



Speech by  
**Simon Finn**

**MEMBER FOR YEERONGPILLY**

Hansard Thursday, 17 September 2009

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## **ELECTRICAL SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr FINN** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (5.56 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Electrical Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and to make a brief comment on a couple of aspects of the bill. The bill amends the Electrical Safety Act to enable the minister to order the recall of unsafe electrical products where there is evidence that the product poses an electrical safety risk. The introduction of recall powers is a major step forward in improving community safety in Queensland by ensuring that the government can take swift action to protect the safety of consumers.

We know that the majority of designers, manufacturers and importers of electrical equipment act proactively and in the interests of safety if they become aware that they have an unsafe product. These new recall laws are aimed at the few designers, manufacturers and importers who refuse to take full responsibility for their unsafe products by not conducting effective voluntary recalls. The onus will be on these people to ensure that both products that are in stock and those that have been sold or installed in people's homes are recalled at their cost.

Under the provisions of this bill, recall decisions are not taken lightly. Prior to making a recall order, the minister must advise the responsible person in writing that an order is intended and the reasons for it. That person then has seven days in which to provide valid reasons in writing as to why they should not be compelled to recall the product. The legislation requires that the minister must consider any such written submission from the responsible person before subsequently deciding whether to make a recall order. If a recall order is then made, a copy is provided to the person and is published in the government gazette and in widely circulating newspapers. Recall orders are required to specify the conditions of the recall action that must be undertaken by the responsible person and the time frame for action. The provisions of the bill will improve electrical safety for Queenslanders by ensuring that the government can act quickly where electrical products have the potential to be a risk to life or property.

I turn now to the provisions of the bill that amend the Contract Cleaning Industry (Portable Long Service Leave) Act 2005 by clarifying eligibility for scheme membership, easing the administrative burden on employers and doubling the civil penalties applied to repeat offender employers who consistently fail to meet their legislative obligations. The contract cleaning industry services a large number of businesses throughout the state, with approximately three-quarters of the income flowing to the industry generated from cleaning services to the private sector.

The cleaning industry has a dynamic workforce with many workers moving frequently between employers due to the high rate of contract turnover and in a work environment with continuous daily demands rather than seasonal or project based work. This describes an industry operating in an increasingly competitive environment where the balance of work quality against cost means competition is intense, contracts regularly change hands and profit margins are frequently as low as between one per cent and five per cent of the contract price. With labour costs comprising the biggest industry costs, combined with these competitive pressures, this can create an environment with little incentive for some employers to comply with their legislative obligations and pay the applicable levies. Employers who avoid these levies gain an unfair advantage over their industry competitors and without viable enforcement

provisions the scheme's long-term viability is threatened. Doubling of civil penalties applicable to repeat offenders will benefit the scheme by ensuring necessary funds to pay long service benefits as well as benefit the industry by contributing to a more equitable marketplace.

Additionally, the definition of cleaning work is also to be expanded, enabling better determination of whether an individual is engaged to perform cleaning work and taking into account the nature of the work and the purpose of the engagement as to whether or not individual tasks fall outside of cleaning work. The bill also broadens the scope of the scheme by including those workers who perform cleaning work in open public spaces such as South Bank Parklands as eligible for scheme membership. These workers, although performing the same work as other contract cleaning industry workers, had previously been excluded from scheme membership and therefore were denied the opportunities for portable long service leave benefits. These provisions will rectify that inequity.

I also note that these provisions, which provide an extension of long service leave availability to this section of workers, build on the recent announcement of the government to implement the Clean Start program to ensure that cleaners working in public buildings are provided with adequate terms and conditions of employment. I welcome the announcement of the Clean Start provisions. I know that our colleagues in the union movement who represent these workers, who are often at the lower paid scale of workers, also welcome that announcement.

I believe that the provisions in this bill will provide greater consistency across the industry in relation to classes of eligible workers and ease the burden of compliance. This in turn will promote equity in the marketplace and ensure the long-term viability of the scheme.

Finally, as the parliamentary secretary for industrial relations with some involvement in this portfolio area, I thank the workers and staff in the Electrical Safety Office for all of the good work that they do and have done over many years in implementing safety measures and protecting the safety of Queensland workers and consumers. This is part of this government's program to ensure that we have a safe and fair Queensland and I commend the bill to the House.