




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR YEERONGPILLY

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Electrical Safety Week

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply) (2.31 pm): This morning I visited Energex and Ergon apprentices learning the trade on overhead powerlines in Rocklea. They were learning not only their trade but, importantly, the dangers and safety around high voltage power. With Electrical Safety Week next week, it is timely to highlight these dangers to all Queenslanders because, to put it bluntly, accidental contact with live high voltage electrical infrastructure can and does kill.

In the past five years alone, Energex and Ergon have seen a 15 per cent increase in accidental contact with Queensland's high voltage network statewide. Tragically, last week a tree lopper died after accidentally contacting with powerlines in The Gap. Just three days later a sign-writer nearly lost his life when equipment he was operating touched the power network in West End in Brisbane. In regional Queensland this year, two farm workers have been electrocuted as well as a pilot dying from injuries sustained when his helicopter crashed into powerlines on a farm. These deaths have all been workplace related.

In the past year there have been more than 500 workplace related incidents of accidental network contacts including everything from cranes, farming machinery and high loads contacting powerlines to excavators and other earthmoving equipment digging up cables. Fortunately, not all of these ended in a fatality. However, some Queenslanders are still bearing the physical and mental scars while the rest are very fortunate to be alive.

While Look Up and Live is a strong message that we are trying to convey to the public, there are very real electrical dangers below that can be just as deadly. There have been more than 40 incidents of people digging through high voltage underground cables in South-East Queensland in the last 12 months. If you are digging around a yard or footpath there could very well be cables carrying more than 110,000 volts just below the surface. Dial Before You Dig, on 1100, is a free service giving detailed locations of underground services in the area a person is about to work in.

Energex and Ergon are currently working together to produce new safety education advertising, urging community caution around Queensland's power network. In regional Queensland Ergon will have their popular Grim Llama highlighting these dangers. In South-East Queensland, Energex will be warning the community of similar risks. I certainly endorse the Grim Llama campaign. It is a very clever and effective campaign.

Later this week I will be launching the state's largest ever electrical safety educational program aimed at primary school aged children in which 94 per cent of Queensland's schools are participating. The advertisements and the upcoming student education program have simple but effective messages. Ultimately, it is up to every member of the community to heed these dangers and to be aware of the threat electricity can pose, particularly in the workplace, and how easily a life can be saved by being vigilant at work.