



Speech by

## **Hon. GORDON NUTTALL**

**MEMBER FOR SANDGATE**

Hansard 19 June 2002

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Workplace Health and Safety**

**Hon. G. R. NUTTALL** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.06 a.m.), by leave: I want to announce an important national decision with regard to workers' health and safety in the workplace. For the first time all Australian governments, national employer organisations and the ACTU have signed an agreement to work together to reduce the number of deaths and injuries in the workplace. Some 206 people died in workplaces around Australia in 1999-2000. Some 40 of these fatalities occurred here in Queensland. In the same year, 16 in every 1,000 workers suffered injuries resulting in compensation for five or more days. It has been estimated that more than 2,000 people die per year from past occupational exposures to hazardous substances. The impact on families and workmates of course is horrific. One of the economic realities is that Australian employers paid workers compensation premiums totalling \$5 billion in the same year.

This new 10-year national strategy with the support of governments, employers and unions has two main aims: firstly, to reduce work related fatalities by at least 20 per cent by 2012 and 10 per cent by 2007; and, secondly, to reduce workplace injuries by at least 40 per cent by 2012 and 20 per cent by 2007. To do this, five national priorities have been identified. They are to reduce high incidence and severity risks, to develop the capacity of business operators and workers to manage occupational health and safety effectively, to prevent occupational disease more effectively, to eliminate hazards at the design stage, and to strengthen the capacity of governments to influence occupational health and safety outcomes. The Queensland government strongly supports this new national strategy. It is consistent with our own 2001 Workplace Health and Safety Enforcement Framework. This is an occasion where the collective support of all Australian governments and major union and employer groups will go a very long way to making a significant difference.

I must add that this government does not just enforce the law where workplace health and safety is concerned; we actively encourage all employers and workers to find better and safer ways in which to work. That is why for the second year running we are offering companies and workers the chance to be recognised for their efforts in helping to reduce deaths and injuries in workplaces around Queensland. The Queensland Workplace Health and Safety Innovation Awards recognise companies and employees who have developed new equipment, a new system, a new technology, even a new training course that is helping to address hazards in the workplace and, in doing so, improving business productivity.

There was an outstanding response to these awards last year. The awards are an incredible opportunity for Queensland industries to be recognised and rewarded for their efforts in reducing injuries in the workplace. All companies covered by the Workplace Health and Safety Act are eligible to enter, and entries must be received by my department by Friday, 28 June. I would hope that all members in the House today would encourage as many companies and employees as possible to go to the Workplace Health and Safety web site for information and entry forms.