




Speech By  
**Peter Russo**  
**MEMBER FOR TOOHEY**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 May 2025

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Workplace Health and Safety

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (2.50 pm): Today I rise to speak about an issue that should be above politics: the health, safety and dignity of every worker in Queensland. Workplace health and safety is not just a bureaucratic phrase. It is about ensuring that every worker—whether they are on a construction site or in a hospital, school, cafe or retail store—gets home safely at the end of the day and they also deserve a safe place of work that is free from sexual harassment.

In my address-in-reply speech, I expressed concern that this government was operating not from a position of principled integrity but from one of perceived political expediency. Sadly, those concerns have now been realised. The changes this government has made to the Work Health and Safety Act, along with the decision to halt the Respect at Work and Other Matters Amendment Act, are deeply troubling. Let us be clear: the amendments to the Work Health and Safety Act have stripped away essential protections. These changes put lives at risk. They weaken the safeguards that protect workers in dangerous situations. This is not just about unions; it is about our nurses, our teachers, our firefighters, our hospitality workers, our retail staff, our factory workers and every person who relies on the law to ensure they are safe at work. These changes wind back the clock on worker protections by a decade.

The Respect at Work and Other Matters Amendment Act was meant to protect women in the workplace and finally implement the recommendations of the *Respect@Work* report, which was handed down in 2020. It was aimed at prohibiting sexual-based harassment, making it unlawful to create a hostile work environment and imposing a positive duty on employers to eliminate harassment, discrimination and victimisation. Instead of showing leadership and delivering safety and respect for women, this government has halted progress. Their excuse? That the commencement date does not allow enough time for consultation. Really? The *Respect@Work* report has been in the public domain for four years. How much more time do they need?

Let us be honest: sexual harassment has not gone away. It is still happening and women are still suffering because of it. So I ask: who benefits from this delay? Certainly not the women being harassed in their workplaces. This is not leadership. This is cowardice. This is political calculation at the expense of people's safety.

*(Time expired)*