




Speech By
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**WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (8.29 pm): It is a great honour to be able to speak to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. I have to acknowledge the importance of this legislation and I commend the Attorney-General for rushing it through very quickly! I do acknowledge the importance of this legislation such that it needs to be fast-tracked! If he did not fast-track this legislation, the situation could have been worse than the global economic crisis. It could have been much worse than the global economic crisis or the recession we had to have from Paul Keating. It needs to be acknowledged that standing orders need to be suspended. This government needs to do something different to what the Labor Party used to do, which was to suspend standing orders and take away everyone's democratic right to have a say.

I also have to acknowledge that there was consultation on this bill. There was a lot of consultation. There were 246 submissions and 18 public hearings. I notice that very few of those recommendations were adopted. I recall that when the terrible Labor Party was in power during the last two years—

Dr Douglas interjected.

Mr KNUTH: We will go back to the last 20 years. I recall LNP members would stand up and condemn the Labor Party when they suspended standing orders to rush through legislation without members having an opportunity to have a say. The Labor Party did not give the LNP or Queenslanders a chance to have a say. I recall how they would talk about how terrible this was and how they would never do anything terrible like that. The LNP said that it would be a government of honesty, integrity and accountability that is about getting the best and good outcomes for the people of Queensland. That is what the LNP believes.

I do acknowledge the importance of rushing through this legislation because I would hate to see another global economic crisis. I would hate to see a recession—another recession we had to have—as a result of fast-tracking this legislation. I do acknowledge the importance of this legislation, which can be seen in the number of submissions received. The Law Society stated—

The Society is encouraged that results for the 2012 / 2013 financial year are tracking positively for the future financial viability of the scheme. It is understood that to the present:

- common law claims rates remain consistently low

Thank goodness the Attorney-General fast-tracked this. It goes on—

- common law average payments continue to reduce.

Thank goodness the Attorney-General fast-tracked this, suspended standing orders and did something different to what the Labor Party did. And how shocking was it when that terrible Labor Party suspended standing orders? I remember that, when in opposition, the LNP would stand and say that the people of Queensland will not tolerate undemocratic processes in this parliament because the way that they acted was terrible. It goes on—

Results presented at the November 2012 stakeholder actuarial presentation were very encouraging, evidencing the following:

- common law claims frequency decreasing both by wages and numbers of employees

My goodness! I am just so glad that we had to fast-track this bill. It continues—

- common law claims nil finalisations remaining high
- common law claims payments continuing to reduce
- actuarial provisions for outstanding claims were reduced by \$114 million.

We are so glad that he had to rush this through, fast-track it and suspend standing orders. It could have been so terrible! The submission continues—

The Society notes that at the November 2012 stakeholder presentation, the actuaries for both Q-Comp and WorkCover Queensland advised that sufficient time had elapsed since the passing of the 2010 amendments, to confirm with certainty that ...

A document headed 'Queensland Government Response to the Recommendations—and thank goodness there were 246 submissions and 18 public hearings—of the Finance and Administration Committee's Report of the Inquiry into the Operation of Queensland's Workers' Compensation Scheme' states—

The Committee recommends that the definition of worker contained in section 11 remain unchanged and amendments are made to Schedule 2 to strengthen who is or is not considered to be a worker.

What an important amendment. Hold on, it is not supported by the government in this bill. That is strange because this bill had to be fast-tracked and we had a strong LNP committee. It is unusual because this is a very important amendment. The number of submissions acknowledges that this is important. There were 246 submissions and 18 public hearings. It is something that is very important, but hold on, it was not supported. Everything else had to be fast-tracked, but something that was so important was not so important to the government or the hierarchy of the LNP. The document states—

The Committee recommends that Schedule 2 be amended to include crews of fishing vessels, who are paid a percentage of catch as remuneration, as workers.

This was not supported by the LNP. I cannot understand this because the committee made some wonderful recommendations. I just cannot understand why the government had to change what the committee had recommended, something that was so important in backing these people who are out there busting their guts and who have the great potential of being injured or hurt. The government could not acknowledge the importance of looking after them, but they had to fast-track this bill by whatever means necessary. The document goes on—

The Committee recommends that the current definition of injury be retained in its current form with the exception of psychological injuries which are addressed separately in section 4.4.

That was also not supported by the LNP. Hold on, it goes on—

The Committee recommends that psychological injuries be included under separate provisions within the legislation.

That was not supported. It continues—

The Committee recommends that the definition of psychological injuries be amended to include the two types of psychological injury identified as category A and B above in section 4.5.

I could read from this all night because I am very passionate and I have to acknowledge that this is important legislation and it is important to rush it through! Three bills have been rushed through the House this week that are of great magnitude and importance. There is one tonight on which we will go til one o'clock in the morning.

When we see that a chairman of a committee is now earning an extra \$30,000 a year and every member of parliament is earning an extra \$8,000, this is a waste of the committee's time and process. For one thing, the committee process is not taken heed of; it is not addressed. It does not matter if the government wants to put through legislation very quickly for their own selfish agenda or when the big end of town gives them enough money to support their election campaigns because this is not about democracy, this is not about good outcomes, this is not about the best outcomes for workers, this is not about the best outcomes for the people of Queensland; this is about the best outcomes for the LNP government. There is no reason why we should suspend standing orders. Those recommendations are very important to the small business people of this state but they are also very important for the workers.

We had the opportunity to put it forward here tonight so that we could have proper consultation, but it was not received. We have to look to see what the Law Society says, and they say that we have the best compensation scheme. There were 246 submissions, but when these submitters put in submissions on how to improve the scheme, what has happened? The government has rejected

those submissions, but they have embraced something that they believe is not in the best interests of working class people and probably also small business. They are happy to adopt something very, very quickly and rush it through to benefit big business in this state.

So if you put two and two together and fast-track, we have been saved from a global economic crisis and avoided a recession. We have solved the problems of this state by fast-tracking this legislation, but at the same time this is not a proper process. This is a kick in the guts for workers and small businesses in Queensland, and I definitely cannot support this legislation.