



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPIILLY

Hansard 4 August 1998

WORKERS COMPENSATION

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (6.48 p.m.): There is no such thing as a free lunch. It is always years before cost blow-outs are recognised. That is what will again happen in relation to workers compensation. That was the result of the previous changes that the Labor Party made to the scheme. Again the Minister is proposing something similar. Of course, last time Labor was in Government it produced a \$320m blow-out that we had to pick up when we came to office. That resulted in \$105m, that is, \$35m per year from consolidated revenue being pumped in to ensure that small business was not faced with crippling increases in workers compensation premiums.

The Premier talks about jobs. Those are hollow statements when he is not looking after the small businesses of this State to ensure that they can afford to employ people. The words of the amendment moved by the Minister are designed to allow the Labor Party to make changes that will be difficult to quantify. Then we will have an argument about the changes.

Of course, it will be impossible to quantify the effects long term. No doubt, the effects will end up like they were previously. In time to come the blow-outs will again have to be picked up either by small business or by the Government of the day. Already the Government has removed from the board people with medical experience and business experience including, I might add, Dr Jane Wilson. Those people have been replaced with a couple of union heavyweights. That might go down well with the union movement but it is not going to achieve any worthwhile results for small business.

At the end of the day, it will not be the Labor Government—because it will end up losing office like it did the last time—but a coalition Government that will again have to come along and pick up the whole exercise that will have been hidden by Labor. The previous rescue was at great cost to the taxpayers of this State and to the Government. All up, we had to find \$105m—\$35m a year in cold, hard cash—which could have been better spent on a whole range of other services in this State had this fund been administered properly in the first place. What gross incompetence! One could well ask what the end result would have been. Would it have reached \$1,000m before Labor recognised the blow-out in the fund?

I believe that there is real concern by the business community about this matter. We have heard Mr Clive Bubb and others of the QCCI speak out in relation to it. They have said that the failing of previous boards was that in some circumstances board members acted in the interests of their constituencies rather than in the interests of the Workers Compensation Fund. Again, concern is being expressed about the composition of the new board of WorkCover. I might add, so much for the Government's so-called concern about having more women on boards! Instead, we have a couple of union heavyweights being appointed to the board. That might be good for the union movement, but I question how good it is going to be for the workers and certainly for the small businesses of this State.

In view of the time, I implore members to give very serious consideration to this motion that was moved by the Opposition, because it should be carried.
