

QUEENSLAND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION

Industrial Relations Act 2016 – s 458

Queensland Council of Unions
Together Queensland, Industrial Union of Employees

Applicants

v

State of Queensland
Local Government Association of Queensland Ltd

Respondents


INDUSTRIAL REGISTRAR

14 AUG 2026


QUEENSLAND


Matter Nos. B/2026/59 and B/2026/60

APPLICATION FOR A DECLARATION OF GENERAL RULING

2026 STATE WAGE CASE

QUEENSLAND COUNCIL OF UNIONS – SUBMISSIONS IN REPLY

Introduction

1. The Queensland Council of Unions (**QCU**) makes the following submissions in reply to the submissions filed by the State of Queensland (the **State**) on 31 July 2026 and the Local Government Association of Queensland (**LGAQ**) on 7 August 2026.

The State's Submissions

Quantum

2. The State supports a 'fair and reasonable increase' to modern award minimum wages and the Queensland minimum wage,¹ but does not make any submissions in relation to what they consider to be 'fair and reasonable'.

¹ State of Queensland Outline of Submissions, 31 July 2026, [3].

3. The State has previously accepted in State Wage Case (SWC) proceedings that the Fair Work Commission's (FWC) Annual Wage Review (AWR) decision reflected a fair and reasonable increase.²
4. Further, the State 'does not seek the Full Bench to exercise its discretions under either section 459(2) or section 459A given the current industrial context'.³
5. For the reasons set out in our submissions dated 17 July 2026, the 4.75% increase determined by the FWC, which provides for fair standards in relation to living standards prevailing in the community, ought to be considered 'fair and reasonable'.
6. We therefore submit that the State's submissions in respect of quantum are generally in support of the QCU's application.

Economic considerations

7. While not the only relevant factor, the FWC's AWR decision is a significant factor considered by the Full Bench in determining the SWC,⁴ and in circumstances where the economic data has indicated that the national economy is substantially the same as that of the Queensland economy, the Full Bench has previously held that there is no cogent reason to depart from the FWC decision.⁵
8. The State has filed evidence, by way of the affidavit of Mr Matt Bonaventura (Deputy Under Treasurer, Fiscal, Economics and Commercial in Queensland Treasury) dated 31 July 2026, confirming, *inter alia*, that:

(a) In respect of economic growth:

² Declaration of General Ruling (State Wage Case 2022) [2022] QIRC 340, [17]; Declaration of General Ruling (State Wage Case 2024) [2024] QIRC 244, [4].

³ State of Queensland Outline of Submissions, 31 July 2026, [6].

⁴ Declaration of General Ruling (State Wage Case 2023) (No 3) [2024] QIRC 111, [157]; Declaration of General Ruling (State Wage Case 2024) [2024] QIRC 244, [19]; Declaration of General Ruling (State Wage Case 2025) [2025] QIRC 229, [22]–[23].

⁵ Declaration of General Ruling (State Wage Case 2023) (No 3) [2024] QIRC 111, [63]; Declaration of General Ruling (State Wage Case 2024) [2024] QIRC 244, [82]; Declaration of General Ruling (State Wage Case 2025) [2025] QIRC 229, [103].

- (i) Queensland's economic growth in the near term is forecast to be one of the strongest in the country and ahead of the national average in 2025-26;⁶
- (ii) Queensland's Gross State Product (GSP) growth was 2.2% in 2024-25, which was the strongest amongst Australian states;⁷
- (iii) In the near term (2025-26 to 2026-27), Queensland is forecast to have one of the strongest GSP growth profiles in the country, ahead of the national forecast in 2025-26;⁸
- (iv) Queensland activity is underpinned by stronger population growth expectations, which means economic growth per capita would be more consistent with the national economy;⁹
- (v) In 2026-27, Queensland GSP growth is expected to be generally in line with the other jurisdictions and in line with the Australian Treasury's national outlook;¹⁰ and
- (vi) A rise in public demand, supported by the Queensland Government's capital program, is expected to support solid state final demand growth.¹¹

(b) In respect of inflation:

- (i) The latest monthly data show inflation was 4.0% in June 2026, broadly in line with that nationally;¹²
- (ii) The unwinding of cost-of-living measures has contributed to higher headline inflation, particularly in Brisbane where household energy rebates were larger;¹³ and
- (iii) Queensland's inflation forecasts are broadly consistent with the national level forecasts.¹⁴

⁶ Affidavit of Matt Bonaventura filed 31 July 2026, [5.10].

⁷ Ibid [5.11].

⁸ Ibid [7.3].

⁹ Ibid [7.4].

¹⁰ Ibid [7.5].

¹¹ Ibid [5.18].

¹² Ibid [5.27].

¹³ Ibid [5.28].

¹⁴ Ibid [7.9].

(c) In respect of the labour market, Queensland's unemployment rate forecasts are generally around ¼ percentage point higher than the national rate, in line with historical trends.¹⁵

9. In his evidence, Mr Bonaventura also assesses the differences between the state and national economies, ultimately concluding that 'the outlook for the Queensland and national economies are broadly similar'.¹⁶ Mr Bonaventura's evidence in respect of this conclusion is accepted by the QCU. We therefore submit that the evidence filed by the State should satisfy the Full Bench that the economic analysis conducted by the FWC of the national economy is substantially the same as that of the Queensland economy, and consequently, there is no cogent reason to depart from the FWC decision of a 4.75% increase.

Differences between the national workforce and Queensland workers who are not national system employees

10. In respect of assisting the Full Bench in identifying relevant differences between the national workforce and Queensland workers who are not national system employees, including the prevailing employment conditions of employees covered by modern awards, the State relies on the statement of agreed facts and the affidavit evidence of Mr Shane Victor John Donovan (Executive Director, Industrial Relations in the Office of Industrial Relations) dated 31 July 2026. This evidence is largely the same as was considered by the Full Bench in *Declaration of General Ruling (State Wage Case 2025)* (the **2025 SWC**),¹⁷ save for updated data and the details of the new public sector wages policy. In fact, the State has identified these issues for the Full Bench in varying degrees, in either evidence or submissions, in each year since 2019.¹⁸

11. In the 2025 SWC, none of this evidence was considered to be a moderating factor. The differences between the national workforce and Queensland workers who are not national

¹⁵ Ibid [7.8].

¹⁶ Ibid [7.2].

¹⁷ [2025] QIRC 229.

¹⁸ *Declaration of General Ruling (State Wage Case 2019)* [2019] QIRC 169.

system employees has not changed in any meaningful way, if at all. We therefore submit that the same approach should be taken this year.

The LGAQ's Submissions

12. In its submissions, the LGAQ confirms the following:

- (a) Councils have historically relied upon the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to issue an annual SWC ruling that is broadly consistent with the approach adopted in the federal jurisdiction;¹⁹ and
- (b) Local governments have had regard to the AWR decision in preparing their budgets for the 2026-27 financial year.²⁰

13. Accordingly, the LGAQ submits that a fair and reasonable wage adjustment would be one that does not exceed the federal increase, and specifically seeks:

- (a) an increase to modern award minimum wages 'that is commensurate with the federal outcome and does not exceed 4.75 per cent'; and
- (b) an increase to the Queensland minimum wage 'that is fair and reasonable in all the circumstances and does not exceed the federal outcome'.²¹

14. Consequently, in respect of local government sector employees, there is consensus between the relevant parties on the quantum necessary to provide fair and just minimum wages, and this ought to weigh in favour of the increase sought by the QCU.

The Queensland minimum wage

¹⁹ Submission of the Local Government Association Queensland, 7 August 2026, [9].

²⁰ Ibid [10].

²¹ Ibid [17].

15. At [40] of their submissions, the State refers to the structural adjustment to the national minimum wage (NMW) arising from the AWR decision and identifies that the increase to the NMW is equivalent to 6%.
16. Specifically in respect of this matter, and in addition to our previous submissions in respect of the Queensland minimum wage (QMW),²² the QCU submits the following:
- (a) It is fair and just for the safety net of fair minimum wages for Queensland workers who are not national system employees to be comparable to the safety net their national system counterparts benefit from;
 - (b) The NMW represents a fair standard in the context of living standards generally prevailing in the community; and
 - (c) A QMW that is out of step with the NMW is inconsistent with the Full Bench's overarching responsibility to ensure that employees are covered by fair and reasonable wages that allow them to participate in society and that those who do not benefit from bargaining are not left behind.²³
17. In respect of the practical outcome of providing a comparable increase to the QMW, the QCU have conducted a review of all modern award minimum wage rates to identify the modern award classifications that would remain below the NMW rate of \$1004.90 per week even if a 4.75% increase is applied to the current minimum wage rate. Attached to these submissions and marked 'Annexure 1' is a copy of the list of modern award classifications identified by the QCU.
18. All impacted classifications relate to junior rates relative to the age 21 rate, except for Band 1, Paypoint 1 to Band 1, Paypoint 5 in the *Brisbane City Council Salaried Staff Award – State 2016*. However, relevant employees are entitled to superior rates of pay under the *Brisbane City Council Certified Agreement 2025*, and the tangible impact will be in respect of award relativities only.

²² Submissions of the Queensland Council of Unions, 17 July 2026, [44]–[47].

²³ *Declaration of General Ruling (State Wage Case 2025)* [2025] QIRC 229, [94] and [97].

19. The QCU submit that excluding Band 1, Paypoint 1 to Band 1, Paypoint 5 in the *Brisbane City Council Salaried Staff Award – State 2016* from the operation of the SWC General Ruling, pursuant to section 459(2) of the *Industrial Relations Act 2016* (the **IR Act**), is not the appropriate course of action in these circumstances. The effect of doing so would be to deny employees a minimum wage rate that is fair and just. This matter could reasonably be addressed by the Full Bench by either:

(a) commencing a review of the award on its own initiative under section 156(1)(a) of the IR Act, or

(b) including a recommendation in its SWC decision that the parties to the *Brisbane City Council Salaried Staff Award – State 2016* discuss the matter and seek an order, by consent, varying the award under section 147 of the IR Act.

20. The QCU confirms this matter has been raised with both the LGAQ and the Queensland Services, Industrial Union of Employees who have coverage of the relevant employees. Neither party has raised with the QCU any objections to the proposal above.

Conclusion

21. For the reasons set out above, and in our submissions dated 17 July 2026, we submit that it is fair and just for the Full Bench to award the increase sought by the QCU.

N. Tosh
Queensland Council of Unions
14 August 2026

Annexure 1

Modern award classifications below the NMW even if a 4.75% increase is applied

Note 1: NMW rate is \$1004.90 per week or \$2,009.80 per fortnight.

Note 2: Current rate of \$959.33 per week or \$1,918.66 per fortnight or below would be less than NMW even if a 4.75% increase is applied.

*** indicates the rate is a junior rate relative to age 21 rate

Modern Award	Classifications	Current Award Rate Per Week / Fortnight (\$)	Award Rate Per Week / Fortnight (\$) after 4.75% increase
<i>Brisbane City Council Salaried Staff Award – State 2016</i>	Band 1, Paypoint 1	901.50	944.32
	Band 1, Paypoint 2	914.00	957.42
	Band 1, Paypoint 3	926.50	970.51
	Band 1, Paypoint 4	938.50	983.08
	Band 1, Paypoint 5	955.00	1000.36
<i>General Employees (Queensland Government Departments) and Other Employees Award – State 2015</i>	<u>Administrative stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,868	1956.73
	<u>Operational stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,658	1736.76
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,775	1859.31
<i>Hospital and Health Service General Employees (Queensland Health) Award – State 2015</i>	Level 1, Paypoint 3 ***	1,915	2005.96
	<u>Administrative stream</u>		
	Level 1, 1 ***	1,788	1872.93
	Level 1, 2 ***	1,907	1997.58
	<u>Professional stream</u>		
	Level 1, 1 ***	1,837	1924.26
	<u>Technical stream</u>		
	Level 1, 1 ***	1,837	1924.26

<i>Legal Aid Queensland Employees Award – State 2015</i>	<u>Operational stream</u>		
	Level 1, 1 ***	1,573	1647.72
	Level 1, 2 ***	1,716	1797.51
	Level 1, 3 ***	1,836	1923.21
	<u>Administrative stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,798	1883.41
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,915	2005.96
	<u>Professional stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,848	1935.78
<i>Parks and Wildlife Employees Award – State 2016</i>	<u>Technical stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,848	1935.78
	<u>Operational stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,588	1663.43
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,728	1810.08
	Level 1, Paypoint 3 ***	1,845	1932.64
	<u>Operational stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,658	1736.76
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,775	1859.31
<i>Queensland Agricultural Colleges Award – State 2015</i>	Level 1, Paypoint 3 ***	1,915	2005.96
	<u>Administrative stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,748	1831.03
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,861	1949.40
	<u>Professional stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,799	1884.45
	<u>Technical stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,799	1884.45

<i>Queensland Parliamentary Service Award – State 2015</i>	<u>Operational stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,544	1617.34
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,680	1759.80
	Level 1, Paypoint 3 ***	1,793	1878.17
	<u>Administrative stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,798	1883.41
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,915	2005.96
	<u>Professional stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,848	1935.78
	<u>Technical stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,848	1935.78
	<u>Operational stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,588	1663.43
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,728	1810.08
	Level 1, Paypoint 3 ***	1,845	1932.64
<i>Queensland Public Service Officers and Other Employees Award – State 2015</i>	<u>Administrative stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,798	1883.41
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,915	2005.96
	<u>Professional stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,848	1935.78
	<u>Technical stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,848	1935.78
	<u>Operational stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,588	1663.43
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,728	1810.08
	Level 1, Paypoint 3 ***	1,845	1932.64

<i>TAFE Queensland Award – State 2016</i>	<u>Administrative stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,798	1883.41
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,915	2005.96
	<u>Professional stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,848	1935.78
	<u>Technical stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,848	1935.78
	<u>Operational stream</u>		
	Level 1, Paypoint 1 ***	1,588	1663.43
	Level 1, Paypoint 2 ***	1,728	1810.08
	Level 1, Paypoint 3 ***	1,845	1932.64