




Speech By
Barry O'Rourke

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Record of Proceedings, 21 August 2024

**ELECTRICAL SAFETY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL;
WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION AND OTHER
LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr O'ROURKE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (9.07 pm): I rise to speak in support of this cognate debate and I am going to speak in part to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024. This bill gives effect to the legislative recommendations made by the 2023 review of the operation of the Queensland workers compensation scheme. The bill continues to build upon the government's strong track record of supporting injured workers and their families while enhancing Queensland's already excellent workers compensation scheme. The Queensland system is recognised as one of the leaders in the nation and this government is committed to maintaining that standard.

In 2015 this government undertook significant steps by introducing deemed disease provisions specifically for firefighters. These provisions were established in acknowledgement of the hazardous conditions that firefighters face on the job. Under these amendments, if a firefighter develops any of the 12 specific cancers after meeting the required period of active service, the cancer is automatically deemed to be work related. This means that firefighters do not need to prove that their cancer was caused by their work; it is presumed to be so under the law.

The bill builds on that foundation by incorporating the latest medical and scientific research, expanding the list of deemed diseases from 12 to 22. This expanded list now includes primary site cancers such as liver, lung, skin, pancreatic, penile and thyroid cancers. Importantly, it also includes cervical and ovarian cancers—a critical recognition of the growing number of women entering the firefighting profession. This inclusion is a significant step forward in acknowledging the contribution of female firefighters, and I put on the record my thanks for their service.

The role of the United Firefighters Union Queensland in advocating for these changes deserves recognition. Thanks to its efforts, Queensland now boasts the most comprehensive list of firefighter deemed diseases of any workers compensation jurisdiction in Australia. This enhancement will ensure that claims are processed more swiftly, reducing the administrative burden on affected workers and providing timely access to payments and care for those who need it most.

The government, under Premier Miles, reaffirms its unwavering support for our brave firefighters. This legislation is testament to the government's commitment to protecting those who protect our communities, ensuring they receive the care and support they deserve when facing the health risks associated with their work.

The bill also proposes amendments to the Labour Hire Licensing Act 2017 to ensure alignment with human rights, to enhance modern operational practices by enabling electronic service of documents and to clarify inspectors' powers related to information gathering and attendance. The Miles government prioritises the safety of every worker by ensuring they can return home safely at the end of

each shift. When accidents occur, it is essential that workers and their families receive the care and support they require through Queensland's workers compensation scheme. These amendments further strengthen the scheme, ensuring Queensland continues to lead the nation in providing workers compensation. I commend the bills to the House.