



Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (12.43 am): It gives me great pleasure to rise in this House tonight to add a contribution to the debate. I think it is absolutely essential that we cover off on the issues and it is so unfortunate that we even need to debate them in this House tonight. The two issues I am going to touch on are the changes to the workers compensation legislation and, as a lot of my friends and colleagues on this side of the House have touched on, as well as the former attorney-general, the shadow minister spoke so eloquently about for some 59 minutes, the protection of the rural fireys.

First, I will touch on the importance of the amendments that we have had to put in place to protect our rural fireys. Why is it that whenever a Labor government is in place there may be the rhetoric about, 'We will support the regions,' but how simple is it to protect the rural fireys? Do they not work as hard as the urban guys? Honestly, I look around at all of my rural fire sheds that are sitting on the sides of the roads all over my electorate. There are way too many for me to stand up here and list them all. For example, I was at the Bloomin' Beautiful Blackbutt Festival on the weekend where I was talking to the first officer of the Taromeo Rural Fire Brigade, Les Lane. I also want to commend secretary Margaret Carrick, because both Les and Margaret took the time to write in to this committee. I thank the Lord that this committee saw the sense—and why it took them two months to come out with it I have no idea—in listening to people like Les and Margaret who were saying, 'We are as hardworking as our urban colleagues. We work just as hard.' They might not go to as many fires, but I can tell honourable members that they do not go home after a five-hour shift. It is absolutely incredible.

An opposition member: The sense of commitment.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The sense of commitment—I see that at places like the Wivenhoe Pocket Rural Fire Brigade that I had the great pleasure of being at not long ago, Crows Nest, Cooyar—honestly there are so many. Everyone that I spoke to could not believe that the opposition had to run such a massive campaign. We had enough time for the shadow minister to put out posters. We had to do months and months of lobbying. What I would like to know in all of this is where was the minister standing up for the firefighters? Where was she? Why did the minister, Jo-Ann Miller, not come out into the general public and say, 'Obviously this is wrong and we need to protect our rural fireys'? How did she seriously go around the state—maybe she did not go to any rural fireys. That would make sense. I have not seen her in my electorate at all. If she has been there, she certainly has not notified the local member. Did she go around to any of these rural fireys and say, 'I'm going to stand up for you because if you get cancer just because you have only fought 100 fires not 150'—do not take into consideration the number of hours—where was that minister standing up for those rural fireys from my electorate? I honestly do not know. It is an embarrassment that a government has to be forced by a couple of decent

people on the committee from the Labor Party who actually said, 'Guys, this is completely wrong. We've got to listen to the LNP. We've only been back in government for five minutes and already the LNP have got it right.'

I congratulate the shadow minister and the LNP members of the committee on the work that they did for bringing common sense back. I would be encouraged to see all of the Labor members stand up and give that acknowledgement to the rural fireys. If they get out and about a little bit and they look at some of those sheds on the side of the road and they took the time to speak to some of these good people like Les Lane from Blackbutt, they would realise how hard these people work, good community members. It was interesting to hear some of the comments from the other side of the House, but they did seem to deliberately skip over the fact that these rural fireys probably work a lot harder than many other people given that they are also community volunteers. I want to give a great big shout out to all of my rural fireys. I want to thank them for everything that they did to make sure that common sense prevailed. It was the rural fireys who really did bring this home, which was fantastic.

I really do need to speak about the diabolical changes to the workers compensation laws. It is incredible to me that we have had to sit here in the House and listen to those opposite in the Labor Party seriously try to make out that the LNP are just ripping away all of these rights. It is incredible to hear the Labor union lawyers over there trying to make out that this is what the LNP are wishing for and that we are against workers' rights, but this is exactly what we are fighting for. It would be lovely to hear from one of the Labor people who understands that businesses employ people. Small business is a great example. A coffee shop in my electorate saved \$1,800 per annum in his little coffee shop. One of my larger abattoirs saved \$2 million a year, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I do appreciate that you are interested. How many employees would that \$2 million employ? It is incredible. It is quite simple to me and yet these people do not understand.

I think that it is interesting to look at the percentages in the other states: New South Wales, 15 per cent; in Victoria a worker requires a serious injury certificate of at least 30 per cent. I am pretty sure that Victoria has a Labor government. It is incredible, Mr Treasurer. You really should be looking at the other states: Tasmania, 20 per cent. Queensland has five per cent but this goes right down to zero, so let us look at some of those figures from the workers compensation statistics.

Ms Grace: You do not even know what you are talking about.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I would love to take that interjection from the member for—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Furner): Order! Pause the clock. Can we have some quiet in the chamber? I am quite interested in this. The member for Nanango has the call.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I thought you were going to say the member for Brisbane Central, because I was going to say that she does not know what she is talking about. But then that would be a bit tit for tat, wouldn't it? The Australian Meat Industry Council stated in their submission—

Governments, however, are elected to govern for all the people and all interests. That includes employers who provide the jobs that drive the economy ...

Increased costs to business invariably result in fewer jobs. It is absolutely incredible to me that those on the other side do not seem to appreciate what they will have to say to their small businesses when they go up by 18 or 20 per cent, when their medium sized businesses go up by 18 to 20 and per cent and when their larger businesses go up.

I see the Treasurer over there laughing away, because whilst he is eating into the big reserve that has been left for him will he transfer the debt over to one of the GOCs or something? It will be interesting to see what the Treasurer is planning to do after he eats away at Queenslanders' workers compensation reserves. It is a shame that we now have a government that will not stand up for workers and employers and a government that certainly will not stand up for business.