




Speech By
Adam Baillie

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 24 March 2026

ELECTRICAL SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BAILLIE** (Townsville—LNP) (4.43 pm): I rise to make a modest contribution to the Electrical Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 and to speak in support of this bill. I note that the previous speaker, the member for Bundamba, wanted to hear more about the electrical safety aspects of the bill and I do not want to disappoint him. I will provide a very comprehensive, electrical-heavy contribution for his benefit, and I will start right at the beginning.

Before being elected to represent the wonderful electorate of Townsville I was an electrical contractor, and for years I helped residents and businesses with a resource that we use every single day: electricity.

Mr Crandon: Do you have an engineering degree?

Mr BAILLIE: I will take the interjection; I have a mechanical engineering degree and I am also an electrician.

Electricity powers our homes, our businesses, our places of work—including this place—our hospitals and our schools. It keeps our communities running. In my experience, it is only once we do not have electricity available that we truly appreciate how much it contributes to our everyday lives. At home we rely on the air conditioner during the hotter months, the hot-water system during the cooler months, the light we search for in the middle of the night, the fridge and freezer that store our food or the oven that cooks our family dinners. We rely on electricity for so many aspects at home. Then we leave home to go to work and we expect traffic lights to operate and manage traffic flow, computers to turn on so we can access emails and files, and cash registers to operate to enable transactions. Electricity allows us to keep our hospitals and operating theatres running and enables our kids at school to learn, connect and prepare for their future. It keeps our big industry moving to advance our economy and it powers the pumps that keep water pressure in the mains so we have water when we turn on the tap. Electricity is vital to maintaining today's way of life to which we have all become so accustomed.

Electricity is something that many of us take for granted until it is not available. I have been on the receiving end of calls when residents and businesses lose electricity supply and contact me directly to advise they have no power. It might be to one appliance or the entire premise, but I can share from experience that getting power supply restored quickly becomes their highest priority. It is worth noting that often when there is a loss of power supply to a premise or an appliance it is due to safety. The first thing an electrician does when there is a report of loss of power is to check the switchboard.

Circuit breakers and RCBOs are safety devices installed to protect people from unsafe conditions. If there are switches tripped, that is usually a good indication that there is a fault in the circuit and that if power were supplied it would be unsafe; however, installation of these switches alone does not provide full protection. One of the limitations of these switches is that, by the very nature by which they work, they only activate when conditions are met that demonstrate the unsafe condition and power is detected flowing to earth through an unintended conductor or in a magnitude the system is not designed for. An example is when a hot-water element is blown and power is conducted initially via

water and then subsequently via water pipes to earth. The circuit protection will activate and stop power supply to the hot-water system. However, safety devices do not detect a damaged cable with a rat chew or a damaged power outlet unless there is a means to conduct to earth or via another conductor. In these circumstances electricity will wait—invisible and silent—for an opportunity to strike. If you are unfortunate enough to touch an exposed live component, you can become the conductor and, depending on how that circuit is protected, put your safety at serious risk.

That is why this bill is so important. Electricians and linesmen who work in the industry are aware of these risks. We can recognise those risks through a visual assessment as well as practical and physical tests. When on site we can recognise serious safety risks before those conditions are met and can take steps to avoid an incident before injury occurs. This bill will clarify that those best placed to make safety assessments and identify potential issues can do so.

Currently the Electrical Safety Regulation 2013 provides that an electrical safety inspector or an electricity entity can give a written notice to a person in control of electrical equipment requiring them to fix any defect affecting the equipment's electrical safety. This situation may arise when an electrical entity, usually a distributor such as Ergon, attends a property while undertaking their duties to inspect an electrical installation and subsequently observes a defective electrical component.

Entities such as Ergon are not resourced nor suited to address all of the issues that may be detected—for example, a damaged power point or an unsafe switchboard is not something that Ergon will be able to directly address—but they can issue a notice to a person in control of the equipment, who might be a home owner or a business owner, to fix the defect. The home owner or business owner would then be obligated to have the defect remedied by a qualified person, most likely an electrical contractor. I spoke to an electrical contractor recently. Ergon had issued a customer of theirs with a defect in the switchboard where the cable was running against the enclosure. Ergon identified that issue and in this instance the electrical contractor attended the issue, identified the exact location and was able to resolve that for the customer—in effect, keeping everyone safe.

It has been a longstanding practice for Queensland energy entities such as Ergon to alert consumers to issues with electrical equipment since the Electrical Safety Act first commenced in 2002. However, while the regulation-making power in the Electrical Safety Act provides the broad prescription powers for a person to discharge electrical safety duties or ensure the electrical safety of persons or property, it currently does not clearly provide a head of power for the electricity entities to give electrical equipment defect notices. To address this issue, this bill will amend the Electrical Safety Act and the Electrical Safety Regulation to maintain the longstanding practice of electricity entities giving these defect notices by including a clear and limited right to prescribe this ability under the Electrical Safety Regulation.

Master Electricians Australia backs this amendment, saying that confirming the ability for electricity entities to continue to give electrical equipment defect notices through clearly prescribed provisions within the regulation will continue to assist the ability of the Electrical Safety Office to keep Queenslanders safe. This bill is about keeping Queenslanders safe at home and at work. Master Electricians Australia has represented electrical contractors in Queensland for 88 years. Its membership is made up of small and medium businesses—and many of them. During their submission in the public hearing, representatives from Master Electricians advised they were pleased to see the necessary steps are being taken to ensure that the regulator's powers to prohibit the sale, installation and use of unsafe electrical equipment are appropriately conferred by the Electrical Safety Act. That is something that we will see more of as we continue to see developments in technology and new products released. Unfortunately a lot of these products are not produced in Australia to our safety standards. We have to be increasingly vigilant about the safety of electrical products being introduced into Australia prior to onsale and picking up that they may not meet our strict design and safety standards.

With regard to the workplace health and safety changes, representatives from Master Electricians said that these are an important step towards restoring proportionality, accountability and efficiency within workplace regulations. I am aware of the time so I will not be able to spend much more time talking about those workplace safety regulations, but they did advise in particular that Master Electricians Australia supports reforms that streamline information requests, prevent any potential misuse of regulatory powers and assure that workplace health and safety oversight remains targeted at genuine safety concerns. Representatives of Master Electricians Australia went on to share that they have seen a number of instances where sites were shut down for a very minor or a very isolated area of a piece of work happening, whereas that could have been sectioned off as more of a proportionate response to the safety incident that could have been raised. We are about productivity, but also about safety and we want to see everyone get home safe.