



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Premier of Victoria

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\$90 MILLION PACKAGE FOR INJURED VICTORIAN WORKERS

Victoria's injured workers will continue to have the most comprehensive support in Australia following the release of a \$90 million reform package to boost support for Victoria's injured workers and families dealing with the tragedy of a workplace death.

Key elements of the reform package include:

- \$20 million per year for superannuation contributions for eligible injured workers;
- \$20 million per year for increased weekly payment benefits for injured workers;
- 10 per cent increase in no-fault lump sum benefits for workers with spinal impairments;
- almost doubling of lump sum death benefits and improving access to pensions for dependants of the deceased; and
- less red tape for employers and more support and advice on the calculation of premiums.

The reform package is the culmination of the most comprehensive review of Victoria's accident compensation legislation since the *Accident Compensation Act* was introduced in 1985.

Premier John Brumby said the reforms balance the needs of injured workers while ensuring Victoria's scheme remained the national benchmark when it came to business competitiveness.

"The improvements we are making to Victoria's WorkCover scheme will ensure it remains the best in Australia, offering generous benefits for injured workers without resulting in higher premiums for employers," Mr Brumby said.

"In the last five years, the Government has delivered successive cuts to employers' premiums with cumulative savings of over \$2 billion. At the same time we have maintained worker benefits at levels amongst the most generous in the country.

"The package provides even more support for the most disadvantaged; families of deceased workers, workers with a permanent impairment and long-term injured workers."

The Government received an independent review in 2008, the Hanks Report, and has consulted widely with employer groups, unions and other key stakeholders.

WorkCover Minister Tim Holding said getting injured workers back to work was helping them to lead a full life, which is good for workers, their families, employers and the scheme as a whole.

"Victoria's injured workers will be the first in Australia to receive superannuation contributions while away from work. This recognises that superannuation is a key component of an employee's remuneration," Mr Holding said.

"The reforms aim to strengthen return to work obligations without a one-size-fits-all approach."

The reforms will be introduced into Parliament later this year. The majority of the changes will come into effect for injuries occurring after commencement of the new legislation in early 2010.

Recommendation 71 of the Hanks Report which relates to the common law statutory offer process will apply to all serious injury applications lodged with WorkSafe on or after today. It will not apply to any serious injury application that is withdrawn and re-lodged on or after today.

The Government's response to each of the 151 recommendations in the Hanks Report is available at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

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