

Question on Notice

No. 467

Asked on 4 June 2014

DR FLEGG asked the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice (Mr JARROD BLEIJIE) –

QUESTION:

Will the Attorney-General outline how recent changes to WorkCover will benefit Queensland businesses and employees, and how Queensland's workers' compensation scheme compares with the rest of Australia?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Moggill for his question.

The Honourable Campbell Newman MP, Premier, and I recently welcomed the 17% reduction in WorkCover Queensland's (WorkCover) average premium rate from \$1.45 to \$1.20 per \$100 of wages. This average premium rate is the lowest in Australia, making Queensland the most attractive state to employ workers.

Jurisdiction*	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13	2011-12
Queensland	1.20	1.45	1.45	1.42
New South Wales	1.47	1.55	1.68	1.68
Victoria	1.272	1.298	1.29	1.34
Western Australia	1.55	1.668	1.69	1.55
South Australia	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75

* Average premium rates for Tasmania, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory are not available, as premiums in these jurisdictions are set by private sector agents.

In addition, 93% of the 150,000 businesses who insure with WorkCover will have their claims history wiped clean through a simpler premium model, and employers will have greater flexibility to pay their premium in instalments.

This simplified premium model for small to medium sized employers, who pay \$1.5 million or less in wages per annum, protects these employers from large variances in premium costs that can be incurred through an expensive one-off claim. Premium rate variances are capped at 10%, providing stability and making it easier to more accurately budget for premium costs.

The 2013 legislative amendments to Queensland's workers' compensation scheme will ensure the ongoing success and viability of the scheme by simplifying regulatory processes and ensuring that compensation is available and accessible to assist injured workers get back to work as soon as they are well enough to do so.

The 2013 legislative amendments introduced a threshold of greater than 5% degree of permanent impairment to access common law damages. This aligns the Queensland approach to damages with the Commonwealth and all other States who have a permanent impairment threshold or have removed access to common law altogether. Thresholds in the Commonwealth and other States range from 10% – 30%, making Queensland's threshold the lowest in the nation.

Queensland is the only State that covers workers for injuries that occur when they travel to and from work. In a large, de-centralised State like Queensland it is vitally important to afford workers this necessary protection.

In addition, Queensland employers are now able to require prospective workers to disclose any pre-existing injuries that could reasonably be aggravated by performing the duties of employment and able to request a prospective worker's claims history summary, with the worker's consent. Allowing access to claims histories from consenting prospective workers will help to prevent employers placing workers in positions or duties to which they are not suited and which carry the risk of re-injury or aggravation of a pre-existing injury.

These legislative amendments are helping to reduce the red tape and financial burden on employers. The amendments provide incentives for business to employ Queenslanders and promote our economy, while retaining appropriate protections for injured workers.