

BEC BARRIGOS

for Honorary Vice-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!**



Hi, I'm Bec. I'm an English and Humanities teacher on Ugarapul, Turrbul and Jaggera land in Ipswich, 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.

Data discipline has increasingly become a way of making teachers responsible for the bad outcomes in education.

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 teacher 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 extreme.** 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.

Our President, Cresta, claims that we stand for a "strategy with no clear outcomes other than conflict." The incumbents falsely counterpose negotiation and using strikes to leverage our demands. Negotiation, without preparedness to take action, is a recipe for defeat. The "collaboration" Cresta lauds has actually undermined our rights. This is not collaboration, but rather concession to the employer's interests without even asking for a better deal.

If elected, I would make it my priority to FIGHT for the best deal for members in all dealings with the Department and Government. I will prioritise my responsibility to seriously improve the conditions of union members, over maintaining quiescent relationships with our employers. This is the bare minimum requirement if you want to represent union members.

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.

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.

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.

QTU Fightback are principled unionists, we have 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 will be no easy task - but teachers don't shy away from challenges. QTU Fightback are not afraid to raise clear and strident demands, and to stand alongside you in the fight that will be necessary to win real improvements.

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.**

The opinions above are the author's own



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 Turrbul land. I urge you to vote:

- President: [1] Ollie Amerena
- Vice-president: [1] Tim Arnot
- Honorary VP: [1] Bec Barrigos
[2] Madonna Johanson

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 with QTU Fightback** (search "QTU Fightback" on Facebook) so I know that we deserve more than we're currently getting.

The current union president proudly claims that they've "led the QTU through Covid, natural disasters and the teacher shortage," and say they're for better wages and conditions – yet what has happened to our wages and conditions in the last three years? We've seen endless representation on bodies, workload surveys, and "consultation" yet what's been missing is **action to improve our conditions**.

We need wages above inflation. Many of us have just received the Cost-of-Living Adjustment 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. If we receive the full 3% COLA each year to 2025, our base salary will have gone backwards by 10% in only 3 years.

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.¹

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 lives if we matched the Australian or OECD average, and could do 1-2 weeks' worth of marking and planning each year, within the current hours of work that we already do at school?

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.

With the **current moves to close special education units**, without fully funding our state schools, this can push the burden onto classroom teachers. This doesn't have to be this way. With more collaboration time for teachers, and a massive injection of funding, we can provide an inclusive education system that caters to all. But we need a union leadership that will stand up to our employers and say we need way more than what we're getting.

Our comrades down south have proven that when you fight, you can win. 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. South Australian teachers just secured an extra hour's non-contact time each week. They didn't accept the first offer made to them. They fought – and won a better offer.

It's not as if our State Government is broke – this year they just posted a record-breaking **\$12 billion surplus**², and they continue to pour millions into

private schools. This is money that should be going into public schools and addressing the teacher shortage, 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. Our leaders should be on a teachers' pay rather than the current \$180 000 for the VP. We will be donating the difference in wages to a local strike support fund, freeing up hundreds of thousands of dollars to support member-initiated 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?

QTU Fightback candidates are all experienced unionists – and it's time we had a leadership committed to the will of members and what teachers, and our students, deserve. **If members vote to strike to improve an offer, we need to heed that call.**

As 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

¹ OECD, 2022. *Education at a Glance: Teaching Hours*, <https://data.oecd.org/teachers/teaching-hours.htm>

² Dennien, M, 2023. *Record \$12b surplus as Qld rides property and coal boom*. <https://shorturl.at/gopyQ>

OLLIE AMERENA

for President



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Greetings QTU Members,

"If you don't like the road you're walking, start paving another one." - Dolly Parton.

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 employers to provide tangible workload reductions and wage increases above inflation**.

It is with great pleasure that, as candidates, we address members via email. Even if the communication is limited to one email. **This was a small concession following the breakdown of the negotiations between legal teams of the General Secretary and QTU FIGHTBACK**. We hope it will enhance communication for future elections.

QTU FIGHTBACK will improve democracy within the QTU and provide members with a **viable alternative to the current leadership**. When you vote, consider their last term of office (3 years) and ask yourself:

- 1. Has your workload decreased?**
- 2. Has your financial position improved?**
- 3. Has the teacher shortage improved?**

The incumbent President stated in an attempted promotional video that QTU FIGHTBACK is looking to "dramatically change the QTU as we know it." On this,

we can agree. State-wide industrial action was last taken in 2009. While I acknowledge the legal requirement to negotiate with the department in good faith, it is time to start fighting for what we are worth and not accepting anything less, even if it means taking courageous action. If you have any doubt, I ask you to consider the impressive gains won by taking recent strike action by colleagues in other states. Through strike action, **NSW teachers gained a 10% base pay rise for one year**, and SA teachers, again through strike action, **received an increase of 60 minutes** to their Non-Instructional Time, which was already greater than the Queensland equivalent Non-Contact Time allocated through the award. Additionally, SA teachers already had access to **overtime payments** for when they are forced to work additional time due to lack of supply/relief teachers. I have no doubt that many teachers in hard-to-staff schools would benefit from such an addition to our agreement—definitely something to consider in our future log of claims regarding our next Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. **Recent strike actions taken by the Independent Education Union and also by our very own TAFE members is admirable.**

In the promotional video of **September 11**, the QTU Fightback Presidential Candidates were labelled as "**extremists**" by the current QTU President. **Some of our "extreme" positions are listed below:**

- Ensuring that the **President and Vice President's wages better reflect the wage of an average rank-and-file member**. This is a pledge to show that we are not interested in the

remuneration of the position but in achieving real wins for members.

- Banning QTU funds being spent on international travel. **In 2022, \$106,558 was spent on international travel**. It is QTU FIGHTBACK's firm belief that both the time and money of the union could be better used.

- Fighting any future pay freezes/deferrals. **The last one in 2020 cost members 100 million dollars.**

- Advocating for **base wage rises above inflation**.

- Fiercely representing members' views **regardless of which government is in power**.

- Improving member engagement using surveys to inform the executive and council of members' views.

- Reimplementing Facebook comments on the QTU FB account. Of the 26 unions of the Queensland Council of Unions, **only the QTU completely removes the ability for members to comment**. All state teaching unions and the federal education union also allow comments. Why is the QTU the only union that removes that avenue of communication between members? Another one of our purported "extreme" ideas.

We implore all members to familiarize themselves with **QTU FIGHTBACK's** platform, accessible at <https://qtufightback.org/> and via the provided QR code. **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] for Madonna Johanson.

The information supplied represents the opinion of Ollie Amerena