




Speech By
Colin Boyce

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Record of Proceedings, 4 September 2018

PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE BILL

 **Mr BOYCE** (Callide—LNP) (4.57 pm): I rise today to make a contribution to the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2018. I take this opportunity to thank my fellow members and in particular Deb Jeffrey and her secretariat for their help and guidance. Whilst we have generally supported the passage of this bill, there are a number of issues that we have concerns about. We have submitted a statement of reservation in relation to the Plumbing and Drainage Bill and it covers several areas which I will expand on.

We believe that the refrigeration and air-conditioning, RAC, industry should have a separate occupational licence. It was noted in submissions that the Australian Refrigeration Mechanics Association expressed strong views on the consultation process with the HVAC&R industry on the new mechanical services occupational licence. The deliberate exclusion of consultation with the heating, ventilation, air-conditioning and refrigeration industries people and a total disregard of a specialist field is indicative of the plumbing industry's attempt to take ownership of the HVAC&R industry through the union controlled plumbing industry. The Australian Refrigeration Association, the ARA, stated that the bill fails to provide the appropriate legislation to protect the HVAC&R industry and consumers with regulations and appropriate trade licences.

It is most important that industry qualifications are uniform across-the-board. Whilst this extends outside the scope of the bill, it is very important that it be recognised that, for example, plumbers, drainers and electricians who wish to be qualified to carry out the work of the refrigeration industry complete the same qualification course. The proverbial two-day course is not adequate, as the installation and maintenance of refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment by inexperienced and unqualified people has the potential to seriously maim and/or be lethal.

I have had many years of practical experience servicing and maintaining air-conditioning systems in my own fleet of vehicles and heavy machinery, including trucks, tractors and earth-moving equipment. I have become acutely aware of what can happen when dealing with air-conditioning gases under pressure. Automotive air conditioning differs greatly from air-conditioning systems used in houses and buildings; however, the basic principles to make them work are very similar. I cannot argue strongly enough that people who are servicing and/or installing those systems are properly trained and know intimately what they are doing, otherwise the consequences can be catastrophic and/or lethal. That is why it is most important that consultation between the department and the industry ensures agreement across the industry as to the suitability of training outcomes and requirements.

As stated in our statement of reservation, we would like the minister to confirm that with the fitting of gas connections it be mandatory for installers to certify connections. We do not want a repeat of what we saw in one hospital, where lives were lost and damage suffered because the wrong medical gas was administered through what was supposed to be the correct outlet.

The Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2018 addresses the need for the prohibition of WaterMark products by regulation. This relates to products that are considered to be unsuitable or unsafe despite their WaterMark certification, thus removing the likelihood of inferior products being installed by relevant industry qualified people. In this way, the consumer will not suffer the consequences of having inferior plumbing products, in particular, installed in their homes and businesses.

In our statement of reservation we referred to the need for flexibility for local authorities, particularly in rural Queensland, with regard to the testing regime for greywater coming out of septic tanks. In rural Queensland, many residences and businesses are unsewered in local government areas. Practical outcomes would be achieved if local government authorities, particularly in rural and remote Queensland, had some flexibility as to how the monitoring of greywater under the act is applied. This is part of our statement of reservation and has relevance to clause 154(2), which provides a non-exhaustive list of matters about which a guideline can be issued and, in particular, how the local governments are to administer the act.

Finally, I comment on the amendments that have been tabled here today. As the member for Hervey Bay has pointed out, they are quite extensive and I do not believe we have had adequate time to consider these things. The bill was introduced on 15 February. The committee report was tabled on 9 April. It is now September. That highlights the fact that the House is not getting through its business. I make that point.