



Speech by

**Evan Moorhead**

**MEMBER FOR WATERFORD**

Hansard Wednesday, 10 October 2007

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## **WORKERS COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION**

**Mr MOORHEAD** (Waterford—ALP) (10.31 pm): The Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 provides that one of the key focuses of our workers compensation system is that workers should be rehabilitated and returned to their work as soon as possible. This is achieved through two key measures—the first is requiring employers with more than 30 employees to have rehabilitation coordinators and the second is requiring employers to have certified rehabilitation plans.

Most rehabilitation coordinators perform an invaluable role in the workplace and do so in an ethical and professional manner. At present, a person can only be appointed as a workplace return to work coordinator if they have completed an accredited course by Q-Comp and been subsequently accredited. However, there is a problem in that Q-Comp does not have the power to investigate complaints of unprofessional behaviour by rehabilitation and return to work coordinators.

I have had raised with me allegations that some rehabilitation and return to work coordinators have used their position of trust within their company to the disadvantage of the workers whom they are there to serve. I have had raised with me allegations that Ms Helen Weber of Wham Solutions has been engaged in practices that are inappropriate and unprofessional. In particular, the allegations raised relate to Ms Weber misusing the trust placed in her by workers in her capacity as a rehabilitation coordinator.

Ms Weber has acted as a rehabilitation coordinator for a number of manufacturing employers in the Brisbane area. In carrying out this role, Ms Weber has on a number of occasions gone beyond the role of a rehabilitation coordinator and taken an active role in defending workers compensation processes for her clients—that is, the employers. This has included Ms Weber insisting that she attend doctors appointments with injured workers and insisting that she be present during the consultation. The medical information obtained during these appointments has later been used to provide submissions to WorkCover on behalf of the employer for complaints to be rejected. Ms Weber has advised workers to accept statutory lump sum payments from WorkCover rather than seeking independent legal advice. Ms Weber has even attended a medical assessment tribunal as a support person for a worker who has made a claim against the employer by whom she has been engaged.

Conduct of this nature would clearly disqualify a person from acting as a legal practitioner in Queensland but at the moment it cannot affect a person's ability to be a rehabilitation coordinator. As well, Ms Weber does not even have professional indemnity insurance to defend any claims made against her. I have raised this matter with the minister for industrial relations and I understand this matter is currently being reviewed by the parliament. I call on the minister to ensure that an appropriate accreditation process is put in place for workplace rehabilitation coordinators so that behaviour like Ms Weber's does not continue in the future.