

Legislation changes will keep workers' compensation scheme strong

Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations The Honourable Cameron Dick - Tuesday, May 18, 2010

The Bligh Government has introduced laws to maintain Queensland's workers' compensation scheme as the strongest in Australia and keep employer premiums low.

Industrial Relations Minister Cameron Dick said the laws, introduced in State Parliament today, would offset the impacts of the global financial crisis and rising costs associated with common law claims and health and medical bills.

"This suite of changes is fair to both employers and employees," Mr Dick said.

"There will be no restrictions on workers' access to common law compensation claims, while employers will still have the lowest average premium of any Australian state or territory.

"WorkCover Queensland will increase average premiums for employers from \$1.15 per \$100 of wages to \$1.30 for 2010-11.

"Victoria, which has the next lowest employer premium costs, currently charges businesses \$1.34 per \$100 of wages – nearly 3.1 per cent more than the new Queensland rate."

Mr Dick said the changes to the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 would align with the Civil Liability Act 2003, harmonising liability and contributory negligence provisions and capping general damages at \$300,000.

Damages for economic loss will be capped at three times Queensland Ordinary Time Earnings, or \$176,607 a year.

"Workers will still have unchanged access to their benefits under the statutory scheme," he said.

"However, claims in the courts will be subject to the new cap, as well as liability provisions. In addition, a court will be able to award costs against a worker where a claim is not successful."

Mr Dick thanked key stakeholders, including unions, for their input into the new laws.

"These changes – which were developed after extensive consultation with the union movement, the legal profession and employer groups – will ensure that WorkCover continues to maintain its position as the strongest workers' compensation scheme in Australia."

<http://www.cabinet.qld.gov.au/mms/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=69733>