




Speech By
Peter Russo

MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK

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

 **Mr RUSSO** (Sunnybank—ALP) (4.37 pm): I rise to support the amendments in the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (National Injury Insurance Scheme) Amendment Bill 2016. The bill implements the National Injury Insurance Scheme for workplace accidents within Queensland's workers compensation scheme. The bill is the next stage in a process of significant social reform which includes the establishment by the Palaszczuk government of the National Injury Insurance Scheme Queensland for motor vehicle accidents which commenced on 1 July 2016. These amendments fulfil Queensland's commitment to the scheme.

Queensland is the only jurisdiction with a centrally funded short-tail workers compensation scheme. Current no-fault statutory compensation benefits available from Queensland's scheme align with the range of treatment, care and support services that are provided for in the national minimum benchmarks for workplace accidents. There is also access to lump sum common law damages, including for future care and support, if injured workers can establish that their employer was at fault in causing their injury.

The amendments in this bill improve on the existing scheme arrangements by extending coverage for workers who sustain particular serious personal injuries. While only a small number of workers will be eligible for additional benefits, this reform will ensure that those injured workers with the greatest needs will be supported over the course of their lifetime.

The changes to the scheme have been carefully designed so as not to displace or duplicate existing entitlements. The new entitlement to treatment, care and support payments is also consistent with the National Injury Insurance Scheme Queensland for motor vehicle accidents established by the National Injury Insurance Scheme (Queensland) Act 2016. This will ensure that people injured in motor vehicle and workplace accidents connected with Queensland will be treated consistently and have access to similar treatment, care and support coverage.

Importantly, unlike the previous government's approach to reforming the workers compensation scheme, introducing new treatment, care and support entitlements will not come at the expense of removing injured workers' existing rights and entitlements. Nevertheless, this important reform is being implemented in a fiscally responsible way as the cost of providing additional lifetime treatment, care and support entitlements to a small group of the most vulnerable workers will be met by employer premiums without impacting on the average premium rate.

The National Injury Insurance Scheme is a companion scheme to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and will have a significant positive impact on the lives of Queenslanders who sustain life-changing injuries as a result of their work. The National Injury Insurance Scheme is proposed to operate as a federation of state and territory based insurance schemes, with national minimum benchmarks ensuring consistency across jurisdictions for coverage, eligibility, level and structure of

benefits and standards of care. The amendments in the bill align with the national minimum benchmarks for workplace accidents unofficially agreed by all states and territories. These minimum benchmarks are largely consistent with the agreed national minimum benchmarks for motor vehicle accidents, subject to some jurisdictional differences.

The design of the National Injury Insurance Scheme for workplace accidents in Queensland paid heed to the recommendations of the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee's report on its inquiry into a suitable model for the National Injury Insurance Scheme for motor vehicle accidents—in particular, the recommendation that the government consider the motor vehicle scheme serving as a platform for other proposed National Injury Insurance Scheme arrangements in Queensland. Consistent with this recommendation, the National Injury Insurance Scheme for workplace accidents adopts a similar model to the scheme for motor vehicle accidents.

This package of amendments implements the National Injury Insurance scheme for workplace accidents in line with the related measure which recently passed through the House to provide for catastrophic motor vehicle injuries. The commonalities between the motor vehicle and the workers compensation schemes reflect the coherent vision of the National Injury Insurance Scheme that is being implemented in Queensland. I commend the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (National Injury Insurance Scheme) Amendment Bill 2016 to the House.