



Speech by

Hon. GORDON NUTTALL

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Hansard 6 August 2002

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Electrical Safety in Rural Areas

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.21 a.m.), by leave: This government has been very outspoken about its efforts to reduce the unacceptable level of deaths and injuries from electrical shock in workplaces and in homes in this great state. A significant part of the government's proposed reforms of electrical safety is the issue of electrical safety in the rural industry. It is critical that as many Queenslanders as possible have their say on this very important issue. My department will be issuing a discussion paper today seeking public comment on ways to reduce the hazards of working with electricity in rural Queensland.

Of the 61 electrical deaths in Queensland since 1995, more than half occurred in regional and rural areas, and almost a third involved contact with overhead power lines—from heavy machinery to moving irrigation pipes on properties. The regulations proposed in this discussion paper include: the management of risks from overhead electricity lines; compulsory installation of safety switches; inspection, testing and tagging of specified electrical equipment; prohibitions on the use of double adaptors and piggyback plugs; and, the protection of cord extension sets and flexible cables. Under the new regulations, the rural industry will no longer be exempt from some safety requirements and will come into line with all other industries.

I am pleased to say that the proposed regulations are the result of significant consultation with stakeholders through the Rural Sector Standing Committee, a group established under the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995. The government is confident that these proposed work practices can help make rural workplaces safer for all workers. A copy of the regulatory impact statement is available on my department's website and I call on members to encourage their constituents to be a part of shaping a very crucial area of the electrical safety legislation.