



# Queensland Council of Unions

*Working with Queensland unions who represent over 340,000 workers in Queensland on industrial, political and social justice issues*

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## **Workers put community health and safety first in cancelling Labour Day events**

Queensland Unions have put community health and safety foremost in today's decision to cancel 2020 Labour Day marches due to concerns about coronavirus.

Queensland Council of Unions General Secretary Michael Clifford said the union movement was taking responsible and measured action to cancel Labour Day activities statewide this year.

"In 2019 around 70,000 Queenslanders participated in marches and events to celebrate the achievements of working people," said Mr Clifford.

"These are health workers, firefighters, teachers, those ensuring community safety or retail and transport workers keeping our economy humming. These are the workers who are at the forefront of Queensland's community response to coronavirus.

"They keep our hospitals operating, they teach in our schools and universities, they keep our streets safe, or make sure our essential transport and supply lines are open.

"Queensland needs to have these essential workers healthy and fit and able to act and respond to community need."

Health advice is that avoiding large gatherings and social distancing would help to mitigate the spread of coronavirus.

"Workers and their unions know the value in collective action on health and safety, and this is a time when we need to work together to ensure community safety," he said.

"That's why we've taken this tough decision, as Labour Day has a long tradition in Queensland but the union movement is already considering other ways to highlight how workers and their unions make a positive contribution to society."

2020 would have been the 129th observance of the introduction of the 8-hour working day.

Since 1901, Labour Day has consistently been celebrated in Queensland on the first Monday in May, and this state's Labour Day celebrations are showcased and recognised as the largest and best attended in Australia.

Mr Clifford said workers are doing the right thing in the best interests of the community and now it's up to the federal government to amend its coronavirus response package and include two weeks' special leave for casual employees who have no paid sick leave.

"We are worried these workers are having to choose between feeding themselves, paying the bills, or going to work if they are possibly sick with coronavirus," he said.

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**Media Release**