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MEMBER: Ms LAUGA

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (12.00 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020. Almost 12 months ago a woman in our community, Karen Gilliland, was horrifically killed. A court case is still underway. Her estranged husband was arrested and charged with her murder. On the day that Karen was murdered, the police and first responders who responded to that incident described the crime scene as the most horrific crime scene they had ever come across. After that incident, I publicly called for honours to be bestowed on the police and other emergency service workers who rapidly responded to calls for assistance at the home where this tragic domestic violence incident in Rockhampton occurred—an incident that saw the death of Karen Gilliland.

Ms Gilliland died in the most horrific circumstances. Police, paramedics and hospital staff responded rapidly to this incident and did their best to save Karen's life while, sadly, her children watched. Police chased and apprehended the suspect in pitch black darkness down on the banks of the Yeppen Lagoon around the Rockhampton Botanic Gardens. I understand from what police reported that it was a young constable, a 21-year-old mother, who had to draw her weapon on the suspect when they had no idea whether or not he was armed and in pitch black darkness. They had no idea what they were facing. For that young constable to be able to draw her weapon and apprehend that suspect in awful circumstances showed so much courage.

We expect police and other emergency service workers to go out and face these types of issues on their watch, but we should not lose sight of the fact they are men and women, just like us. Our first responders do not get to wake up every day knowing it will be a quiet day in the office, free from abuse, harm and tragedy. These people—our brothers and sisters, husbands and wives—are normal people doing extraordinary things.

I acknowledge the former first responders who now serve in this place who have given amazing contributions in the parliament throughout this debate, including my friend the member for Thuringowa Aaron Harper, and the member for Barron River. I note the amazing contributions of members like the member for Caloundra, the member for Macalister and the member for Greenslopes. I also acknowledge the former union organisers and delegates in this House who worked either as first responders or directly with first responders and the challenges that come with that representation and advocacy.

On many occasions, working as a first responder involves confronting life and death in situations akin, in part, to war zones. When these people are not on the job, how many times do we hear of off-duty fireys, ambos, police, doctors or nurses attending emergencies in the course of their everyday lives—becoming involved in heroic rescues or car accidents or fires. They deserve not just our thanks, but also our protection, as their government, when it comes to empathy, compassion and treatment as a result of injuries they may sustain as part of their work.

This bill talks of compensation and rehabilitation, but what it is ultimately about is our duty of care as a government and employer of public servants. It aims to take away some of the processes that employers of first responder agencies currently have to navigate in an effort to see the just and fair compensation and rehabilitation they need, particularly if they suffer post-traumatic stress disorder.

The community has rapidly come to accept and, we hope, understand PTSD and its often debilitating impact on people, particularly through the suffering of our defence force personnel, and the impact on people's family and friends. With this newfound understanding of such a severe mental health issue, I am pleased that this bill aims to introduce presumptive workers compensation laws which ease the onus of proof from the first responder in any claim.

I commend the work of Beyond Blue in helping to shape this bill—particularly their 2018 survey of police and emergency services on the issue—and also the work of the 2019 Senate committee inquiry. One of our jobs as a government is to improve on the current compensable PTSD processes and make the system less stressful and adversarial for first responders when they are trying to establish and confirm the incidents which led to them making a claim. Importantly, too—and on International

Nurses Day—this bill delivers a head of power which includes, among other employees, 'a doctor or nurse employed in emergency and trauma care, acute care, critical care, or high-dependency care, will also be covered'.

There were a reported 113 PTSD claims in the public sector from 1 July 2019 to 31 May 2020. This bill will not prevent or reduce those PTSD claims, but it is critical in delivering the fastest, most essential mental health care possible to our first responders, in a compassionate, fair and just manner befitting a Labor government. I congratulate the members of the Education, Employment and Training Committee for their work. I commend the work done by the Minister for Industrial Relations and the department. I commend this bill to the House.