



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Tuesday, 23 February 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

WorkCover

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.57 am): The global financial crisis has had profound and far-reaching effects on many parts of the Queensland economy. WorkCover Queensland, the state's key workers compensation insurer, has not been immune to these impacts. WorkCover's investments, like those everywhere, suffered sharp losses following the collapse of Australian and international share markets.

When I outlined the impacts of the GFC on WorkCover to parliament last year, I foreshadowed the need for changes to the scheme to ensure it maintains its position as the most stable workers compensation scheme in the nation. I also made a commitment to consult widely with stakeholders on any proposed changes to the scheme. After considering a report from the WorkCover board, the government has now prepared a discussion paper, *The Queensland Workers Compensation Scheme: Ensuring Sustainability and Fairness*, which outlines options for improving WorkCover's financial position. I table a copy of that discussion paper.

Tabled paper: Discussion paper titled 'The Queensland Workers' Compensation Scheme: Ensuring Sustainability and Fairness', Department of Justice and Attorney-General [\[1755\]](#).

One option to be discussed is whether premium rates, currently the lowest in the country, should be raised to ensure Queensland workers and their families remain fully covered in the event of injury and to offset the effect of the global economic crisis. Another option in the discussion paper is a restriction on access to common law claims. One thing is certain: action has to be taken even if the economic crisis continues to ease. Hospital, rehabilitation and medical costs continue to increase above CPI levels, as do increases in lump sum payments and weekly benefits due to wages growth. The government's commitment to consultation about changes to the scheme is now being implemented. The discussion paper is being circulated to stakeholders with input required by 24 March 2010.

We will also convene a reference group of key stakeholders, including unions, employer organisations and lawyers, to provide advice to government about the options proposed in the discussion paper. This reference group will meet for the first time on Thursday. The Queensland government wants to continue offering industry a scheme that offers a fair level of support for workers and their families and value for money premiums for employers.