




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 17 October 2019

**WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (4.59 pm): I rise to make a brief contribution to the debate of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill as in the last parliament I was a member of the Finance and Administration Committee that examined the previous workers compensation bill. We all recognise the importance of workers compensation. I think that has been expressed by members on both sides of the House. The role of workers compensation is to facilitate recovery. If somebody is injured at work it supports them in their time away from work. There needs to be support around that person to get them back into the workforce as soon as practically possible.

The seat of Condamine has a lot of industries, some of which are high risk. We have sawmills. We know the reputation of sawmills in years past. They have improved a lot, but they still are high risk. Condamine has two large abattoirs. They have a very large workforce, so their expenses are very high. The member for Kawana talked about the \$1.20 cost that came in under the LNP government. For businesses in those high-risk categories the cost for workers compensation a few years ago was frightening. We need to provide the service, but it is important to monitor it and try to make it affordable.

I mentioned abattoirs. A week ago I met Pat Holmes, who worked at Oakey. He told me that he was in an accident in which he injured his leg. He had to have an operation. He was off work for 12 months. He said that in that time he let himself go a bit. I think it was a fair bit. After 12 months he decided that he had to get his health back in order and to do that he needed to lose a lot of weight, which he had gained while he was injured. He took up mountain biking. He has lost 57 kilos—an enormous amount of weight. He said that he feels like a young man again.

Mental health is included in these reforms. The member for Hinchinbrook mentioned mental health. It is good to see mental health recognised. I was not on this committee, but I would be interested to see how the system will operate. The minister might talk about that in her speech in reply. In our jobs no doubt we have all seen cases of workplace bullying. Recently I saw a claim for workplace bullying that had severe impacts on the mental health of the person involved. It is very tragic. As we know, mental health issues are probably some of the slowest to cure. It takes a long time to fully recover from a severe mental health episode, depression in particular. Business will not want to bear the cost for a mental health issue that has been carried into their business. How that works I do not know. I have had experience with people who have unfortunately gone into drugs, and I know the battles they face. They last for a long time. It takes a long time for them to get over it and there are often relapses. I applaud the inclusion of these provisions, but I am curious as to how they will be enacted.

I refer to the provisions relating to apology. Business owners are very wary of making a statement that will come back to haunt them in court. That an apology is not an automatic admission of guilt I think will be very warmly welcomed in the business world.

Obviously, farms are high-risk areas. About 12 months ago I talked to the minister about quad bikes. I brought in a gentleman from Clifton who has worked on a helmet for use on quad bikes. He is working with the University of Queensland and other groups on that. He builds a rollover bar for quad bikes. In fact, a rollover bar probably saved the life of the former member for Southern Downs, Lawrence Springborg. He told Dave Robinson that he had rolled his quad bike.

Ms Grace: And Vaughan Johnson.

Mr WEIR: Vaughan Johnson is another former member who was severely injured. Unfortunately, a teenager in Condamine was severely injured in one the other day. Quad bikes are wonderful assets on a farm, but they are dangerous. I am a very strong advocate for crush bars and for what Dave Robinson is doing with helmets. The LNP supports this legislation. I do not think one side of the House has ownership of concerns with workers' welfare. I know that I have that concern. We will be supporting this bill.