




Speech By  
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**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH**

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### **ELECTRICAL SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (5.43 pm): I rise to support the Electrical Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This is an important bill because it goes directly to the safety of Queensland workers and the integrity of our workplace safety system.

In Toowoomba and across the south-west, I speak regularly to tradies, apprentices and small business owners—the people who form the backbone of our great state. They want safety to be real, they want safety to be practical and they want safety to be free from pressure, politics and intimidation. They are not asking for special treatment; they are asking for a fair system, they are asking for a regulator that can focus on real risks and they are asking for laws that protect workers without giving bad actors another tool to bully, disrupt and intimidate. Before I go into the detail, I want to talk about why this bill matters.

The bill is about restoring balance. After a decade of decline, where the balance was lost under Labor, the Crisafulli government is committed to restoring productivity and stamping out systemic misconduct, intimidation and bullying, particularly by the CFMEU. We are doing that while strengthening real safety outcomes. That matters to workers, it matters to employers and it matters to the communities that depend on safe, productive workplaces. The question for Labor is: are they on the side of Queenslanders and productivity or the CFMEU?

For too long everyday Queenslanders who run family businesses, who employ apprentices and who turn up every day and do the right thing have been pushed to the edge of the conversation. This bill puts them back at the centre of the system. I have met contractors in my electorate who do everything right. They invest in training, they keep their records and they fix hazards. They know that good safety practices protect workers and business, but they also tell me that confidence in the system breaks down when safety processes can be turned into industrial leverage. It breaks down when businesses believe that sensitive compliance material can be hauled out again and again—not to deal with a current risk but to create pressure and disruption. When trust breaks down, safety outcomes suffer, cooperation drops, engagement drops and people become more guarded and not more open. That is the exact opposite of a good safety culture.

Let me be very clear: safety should always be about safety—not about power, not about pressure, not about politics and certainly not about intimidation. This bill repeals Labor's information-sharing laws before they even begin. Let us be clear about what those laws would have done. They would have given unions such as the CFMEU direct access to compliance and enforcement information from the regulator—information that could then be used to harass and intimidate employees and workers. Under Labor's information-sharing laws, entry permit holders and health and safety representatives could request improvement notices, prohibition notices and non-disturbance notices issued to businesses. There were no real limits to the number of requests, no real limits on how often they could be made and no real limits on how far back they could go. That means decades of enforcement information could be pulled even where it had very little relevance to improving safety today. That is not a genuine safety

reform; it is a clear legislative overreach. It serves no useful purpose here in Queensland other than giving the CFMEU another tool to bully and intimidate employers and workers in the construction industry.

It would have imposed a significant administrative burden on the regulator. Instead of focusing on inspections, investigations and prevention, the regulator would have been dragged into processing open-ended requests, manually reviewing material and dealing with the consequences of a badly designed scheme. The bill fixes that. It removes that additional avenue before it can be misused. It restores proportionality, it restores focus and it restores integrity to the system. The regulator's role is to protect safety, not to facilitate campaigns of coercion, harassment and intimidation.

At the same time, this bill strengthens real electrical safety. It clarifies defect notice powers, it modernises unsafe electrical equipment directions and it strengthens enforcement where real risks exist. This is practical reform. It is targeted, it is professional and it is focused on outcomes, not slogans. Importantly, the committee made one clear recommendation: that the bill be passed. That is a very clear signal and it now presents a very clear test for those opposite.

Do they back Queensland workers and businesses, or do they continue to back and enable the CFMEU? If they choose the latter, it tells Queenslanders everything they need to know. It tells them that nothing has changed and it tells them that, if ever given the chance again, they would be back to the same bad old days. In Toowoomba and across South-West Queensland, safety is not abstract. It is personal, it is immediate and it matters. The bill strengthens safety, restores focus and protects the integrity of our system for workers, businesses and communities. Safety should be about safety.

While I am on my feet, I want to add that those same tradies, businesses and everyone else are currently finding it very difficult with the price of fuel. Queenslanders deserve price security. We are doing the work here in the state, but the federal government need to deliver a national plan on supply and price and they need to step up to the mark. I commend the bill to the House. I support all the tradies in Toowoomba and South-West Queensland.