



Speech By  
**Hon. Curtis Pitt**


**MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE**

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Record of Proceedings, 7 May 2015

## **WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

### **Introduction**

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.07 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Electrical Safety Act 2002 and the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Finance and Administration Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015 [\[387\]](#).

*Tabled paper:* Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes [\[388\]](#).

The former Newman LNP government shamelessly tied the hands of workers and their representatives, increasing the risk to workplace injuries and making it harder to take preventative action in the workplace. We on this side believe that every worker has the right to go to work expecting to return home safely to their family and friends at the end of the day. We believe in genuine consultation, cooperation and respect between employers and workers.

It is critical that all parties in the workplace have the ability to participate in the resolution of health and safety issues and gain advice or be represented where a work health and safety issue arises. Workers and employers benefit by the provision of safe and healthy workplaces where parties involved share responsibility for improvements in work health and safety practices to prevent workplace incidents.

In recognising these benefits and our election commitments, the bill restores the rights of work health and safety, or WHS, entry permit holders to gain preventative and meaningful access to workplaces. This is achieved by removing the requirement for WHS entry permit holders to give at least 24 hours notice before entering a workplace to inquire into a suspected WHS contravention. Instead, WHS entry permit holders will be able to enter a workplace immediately if they reasonably suspect a safety contravention has occurred and provide notice of entry as soon as is reasonably practicable afterwards.

The bill also restores the rights of trained health and safety representatives to direct workers in their work group to cease unsafe work. This change improves safety protections for all workers including young workers and workers from non-English-speaking backgrounds. This will allow workers to be guided and advised by more knowledgeable, trained representatives who are better placed to identify hazards and potential risks in work activities. This change also restores consistency with the nationally harmonised model of work health and safety laws that provides this protection.

The bill also allows health and safety representatives to request the immediate assistance of any person at the workplace, removing the requirement for at least 24 hours notice before the assistant can access the workplace. Not only does this amendment improve safety at the workplace level by providing immediate access to external support and information for representatives; it also removes regulatory burden that has no safety benefit.

Further, the bill reinstates an historical requirement for employers to notify the regulator when a worker is absent from work for more than four days due to a workplace injury or illness. This change will capture work-related musculoskeletal and mental disorders, both of which are priority disorders in the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022.

These disorders have a significant personal impact and cost to business and the community. Increased data about the incidence of these disorders will assist in improved targeting of interventions and education and awareness programs.

The Palaszczuk government is also committed to improving safety for electrical workers. To give effect to our commitment, this bill also amends the Electrical Safety Act 2002 to reinstate the position of the Electrical Safety Commissioner. This important role manages the Electrical Safety Board and its committees but also provides direct advice to the department and the minister on electrical safety matters.

The Electrical Education Committee and Electrical Equipment Committee that were abolished in 2012 are also reinstated by this bill. These committees play an important role in giving advice and making recommendations about the promotion of electrical safety in workplaces and the broader community and about the safety of electrical equipment.

The former Newman LNP government has watered down workplace health and safety standards on Queensland work sites, creating significant risks for workers across the state. With this bill, we are improving safety for Queenslanders at work.

### **First Reading**

**Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.12 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

### **Referral to the Finance and Administration Committee**

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Grace): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Finance and Administration Committee.

### **Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date**

**Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (12.12 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Finance and Administration Committee report to the House on the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill by 6 July 2015.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.