



Speech by

**CAROLYN MALE**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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Hansard 27 March 2003

**CORONERS BILL; CREMATIONS BILL**

**Ms MALE** (Glass House—ALP) (6.46 p.m.): I rise in support of the Coroners Bill and the Cremations Bill. Both these bills represent sensible and practical legislation. The Coroners Bill will remove the confusion surrounding the roles and responsibilities of the coroners office and bring Queensland into line with most of the other states by establishing a State Coroner. The appointment of a State Coroner to oversee and coordinate the coronial system throughout Queensland is probably an overdue step, and I commend the Attorney for bringing this legislation forward.

For people outside the legal profession, the present coronial system can be confusing and unclear. For most people, the only time they come into contact with a coroner is during periods of extreme stress and trauma when they have lost a loved one. To lose a loved one suddenly through an accidental death is bad enough, but to then go through a coronial process which can confuse and frustrate family members and friends makes the situation far worse than it has to be.

The new system outlined in this bill will help ease some of the stress and trauma by putting in place uniform procedures, providing more support and information to families and improving accountability measures. In addition, strengthening the process for coroners to be able to make recommendations which will reduce the likelihood of further accidental deaths occurring is commendable. Families and friends leaving a coronial inquest at least will be comforted in the knowledge that when the recommendations are followed and implemented no-one else will have to suffer in the way that they have.

Giving the coroner some extra teeth by compelling a person at an inquest to give answers which may be self-incriminating is a strong move, too, because far too often in the past people have simply refused to give evidence which may be crucial to a just outcome at inquests. The improvements and changes proposed by the Coroners Bill are widespread and I assume the Attorney has planned a comprehensive education process for police, health professionals, emergency service workers and counsellors to ensure a smooth transition when the new system is implemented.

Detailing the processes involved in cremations within one piece of legislation is also a practical and sensible move. It clears up confusion and cuts down on any possible abuse of the system, and this is to be commended.

The only other matter I wish to add to this debate is the fact that the Attorney-General has publicly stated that he will clean up the nefarious and inappropriate practices of some of the less reputable operators in the funeral industry, which comes under his jurisdiction. I look forward to commenting on the changes that he proposes to overcome these problems in the future and am confident that he will do an outstanding job with those legislative changes as he has with these two bills. I commend the bills to the House.