




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

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**WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION (NATIONAL INJURY
INSURANCE SCHEME) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (8.20 pm): Apparently, leopards do change their spots. I was under the impression that leopards do not change their spots, but now we see that those opposite are very concerned for workers. They did not show that three years ago. I listened to the member for Kawana talk about how they looked after small business. It is obvious that the member for Kawana was in this House during their reign, because he certainly was not in small business, which had it very tough under their three years of rule. I was in small business at that time, so I know all about it and the workers compensation bill. I have employed a lot of people—

Mrs Stuckey interjected.

Mr SAUNDERS: I take that interjection.

Miss Barton: How much did your premiums come down by? How much less red tape was there?

Mr SAUNDERS: I do not know where to start. I have employed a lot of people over the years. I think the cost of insurance is about \$1.20 per \$100. I have employed a lot of people in my time and paid a lot of money towards workers compensation premiums. I believe, and I always have believed, that Queensland's workers compensation scheme is probably the best in the country. When I talk to other people I know in business from around the country, they always say that Queensland has the best workers compensation scheme.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SAUNDERS: I thank the member for Gympie. It is unusual to hear the former leader of the LNP talking about how good they were for people and how they looked after workers. As I said, I have been around politics for a long time and I have never seen leopards change their spots. Tonight, we have watched history being made in this House. We have seen nature changed, as they have decided that they are now going to look after the workers. There is a blue moon and I am astounded. In fact, I am lost for words.

Tonight I have listened to the opposition talk about consultation. I was on the committee and I have consulted a lot. I have talked to people in my electorate. We had some great discussions on the committee. I thought that, as a government and as a committee, we consulted with a lot of people. Apparently, we did not consult with the LNP donors. They talk about Labor and the unions. We did not consult their donors. I apologise for that, because I can tell the House that their donors are really going to look after the workers! They are going to put the workers first! You can just see it: 'Vote here, give the money to the LNP and we will make sure that the workers arrive home every afternoon after work'. I am sure that will happen.

One thing that I love about the opposition is that they call us union thugs and they carry on, but I am proud to say that I knock around with people who care about workers' rights, who care that people get the right pay, work under the right conditions and have workers compensation. I am proud to say

that the people I knock around with are union thugs, because I would not want to hang around with people or take donations from people who put their feet on the back of workers' necks, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

An opposition member: Oh, that hurt!

Mr SAUNDERS: I must be touching a nerve, because I have never seen the opposition so animated. They have come out of their slumber. They are awake and they are animated. I am proud to say that I support the minister's bill. We heard from the member for Broadwater. On my understanding of the bill—and the minister may correct me—the workers are covered.

Ms Grace: Absolutely, 100 per cent.

Mr SAUNDERS: I thank the minister for saying that they are covered. I was shocked and perplexed to hear the opposition say that the workers were not covered, because my understanding of the bill is that the workers were covered.

The bill proposes to amend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 to include a NIIIS scheme for workplace accidents. Isn't it amazing that suddenly those opposite have a conscience? After all these years, they have found their conscience about workers who have been catastrophically injured at work. It is good to see that they are learning something from this side of the House. It is great to see that they are following our lead and are learning. I did not think that you could teach old dogs new tricks, but apparently you can now. I am very happy that the opposition is observing and learning from the Labor Party. Contrary to the opposition, the Palaszczuk Labor government has consulted. We are consultative people. However, we do not consult with LNP donors to get favours. They talk about us getting favours from the union movement. As we know, the bill furthers this scheme and the NDIS. I was happy to be on the committee. We had some great discussions. I commend the bill to the House and I hope that the opposition keeps looking and learning.