM ARNOT

for Vice-President



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Hi, I'm Tim, I'm a senior teacher based in Meanjin-Brisbane teaching on Jagera and Turrbal land and I'm running for QTU Vice-President. I'm running with **Ollie Amerena** for President and **Bec Barrigos** for honorary Vice-President and I urge you to vote for us, and vote [2] Madonna Johanson for Hon. VP.

I love what we do, I'm passionate about a public education system that gives all students the best education possible, and I'm an experienced unionist so I know that we deserve more than we're currently getting.

We need wages above inflation. Many of us have just received the Cost-of-Living Allowance payment, which is an admission that our base increases are below inflation. Not only is the allowance capped at 3%, but it doesn't compound with the rest of our salary. If we receive the full 3% COLA each year of the agreement, our base salary will have around \$10 000 less purchasing power in 2025 than it did in 2022 (a 10% cut in real wages as inflation outstrips our base salary).

NSW public school teachers just agreed to an average 10% pay increase for one year – a significant win and a vindication of their industrial campaign. They didn't accept the first offer made to them, they fought – and won. It shows that the arguments we heard last year, that 11% over three years was the best offer we could get, were simply wrong and misguided.

We need to cover the gap between our wages and those of similarly qualified professions: teaching is, on average, 16% behind.¹

¹ Nolan, J and Sonnemann, J, 2019. *Three charts on teachers' pay in Australia: it starts out OK but goes*

We need real workload reduction. According to the OECD, we do more **face-to-face teaching** here in Queensland than the Australian average, the OECD average, and we're doing up to 7 hours a week more than the best education systems in the world.²

	Face-to-Face Teaching Hours (per week)	
	High school	Primary
Queensland	21.5	22.5
Australian average	21	21.5
OECD average	19.6	22.1
Estonia	14.8	14.8
Finland	14.5	17

Source: OECD, 2022.

Imagine what a difference to our personal lives, to our families, and to our students, if we matched the Australian average, or the OECD average, and could do a week or two weeks' worth of marking and planning each year, within the hours of work that we already currently do at school?

Teaching conditions are learning conditions.

If we can improve our access to planning time, where we can collaborate with our peers, share resources, give more time to feedback with our students, then we can make a genuine improvement to their education.

Addressing wages and workloads is also about addressing the teacher shortage – we've lost good teachers to other professions. They can be brought back if we see real improvements.

It's not as if the State Government is broke – this year they just posted a record-breaking **\$12 billion surplus**, and they continue to pour millions into private schools. This is money that should be going into public schools and addressing the teacher shortage,

downhill pretty quickly. The Conversation, Grattan Institute

but it's not. It's something that we must fight for.

Having a leadership that is grounded and connected with the daily struggles of members is why **we're committed to only taking the wages we're currently on.** The President and Vice-president positions are fulltime, high-paid positions.

We want a leadership that is in touch with members' experiences such as the cost-of-living crisis. Having a Vice president on a senior teacher salary, rather than over \$180 000, can help address the sense that the leaders of our union are out of touch. We will be donating the difference in wages to a local strike support fund, freeing up hundreds of thousands of dollars to support members initiating their own disputes.

Our strategy to win is based on our might as union members – that without us, schools don't operate. Our current leadership ask for your vote as they are "experienced", but where has this "experience" got us? Where members vote for action time and again, yet our calls are ignored by our leadership, and our conditions suffer? QTU Fightback are all experienced unionists – and it's time we had a leadership committed to the will of members and committed to what teachers, and our students, deserve. **If members vote to strike to improve an offer, we need to heed that call.** As radical German playwright Bertolt Brecht said, "If you fight, you might lose, but if you don't, you've already lost."

The opinions above are the author's own

² OECD, 2022. *Education at a Glance: Teaching Hours*, <https://data.oecd.org/teachers/teaching-hours.htm>

BEC BARRIGOS

for Honorary Vice-President



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Hi, I'm Bec. I'm an English and Humanities teacher in Ipswich, teaching on Ugarapul, Turbul and Jaggera land, a QTU rep and long-time progressive activist and unionist. I'm running for Honorary Vice-President as part of **QTU Fightback** and alongside **Ollie Amerena** for President and **Tim Arnot** for Vice-President.

Our profession is in crisis. The impact of increasing workload pressures over the past few years has been dire. When I entered our profession, some of my mentors told me that they would never have chosen teaching if the conditions we face now, were what they had first confronted in their career.

Data discipline has increasingly become a way of making teachers responsible for the bad outcomes in education. Whilst the teacher shortage is used to further erode what little we have in the way of conditions.

Who has not heard the line, "Everyone is doing it tough"? We are told that we can't fix this situation because we are in the midst of a teachers shortage. **The shortage will not be resolved without action to address the conditions that are driving people away from teaching.**

Valiant teachers, giving our all, you and me, cannot overcome in individual classrooms the problems of decades of under-funding and neglect. The only way to turn the situation around is to **improve our workload now**. The consequences of inaction are extremely dire.

What will the teacher shortage be like in the next decade if we don't begin to reverse it now?

The crisis in our profession is reflected in the **political crisis** that exists in our broader union movement. For too long, the strategy of our union leaders has been to look to Labor state and Federal governments to save us. But with Labor in power in Queensland, our conditions have not been guaranteed nor have we seen real action. Under Palaszczuk and Grace Grace, we have seen the same policies as under the Liberals, wage freezes for teachers, public funding of private schools, lack of action on workload. If they're "our people," why aren't we getting a better deal? The truth is that **power concedes nothing without a demand**. NSW teachers are the proof of this.

In the next year, a state election year, there will be more pressure on us to quiet our criticisms in favour of re-electing Labor. If Labor loses, and we end up with another dastardly Liberal government, it will be because Palaszczuk has not delivered real improvements for workers in this state. Whoever's in power, we will need to fight for our rights.

The crisis in our unions will not be magically resolved by replacing our leadership alone, but it would be an important step in turning the situation around.

Further, we need to rebuild a fighting union movement, that is not afraid to put Labor on notice and will mobilise our industrial

muscle to win real change. QTU Fightback is the voice of this argument in our union. We are the network for the significant section of members dismissed by the incumbents' arguments against supposed "negativity" and "naivety" because we're principled unionists who will always advocate for membership but know that that's not enough. **A union that won't take decisive action for our rights can't inspire confidence in its members, and gives no answer to the genuine desperation and demoralisation that teachers are experiencing.**

I am sick of hearing the lie that focusing on the crisis in education means we're "negative." **QTU Fightback has a positive vision** for what needs to happen to save our profession, and we're passionate about building a thriving public education system that supports students and teachers.

This is no easy task - but we are teachers, we are fighters, and we are not afraid of looking reality in the face and strategising for change. We do that every single day, when we go to work and strive to do the best for our students in difficult conditions. A vote for me is a vote for a rank and file voice in our leadership. Whether we win this election or not, QTU Fightback is not going anywhere and we need you to join the fightback with us.

I urge you to **vote [1] Bec Barrigos** for Honorary Vice-President and **[2] Madonna Johanson**.

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