



14 July 2016

Research Director
Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE Qld 4000

By email: ETISBC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Research Director

Re: UFUQ Submission to the National Injury Insurance Scheme Bill

Thank you for the invitation to provide a submission regarding the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (National Injury Insurance Scheme) Amendment Bill.

The United Firefighters Union of Australia, Union of Employees Queensland (UFUQ) represents approximately 2,500 full time and part time firefighters across the state. Our members respond to almost every emergency incident, not only in Queensland, but also interstate and internationally.

This bill establishes the National Injury Insurance Scheme, which, alongside the National Disability Insurance Scheme, aims to overhaul the current systems in place for supporting Australians with serious injuries. The amendments proposed by this bill afford workers who suffer catastrophic injury (referred to as 'serious personal injuries' in the bill) the ability to access a lifetime entitlement to treatment, care and support.

Queensland's current Workers Compensation Scheme was never designed to provide long term support to workers with catastrophic injury. It is a short-tail scheme, which operates within a 5 year statutory timeframe and leaves the ongoing needs of injured workers to be determined through common law.

Due to the significantly high risk work our members are often called on to perform, firefighters are unfortunately exposed to the risk of the sorts of life long debilitating injuries that the current system was never able to adequately compensate for.

The bill's proposed changes would help our members in the very unfortunate chance that they would need to rely on the system for long term support.


UFUQ notes that the bill includes safeguards to ensure that eligible workers will have access to the treatment and support services as determined by their individual need.

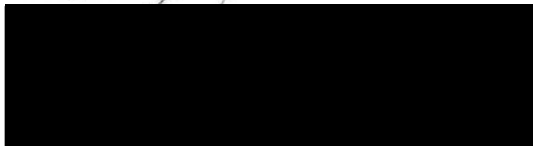
We commend the bill's focus on preserving the independence and autonomy of injured workers, in particular by allowing them to choose their own support providers from a range of certified agencies. The bill also allows injured workers the option to opt out of the scheme if they are sufficiently supported by a lump sum compensation payment that has been awarded under common law.

Our members put their lives on the line every day through the course of their work, to protect Queenslanders from a wide range of emergency situations. UFUQ submits that it is of vital importance that firefighters who unfortunately suffer injuries at work are provided with the highest standard of care and support as they need it, regardless of the time it takes them to recover.

UFUQ therefore submits that the National Injury Insurance Scheme proposed in this bill is in the public interest.

We authorise publication of this submission by the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee.

Regards 



John Oliver
State Secretary