




Speech By
David Lee

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

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ELECTRICAL SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LEE** (Hervey Bay—LNP) (7.30 pm): I rise to speak to the Electrical Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. The Crisafulli government is restoring productivity and safety in the construction industry and that is critical in my electorate of Hervey Bay. Over the next decade in Hervey Bay we will see construction of high-rise buildings, an expanded airport, lifestyle villages and enormous development in residential housing. We desperately need trades to build our splendid Fraser Coast region.

Last week I presented awards to apprentice graduates from the Hervey Bay TAFE campus, including Young Apprentice of the Year, electrician Tayla Axelsen. The Crisafulli government is unapologetically prioritising the safety and wellbeing of young Tayla, electricians and other tradies over Labor's dubious CFMEU trade union affiliations. Member for Bulimba: every worker has the right to be safe at work free from CFMEU intimidation—tick!

Jarrold Bleijie, Deputy Premier, Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning and Minister for Industrial Relations, in his introductory speech said—

While those opposite were more interested in running a protection racket for the CFMEU, this government backs Queenslanders and focuses on workers' safety and not militancy, intimidation, misogyny, bullying, harassment and violence.

The Queensland Productivity Commission's report *Opportunities to improve productivity of the construction industry* exposed Labor's so-called best practice industry conditions as a deception. It turns out that BPIC was an unmitigated sham. The QPC report relevantly states—

No evidence was provided to the Commission to suggest BPICs have improved WHS outcomes across the Queensland construction industry or that BPICs sites have better safety outcomes than non-BPICs sites.

The report goes on to state—

Further, most of the workplace health and safety obligations in BPICs are either covered in legislation, codes of practice or relevant awards.

The final report concluded that BPICs could cost Queenslanders higher project costs—up 25 per cent; delayed access to infrastructure; higher taxes—up to \$20.6 billion; less housing—77,000 fewer homes; higher rents—up 8.3 per cent; and lower investor confidence.

This bill will amend the Electrical Safety Act 2002, the Electrical Safety Regulation 2013, the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024. The legislated purpose of the Electrical Safety Act is to eliminate the human cost to individuals, families and the community of death, injury and damage that can be caused by electricity. Clause 4 of the bill introduces a new section 122D for unsafe equipment directions and provides a robust and contemporary regulatory framework to empower the regulator in giving directions about unsafe equipment. Section 122D currently exists in section 192 of the Electrical Safety Regulation and this will be repealed under clause 9 of the bill.

The offences for noncompliance under the new section remain the same as those in section 192 of the Electrical Safety Regulation. The offence and associated penalties for noncompliance require a reverse onus of proof—a reasonable excuse—for failing to comply with an unsafe equipment direction. Furthermore, the amendments provide clarity and certainty in relation to the existing application to allow the regulator to prohibit the sale, installation or use of an item of electrical equipment or a type of electrical equipment if it is unsafe. It sets out the grounds for the regulator to give an unsafe equipment direction and other matters the regulator may consider in doing so. It specifies that a set period of more than 10 years applies. It ensures procedural fairness for a person to seek an external review of the regulator's decision through QCAT. It requires the regulator to publish a copy of each unsafe equipment direction and a notice with sufficient information for a person to apply for a QCAT review on the department's website. Finally, it requires a copy of the directions and information notice be given to the person selling the unsafe equipment.

This bill confirms that the regulator cannot delegate its power to give an unsafe direction. The Work Health and Safety Act provides a balanced and nationally consistent framework to secure the health, safety and welfare of all workers at work and all other people who might be affected by the work. The WHS Act provides for voluntary health and safety representatives to assist workers and represent the health and safety interests of workers. WHS entry permit holders, union officials who hold a valid WHS permit, also have a role in facilitating a safe and healthy workplace.

The WHS Act provides for health and safety representatives and WHS permit holders to access and receive certain information, including but not limited to requesting to inspect and make copies of any document directly relevant to a suspected contravention they are investigating pursuant to section 118(1)(d) of the act. Access to certain information ensures that consultation between their representatives and a person conducting a business or an undertaking are relevantly informed about health and safety issues at a workplace. Additionally, section 210 of the act requires that a person who is issued with an improvement, prohibition or non-disturbance notice must, as soon as practicable, display a copy of the notice in a prominent area within the workplace.

On this side of the House we are mindful of Labor's obsession with imposing regulatory and administrative burdens. A good example is clause 52 of the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024. Clause 12 of this bill omits clause 52 of the WHS and Other Legislation Amendment Act which, according to a postponement regulation in 2025, postpones the commencement of section 155A until 29 March 2026. Predictably, Labor's botched section 155A placed no limitations on the types of requests to the regulator for information contained in improvement, prohibition and non-disturbance notices. No such provision is said to exist in any other state or territory. This provision could have imposed a colossal regulatory and administrative burden on the regulator to laboriously check requests to ensure that there was no personal information or commercial-in-confidence information unintentionally released in breach of section 271 of the act. The Crisafulli government is repealing this oppressive provision that would otherwise mire the regulator in red tape perpetuated by the CFMEU.

I now turn briefly to the amendment in relation to the James Cook University Act 1997. The amendment is directed at improving university governance and accountability. This amendment will provide for a prescribed membership to improve transparency and public confidence in the JCU membership structure. This bill is a crucial test for the Labor opposition: do they back Queenslanders or will they continue to champion CFMEU militancy? If it is the latter they have not learnt a thing. Queenslanders cannot risk returning to the bad old days of Labor's enabling of CFMEU intimidation, misogyny, bullying, harassment and violence.

In closing, the Crisafulli government is calmly and methodically restoring safety and productivity to the construction industry. It is a fresh start for Hervey Bay and a refreshing change for the Fraser Coast construction industry. The Crisafulli government is closing a dark chapter in the construction industry by swiftly and decisively repealing Labor's botched section 155A. The Crisafulli government will continue to methodically and forensically expose the Labor opposition's blatant and shameful hypocrisy in underwriting systemic CFMEU misogyny, bullying, intimidation and harassment in the workplace. I commend the bill to the House.