



Speech by

Hon. P. BRADDY

MEMBER FOR KEDRON

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

WorkCover

Hon. P. J. BRADDY (Kedron—ALP) (Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations) (9.47 a.m.), by leave: I am delighted to be able to inform the House that, following the annual review of premium rates, the WorkCover Queensland board has decided to decrease the average premium rate to 1.85%. This decision was made following actuarial advice and is good news for Queensland employers and good news for jobs. Queensland employers are set to pay the lowest average workers compensation premium rate of any State in the country.

Today, the Queensland workers compensation scheme is the envy of other States. The new average rate is lower than Victoria's rate of 1.9%, Tasmania's rate of 2.7%, Western Australia's rate of 2.73%, New South Wales' rate of 2.8% and South Australia's rate of 2.86%. Apart from the lowest average rate of the States, Queensland employers also have one of the lowest employer excess costs. For example, Victorian employers pay the first \$426 of medical costs and the first 10 days of incapacity payments. This compares to Queensland employers, who pay the first four days of incapacity payments and no medical costs.

Employers are facing an increase in premium this year because of the transition to full experience-based rating, introduced by the coalition Government. This reduction in the average rate to 1.85% from 1.95% will result in a 5% average decrease in industry rates and goes some way to smoothing rate increases that would have occurred in the transition to full experience-based rating.

Two weeks ago I said in this House that the amendments proposed by the Government would improve access for workers and be balanced against reduced premiums for employers and the need to continue the growth of the workers compensation scheme to full funding. I again draw the attention of the House to comments I made in reply in that debate.

The Beattie Labor Government stood committed at the last election and stands committed today to restoring the balance of the Queensland workers compensation system. Unlike the Opposition, this Government governs for all Queenslanders, not just select groups. The Labor Government is about looking after workers and employers for the benefit of the whole community. The amendments introduced by this Government balance the rights of injured workers against the need for competitive and affordable premiums for employers while maintaining a secure, viable and relevant workers compensation system.

Two weeks ago the Opposition was claiming that the amendment Bill I introduced would bankrupt the scheme. The decision to cut the average premium rate is a product of comprehensive actuarial analysis. It is worth noting that these reductions are based on sound actuarial advice. The same actuary who did analysis for Kennedy and the coalition Government also costed the amendments introduced by this Government. The decision to reduce the average premium rate was then made by the independent WorkCover board.

The reduction in the average premium rate will continue to build on the Government's commitment to jobs growth and investment in Queensland. While that success may not be welcomed by some members of the community for purely political reasons, the fact is that it took a Beattie Labor Government to oversee the falls in premium rates. Outrageous claims that the opposite would occur under this Government have been shown for what they are: scaremongering and deliberate misinformation. But the wider community will welcome this premium rate decrease because it is a boost for industry and because it balances the improvements enacted on behalf of workers.