



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Thursday, 11 March 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Workplace Safety

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.17 am): The Queensland government places the safety of workers at the top of its list of priorities. That is why I issued a ministerial statement earlier this week in relation to foil insulation. That is why we launched the zero harm program last year, and that is why we are about to conduct the state's largest ever safety education and audit campaign for medium-sized businesses. Later this month the inspection program will start. Within 12 months it is anticipated that every medium-sized business in Queensland—more than 7,700 of them—will be inspected to ensure they have effective systems in place to manage workplace health and safety. These businesses employ about one in five workers, yet they account for about one in three workers compensation claims lodged each year. The only way we can tackle this high number of workplace injuries and fatalities is to target the areas of greatest concern.

As part of the education and audit campaign, all medium-sized businesses will be offered a free voluntary safety advisory session with a workplace health and safety expert to help them identify any problems before inspections start. The free voluntary advisory sessions will allow Queensland's medium-sized businesses to work with us to discuss workplace health and safety issues, identify problem areas and develop better safety practices.

Businesses that take advantage of the offer will be given time to apply what they have learnt and make improvements to their safety systems, if needed, before being inspected. The initiative is being implemented as a response to the high percentage of workers compensation claims lodged by medium-sized businesses—those with annual payrolls of between \$1 million and \$10 million. The initiative will help medium-sized businesses reduce the number of injuries and fatalities occurring in their business and increase their capability to manage workplace health and safety risks and obligations.

The initiative will be conducted in two separate waves—with half of Queensland's medium-sized businesses to be contacted this month and the other half from September 2010. The initial response by businesses wishing to register for these sessions has been very positive—with a quarter of the businesses contacted in the first week registering their involvement and already half of the planned 57 advisory sessions booked out. I would urge all medium-sized businesses to get behind this initiative to help us reduce their claims but, more importantly, protect our workers.