



## Speech by

# PETER WELLINGTON

## MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

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Hansard 4 August 1998

### WORKERS COMPENSATION

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—IND) (6.34 p.m.): I would like to address the motion before the House regarding the workers compensation system in this State. One of my primary concerns about workers compensation is that the Government take a balanced approach to any possible review. There are two main players in the system: the workers and the employers. Each one is as important as the other. Workers need to be treated fairly, that is, they should have access to benefits and damages should they be injured at work. I believe that this includes maintaining access to the common law. The motion, as amended by the Government, provides a commitment that workers' rights will be protected. Employers, on the other hand, also need to be provided with suitable insurance that protects them against claims from injured workers. As with all insurance policies, there are costs involved and it is important that premiums remain affordable. The last thing we want to see is businesses crippled by excessive premium levels, whereby businesses close and jobs are lost.

It is my understanding that Queensland currently has the second-lowest workers compensation premiums in the country, with Victoria having the lowest. But the people in Victoria have nothing to crow about, as they have abolished access to the common law. Queensland is in the enviable position of retaining access to common law while keeping premiums competitive for employers. It is important for the Queensland economy that employers are not burdened with unnecessarily excessive premiums that will impact adversely on their ability to compete.

Over the years there have been a number of changes to the Queensland workers compensation system introduced by both sides of this Chamber while respectively in Government. These changes have been quite substantial and they have impacted on both employers and employees. Prior to the election, the current Government announced that it would be reviewing workers compensation yet again. My concern is that, in doing so, it maintain a balanced approach while ensuring that any reforms will not put undue cost pressures on the system. What I want to see is the continued operation of a viable system that protects the employers, their families and employees. If the system falls down, the social consequences for all concerned will be enormous.

It is for these reasons that I am talking to this motion this evening. I believe that it puts an onus on the Government to ensure that any changes will not adversely affect the financial viability of the fund. I am concerned that all workers are covered, and will seek further information from the Government as it progresses any changes to the system. I would like an assurance that it will undertake a full analysis of the impact of any proposed changes on all concerned. The workers compensation system has an extremely important role to play, and its continued viability must be ensured. I support the amendment.

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