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SUBJECT: (no subject found)

MEMBER: Mr KING

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (4.01 pm): I rise to speak on the Electrical Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, a bill that the parliamentary committee I am on, the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee, inquired into. I thank my fellow committee members as well as the member for McConnel for their work on our report. I thank the whole committee. I am sorry the chair did not thank the whole committee, but I thank the whole committee as well as the secretariat, Hansard and everyone else. We may walk down different sides of the road, but on parts of this bill we worked together well and shared the load, let me just put it that way.

I will start with those bits that we did work together on: the amendments to the Electrical Safety Act 2002 which include prescribing a clear power for the longstanding practice of electricity entities to issue defect notices when they discover electrical equipment faults on a property. This usually comes about when an electrical entity or distributor such as Energex or Ergon attends a property to inspect an electrical installation and notices a defect, for example a faulty earth, damaged switchboard or GPO. They then give notice to the person in control of the equipment that the defect must be fixed. Penalties apply if they fail to do so.

Similarly, the amendments in this bill move the power to issue and enforce unsafe equipment directions from the Electrical Safety Regulation into the Electrical Safety Act, clarifying the powers of the regulator as well as definitions and timelines. Unsafe equipment directions can prevent the sale or use of unsafe electrical equipment. I may not have ever mentioned it in this place, but I am a licensed electrician—

A government member: No! Really?

Mr KING: Lucky you are all sitting down—from the electricity supply industry. Keeping people safe is what we do, so I welcome amendments that help the regulator and our frontline workers do that.

What I do not welcome are the amendments to the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, and I will put on record the Labor opposition's concerns as expressed in the statement of reservation to the committee report that workplace health and safety will go backwards under this bill. Just like the QBCC Bill that was rushed through by the government at the end of last year took workplace health and safety laws backwards when the LNP reduced the legal requirement for QBCC licensees to notify both QBCC and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland—or the Electrical Safety Office in some cases—about serious notifiable safety incidents, instead they brought in a memorandum of understanding for government departments. As I said back then, if you spend enough time working with government processes you get to know that mistakes can happen, but back then a law was traded for an MOU.

This year the LNP says that more informal understandings are not enough for them. They want to bring in more formal legal requirements around the access of health and safety representatives to information concerning the workplace conditions of the workers they are elected to represent. Specifically, they want to wind back the ability for a health and safety representative or a workplace health and safety permit holder to seek information directly from the regulator after an improvement notice, prohibition notice or non-disturbance notice was issued—in other words, information about notices designed to save lives. The LNP think that is a burden on the regulator. Last year they wanted to give government departments and regulators more work. In this case it is too hard.

This is what I think the difference is. Last year when the LNP wanted to make something easier to save some red tape the beneficiaries were their business mates—maybe the ones they can take donations from now. This year the LNP wants to make life harder for health and safety reps, who often come from unions.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance in relation to the bill before the House. The member is clearly straying away from relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Martin): Minister, I am listening to the member on their feet. As far as I am concerned, the member is being relevant.

Mr KING: This is absolutely relevant. We are talking about burdens on the regulator. Here is what I think the difference is, just to repeat myself: they are probably the same ones they can take donations from. This year the LNP wants to make life harder for health and safety representatives, who often come from unions. We know that the union movement takes up so much space in the heads of the Premier and Deputy Premier. We have heard lots about unions today and we will probably hear much more. When I say 'unions', I mean the bodies that represent workers in this state, help them earn a fair wage and work safely so they can put food on the table and return home to their families in one piece.

In relation to this bill we heard from a lot of other representative bodies that represent businesses and business owners who resented workers being able to access information that could potentially save lives. These I would also call unions. Those opposite do not have a problem with them. They are the ones that support and may donate politically—just saying. We heard from Master Electricians, the Civil Contractors Federation and Master Builders. They are all great representative bodies, but they do not represent workers so they get away with things. They all thought it was a bad idea to allow workers to access that information and a burden to the regulator. Ironically, as has been said here before, no-one could tell us what burden would be imposed as this bill cuts legislation that was never enacted—it was before it came into effect—except when the Deputy Premier asked for the history of works at the Callide Power Station. We never got a satisfactory answer as to whether that was a burden or not. In fact, the chair tried to block the question. That was only time this has been requested and there was an attempt to have it ruled out as irrelevant—for goodness sake!

I will raise a hypothetical situation that I think would illustrate this. You have a new person in control of a business and they have taken over a site. You are working on the site, and the workplace health and safety rep hears from someone who used to be there that there may be some asbestos. They go to the person in control of the business, who does not have that information. The only way to get that information would be from the regulator, who has that historic information. The only way they would be able to get that after this bill passes—if it passes—is through an RTI. That is a real burden on a workplace health and safety rep. There is a cost burden and everything.

In my opinion, the amendments to the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 contained in this bill are part of the Crisafulli crusade against unions and blue-collar workers. This bill is another example of a government that pushes through poor policy which has not been consulted on. The committee process was the consultation for this. They do it unashamedly under the cover of continuing positive reforms that are initiated by Labor. They are counting on us copping the bad with the good once again with this bill as well as new amendments that have just been put in today that have nothing to do with this legislation. I do not support making workplace health and safety weaker. I will always call it out.