



Speech by
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA WEEK

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (11.39 am): The Bligh government is urging employees, employers and the community to work together to cut the incidence of death and injury in the workplace. The plea has been made as part of Safe Work Australia Week, which runs this week from 24 to 30 October. Safe Work Australia Week is of vital importance in spreading the message throughout the entire community that workplace safety is for everyone. We all have a role to play in cutting injury and death from the workplace. Ensuring that Queensland workers come home safe and healthy is a goal worth striving for. It does not matter what industry we work in. As Queenslanders, we want to return home safe each day to our families and loved ones.

Promoting workplace health and safety has been a lifelong mission for me and it is vital to cutting the Queensland workplace injury and fatality toll. There was a slogan in the union movement, and we have lived by it for many years, in relation to occupational health and safety—that is, that workers sell their labour, not their health. The human dimension is that each year in Queensland there are about 100 work related fatalities and nearly 30,000 cases where workers are either permanently impaired or seriously injured. On the economic side, the cost of these workplace incidents to the Queensland economy has been estimated at more than \$5.2 billion each year. The Queensland government wants to turn these shocking statistics around to ensure that people make it home safe and sound to their loved ones at the end of each working day.

The government is working with employers and workers to build a positive zero harm safety culture in all Queensland workplaces to reduce the number and severity of workplace incidents. Ensuring our businesses are as safe and productive as possible will also secure Queensland jobs and keep the economy strong.

Safe Work Australia Week is for all Queenslanders—whether you are a small, medium or large business; an office worker or labourer; an apprentice or manager; from the country or the city; or work in an office or outdoors. This is the perfect opportunity for employers and workers to look carefully at their workplace health and safety practices and systems and how they can be improved. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has many events planned during Safe Work Australia Week to raise awareness of the importance of a safe and healthy workplace, as I said, for all Queenslanders.

It was great to have Simon Finn, parliamentary secretary to the Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations, launch the Safe Work Australia Week at a forum held at the Victoria Park Golf Complex in my electorate of Brisbane Central. The forum keynote address was delivered by rugby league legend and Queensland State of Origin coach, Mr Mal Meninga. Mal has taken on the role as a safety ambassador for Safe Work Australia Week this month and will be helping to spread the safety message during the week.

The forum provided a comprehensive look at the new harmonised occupational health and safety laws to be introduced from 1 January 2010. Speakers from Safe Work Australia and Workplace Health and

Safety were there to outline details of key aspects of the new legislation. John Crittall from Master Builders Queensland and Amanda Richards from the Queensland Council of Unions were also there to discuss the impact of the new laws from an employers' and workers' perspective. Also in attendance was the Workplace Health and Safety Board chair, Vince O'Rourke, and other board members. The new laws will mean that occupational health and safety rules will be applied consistently across Australia, making it easier for workplaces to understand and comply with requirements and this will improve both safety and productivity in industry.

On Thursday the 28th this week Mal Meninga, along with the Hon. Cameron Dick, the minister, will be at the King George Square Zero Harm at Work breakfast, which kicks off at 7 am, and I plan to be there. Celebrating this year's theme 'Zero Harm at Work', the event will include Nova 106.9 providing entertainment, games and giveaways. Safety ambassador Mal Meninga will address the crowd and discuss the importance of workplace health and safety and his personal perspectives as a coach, team player, business owner and family man. Industry groups supporting the Zero Harm at Work theme have agreed to be involved in the event providing giveaways or support with promotional materials, banners and a variety of interesting stands. Come along everyone and have the chance to win an autographed football from Mal.

Helping businesses to set up health and wellbeing programs is a priority for the Queensland government. There are a host of activities happening in hundreds of workplaces across the state from Toowoomba to Townsville to Rockhampton. In Rockhampton, we have the second annual Central Queensland Zero Harm Seminar.

(Time expired)