

Media Release

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BETTER SUPPORT AND FAIRER OUTCOMES FOR INJURED WORKERS

Workers injured on the job will be given more support and care they need to recover and get back to work thanks to significant WorkCover scheme changes by the Andrews Labor Government.

The changes respond to recommendations from an independent review conducted by Peter Rozen QC into the Victorian workers' compensation scheme's management of complex WorkCover claims. Mr Rozen's report found the outsourced agent model is unsuitable when it comes to dealing with certain complex claims.

As part of several improvements to be made to the scheme, WorkSafe will expand its newly established Claims and Recovery Support Team to focus on dedicated and specialised interventions for more complex claims.

By the end of 2022, WorkSafe will have finalised the transfer of about 2,000 WorkCover claims from long-term injured workers with complex needs from external agents and take on direct responsibility for their management. These are workers who still need to receive weekly payments 130 weeks after first making a claim and whose employers have ceased to operate.

The Labor Government will also amend the *Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 (Vic)* to require WorkSafe to develop and publish a Code of Injured Workers' Rights, identifying the rights of workers and the responsibilities of WorkSafe, as well as the process by which rights may be enforced.

The initial reforms will be phased in and will transform the scheme to better address the nature of modern workplace injuries, particularly mental injuries – which can be more challenging to identify, more costly and take longer to recover from than many physical injuries.

The reforms strengthen the Government's existing suite of mental health prevention and recovery initiatives, including the development of psychological regulations and WorkSafe's \$50 million WorkWell program.

By improving workers' experience with the compensation scheme, the changes also aim to prevent further injury. Workers who are unable to recover quickly and return to work can often develop a secondary mental injury such as anxiety or depression.

Of the 22 recommendations made by the independent review, the Government has accepted 19 in full or in principle. Two recommendations require further consideration and one recommendation was noted.

Implementation of the review's recommendations would constitute the biggest reform to the WorkCover Scheme since its inception in 1985, so the Government will carefully stage the implementation to ensure we get the transformation right.

The independent review and Government's response can be found at [vic.gov.au](https://www.vic.gov.au).

Quotes attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt

"We're transforming how complex claims are managed to make sure that Victorian workers injured on the job get the support they need to get well and get back to work."

"With more Victorians than ever putting their hand up when they need help, it's vital that our workers' compensation scheme is effective, efficient and has the health and safety of workers at its heart."

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