




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

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WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (4.13 pm): The relatives of people killed as a result of corporate failings are entitled to see justice done—people like Michael and Lee Garrels, whose son Jason, at just 20 years old, went to work, did his day's work and then stepped in a puddle with an electrical wire in it and never came home. He had worked at the site for just nine days. His father has lobbied hard for stronger laws ever since. This bill is for him and for every other Queenslander who has lost a loved one at work, for every Queenslander who kisses a family member goodbye in the morning and wants to be sure they will return safe that night. It will show that we are prepared to hold to account those who are negligent or indifferent to workplace health and safety practices.

The bill also aims to establish a new basis for liability and it introduces the offence of industrial manslaughter into the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. So far, the ACT is the only Australian jurisdiction to have a specific industrial manslaughter offence. With this bill, Queensland will follow suit. Ultimately, these changes to the law are about ensuring there can be prosecutions where a serious criminal offence has occurred. We are talking about cases where there is such wilful disregard for employees or gross breaches in the duty of care that it results in death. Increasing the criminal accountability of companies, particularly in cases where there is a corporate culture that encourages, tolerates or leads to management failures, is a major change for the better.

We know from experience that the people who get put at risk by dodgy practices are the workers, not the company directors. Our proposed amendments will ensure greater safety for front-line workers in industries like retail, leisure services, transport and the public services—in other words, those people who work to help others and who have a duty of care to all of us, the public, whilst they perform their duties.

Legislation to correct injustice at work is not just a political point of difference with the LNP; it is a choice we on this side of the House proudly make. Every time the LNP oppose sensible reforms—whether it is labour hire licensing or industrial manslaughter—they come in here and they blame it on the unions, but this is not about unions; it is about improving the lives of hardworking Queenslanders and ensuring proper workplace protections are in place. This is not something to shy away from; it is something that is long overdue. It is about time the LNP stopped playing politics on this issue when people's lives are at stake. All workers deserve to return home safely to their loved ones at the end of a day's work. We owe it to the people who have lost their lives at work and their families to ensure Queensland has strong industrial manslaughter laws to protect people on the job. That is why I am supporting this bill today.