



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION BILL

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (12.31 a.m.): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Bill 2003. The bill gives effect to separating WorkCover's insurance and regulatory functions—actions resulting from the national competition policy review of the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996. There are four key features of the bill: firstly, the repeal of the WorkCover Queensland Act 1996 and new legislation providing for separate delivery and regulation of the workers compensation scheme; secondly, keeping WorkCover as a fully commercialised statutory body; thirdly, establishing a statutory authority to regulate the scheme; and, fourthly, functions such as policy and legislative matters being centralised within the Department of Industrial Relations. The bill also contains some technical amendments to the Industrial Relations Act 1999. It is pleasing to note that the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Bill 2003 has received support from all major stakeholder groups, including employer associations, trade unions, legal and insurance professional bodies and state government departments.

Workers compensation is so important to the workers of my electorate of Bundamba. The workers in my electorate are generally not high income earners and if they are injured at work, that injury can have catastrophic effects on their family, their income and their quality of life. A work injury for any family member affects the entire family. I recall one constituent in my electorate who was badly injured in a workplace accident. He had to undergo many operations at the Princess Alexandra Hospital and at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. Only now, several years later, is he back to his old self. Even though his physical injuries were very severe, this man also suffered trauma from the accident and the psychological effects on him and his wife were devastating. However, throughout this man's recovery and rehabilitation his family spoke very highly of the workers compensation scheme and also of the care that they received in the hospitals. This man is a survivor and I am very proud of him and his family. Although he will never return to his original job, he is now back at work full time in an administrative role. He and his wife are getting on with their lives. So medical miracles do happen. The commitment and love of this man's family went together to pull him through his rehabilitation years.

Over those years, I was very impressed by the efforts that were put into this man's rehabilitation. I am very pleased that the word 'rehabilitation' is in the title of the bill. Chapter 1, part 4, division 7 of the bill contains the clauses that relate to rehabilitation. They include clauses that set out the meaning of the term 'rehabilitation', the meaning of the term 'rehabilitation coordinator', the meaning of the term 'suitable duties', the meaning of the term 'workplace rehabilitation', the meaning of the term 'workplace rehabilitation policy and procedures', and the meaning of the term 'accredited workplace'. Rehabilitation is an important part of an injured worker's road to recovery. It is also pleasing to note that the development of industry based rehabilitation arrangements have been finalised and that supportive rehabilitation models are being implemented across a range of high-risk industry sectors.

I have said in this House before that one worker injured is one worker too many. We all need to support this bill as Queensland workers need to know that they have a fair workers compensation system—indeed, the best in Australia. I would like to congratulate the minister and his department on this great piece of legislation. I commend the bill to the House.