



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Tuesday, 10 November 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Electrical Safety, Insulation Installation

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.13 am): The electrocution of an insulation installer in Brisbane on 14 October and the injury of a fellow worker has highlighted, in the most tragic circumstances, the electrical safety risks associated with installing ceiling insulation. I would like to express my sincere condolences to the family and friends of the deceased worker and I extend my hopes for an early recovery to the injured co-worker. I must also acknowledge the representations made to me by the member for Albert, Margaret Keech, on behalf of the deceased worker's family. I know that she is supporting them and also wishes to publicly extend her condolences.

The responses of both the federal and Queensland governments to these safety issues has been both rapid and comprehensive. Immediately after being notified of last month's incident, inspectors from Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and the Electrical Safety Office went to the scene of the incident and launched an investigation, which is ongoing. The next day the Electrical Safety Office posted a safety alert for installers on its website and to its email subscribers.

Then on 16 October, the Electrical Safety Office convened a meeting with the Office of Fair Trading, the Building Services Authority and other government agencies to consider measures to improve safety for insulation installers and homeowners. As a result, all agencies circulated the alert dealing with the electrical safety risks associated with installing foil ceiling insulation. The alert went to tens of thousands of electricians, electrical retailers, construction companies, manufacturers and other businesses—18,000 on the Electrical Safety Office and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland mailing lists alone and another 30,000 recipients through Fair Trading's *Smart Business Bulletin*.

As part of a coordinated approach to addressing safety issues in this industry, federal minister Peter Garrett and I also discussed a range of improved safety requirements for insulation installers. As a result, I issued a ministerial notice on 30 October under the Electrical Safety Act for installers to comply with several important safety conditions, starting on 1 November 2009. These conditions included the banning of metal or other conductive fasteners when installing ceiling insulation as well as requiring on-site risk assessments before any installation work commences. These conditions also complement a series of changes announced by the federal minister about the Home Insulation Program.

It is disappointing, therefore, to see reports that a very small number of installers may not be following the new directives that became effective on 1 November. All these reports will be investigated by the Electrical Safety Office and action will be taken against firms if they have breached the new conditions. Banning the use of metal staples and other conductive fastenings is an important response to the safety concerns arising within the insulation industry.