



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Wednesday, 16 September 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Workplace Health and Safety

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.07 am): Ensuring safety in the workplace is one of the most important challenges facing our state. Every year around 100 Queenslanders are killed at work and 30,000 people suffer serious injuries or work related diseases. The cost to our state of these tragic deaths and injuries is more than \$5 billion a year. And worst of all, mums and dads, husbands, wives and children are left mourning the family member that never came home from work.

The Bligh government wants to turn these statistics around, to make it clear that workplace health and safety is everyone's business. That is why today I will be launching the Zero Harm at Work program for Queensland industries. The program aims to get our top business leaders as well as union and public sector representatives to drive a change in attitudes about safety at work. If we can get business to lead the way in their organisations then that is a great step towards safer workplaces and work practices for Queensland workers.

I am very pleased to announce that we have 250 industry and union leaders who have agreed to sign up to our Zero Harm at Work program. It is the daily decisions business and industry leaders make that potentially have the greatest impact and the most serious consequences. By showing workers that we are committed to zero harm and that workplace health and safety is core business, these CEOs and worker representatives can build a new culture of safety at work from the top down.

The Zero Harm at Work leadership program has already been trialled in the construction industry this year, with 35 companies and industry leaders signing up to the initiative. Now we are expanding it to all industries across the state, with a particular focus on high-risk industries such as manufacturing, transport and agricultural industries. These industries have the highest rates of workplace deaths and injuries in the country. Yet they are also some of our state's biggest economic drivers, helping to build our economy and our future during these tough economic times.

So the health and safety of workers in these industries is absolutely crucial to our state's prosperity. Every time a worker is injured or, worse, killed, the impact on the business itself—both human and economic—is tremendous. Companies that fail to meet workplace health and safety requirements can also face tough financial penalties. It is in everyone's best interest to make workplace health and safety a priority.

I congratulate business and union leaders for their involvement in the Zero Harm at Work program. By working together we can help to make Queensland workplaces the healthiest and safest in the country.