



Speech by

Hon. T. McGRADY

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

Hansard 30 May 2000

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fireworks Tragedy

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (10.05 a.m.), by leave: I wish to inform the House of a tragic incident which took the life of a young girl, Dominique Maree Baxendell, at a fireworks display on the evening of Saturday, 20 May. During the display it appears that a firework exploded and metal fragments went into the crowd. The incident is subject to a police investigation, assisted by explosives inspectors from the Department of Mines and Energy. A coronial inquest will follow this investigation. As members would be well aware, all the circumstances surrounding this incident will be considered as part of the inquiry and we cannot pre-empt the outcome of the inquest. However, there have been several actions taken by Government which I believe are warranted given the very serious nature of this tragedy.

The day after the event the State Government announced the immediate prohibition imposed by the explosives inspectorate on the use of metal equipment in fireworks displays. Current national standards for fireworks displays allow for such metal equipment to be used. However, I am advised by the explosives inspectorate that metal fragments were the major cause of injuries in this incident. The interim ban on metal components is considered to manage the risk until the coroner makes his determination. On Tuesday, 23 May, the Government also put a halt on issuing of licences for fireworks operators pending the outcome of the inquest.

I make the point that courses have been conducted since 1997 for people who wish to apply for fireworks operator licences. Following industry input, shorter courses were also introduced in March 1998 for a restricted licence. I am advised that Queensland is the only State that requires people to have either practical experience or training through one of these courses before being permitted to handle fireworks. However, no further operator licences will be issued until the matter has been reassessed after findings are handed down by the coroner.

I have also met with a group of leading fireworks operators to discuss their industry and have encouraged them to form a formal industry association. I have extended an invitation for a genuinely representative industry group to regularly provide me with industry views and positions on all matters, including safety, relevant to the fireworks industry. I can assure all members of the House that, when the findings and recommendations of the coronial inquest are handed down, the Government will accept and implement them lock, stock and barrel. I am sure I speak for every member of this House in extending my deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those who have been affected by this terrible tragedy.
