

~~Mr Pitt interjected.~~

~~Mr SPEAKER: Treasurer, I do not need your assistance.~~

~~Ms ENOCH: It is an absolute priority that our social housing that is being accessed by some of the most vulnerable people in our community and the policies attached to it are the fairest that they can be. We do not want to see people toppling over into homelessness, into crisis situations because of policies that have not been thought through properly. That is why the three strikes policy, along with many others, is currently being reviewed to ensure that that fairness is in place for all Queenslanders who are accessing our social housing system. ->~~

### <Legal Services

~~Mr MADDEN: My question is to the Attorney General and Minister for Justice. Following the 22 May ministerial council meeting in Canberra, will the Attorney General update the House on any developments in the funding of legal services?~~

013 ~~Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. As I outlined at the last sitting week in this place, in the federal budget the LNP has made significant cuts to the funding of legal services. We know that Legal Aid Queensland is getting its funding cut, as well as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service. Unfortunately that is not all. The cuts to funding are not the only challenges facing those who provide essential legal advice and assistance to disadvantaged Queenslanders right across this great state. It is of great concern that in the latest round of federal funding of community legal centres, gag clauses are proposed for our community legal centres. What this shows is this is the nature of the LNP. This is what you get with LNP governments despite, can I say, the charter letters—we have heard a bit about charter letters—of the former government where all ministers were directed early on to continue to establish effective working relationships with stakeholders and other interest groups. We saw how well that worked for the former attorney general.~~

~~This is about gagging people. The Labor government stepped up and listened to the community groups, the doctors, the legal centres and said we know that these gag clauses are wrong. We want to give you a voice. You represent the most vulnerable in our community. If we do not give you a voice who else gets that voice? Who else deserves it? These are the people who have a right to speak up and speak up for these people who they represent so well.~~

~~Interestingly, in the report on the LNP election loss there is a finding that during the campaign, with one or two exceptions, the party was without support from community groups. Who would have thought? Who would have thought that they were without support from community groups during the election? That might be because they did everything possible to cut these groups out. They cut their funding. They stopped them from having a voice in the community. We acted in our first 100 days to step up and to remove those gag orders. The federal funding proposal is to stop lobbying of government, which means these community legal centres cannot speak to government centres. So, no lobbying of government and no public advocacy if they are getting federal funding dollars. That is an absolute disgrace.~~


~~I was very pleased to be at the ministerial council meeting Friday a week ago where other attorneys general in other states stand with us on this issue. They want these gag clauses removed. They agree that this is appalling behaviour by any government and we ask that the Commonwealth government start listening to the community.->~~

~~Mr WEIR: Mr Speaker?~~

~~Mr SPEAKER: Member for Condamine, question time has concluded for the day. You will be right for tomorrow. Order, members! We now move into time for private members' bills.~~

## <WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND REHABILITATION (PROTECTING FIREFIGHTERS) AMENDMENT BILL

### Introduction

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (4.02 pm): <I present a bill for an act to >amend the Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 for particular purposes. I table a copy of the bill and explanatory notes and I nominate the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

*Tabled paper:* Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015.

*Tabled paper.* Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill 2015, explanatory notes.

I present a bill for an act to amend the Workers Compensation Rehabilitation Act 2003 for particular purposes. The Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill follows on from our public commitment in 2014 when we signed a landmark accord with John Oliver of the United Firefighters Union of Queensland. The bill introduces deemed disease provisions for all Queensland firefighters who contract one of the 12 specified cancers, provisions that are mirrored in the Commonwealth legislation that was introduced by the federal government in 2011. If a firefighter suffers a disease that was deemed to be work related and is listed in the table in the bill and meets the specified time requirements it will be presumed that the disease was caused by that employment for the purpose of a workers' compensation claim.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Kawana, one moment. Members, the member for Kawana is speaking to his bill. If you can please leave the chamber quietly.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** And we are talking about firefighters, Mr Speaker. If a firefighter suffers a disease that was deemed to be work related and, as I said, is listed in the table in the bill and meets the specified time requirements it will be presumed that the—

**Ms Jones** interjected.

**Mr Dick** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Mr Speaker, I am introducing a bill in relation to firefighters with cancer. The Minister for Tourism and the Minister for Health continue their interjections. I ask that you bring order to the Minister for Health and Minister for Tourism. I was talking about firefighters with cancer.

**Mr DICK:** I rise to a point of order. The fact is that the member opposite, and all those members opposite, abused firefighters consistently—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Minister, no point of order. I would ask members to listen to the member for Kawana. I call the member for Kawana.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. As I said, if a firefighter suffers a disease that was deemed to be work related and is listed in the table in this bill and meets the specified time requirements, it will be presumed that the disease was caused by the employment for the purposes of a workers' compensation claim.

There is a reason why, when surveys are undertaken with Queenslanders about the most respected professionals in our community, firefighters are always at the top of the ladder, if not on the top. That is because the community respects the hard work, the dedication and the sense of service that our permanent, part-time, auxiliary and volunteer rural firefighters have and the innate sense of selflessness that these men and women display on a daily basis protecting lives and property around the state. It is not always about fire events. In a state like Queensland, with the range of wild weather conditions we experience, from wild storms and cyclones to bushfires, floods and drought, firefighters are always there to keep us safe to the best of their ability and to rescue Queenslanders in dangerous situations.

That is why we made the commitment in 2014 that we supported the policy of presumptive legislation for firefighters and today's bill honours that strong commitment. The bill implements changes that other jurisdictions around Australia have adopted to a similar extent and it is time that we joined them in recognising the importance of this change. When someone contracts cancer we need to do what we can to support them as a community. I know that as a member of parliament but also as a son of someone who is a cancer survivor. To the extent that the person has contracted the disease in the duty of keeping our community safe from harm, we have an obligation to do what is right in helping that person through what could be one of the toughest battles in their lives. That is why these changes are so important. Rather than an onerous bureaucratic process of proving the linkage between a disease and work, provided the criteria are met this is simply going to be presumed. This is about making the process so much easier. The last thing someone needs when they are told they have cancer is to then go through a battle to make sure they can take the time for the treatment.

While I note that Queensland does not lead the nation in terms of being the first jurisdiction to introduce presumptive legislation for firefighters, I understand this bill will provide for the highest level of support in any Australian state or territory. I know that the Labor government has talked about this policy more recently and I look forward to bipartisan support on this bill in good time.

I want to thank John Oliver and his team at the UFUQ, the team at the Queensland Auxiliary Firefighters Association and the Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland for continually advocating for these presumptive laws. I also want to acknowledge the former minister and member for Bundaberg, Jack Dempsey, and his staff for the work they did and the consultation and discussions they had on the issues when we were in government. Can I also pay particular tribute to the hardworking firefighters right around Queensland, whether they be permanent, part-time, auxiliary or rural firefighters, for their service to our state.

There are differences in this legislation right around Australia. In a lot of jurisdictions the presumption is applicable to permanent firefighters. We have over 2,000 permanent firefighters and over 2,000 part-time auxiliary firefighters in the state, but we have some 15,000 active rural fire brigade members and also about 30,000 rural fire brigade members of the association. We are talking about a lot of men and women who put their lives at risk for the protection of Queensland citizens on a daily basis.

The difference with this bill compared with the other bills is that this bill is non-discriminatory. A lot of other jurisdictions that have introduced this legislation have a discriminatory clause dealing with rural fire brigades—basically volunteers—where it says that if you are a member of a volunteer fire brigade station and you contract one of the 12 specified cancers, in order to have the workers' compensation claim you have to have been exposed to 175 to 200 fire incidents in a period of five years. Today we end the discrimination. This bill that I place before the House today is applicable to permanent firefighters, auxiliary firefighters and rural fire brigade members without any discrimination of the three levels.

014 There are situations in Queensland where auxiliary firefighters share the same office space and brigades, yet under laws proposed by the Labor Party and in other jurisdictions around Australia, if an auxiliary member and a volunteer were to attend the same fire, they would be under two different systems and the discrimination rests against the volunteer. Our bill is nondiscriminatory. It will apply to all firefighters. There is a new definition of 'firefighter' for the benefit of the workers compensation legislation.

I thank LNP members who have had input in this bill. It is an important bill that we took to the people in 2014 to protect our firefighters. We announced it with the firefighters union. I pay tribute to the permanent auxiliary men and women of the Rural Fire Brigades Association, who work in all of our electorates. Some time ago, Commonwealth legislation was introduced dealing with presumptive legislation. When we are talking about firefighters at the Commonwealth level, of course, we are talking about the ACT firefighters or firefighters based at airports around Australia, because they fall under the federal jurisdiction. State firefighters are not covered by any of the legislation. That ends today with this LNP bill. I know that there are members of parliament from right around the state who are active members of the Rural Fire Brigades Association and today I pay tribute to them as well.

In particular I thank members of the Rural Fire Brigades Association with whom I have had conversations over the past couple of days to ensure that we introduce a bill that is nondiscriminatory, that applies to all firefighters and that gives the protection that firefighters right around the state require and deserve. If a firefighter contracts one of the 12 diseases specified under the bill, the only requirement is that they have served the period prescribed in the bill, which could be five, 10, 15 or 25 years depending on the type of cancer.

I hope this goes some way to showing that the LNP have always and will always support our firefighters in this state. The former member for Mirani, Ted Malone, conducted the Malone review, which gave volunteer firefighters the best support that a government has ever given. I congratulate Ted Malone on the review that he undertook and the reforms that will be undertaken going forward. This is an important bill for Queenslanders and it is an important bill for firefighters, both permanent auxiliary and Rural Fire Brigade members. I commend the bill to the House.

### First Reading

**Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (4.12 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.


Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.


## Referral to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

**Mr SPEAKER:** In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

### Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana LNP) (4.12 pm) by leave, without notice: I move

~~That under the provisions of standing order 136 the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report to the House on the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation (Protecting Firefighters) Amendment Bill by 13 July 2015.~~

 **Mr HINCHLIFFE** (Sandgate ALP) (4.13 pm): ~~I think the reporting time proposed by the member for Kawana does rough justice to the parliamentary committee system. Last night in this House, from those opposite we heard all sorts of proclamations about how they were somehow the champions of the committee system and that they were its guardians and protectors. That was in the context of a debate on reporting time frames for parliamentary portfolio committees inquiring into private members' bills, such as the one before the House, which would bring those reporting dates forward to 14 September. Members will note that the government supported those opposite, in the main, in bringing those dates forward to 14 September. That was reasonable and appropriate.~~

~~However, last night I was surprised that in the end those opposite, who had been so keen to see those matters dealt with by 14 September, voted against the proposition. They were happy to have the private members' bills dealt with in the ordinary time frame as provided for under standing orders, which would have seen the committees reporting back to the House in November. Even though they said that they were concerned about and interested in seeing those matters dealt with by 14 September, when ultimately the proposition came before the House, having been amended to allow for the vast majority of those private members' bills to be reported to the House by committees by 14 September, they voted against it.~~

~~In relation to this motion, it is proposed that the committee report to the House on this private member's bill by 13 July, that is, the next sitting of parliament. We need to make sure that these matters are considered and responded to appropriately. I think that it would be a travesty and an offence to the parliament and our commitment to the committee system to see it short stalled in this way. This has not been a matter where there has been ongoing consultation in the community. The member for Kawana has lobbied this into the chamber~~


~~**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.~~

~~**Mr Rickuss** interjected.~~

~~**Mr SPEAKER:** Order, members! One moment, please, Leader of the House. Pause the clock. Member for Lockyer and member for Nanango, you will have an opportunity to speak after the current member finishes, if you choose. I call the Leader of the House.~~

~~**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** It is absolutely appropriate that the committee takes evidence from a range of stakeholders, including, and very importantly, firefighters and their representatives. That would be a very good thing. It is important that the committee has the best opportunity to do that. In the past that has been the appropriate process in relation to private members' bills and it would be welcomed. I would welcome it and I am sure that the member for Kawana would welcome it as well.~~

~~It would be appropriate, either in person, in writing or through a representative from the opposition, to bring to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly a proposal for a reporting date earlier than the automatic six month process. Were that to happen, we could consider and discuss it to ensure that we come up with a proper response that accounts for the management of the portfolio committee's workload and appropriate consultation with the broader community. However, this course of action — this bluff and bluster from the member for Kawana, which is completely on trait — has been thrown into the House. I accept and understand absolutely that this is something that the House can deal with, as we did last night. However, to allow for better consideration and for the better working of the House, rather than trying to ram things through, it would be preferable to refer the matter to the Committee of the Legislative Assembly. I look forward to that happening. To allow for that proper reflective process to happen, I encourage the House to vote against the motion moved by the member for Kawana.~~

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (4.18 pm): ~~This is a fairly simple proposition. This is a rather small bill that looks to add to some provisions that are already in legislation before the House, which I will not refer to. We need not to look at what~~