



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (5.25 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Workplace Health and Safety and Another Act Amendment Bill 2002. Today's debate is timely since just yesterday was the eighth International Day of Mourning to commemorate those who have died at work.

With around 2,700 workers in Australia dying each year in workplace accidents or from work related diseases, the day was a timely reminder of the importance of workplace health and safety. To commemorate, 158 black balloons—one for every Queenslanders who died in a workplace accident last financial year—were released during a memorial church service.

This number of deaths is clearly unacceptable. Sadly, in Queensland alone last financial year 89 workers were killed in industrial accidents, with a further 69 dying from asbestos related disease. I am advised that the average age of these fatalities is just 45, with the youngest being a 19-year-old child care worker. Incidentally, the most common cause of death is work related vehicle accidents, with the road freight industry being marked as the most dangerous industry with nine fatalities—again, an unacceptable figure.

These figures surely highlight why workplace health and safety should be an issue for all Queenslanders. It should also be a timely reminder of why workplace health and safety issues must remain in the minds of both employers and employees, wherever they work. This bill ensures that Queensland's workplace health and safety provides for an effective, modern regulatory regime which meets the needs associated with the changing nature of the labour market. It also makes consequential amendments to the Electrical Safety Act 2002.

This bill aims to ensure that community standards for workplace conditions are relevant. Hopefully, these legislative changes will encourage employers and employees to continue to be aware and vigilant to protect the health and safety of everyone in the workplace. Workplace health and safety applies to every industry from construction to retail to transport. I commend the bill to the House.