



Speech by

**DESLEY SCOTT**

**MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE**

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**WORKCOVER QUEENSLAND AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mrs DESLEY SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (4.13 p.m.): I am glad to speak on the WorkCover Queensland Amendment Bill 2002. WorkCover has occupied a fairly large slice of my work as an electorate officer over the years. Fortunately, because of the legislation which now is more refined and the great efforts by Workplace Health and Safety, in recent years the number of cases seeking help at my office with WorkCover has diminished. However, when we are asked to assist, the issues are often complex. I should here like to commend our local WorkCover office at Loganholme. Having an efficient regional office takes much of the load away from local members and their staff.

Over the years there have been a number of cases which proved to be fraudulent. It is amazing that a person will go to such lengths of pretence to defraud the government of unwarranted payments. Sadly, it is because of the people who attempt to defraud the system that some payments are held up while additional checks are done on someone who is very genuine.

I think back to a time when recipients of lump sum payments were not well briefed by the department and they went out and spent large sums of money, sometimes purchasing cars and the like, and within two or three weeks fronted up to what was then Social Security for benefits, only to be told that their \$20,000 payment should have been used for living expenses over a six-month period. These days written information is provided so there is no excuse for ignorance.

I am pleased to see within these amendments provision for a court to make an order for structured payments which can be tailored to the budget requirements of the person or family, taking into consideration such things as medical needs. It is to be hoped that the federal government will cooperate to eliminate the tax burden on these payments.

I have seen many cases where solicitors have taken on common law cases, done work on them for a number of years and then run dead in the water. People with severe injuries, particularly if they suffer pain constantly, have often suffered added stress and unnecessary emotional upheaval by being led on and on by a solicitor who then may promptly tell them, 'It's impossible to decipher who the responsible party is.' Some years ago I was very fortunate to be introduced to a specialist in this field who took a number of these dormant cases and, to the huge relief of the client, was able to get a reasonable payout and the case closed. I note that in this bill the limitation period has been clarified and that action must be commenced within a three-year period from the date of injury.

I also welcome the cross-border arrangements. With so many businesses operating in various states, employers will welcome these measures which will streamline their cover to be taken in their home office state when workers are temporarily located interstate. Similarly, employees will have the assurance of knowing their cover is sure.

I believe the added amendments regarding succession rules will bring clarity to the purchase and transfer of a business to a new owner and ensure that the business person will retain their good or bad claims history. If there is a loophole, unfortunately there are unscrupulous operators who will use it for their own gain. I believe that these measures are timely and I commend the minister and his staff for this legislation, which will enhance our WorkCover for both employer and employee. I commend the bill to the House.