



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR MCCONNELL**

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Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2019

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **WorkCover**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (9.49 am): The Palaszczuk government is backing business in Queensland, especially small business. On Tuesday, the Treasurer announced a number of initiatives to support small business in Queensland, such as lifting the payroll tax threshold and introducing a new regional discount rate for businesses outside South-East Queensland and continuing the 50 per cent payroll tax discount for apprentices and trainees until 30 June 2021.

Today, I have even more good news. I am pleased to announce that WorkCover Queensland will keep its premium rate at \$1.20 per \$100 of wages for another 12 months. This is the lowest average premium rate of any state or territory's workers compensation scheme and keeping it the same for the sixth straight year provides much needed stability for employers in their business planning.

WorkCover will also continue to not charge premiums for apprentices employed by businesses. Since 2017, around 10,000 employers have shared in more than \$36 million in savings because apprentice wages have been removed from premium calculations.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Ms GRACE:** It is so pleasing to hear members on the other side of the House so excited about this great announcement. This year alone we saw 10,720 employers taking on at least one apprentice, saving \$18.7 million in premiums. It does not stop there. Employers paying their premiums early will continue to be eligible for another five per cent discount, which has saved business owners more than \$39 million since 2017 when the discount rate increased from three per cent. This discount will continue for any business that pays its annual premium in full before 16 September. Around 65,000 employers took advantage of this initiative in 2018-19. These initiatives, which were introduced by the Palaszczuk Labor government, have resulted in savings for employers of over \$75 million in two years.

Queensland has Australia's most efficient workers compensation scheme. Safe Work Australia reports that Queensland has the highest proportion of total expenditure paid directly to or for our injured workers and the lowest proportion going to administrative costs. WorkCover is also investing in research and partnerships to improve return-to-work and rehabilitation support. That includes vitally important research for workers affected by silicosis and other dust diseases.

With WorkCover's support, the Palaszczuk government has taken a leading role in responding to the emergence of silicosis in Queensland. Our proactive health screening program for workers in the engineered stone benchtop industry has been crucial to diagnosing this disease and connecting workers with the support, both medical and other support, they need. WorkCover Queensland continues to deliver a strong, stable, fully funded workers compensation scheme delivering improved savings for employers and enhanced benefits for injured workers and their families throughout Queensland.