



Speech by

Hon. GORDON NUTTALL

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Hansard 16 May 2002

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Building Industry Reforms

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (11.37 a.m.), by leave: I would like to announce significant new reforms being introduced by this government today, upon Governor in Council approval, to reduce the number of deaths and injuries in the building and construction industry in this state. Right now, more than \$11 billion worth of building and construction work is going on throughout the state, and these reforms will address the hazards responsible for the majority of all fatalities in one of Queensland's most dangerous industries. In the last financial year, 12 people died on building and construction work sites. In the same period, 4,971 workers compensation claims were lodged at a cost of more than \$21 million. These new regulations will replace a series of advisory standards that currently exist and, for the first time, ensure that all players are bound by a single set of regulations designed to improve and maintain workplace health and safety in these critical areas. The new regulations will apply to: working at heights, including ladders, scaffolding, and specific use of harnesses to prevent falls; excavations, including trenches; falling objects, regulations to protect workers and members of the public; safe housekeeping practices, for example, access to work sites, safety signs, disposing of waste and safe storage of materials and equipment; and common equipment at a work site.

The Queensland government is stepping up compliance and moving away from the national approach of self-regulation to introduce regulations for hazards in the building industry that have been proven to endanger workers. Just as importantly, though, these regulations have the support both of industry and unions. They stem from the Building and Construction Industry Workplace Health and Safety Taskforce established in 1999 which reported to government a series of recommendations for change in August 2000. Since then, my department and the task force have been in extensive consultation with industry to determine the new regulations and how to best implement them.

These regulations will reduce the most serious hazards in a high-risk and competitive industry that is employing more and more contract workers, part-time workers and casual employees. Other states have been watching Queensland's progress on this issue, and I hope they will follow our lead and improve serious safety issues that exist in the building and construction industry Australia wide. My department will now be embarking on an extensive program of educational seminars for employers, employees, industry, unions and community groups before the regulations come into effect on 1 September this year. I look forward to updating members of the House on the progress of these reforms in the months to come.