




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TRAEGER

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

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (6.24 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. While this is not an issue with which I am overly familiar, how could you not have heard some stories or had interactions with people who have had these sorts of stresses put on them? Like every good opposition or crossbench member, we try to give a rigorous critique of anything that the government does and certainly I try to do that. However, it is pretty hard to do that here as I think the government's intention is virtuous so well done. This fills a gap and there is a need for it, so I am happy to acknowledge that.

The member for Kawana raised a pertinent issue about costs. We have to be cognisant of that with any legislation that we pass because it will have an impact somewhere. Like the member for Logan pointed out, we balance that against the need from the community. On that basis it would be very difficult to deny people fast and needy access to a scheme such as this.

I cannot say that I have had a lot of experience of PTSD through discussions with constituents or through my general life experience, but I know of an ambulance driver—who represents a bit of a periphery issue as they are not ambulance officers—who has expressed some concerns about a deficit in services, which I think is pretty important. For me it particularly rings true when talking about services in small towns, so another concern I have with a scheme such as this is what it means for smaller towns. The meaning of the scheme can be very clear for Brisbane, Townsville or Cairns where established services are based, but what will it mean for someone in Richmond, Julia Creek or Mount Isa?

Mount Isa has a big deficit as there are no inpatient services for mental health. The condition of someone who is totally stressed and has an acute need can be exacerbated by a lack of services. This affects people not only in Mount Isa but also in the entire catchment of the North West HHS. Someone who presents with acute stress may be sent away from their family and their support network to Brisbane or Townsville, possibly for weeks, and that is something to be considered.

In the north-west there is an urgent need for a mental health inpatient service. We have staff but there is no inpatient mental health service. If someone is showing signs of acute stress you cannot take them in for treatment over a number of days. When we establish something like this we have to think about the services available at the back end, particularly in remote areas where services are not readily available. The rollout may sound good but there can be big gaps.

The only other point that could add some value is that clearly there will be gaps and people will say that it does not fit, but that is the nature of much of the legislation that we pass in this place. Provided there is a review at some point, which has been flagged, I think we are on the right track. I say well done to the government. I think we are doing a good thing to help people in need. The KAP will support the bill.