

# Media Release

**The Hon James Merlino MP**  
Acting Premier  
Minister for Education  
Minister for Mental Health



Wednesday, 24 March 2021

## HONOURING FALLEN WORKERS AND PREVENTING WORKPLACE DEATHS

The Andrews Labor Government will support the Ballarat community to pay tribute to Victorians who have lost their lives at work – while continuing to improve workplace safety and keep more families together.

Acting Premier James Merlino and Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt joined Member for Buninyong Michaela Settle and Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison in Ballarat today to announce the Labor Government's \$50,000 contribution towards the Ballarat Regional Workers' Memorial.

The memorial will commemorate Jack Brownlee and Charlie Howkins, two local workers who tragically lost their lives in a workplace accident in 2018. Sunday marked the third anniversary of their deaths.

Since the accident, their families have been tireless advocates for strengthening workplace safety in Victoria – contributing to the development of the Labor Government's landmark workplace manslaughter laws.

Coming into effect in July last year, the laws make workplace manslaughter a criminal offence – with negligent employers facing tough new penalties, including fines of up to \$16.5 million for companies and up to 25 years in jail for individuals.

The Government is continuing to work closely with those affected by serious workplace incidents to strengthen the workplace safety framework and make sure workers and their loved ones are given the support they need.

This includes establishing the Workplace Incidents Consultative Committee, which is due to convene in mid-2021 and will provide advice to Government on how to best support injured workers and their families, prevent serious workplace incidents and make Victorian workplaces safer.

Last year, 65 people sadly lost their lives due to work-related injury or disease in Victorian workplaces.

The Government has broadened the criteria that defines a workplace death – meaning every loss of life in a Victorian workplace gets the recognition it deserves, and more affected families can access vital support services.

Work-related transport incidents, industrial disease, criminal acts, and medical or suicide incidents are now all recognised in the fatality toll – shining a light on these significant workplace health and safety issues.

### **Quote attributable to Acting Premier James Merlino**

*"Every single worker deserves to make it home safe to their family. This contribution reflects our commitment to making that a reality for all Victorians – while honouring those who have tragically lost their lives."*

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt**

*"One workplace death is one too many. We must continue to work closely with workers and families to prevent tragedies like this from occurring, so that every worker can come home from work safely at the end of each day."*

### **Quote attributable to Member for Buninyong Michaela Settle**

*"Today we are paying tribute to the lives of Jack and Charlie, and to their families – who have done so much to advocate for safer workplaces for our community, and all Victorians."*

**Quote attributable to Member for Wendouree Juliana Addison**

*“The deaths of Jack and Charlie shocked and devastated our community – that’s why we’re doing everything we can to strengthen our workplace laws and prevent such a tragic incident from happening again.”*