

Media Release

The Hon Ingrid Stitt MLC
Minister for Workplace Safety
Minister for Early Childhood



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BETTER MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR VICTORIAN WORKERS

Victorian workers who suffers a work-related mental health injury will soon be able to access early treatment and support, thanks to new legislation introduced into Parliament this week.

The *Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Provisional Payments) Bill 2020* delivers on a key election commitment from the Andrews Labor Government – ensuring no worker has to wait to get urgent care.

Under the new laws, Victorian workers who seek compensation for a mental health injury under WorkCover will receive payments to cover reasonable medical expenses while they await the outcome of their claim.

The scheme is an expansion of the Government’s successful pilot providing provisional payments to emergency services workers and volunteers.

Eligible volunteers – including Emergency Management Victoria volunteers, volunteer school workers and jurors – will be covered by the scheme, recognising their unique contribution to the community through their vital work.

Mental injury claims have grown significantly in recent years and are expected to account for a third of all workers’ compensation claims by 2030.

The nature of these claims can be more complex and take longer to determine than physical injury claims. Before this reform, workers could wait up to five weeks before receiving payments to access treatment or support – with some struck with stressful out of pocket costs.

By covering costs such as GP visits, psychiatrist or psychologist appointments and medication, the provisional payments scheme removes financial barriers that delay workers getting the care they deserve.

Workers whose claims are rejected will continue to receive access to payments for up to 13 weeks from the date they submitted their claim. This measure gives certainty of immediate support whether a claim is accepted or not, encouraging workers to make a claim and seek the treatment they need.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt

“These landmark reforms will ensure that Victorian workers gets the urgent support they deserve – and can get better and return to work as soon as they can.”

“With more and more workers seeking help for mental health injuries, it’s vital that we remove barriers that prevent people from accessing care and support as soon as they need it.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

“No one should have to suffer in silence. These changes will encourage workers to put their hand up for help when they’re struggling, knowing that they’ll be given support and access to treatment right away.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Police and Emergency Services Lisa Neville

“We’ve seen how valuable the provisional payments scheme has been for our emergency services workers and volunteers – now all Victorian workers will benefit from these important changes.”

Media contact: Nikki Mott 0416 311 214 | nikki.mott@minstaff.vic.gov.au