




Speech By
Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

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

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Woodridge—ALP) (Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services) (12.59 am): I am delighted to speak tonight in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which restores rights taken away from the workers of Queensland, vulnerable workers in particular, by the LNP government. It is a very significant legislative reform that this parliament is being asked to progress this evening, and I support it wholeheartedly.

Earlier this evening I had the very great misfortune to have to listen to the member for Kawana for an hour. That is an hour of my life that I will never get back. It was an hour of cliché, sloganeering, defamation of a whole range of people and distortion of the facts. As I said last night in a debate, the LNP never lets the facts get in the way of a fabricated, dishonest argument.

We had the whole LNP pantomime tonight. We had it all. We had the greedy plaintiff lawyers. Imagine that—the former first law officer of this state defaming lawyers. The former first law officer of this state came into the House and called plaintiff lawyers greedy plaintiff lawyers. No wonder he was so disrespected by the legal profession. No wonder he was so disrespected by the judiciary of this state because of the way he treated people, and that was all on display.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Members on my left! We are nearly there.

Mr DICK: We are nowhere near finishing what I have to say about the member for Kawana. What did we get tonight from the member for Kawana? We got the defaming of lawyers. No wonder he was so disrespected by the legal profession. I served in the legal profession for three years. I know what the legal profession and judicial officers think of the member for Kawana. The worst Attorney-General in living memory is how they regard him. We had it all on display tonight. As Talleyrand said of the House of Bourbon, and so it could be said of the LNP tonight, they learned nothing and they forgot nothing.

The reason we are here tonight is to right the wrongs perpetrated by the LNP against vulnerable workers in this state. How did they do it? They came in here like thieves in the night to take things away from workers. What was the history? They introduced legislation on Tuesday, 15 October 2013 and rammed it through two days later. What was the history before that? They set up an inquiry conducted by the Finance and Administration Committee which thoroughly examined the benefits and disadvantages of imposing a threshold on common law claims. How long did that review take? It was a year of examination by a parliamentary committee set up by the LNP and chaired by them with an LNP majority. That committee came to the conclusion that it was too early to tell whether the amendments introduced in 2010 by the previous Labor government that I was proud to introduce into this parliament had done an effective job, and it recommended no change. But that was not good enough. That was not good enough for the member for Kawana when he was the attorney-general so he cooked up these reforms to punish injured workers, brought them into the parliament and rammed them through in three

days. This is the party that holds itself up as the party that respects institutions and the monarchy. The former attorney-general could not wait to bring in Queen's Counsels. He could not wait to restore that when he was the attorney-general while wasting public money, and I will say more about that later.

The party that supposedly supports the institutions of state like the parliament abused this place because it thought it would be here forever. It thought it would be here for 10 to 20 years. They abused this place. Those of us who serve in this parliament know that we must respect the people of Queensland, as Labor governments always do. We respect the democratic process and we respect the parliament. That is why this Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations has taken his time to get this legislation right. The history of this is all because of the way the member for Kawana conducted himself as a minister of state. The root cause of all of this—the punishment of injured workers, taking away their common law rights—comes back to the way he conducted himself as the attorney-general.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

Mr DICK: I sat in silence for an hour listening to the member for Kawana, but he cannot help interjecting now. The glass jaw of the member for Kawana is easily shattered. He is very happy to criticise and defame other people, but he cannot take it. He cannot take criticism. He is always complaining about it.

Let us look at the history of the member for Kawana and how he was regarded as the first law officer. What did Walter Sofronoff say about his conduct in briefing out confidential conversations with the second most senior judicial officer in this state, the President of the Court of Appeal? He said that his conduct was a matter for public alarm, his conduct was shocking and unacceptable. What did retired Supreme Court judge and Court of Appeal judge Jim Thomas say about the member for Kawana?

Mr WATTS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr DICK: You must understand how we got to this point with these egregious law reforms that punished workers. What did they do? They put a law through that said, if you are a worker, you would be compelled to disclose your workers compensation history—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Woodridge, can you resume your seat. When there is quiet, we will continue. I will warn the next person who interjects.

Mr DICK: What did they do? They put a law through that punished workers. You were required to disclose to an employer your workers compensation history. But what happened to employers? They could have their claims history wiped. What an unfair and unbalanced system they introduced because of the way the former attorney-general and member for Kawana conducted himself. Shocking was how his behaviour was described by Walter Sofronoff, one of the most significant lawyers of his generation.

Mr RICKUSS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Lockyer, what is your point of order?

Mr RICKUSS: Quarrelling, Mr Deputy Speaker. Under the standing orders, quarrelling is an offence to the parliament.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr RICKUSS: Under the standing orders quarrelling—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have made my ruling, member for Lockyer.

Mr DICK: Nothing that the LNP does surprises me. They come in here condemn, complain and defame other people, but as soon as any criticism is levelled at them they are up on their feet taking points of order. The member for Lockyer constantly interjects across the chamber.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DICK: They do not like it, Mr Deputy Speaker. There is one thing that the LNP does not like and that is the truth. They have never liked the truth. In relation to the member for Kawana, who was profligate with public money and spent \$15,000 on two helicopters that he billed to the department of justice—

Mr BLEIJIE: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Member for Woodridge, please take your seat. There is a point of order on my left.

Mr BLEIJIE: My point of order is in relation to relevance under the standing orders. A minute ago the minister came in here and talked about the behaviour of members. Look at how he is carrying on now. I would suggest—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. Take your seat.

Mr BLEIJIE: I seek clarification, Mr Deputy Speaker. How does a helicopter have anything to do with this workers compensation bill before the House?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the member for Woodridge.

Mr DICK: No wonder he wants to airbrush history. I would have thought that someone who conducted himself that way, who introduced this sort of legislation that the Labor government is repairing, would be silent for three years. We know for the last six months of his term as Attorney-General he was silent. They put him into a locked box, put him out in Western Queensland and said, 'Do not speak.'

Mr Watts interjected.

Mr DICK: The member for Toowoomba North does not like it. He is happy to bully other people in this House but he does not like criticism himself. They have all been talking about rural firefighters. We should all be putting on record tonight our support for rural firefighters and the amazing work they do for Queensland, but not one of them has apologised to the firefighters of Queensland they defamed during the Redcliffe by-election when they said they were strippers and a rent-a-crowd. That is what those opposite did. There was the member for Kawana on the polling booth demonising firefighters and now they come in here—

Mr WATTS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Just hold on, member for Woodridge. Member for Toowoomba North, what is your point of order?

Mr WATTS: Relevance, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am not sure that the Redcliffe by-election is mentioned in the long title or the detail of the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The member was referring to firefighters. I call the member for Woodridge.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. History shows that the reforms put through by the previous Labor government had an effect that stabilised the workers compensation system which meant there was no need for any further reform.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: One moment, Minister. Minister, it is late. We have all had a fair go. I would ask you to be relevant in your response or resume your seat.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Referring to the reforms that were put through previously, they were overturned in 2013 for no other reason than to unbalance the system and to skew it against workers in this state. That now needs to be repaired by the Labor government, and of course what have we seen? Between 2009 and 2014 we saw a 15 per cent reduction in common law claims that are referable back to the reforms put through in 2010. What did we see? We saw a 15 per cent reduction in common law claims and total annual common law claim payments and the average cost of damages reduced by about 10 per cent. There was no reason for these reforms other than pure ideology—ideology designed to punish workers and to take away their rights, some of whom have never been able to work in their chosen profession. Even if it was a five per cent impairment, they may have never been able to work in their chosen occupation or profession or trade. That is how those opposite regard workers. But thank heavens we have the democracy we have in our state. The people of Queensland saw through the member for Kawana and they saw through that government and they punished them at the January 2015 election and changed the government.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I have given you an indication as to my feeling in relation to relevance. If you persist, I will ask you to resume your seat.

Mr DICK: I commend the bill to the House.