




Speech By  
**Barry O'Rourke**

**MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2021

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

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (12.26 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. There are several objectives to the bill. Importantly, the bill proposes to introduce presumptive workers compensation legislation for first responders and other eligible employees who have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Some of the professions that are eligible include police officers; paramedics; child protection officers; corrective services officers; firefighters including volunteers and rural fire brigade workers; State Emergency Service members; doctors and nurses in certain areas such as emergency and trauma care; local government and private sector workers performing the same roles, such as paramedics working in the not-for-profit sector or in mine rescue teams; and eligible employees who work for departments and perform roles that expose them to repeated or extreme details of traumatic events, such as fire communications officers and emergency medical dispatchers who respond to and provide information in emergencies.

Our first responders do an absolutely amazing job and I want to thank them for the services that they provide for Queenslanders. Their jobs are extremely difficult and they should be proud of what they achieve each and every day. This legislation is about supporting our first responders.

The bill will provide an alternative claims pathway for first responders with PTSD that presumes they have a work-related injury unless it is proved that the injury was not caused by work. The aim is to promote early claims acceptance. PTSD can develop in people who have been through a traumatic event that threatened their life or safety or that of others around them. It could be a car accident or another serious incident such as an assault. Those who have served in war or been involved in disasters such as bushfires and floods can experience feelings of intense fear, helplessness or horror.

Our first responders have a high risk of PTSD injury compared to other workers. Studies have shown that some of our first responders have found it very difficult to claim workers compensation for PTSD injuries, resulting in poor mental health outcomes.

There were 14 submissions received, from organisations like the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists Queensland Branch, Australian Medical Association Queensland and a number of unions representing their membership. We also had a public hearing and departmental briefing on 16 December.

I think each and every one of us in this chamber would know a first responder who has or had PTSD and the difficulties they have experienced in getting medical support through WorkCover. I know a gentleman by the name of John who was a first responder for many years and who attended some horrific motor vehicle crashes over the years. It has left him so very unwell, with almost nightly nightmares—other than the days he self-medicates with alcohol.

This bill is about supporting our first responders and acknowledging that they have some of the most challenging of jobs. I thank them for the job that they do on behalf of our community. I would also like to thank the other members of the committee, committee secretary Rob Hansen and staff. I commend the bill to the House.