




Speech By
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**QUEENSLAND BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION COMMISSION AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

Second Reading

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (12.37 pm): I rise today to speak on the Queensland Building and Construction Commission and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. It is a bill that our committee, the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee, inquired into. At the outset I would like to thank the committee for our work. We did not agree on everything, but we did a lot of work on this and it is appreciated.

While I take issue with the first line of the minister's press release about the bill, which refers to improving safety in the building and construction industry—and I will come back to that—I do support modernising the licensing system for tradies to remove barriers for the QBCC and Queensland tradespeople to utilise digital technology platforms. For those who did not know, I am a licensed electrician, so I know how convenient it will be for us electricians and other tradies to access QBCC licences and other related documents on our phones, just like it is convenient for Queenslanders to access their driver's licence digitally—an initiative Labor introduced to this state. Of course, I am very happy to see the LNP handing in Labor's homework again on these progressive reforms—reforms we did the groundwork for when we were in government. It is good to see it happening.

The QBCC has a big job, especially in these times of unprecedented growth across our state. It oversees the licensing frameworks for building, plumbing and drainage trades, contractors, building certifiers, pool safety inspectors and some fire safety work, along with other functions including dispute resolution and the Queensland Home Warranty Scheme. I want to pause here to say how disappointing it is when we hear stories from constituents who have had faulty work done and tried to do the right thing by allowing the contractor time to rectify, only to find that they have gone out of business and the home owner has missed the deadline to make a claim. I look forward to seeing whether recent changes in communication by the QBCC with customers who are covered by the scheme will help those home owners better understand their rights and the timeframes that apply in accessing this insurance.

I will now move on to the parts of the bill that deal with safety notifications, and I am all for cutting red tape—except when we could be risking lives. That is why the Labor members in our parliamentary committee expressed grave concern in our statement of reservation about reducing a legal requirement for QBCC licensees to notify both the QBCC and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland or the Electrical Safety Office, in some cases, about serious notifiable safety incidents.

Reducing this legal requirement to a memorandum of understanding so that agencies will just talk to each other will not make workplaces safer. I am sure all of us have heard stories from our electorates about cases where government departments should have talked to each other but did not, leading to poor outcomes for our constituents. The minister went on about paperwork duplication and that this is cutting that down, but to me the department could not satisfactorily answer why it cannot just be an email—sending a copied email, pushing one button. I really think it is that simple. We are rightly

worried that these safety processes will be weakened by this change—a change that does remove the statutory reporting obligation with offences punishable under the law. The fact that the result will be a weaker regulatory environment is a worry.

This view was also expressed to the committee during our inquiry by Michael Garrels, the father of Jason Garrels, who devastatingly lost his life in a work incident in Clermont in 2012. Jason was only 20 years old. I just want to tell a little bit of Jason's story because it led to the then Labor government that I was proud to be part of bringing in the dual notification safeguard in 2017. Jason took a job on a townhouse construction site working for a builder as a labourer. There had been a lot of rain on the site. Jason trusted his boss to fix it all up after an inspector from Workplace Health and Safety Queensland had visited the site just 13 days earlier and issued the builder with urgent improvement notices. This inspection was in response to an anonymous complaint about safety concerns on the site.

On the day Jason was electrocuted, the ambulance vehicle—a four-wheel drive built for the country—could only get to within 100 metres of him because of the poor state of the worksite. Paramedics found it impossible to transport their equipment to Jason, causing further delays in potentially life-saving treatment, and the site workers had to push the ambulance out of the mud as it left.

The QBCC was not notified until months later—that is the issue; the reporting needs to be quick—which meant it could not take any immediate action such as suspending the contractor's licence. Frighteningly, a safety audit conducted on the Clermont site before power was switched back on found numerous examples of life-threatening faulty work, so it is upsetting when the LNP refers to a reduction in reporting requirements as streamlining because I reckon the possibility of saving a life is worth the few extra minutes burden of sending two notices or emails in case of a serious workplace safety incident.

As we know, in the past five years the QBCC has acted on over 900 safety notifications, with 26 show cause notices issued and five licences cancelled due to serious safety breaches. This proves that incident notifications directly lead to disciplinary action. This government has form in combining good reform—often those it has copied from Labor—with policy that just does not pass the pub test. In this case I fully support the efficiencies and increased responsiveness we will gain in transforming the experience of Queenslanders who interact with the QBCC with digital options. I do not support making workplace health and safety weaker. Every year on 28 April Workers' Memorial Day is held in Brisbane. I go along and talk to the families and listen to their stories. I hope that we do not hear of another death next year for the sake of sending another email.