



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Tuesday, 4 August 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Workplace Health and Safety, Traffic Controller Death

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.06 am): This morning our thoughts are with the friends and family of a traffic control worker who was tragically killed last night while working on the Bruce Highway near Burpengary. Any death on our roads is a tragedy for the families and friends of those involved. Where such a tragedy involves a worker going about their job to improve road conditions for all of us, it has particular meaning. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is investigating the circumstances of the accident. A more detailed investigation by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland will await the finalisation of the police investigation, which is currently underway.

The Bligh government is committed to an \$18.2 billion infrastructure capital works program, and this commitment requires thousands of workers to complete the roads, bridges and buildings that will build our state's future. Workers across the length and breadth of the state deserve to be respected in their workplace and protected in their workplace. Regardless of whether it is an office or a roadside, we are all equal and we all deserve to be safe. Unfortunately, incidents involving traffic control workers do occur on Queensland roads. That is why this government is taking action. As Minister for Industrial Relations, I recently announced the establishment of a task force to address the recommendations of a report into traffic controller safety and conditions.

In July this year the Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman, Don Brown, released a report identifying a range of possible measures for government to consider to further improve safety and industrial conditions among workers in the traffic control industry. The report highlighted a number of concerns, including a culture among Queensland motorists of ignoring reduced speed zones through roadwork sites; a need for increased responsibility among employers regarding accreditation, compliance and licensing of business operators who provide traffic control services; and a need for improved provision of toilets, fatigue breaks, safety and training, appropriate signage and avenues for complaint reporting.

These are issues we must all as citizens and political leaders work to address, and this government is committed to fair and safe workplaces for all Queenslanders. My department has examined this report in detail and is currently coordinating a response covering the range of issues dealt with in the report. Following this response, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General will be convening a task force by the end of the month, and I acknowledge the support and contribution of the task force made by my cabinet colleagues the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Main Roads.

By continuing to improve workplace conditions, we can ensure workers make it home safe to their families each night and tragic incidents like that which occurred last night are avoided. Any future measures will build on action we have already taken to reduce injuries, deaths and industrial disputes in this industry. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is continuing to work with the Department of Transport and Main Roads to raise awareness about the code of practice and general safety on roadwork and construction sites. By continuing to work with industry and unions, we can continue to look at more ways to improve safety and conditions for workers in this important industry.