




Speech By
Hon. Nikki Boyd

MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

Record of Proceedings, 22 August 2024

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

 **Hon. N BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Disaster Recovery and Minister for Corrective Services) (11.48 am): I rise to support the Work Health and Safety and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This is a bill that does what Labor governments have always done. By responding to the review of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011: final report—December 2022*, we are putting workers first. Again, the Miles government is doing what matters. While this bill builds upon substantial reforms from 2017 for all Queensland workers, there are parts of this bill specifically relevant to my portfolio. Firefighter safety and wellbeing is of paramount importance to the Queensland Fire Department, and the policy intent and practical improvements embedded in this bill are wholeheartedly supported.

We know that firefighting as a profession carries an inherent risk and, unfortunately, our firefighters and our Rural Fire Service volunteers can be exposed to carcinogenic environments through the course of their work when they are protecting our communities. That is why Labor passed legislation in 2015 to help our firefighters by streamlining access to workers compensation, reducing stress in what would already be a very difficult time.

Under that change, firefighters and RFS volunteers performing relevant duties diagnosed with one of 12 specified diseases can claim WorkCover without needing to prove the diagnosis is work related. As medical research grows and out of that the understanding of cancer grows, that list will need to be expanded for the protection of our firefighters and our volunteers, and that is exactly what this bill does. It expands the list of presumptive illnesses for firefighters and Rural Fire Service volunteers to make Queensland's coverage one of the most comprehensive in Australia.

I acknowledge that today is Yellow Ribbon Day in recognition of the service of our rural volunteers right across our Queensland communities. I had a chance to meet with some of those volunteers this morning and thank them for their service and their contribution and I will again at an event this evening. It is important to note Yellow Ribbon Day was born out of protest against planned LNP cuts to the Rural Fire Service. I am told that they marched on parliament and tied a yellow ribbon on the gates of parliament. We listen to our rural fires and to our rural volunteers right across the state through initiatives like the Rural Advisory Committee as part of the new Queensland Fire Department. Because we listen, these new presumptive diseases will apply to volunteers.

The passing of this bill will see an additional 10 diseases added to Queensland's existing list of 12 presumptive illnesses. The new additions are: asbestos related diseases, primary site liver cancer, primary site lung cancer, primary site skin cancer, primary site cervical cancer, primary site ovarian cancer, primary site pancreatic cancer, primary site penile cancer, primary site thyroid cancer and

malignant mesothelioma. This legislation also ensures day-work rotations are covered, giving better support to our firefighters and providing greater clarity around the inclusion of this time in qualifying periods to access compensation.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the United Firefighters Union of Queensland on this important issue. As the minister made clear in her introductory speech, these changes will mean Queensland firefighters will have the most comprehensive list of deemed diseases of all workers and jurisdictions in the country. The Miles government will always back our firefighters. They run towards danger to protect others and put themselves at risk at the same time. Sometimes that risk has immediate consequences but at other times that risk is delayed in the form of cancer. That is why these changes are so important. They will allow claims to be processed more quickly, reduce the administrative burden on firefighters diagnosed with these deemed diseases and give access to payments and care when they need it most. I commend the bill to the House.