




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 21 March 2024

WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (4.01 pm): A union is a group of workers. A union is made up of workers. From the way unions have been spoken about by those opposite you would think they were aliens. They are the people who serve you in the shops. They are people you will see at hospitals and in your schools. They are everyday men and women from our communities. They are the kids with the part-time jobs. They are not evil and they are not corrupt; they are just workers of Queensland.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Member for Coomera, you need to be in your seat when you interject.

Mrs GILBERT: Ensuring Queensland workers are protected by robust and contemporary work health and safety laws is really important to this side of the House. It is front and centre for this Miles Labor government. The Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023 continues our long record of strengthening workplace health and safety laws in Queensland. We are leading the nation in doing so. We have the best laws in the country. This bill builds on the reforms that we started in 2017.

I would like to take a moment to extend my condolences to anyone who has lost a family member, a friend, a work colleague or a community member to a workplace accident. The loss is devastating and long-lasting, as we heard from the member for Greenslopes. Too many times in my region we have felt the impact of workplace injury or death making headlines in our local news. This is something we should not hear about. It is not just close associates of the people involved in the accident who are touched; it is the whole community that feels the pain. When a person comes to work in our community they become one of us. We feel their pain, we feel their loss and we remember them.

I was appalled by the behaviour of the member for Callide when the member for Greenslopes was referring to his uncle Alan, who was killed in a workplace accident. He upped his yelling. He upped his interjections. I was appalled by his behaviour. It has always been unspoken in this House that when a member—and it does not matter from which side of the House—is talking about the loss of a loved one we give them respect to be able to do so. The lack of empathy—whether it is his immaturity or he is just straight out rude—

Mr Bleijie: The member for Callide wasn't yelling at that stage. It was the member on his feet yelling.

Mrs GILBERT: The member for Kawana is probably supporting him when it comes to the member for Callide's lack of empathy when the member for Greenslopes was referring to his uncle Alan. That is for them to sort out.

We have some really heavy industries in my region—the mining and engineering industries and also the agricultural industry—where heavy machinery is used. There is no second chance when using big machinery. We need to make sure that we have safe work practices, and that is what this side of the House is doing. We make sure there are investigations. We want to know why accidents have happened and how we can stop them from happening again.

I know that it is the workers on work sites who are the best people to identify incidents at work. When we were investigating black lung disease, it was the workers who were able to come out and say, 'This is what is happening on our work site.' They are the ones saying that they were not allowed to speak up—that their jobs were at risk if they were to say what was unsafe in their workplace. It makes sense that we have workplace representatives who are out there making sure that their colleagues are safe, that they are able to speak up and that everybody on that work site is safe.

We are here to support workers. Just recently I went to a Women in Manufacturing Breakfast on International Women's Day. Two young apprentices, Ainsley and Aisha, were praised by their supervisors because they had identified practices that were unsafe in their workplaces. Sadly, when it came to the discussion panel there were women in the audience who put up their hand to say that that is still not the case across workplaces in Queensland: they are afraid of losing their job if they identify something that is unsafe. I highly support this bill. It is something that the workers of Queensland need.