




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Record of Proceedings, 3 June 2015

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION (PROTECTING
FIREFIGHTERS) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (4.20 pm): I oppose the motion. One thing that Labor members know is to look very carefully at anything the member for Kawana does. We look very carefully and behind everything the member for Kawana does. The last three years of the LNP government gave us enormous cause to pause and to look carefully at anything the member for Kawana does. If he says one thing you know that something different is happening behind the scenes. We oppose this motion.

It is stunning in its ignorance. The ignorance of the deputy opposition leader on this issue is absolutely stunning. He says it is a simple amendment to the workers compensation act. Bringing in deemed provisions for workers compensation is a very significant and substantial change to the workers compensation system in this state. It would be the first time ever, if I am not mistaken, that deemed provisions are being sought to be introduced into workers compensation legislation in this state.

Labor supports this. Labor campaigned on it. Labor rammed this issue during the election campaign. Looking behind the member for Kawana, as we always have to do—he puts on the smug face for the public but behind the scenes does something else—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr DICK: You bought the smug face of Peter Costello into the Commission of Audit. He is the man you brought in—your fixer—to fix the books so you could ram through changes and sack tens of thousands of Queenslanders.

What does the member for Kawana say? This is a bipartisan proposition. The member for Kawana might table the letters he has written to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and talk about the conversations he has had with the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services in this place. But, of course, he would not have done any of that. He has brought this bill before the House and now wants to sneak through the time frame.

As the Leader of the House has said, it does not do justice to the substantive issue. It is most appropriate that there be significant consideration of this issue by the parliamentary committee so members of the community, including perhaps affected firefighters, might be able to come before the committee and give evidence about this important change to the law.

As I said earlier, we know how those members regard firefighters. We saw the demonisation of firefighters during the Redcliffe by-election. They now profess to be the friend of firefighters.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Member for Lockyer, you will have an opportunity to speak if you wish. Member for Nanango, you will also have an opportunity to speak.

Mr DICK: They now profess to be the friend of firefighters after demonising them through the Redcliffe by-election.

Mr LANGBROEK: I rise to a point of order. Mr Speaker. I seek your ruling as to the appropriateness of this contribution in terms of its relevance to the motion.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I ask you to make your comments relevant to the motion we are debating at the moment.

Mr DICK: Firefighters need time to give evidence to the committee. They will be sceptical about the approach taken by those members opposite because of the way they were treated previously.

Mr NICHOLLS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The Minister for Health makes one statement in relation to the time frame and then moves immediately into debate of the substantive issue in relation to the bill. I would ask that you restrain the minister to comments in relation to the motion before the House, and that is the reporting date and not the merits of the bill, why it has been presented, who is going forward with it and all those other matters.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Clayfield. Minister, I ask you to take on board those comments.

Mr DICK: The member for Clayfield is obviously not listening to the debate because I have not raised anything about deemed workers compensation.

Mr NICHOLLS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. On that basis, I find the member's comments offensive and I ask that he withdraw them.

Mr DICK: I withdraw absolutely anything in respect of the comments made. I will not debate the substance of the bill which is about deemed compensation. What I am debating is the time line—the time line for affected workers, including firefighters, who were treated poorly by the last LNP government to be able to be given sufficient time—

Mr NICHOLLS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The first part of his contribution related to the time frame and then he started debating the substantive matters behind the bill and the other issues. I would ask you to bring him back to the point and that is the debate on the time frame.

Mr HINCHLIFFE: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker. The member for Clayfield's supposed point of order does nothing but draw to your attention that the Minister for Health was in fact addressing an issue that is fundamental to the time frame for the committee to report on this bill. That is how it sits in the context of community consultation and community engagement with people who have significant interests in the merits and issues with regard to this bill. I am not going to go into the merits and issues with regard to the contents of the bill. He was referring to how they will be affected and the opportunity for them to express their opinion and have their opinion heard by the committee.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, Leader of the House. I do not need you to participate in the debate. Minister, I bring you back to the motion we are debating and the importance of relevance.

Mr DICK: The time line put forward by those opposite is not sufficient for workers to be able to give sufficient evidence. I know they want to gag contrary voices. But, in this case, this time line is not sufficient for this legislation. It is not a simple bill. It is a substantial change to workers compensation. It will have broad effect on the workers who are affected—those firefighters whom we on this side of the House support and agitated and argued for.

The motion should be opposed. It is sought to ram through a piece of legislation without proper consideration. Of course, the government's legislation may in fact impact on what is proposed. The committee needs to be given sufficient time. The motion should not be passed by the parliament.