



Speech by

Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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BUILDING AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (NO. 2)

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (9.26 pm): I too rise to speak in the debate on the Building and Other Legislation Amendment Legislation (No. 2). From the outset, let me add my support for any piece of legislation that looks to improve our ability to keep our kids safe, particularly when it comes to drowning deaths in swimming pools. When this bill came up for debate and we received the swimming pool safety laws brief put out by the Queensland Parliamentary Library, I took the liberty of forwarding it on to a constituent of mine, Mr Harry Wrangell. The minister may remember that I mentioned some of the submissions that Mr Wrangell made to the review committee. Unfortunately, Mr Wrangell replied by saying that he still has not heard back from the review committee or anyone to do with the swimming pool safety law review, which is a bit frustrating for not only Mr Wrangell but also me.

He still has a number of issues that I think are worthy of raising. I hope the minister will take a moment to listen to some of the concerns he raises. The research brief itself mentions that over half of fabricated metal fencing does not comply with the standard for strength. Substandard fencing is still being used. The brief, and certainly the legislation, does not go any further in terms of mentioning strategies to enforce the standard of fence panels nor have any fines or the like been imposed on manufacturers or suppliers of faulty products.

I think Mr Wrangell is right in suggesting that this may become a bit of an issue for pool inspectors when they try to determine the strength of the pool fencing. It is still the case that kids can get through, get around or push down some fencing. As Mr Wrangell suggests, testing for such standard compliance requires special hardware which is normally performed in laboratory type environments. It is going to be very difficult for pool safety inspectors on site to determine whether that pool fencing is up to standard. Mr Wrangell suggests—

Other safety products must have a permanent label attached stating the relevant standard of compliance. This is why I suggest that pool safety panels, posts and gates must display this permanent marking. This is the only way that pool owners know that they have been supplied with an authorised product.

Mr Wrangell is also very passionate about the gates and the locks around swimming pools, and he made a submission specifically around some of the work that he has been doing on alternatives. He strongly believes that many deaths and near drownings have been attributed to young children climbing up some movable object, reaching the release knob and gaining entry. He states—

It is beyond belief and logical thinking that the standards do not stipulate a minimum force which must be applied to release any locking mechanism.

He continues—

Locks which use electromagnetic attraction to hold a locking bolt in place have a bad safety design defect. The locking feature can easily be negated by simply placing a metal washer over the magnet's pole face. (the bottom half of the assembly).

The gate will still close perfectly, but it will never lock.

If we continue to use substandard gates and locks then we possibly still have not got this right. He goes on to say—

Another feature of this type of lock is that the force required to release the lock is insufficient, as well as the fact that the magnetic attraction on the plunger forms part of this force.

He suggests that—

... locking devices should be included in the Australian Standard (or State building codes), which would require that the locking pin arrangement be completely enclosed to make it tamper proof. Methods are available to do this.

Ultimately, though, my biggest concern in terms of correspondence I continue to get from Mr Wrangell is that he has failed to receive any response or even acknowledgement from anyone involved in the pool safety law review. It really pains me to know that a constituent of mine is going to such effort to contribute to the debate, to contribute to the making of legislation and to contribute to the making of policy in this state and yet we cannot even acknowledge it. He concludes by saying—

I would appreciate a response as to how my suggestions were received, and if any of them look like being adopted. Incidentally, I requested some help on pool safety matters some five months ago—first to the Institute of Building Surveyors, and then to Building Codes Qld—I am still waiting for a reply to the question I asked.

If the minister has an opportunity in his reply to respond to some of those issues around the strength of the panelling, the gates and the locking mechanisms, I know that that will go a long way to assuaging the concerns of Mr Wrangell and me in those matters. With that, I commend the bill to the House.