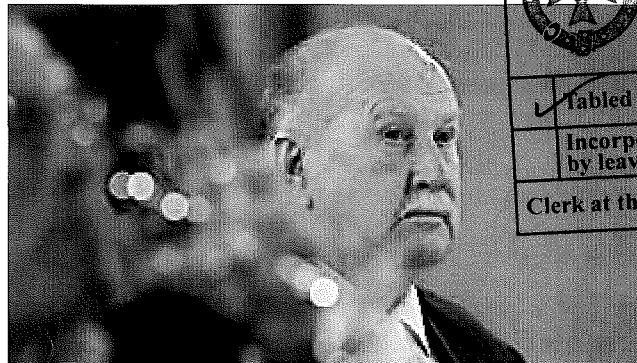



QLD EXAMPLE

Australian Workers Union funds paid Bill Ludwig's bills

- by: *Michael Madigan*
- From: *The Courier-Mail*
- September 07, 2011 12:00AM



	Paper No.: 5413T2849
	Date: 5/6/13.
	Member: Hon Blagje
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Clerk at the Table: <i>Mike...</i>	

SIGNED CHEQUES: Bill Ludwig, president of the Australian Workers Union. *Source:* News Limited

ONE of the most powerful men in Australian politics has used union funds to pay for the cost of a private legal dispute.

National Australian Workers Union boss Bill Ludwig personally signed two AWU cheques worth almost \$45,000 combined for legal expenses relating to his position as a director of Racing Queensland Limited.

The revelation will focus further attention on the use of union funds by officials.

Labor remains embroiled in the ongoing controversy involving former head of the Health Services Union, NSW federal Labor MP Craig Thomson, who is alleged to have misused union credit cards.

Mr Ludwig, one of the powerbrokers instrumental in the downfall of Kevin Rudd as prime minister, yesterday said he had done nothing unusual.

He had taken defamation action against former Supreme Court judge Bill Carter in relation to Mr Ludwig's duties as an RQL director. It is understood Mr Ludwig is eligible for an income of at least \$50,000 for those RQL duties.

Mr Ludwig eventually dropped the legal action and was forced to pay Mr Carter's legal costs. It is understood Mr Ludwig's lawyers demanded Mr Carter sign a confidentiality agreement over the settlement.

It is understood that Mr Carter, who declined to comment to *The Courier-Mail*, refused to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Mr Ludwig signed two AWU cheques one worth about \$37,000 and the other \$8000 to settle Mr Carter's legal fees for the dropped action.

Mr Ludwig said the AWU had a long-standing policy that an attack on a union official was an attack on the union.

However, he said the AWU held a meeting regarding the costs incurred in the Carter case. A formal resolution was passed that the union would pay the legal costs, Mr Ludwig said.

Mr Ludwig said he still had a copy of the resolution.

He said union officials lost their private identity when they took on the job of union representation.

"Any attack on them becomes an attack on the union," he said. "That is why their costs are covered."

The AWU did not return *The Courier-Mail's* calls to answer whether a damages payout from a successful action against Mr Carter would have been given to the union.

Mr Ludwig is also taking defamation action against *The Courier-Mail* in relation to his RQL duties. That legal action is ongoing.

No one from the Australian Council of Trade Unions was available for comment on whether unions routinely pay the legal costs of union officials involved in private disputes.

Fair Work Australia said it could not comment on the case.

Mr Ludwig has long been a powerful figure in Queensland.

Mr Rudd's tenure as prime minister folded after Mr Ludwig and the AWU put their support behind Julia Gillard on the night of the leadership coup.

AWU support was also crucial for Anna Bligh when she became Queensland Premier, and again when she tried to push asset sales through the Labor conference.

The AWU represents more than 135,000 Australian workers, including many employed in low-paid positions.

They include unskilled farm and council workers as well as those in manufacturing, gas, aviation, construction and hospitality.

The revelations of Mr Ludwig's legal costs follow the ongoing controversy involving federal MP Craig Thomson.

Mr Thomson received cash from NSW Labor for his legal fees following a defamation action stemming from accusations he misused union credit cards. He revealed the party paid his legal bills after the defamation action, against Fairfax media, was dropped.