




Speech By
Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

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

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (4.36 pm): I have introduced a bill that the police minister only a couple of weeks ago—

Mr Dick interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, please, I ask you to cease your interjecting. The member for Kawana has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE:—said that she was drafting laws. They wanted to do exactly the same thing. I think the health minister has made the point about why they want to delay protection for firefighters, and that is so they can hurry up and get their bill in so ours does not mean anything. That is the point the health minister was making. This should be a bipartisan issue where a private member's bill in a hung parliament can come before the House. In talking about the motion before the House, there is a five- to six-week period for the committee to look at this—

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Lockyer and I think it is the member for Brisbane Central, please stop your interjecting. I am trying to hear the member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have allowed a five- to six-week period for the committee to look at this bill. I do not think firefighters can wait any longer. They want the bill. I note in the last 30 seconds the Rural Fire Brigades Association has just released a media release to its 30,000 members across the state urging parliament to pass the bill. I am not saying that we should pass it today; I am saying that we should let parliament look at it for the next six weeks. I think that is ample time for the government to have a look at the bill and for the committee to have a look at the bill.

I note that the chair of the committee was saying just now that the committee has two bills before it and they could not possibly get to this third bill within six weeks.

Mr Langbroek: He has come from the Senate.

Mr BLEIJIE: Perhaps they could not do that in the Senate, but here the Queensland parliament works a bit faster. I remember when I was the Attorney between 2012 and 2015. I think the legal affairs committee had some 15 to 20 bills before them at any given time and they were never prevented from producing good reports, decent reports, after having fully looked at the bills—50 bills in 2½ years. I hope the crossbench members of the parliament will note the six-week time frame for this very important bill, which I acknowledge has support from both sides—both parties announced it. We were the ones who signed the accord with the firefighters union, but we have also in this bill made the protection for rural fires better. They cannot wait any longer.

As the honourable shadow infrastructure and planning minister said, how long do they have to wait? A firefighter may contract one of the 12 specified cancers in a week or two and they should have protection as soon as possible. This House has an opportunity to show the real bipartisanship that can be achieved in a hung parliament. I ask all members, particularly the crossbenchers, to look at 13 July before we come back to the House. It is only a reporting date. It does not mean that the House debates the laws by that date. It is three months after that. The six-month period that members opposite go on about is a maximum period. The House can look at it before six months.

Mr Hinchliffe: The way to deal with it is by the Committee of the Legislative Assembly. That is the bipartisan way to do it.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Committee of the Legislative Assembly answers to this House. This is a private member's bill, and as a member of parliament I have moved a motion before the House for the House to deal with it in the normal set of circumstances. But at least get the investigations underway and the hearings underway so firefighters can have a voice in the next six weeks. Let us not delay this until the end of the year like other bills. I have full confidence that committee members will be able to attend to this in six weeks time. I implore members of the government to support 13 July as the reporting date. I implore the crossbenchers to support the reporting date of 13 July. It is a six-week period, which is sufficient to deal with such an important matter for this hung parliament.