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Queensland government's decision will put worker's lives at risk – unions fearful it could happen nationally

ACTU condemns the Queensland government's proposed amendments to the Work Health and Safety Laws which will put worker's lives at risk and take the heat off employers who choose to cut corners on safety.

ACTU Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick said, "These proposed amendments will put all workers at risk, not just on construction sites but across many workplaces. It takes the pressure off employers to do the right thing and it makes it harder for unions to protect their members."

"Unions are fearful this type of dangerous thinking could spread to other states creating a lowering of health and safety standards in Australia."

Jarrod Bleijie Attorney-General and State Minister for Justice said he would be seeking the agreement of other states and territories to get on board. "This would be very bad for Australia because at the end of the day, these amendments reward bad employers and make going to work more dangerous, especially for those on construction sites."

"We don't believe there has been proper consideration of the impact of these changes on workplaces."

"Government has provided no evidence that current laws are a problem, in fact only evidence given by Government is that non-fatal injuries and disease claim rate for construction sites in Queensland are improving and at a faster rate than the rest of the country."

"Forcing unions to give notice before entering worksites will give employers time to cover up dangerous practices, therefore putting lives at risk."

"Employers need to be vigilant with safety all the time, not just on the day of an inspection."

Mr Borowick said that further to the dangers involved in a weakening of right of entry laws created to protect workers, he was concerned with Queensland's decision to reject the national standards for health and safety.

"Queensland is basically going it alone. They are moving away from national standards that aim to make Australia one of the safest countries in the world and are instead doing it their way and doing it the wrong way."

“Unions are the number one reason why safety in the workplace is such a key issue here in Australia. While there are many good employers out there, too many others will cut corners to save money if they can and the cost of that is injury and death of workers.”

“We want people to go home at the end of the day and will fight any move to weaken occupational health and safety laws.”

Mr Borowick also said it was disappointing that the Queensland government would attempt to sway opinion by using false connection such as militant union activity and safety.

“This is an unsurprising but still disappointing attempt to link strike action with laws around safety. The laws that govern workplaces need to be of the highest order and whether there is strike action at that workplace or not should have no bearing on this.”

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