



Speech by

CHRIS CUMMINS

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard 1 April 2003

CORONERS BILL; CREMATIONS BILL

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (4.16 p.m.): The Coroners Bill 2002 represents a major overhaul of Queensland's coronial system with a stronger emphasis on preventing deaths and a more sensitive and compassionate approach to families. For the first time Queensland will have a coordinated, standardised and accountable system overseen by a state coroner. As an electrician by trade, I and a number of other members on this side of the House know what it is like to work in a very dangerous trade. Many electrical workers have lost their lives and often leave a family in immense grief, sometimes not knowing how their husband, father, son, brother was killed. Compassion when dealing with these issues should always be a priority in my opinion, and the Beattie government has identified the need to design the new coronial system to be far more sensitive and compassionate towards families. There will be improved information and support, a greater sensitivity to different cultures and beliefs and families will be given greater access to coronial documents during investigations.

Queensland is a decentralised state and to have an effective system we must have coroners located throughout the state. Therefore, the bill contains the current act's provision that every magistrate is also a coroner. At the same time, the Coroners Bill will create for the first time in Queensland the position of a state coroner who will ensure that the coronial system operates efficiently and that reportable deaths are investigated to the appropriate extent. The bill modernises the categories of deaths that have to be reported. In particular, it provides that deaths in care and deaths in custody have to be reported to a coroner. Both these terms are comprehensively defined in the bill. All deaths in custody have to be investigated by either the state coroner or a deputy state coroner in accordance with the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. There must also be an inquest.

This bill will herald a much-needed change which will maintain and guarantee a coronial system that is efficient, effective, responsive and compassionate. I commend the minister and his department for the hard work that has been done in formulating this bill and the consultation that has been involved, and I commend the bill to the House.