




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAIWAR

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ELECTRICAL SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (5.08 pm): I rise to give my contribution on the Electrical Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I will keep my contribution relatively brief and confine it essentially to the repeal of proposed section 155A of the Work Health and Safety Act that was legislated during the last session of parliament in the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Act. On commencement, this provision would have provided a means for health and safety officers and union representatives at a workplace to request copies of relevant documents for that workplace from the regulator rather than relying on disclosure by the workplace itself. The notices that would have been available on commencement include improvement notices about contraventions of the act, prohibition notices about activities that are occurring or may occur at the workplace and non-disturbance notices relating to a worksite.

The access to this information, both in terms of the information itself and by whom, would have been limited under proposed section 155A. To illustrate, only representatives of the workplace or the relevant union could access the information and it would not include any personal information or confidential commercial information.

In the predictable or, dare I say, inevitable circumstance where a workplace shirks its obligations to give copies of these notices to health and safety reps, it seems to me just sensible to ensure there is a mechanism for representatives to obtain copies directly from the regulator. This safeguards the ability for health and safety reps to assess risks to the workers they represent and ensures the regulator serves the interests of the workers, rather than just employers.

Some have raised concerns throughout the process that this power would entitle workers' reps to information from historical notices, and not just in respect of more immediate safety risks, but I would suggest that health and safety reps should in fact be able to access current and historical information. This is how they might identify patterns and trends in a workplace and holistically respond to safety concerns raised by workers.

It is news to no-one that the LNP will always prioritise the profits of its corporate donors over the safety and welfare of workers. Their words and actions make that perfectly clear at every opportunity. In fact, that may even be the one instance in which I am prepared to offer them credit for their transparency. Yet, the minister spent the vast majority of the introductory speech insisting that blue is yellow, feigning concern and care about worker safety. However, they undermine their own confected concern when they gleefully gloat about how they have repealed laws that would have given workplace health and safety permit holders a right of entry without requiring 24 hours notice and prevented the commencement of laws that would have ensured that reps could take photos, videos, measurements and conduct tests at workplaces. No matter how this LNP government tries to gild this particular lily—we will put it that way—stripping health and safety reps' powers to gather information about risks and respond immediately is, as a matter of fact, bad for workers. The interests of workplace health and safety representatives are just as their job title suggests—their interest is the health and safety of workers, and that is not something that need be overcomplicated.

To put it bluntly, if proper protections and attention to the health and safety of workers results in financial loss for the bosses, or even goes so far as a failed business, then it is a business that should fail. We cannot afford to put corporate profits ahead of the safety of workers, and this government has a thing or two to learn about that.