




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH WEST

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

Second Reading

 **Ms BOURNE** (Ipswich West—ALP) (5.30 pm): I rise to speak on the Queensland Building and Construction Commission and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. At its core, this bill seeks to modernise licensing frameworks across Queensland's building and construction industry. One key reform is the removal of mandatory physical licence cards making way for digital licences accessed through the Queensland Digital Licence app. Let me be clear: this is not a novel idea from the LNP. In fact, this is a reform that was already well underway under the former Labor government. Labor initiated this digital transformation, Labor built this infrastructure and Labor set the vision for a more streamlined, accessible licensing system that works for both licensees and the public. The LNP is simply continuing the groundwork laid by the previous Labor government when it comes to digital licensing.

Since the statewide launch of the Queensland Digital Licence app in November 2023, over one million Queenslanders have taken up digital licensing. This is a tremendous milestone and it is proof that our state is ready to embrace digital reform when done properly. We support digitisation where it improves efficiency, transparency and ease of access for licence holders and consumers alike, we support it when it streamlines compliance processes and we support it when it makes government services more accessible, not less. That said, digitisation must be inclusive. It must consider those who, for various reasons, may not have reliable access to smartphones, stable internet or the technological literacy to navigate digital platforms confidently.

During the committee's inquiry into this bill, the Plumbing and Pipe Trades Employees Union raised a legitimate concern. They highlighted that a significant number of licence holders in Queensland may be disadvantaged if we shift exclusively to digital formats without providing adequate support and alternatives. They acknowledge that the bill does not mandate digital-only licensing and simply enabled digital formats to be used but warned this flexibility must be retained in implementation. The union stated that physical licences should remain available as an option because no-one in their industry should be excluded or penalised because they prefer or need a physical licence.

The committee also heard from the Fire Protection Association Australia, which supported the move towards digital delivery in principle but strongly recommended maintaining the option for physical licences. The association provided examples from the field. In correctional centres, in certain hospital settings and anywhere mobile phone use is prohibited, licensees may be unable to produce a digital licence when asked. These are not hypothetical scenarios; they are real-world operational constraints that must be considered. Their feedback was constructive: provide flexibility, ensure certainty around photo update requirements and consult closely with industry before implementing any major shift. This is common sense and I urge the government to listen.

While we broadly support the move towards digital licensing, we must draw a very firm line in the sand when it comes to clause 26 of this bill. Clause 26 proposes to amend section 54A of the Queensland Building and Construction Commission Act 1991. This amendment removes the legislative requirement for licensees to notify both the QBCC and the Office of Industrial Relations of a serious safety incident. Instead it requires notification to the Office of Industrial Relations only, with information then expected to be passed on to the QBCC. This may seem like a harmless administrative change, but we on this side of the House know what is really at stake.

This dual notification requirement was introduced in 2017 for a very specific, very serious reason—after the tragic death of Jason Garrels, a young man just 20 years old who died on a construction site in Clermont. I offer my sincere condolences to Jason's dad. That tragedy led to a comprehensive review of safety reporting procedures. The outcome was dual notification—a safeguard, a fail-safe to ensure the QBCC had direct access to serious incident reports, because we knew that relying on interagency information sharing alone posed a risk. What has that system delivered? In the past five years, the QBCC has received and acted on more than 900 safety notifications. Of those, 26 show cause notices were issued and five licences were cancelled due to serious safety breaches. That is not bureaucracy; that is life-saving oversight. That is regulatory action that protects lives.

To remove this requirement now on the assumption that agencies will share information is to weaken a system that is demonstrably working. If information fails to flow, if another tragedy occurs due to a missed report, it will be this government that bears responsibility. The opposition believe that safety in the Queensland construction industry should be strengthened, not watered down for administrative convenience.

In conclusion, while there are positive elements in this bill, particularly those initiated under Labor, there are also areas of grave concern and risk. We support the continued rollout of digital licensing—a vision set in motion under the former Labor government—but warn about weakening safety oversight and about removing the protections put in place after preventable tragedies.