




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR HILL**

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Record of Proceedings, 5 September 2018

### **PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (11.28 am): The key objectives of the Plumbing and Drainage Bill are outlined in the explanatory notes, which state—

Establish a contemporary, streamlined and flexible legislative framework for plumbing and drainage that is clear and simple for the end user, will ensure both public health and the environment are protected, and will meet industry and community expectations over the next decade.

I welcome the changes in the bill to increase the number of minimum penalty units from 165 to 250 for unlicensed or underlicensed operators. However, the experience of many commercial plumbers is not just that the penalties are not strong enough to act as a deterrent; a major issue is that unlicensed operators are simply not policed adequately. This results in higher costs for those who are doing the right thing to help prop up the QBCC while individuals continue to operate free of the administrative requirements or cost of maintaining the appropriate licences.

Particularly concerning is the amendment relating to contractors with plumbing and drainage licences who did not hold an occupational licence on or after 10 November 2014. While I support the move to ensure contractors who acted in good faith are not prosecuted because the LNP did not legislate its commitment, I think the amendment has not gone far enough to streamline the licensing requirements for certain contractors and plumbing licensees to hold an occupational licence. Considering the government's commitment to rectify this issue and get rid of the requirement for occupational licences for some operators, I feel that the amendments in their current form are just a cop-out. The financial and administrative cost of multiple licences for essentially the same thing is crippling small business plumbers, who are already competing against unlicensed and unpoliced operators.

If the intention of retaining occupational licences is to fund the regulatory body, I believe that the government should look at getting the QBCC to do its job and draw its funding from penalties imposed on those doing the wrong thing, rather than impose costs on those trying to do the right thing. Increasing the penalties for unlicensed work means nothing if there is no will to enforce those penalties. This move to retain occupational licence requirements on the grounds that those licence fees fund the regulatory body confirms the industry's fears that there is no real intention to improve enforcement of those increased penalties. I ask the minister to provide a time line for the removal of the occupational licence requirements for some operators so that the small local operators that are doing the right thing do not have to pay for the QBCC's failure to prosecute those who are not compliant.

I welcome the changes regarding project bank accounts and greater protections for subcontractors. Too often it is the local businesses that secure work on a major project that are left carrying all the risk, while large out-of-town companies that are able to secure big contracts walk away, leaving small operators trying to figure out how they are going to pay their workers. The flow-on effect, particularly to rural and regional communities, is enormous. I particularly support changes that will hold head contractors accountable for paying accounts to subcontractors by the due date.