




Speech By
Joan Pease

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

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QUEENSLAND BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION COMMISSION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (5.44 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Queensland Building and Construction Commission and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. At the outset, the Queensland opposition supports the modernisation and digitisation of the QBCC. Of course, this work began under the former Labor government. We wanted a system that was faster, simpler and more accessible for builders and consumers and capable of operating in a modern digital environment. The move towards digital licences, electronic service of documents and improved online interaction with the QBCC is sound policy and I acknowledge that much of this work was initiated under Labor and is simply a rebranding by the Crisafulli government. However, this bill does far more than digitise licences and it is in those deeper changes, specifically the amendments to section 54A dealing with the reporting of serious safety incidents, where the opposition must sound a clear warning.

In 2012 a young man named Jason Garrels went off to work. He turned up to what should have been an ordinary day's work. It was his sixth day on the job. He was enthusiastic, hopeful and doing everything he could to build a future for himself. Instead, he died in an utterly preventable workplace incident, an incident that exposed catastrophic failures in communication between regulators and gaps in safety awareness onsite. Jason's father, Michael, has spent more than a decade channelling his grief into advocacy. I cannot imagine the pain that he and his family have gone through. He told the committee that removing legislated dual reporting creates real danger. His words were powerful and sobering at the committee hearing in July 2025—

... the MOU could be torn up at any time. It should be a legislative link... By undoing this and just having an MOU I think it is going to be a flawed system.

It was Jason's death and the failures identified by the coroner that led the former Labor government in 2017 to introduce dual notification. That safeguard ensures the QBCC receives direct statutory notification of serious safety incidents—not second-hand information, not delayed information and not information dependent on administrative goodwill. The government seeks to remove this safeguard on the basis that administrative arrangements and an MOU between QBCC and the Office of Industrial Relations will be 'sufficient'.

The facts before the committee told a different story. Over the past five years the QBCC has acted on more than 900 safety notifications. They have issued 26 show cause notices and five licences were cancelled as a direct result of those notifications. These are not theoretical numbers. These were unsafe worksites and these are workers' lives that are being put at risk. These regulatory interventions only occurred because the QBCC received direct legislative notice, not because someone relied on an email or a flag or a promise in an MOU. This government's argument that dual reporting is an administrative burden rings hollow. I wonder how Jason's father, Michael, feels about that. The cost to a licensee is just a few minutes. The cost of getting this wrong is a life.

This bill removes the legislated obligation and replaces it with trust, hope and an administrative agreement that is not enforceable, it can be changed at any time, it will not be regularly reviewed and relies entirely on the cooperation of whichever government happens to be in office. I am so pleased to hear that you are still awake, member for Mermaid Beach.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Marr): Member for Lytton, that was uncalled for. If you could continue please.

Mr RYAN: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. There was definitely an interjection from that corner, from a member not in their seat. I ask you to make a ruling accordingly.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Morayfield, I heard the conversation over there and it was not directed at the member for Lytton. I have made my call.

Ms PEASE: It relies entirely on the cooperation of whichever government happens to be in office. The opposition does not oppose digitisation. We oppose the dismantling of proven safety protections, especially when those protections were put in place after a young man died on his sixth day at work. The current Crisafulli government is choosing convenience over safety and if—or when—information sharing breaks down then responsibility for the consequences will rest solely and squarely with this government, not with the worker who pays the price.

Turning to the digital components of the bill, the opposition supports digitisation measures including the removal of mandatory physical licence cards, enabling digital licences through the Queensland Digital Licence app, digital communication pathways and updated requirements for licensees. However, we stress the importance of ensuring physical licences remain available, especially for workers in high-security or mobile restricted environments, as was raised by industry stakeholders during the committee process.

In conclusion, Labor supports modernising the QBCC. For the very reasons that we have heard the member for Glass House talking about, it is a really important piece of work that is going on. We support digital licensing. We support improved customer service because that is what we all want. However, we will never support removing a legislative safeguard that existed for one reason only: to prevent another tragedy like the death of Jason Garrels. This bill asks the parliament to trade away a proven safety mechanism for an administrative convenience. The opposition will not support clause 26. We will continue to fight for a safety framework worthy of Queensland workers because every worker deserves to come home at the end of the day, whether it is on their sixth day on the job or their 6,000th.