

MEDIA RELEASE
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Government again ignores workers

Current legal barriers to fair compensation for injured workers and the Tasmanian Government's failure to honour a pre-election commitment to change the system should be urgently addressed at this weekend's ALP State Conference, the Australian Lawyers Alliance said today.

The Tasmanian President of the ALA Sandra Taglieri said a review of the state's workers compensation system announced last month failed to deliver on a promise to address the 30 per cent 'whole person impairment' barrier, which currently prevents workers being able to claim and recover proper compensation for negligently caused injuries.

On the eve of the last state election in March, the then Minister, Bryan Green, made a written commitment to "a formal review of the workers compensation system, including an analysis of the whole person impairment threshold".

However, in early July, the Minister for Justice, Steve Kons, tabled in parliament Terms of Reference for a Review into Workers Compensation benefits that sidestepped the promise, Ms Taglieri said.

"The Terms of Reference tabled by Mr Kons do not ensure that the review will specifically address the 30 per cent 'whole person impairment' barrier.

"To the contrary, they are framed to pre-determine the outcome of the Review and leave the 30 per cent threshold in place. The terms of reference do not direct the reviewer to examine whether it is proper and fair to have a barrier to claiming compensation for negligently caused injury."

A worker, Mary, who was part of the injured worker's campaign run in the lead up to the last State Election now feels betrayed.

"I thought the Government had finally understood how unfair their workers compensation laws are. I believed they were genuinely going to make reforms to ensure workers who were negligently injured could claim fair compensation."

"The terms of reference I have now seen really make me dubious. Does the Government really think it can play us like pawns and sacrifice negligently injured workers to insurance industry profits."

Ms Taglieri urged delegates at the Labor Party's state conference this weekend to stand up for workers and honour its commitments.

"We can only hope that the political wing of the ALP finally takes note of what its members and the workers of Tasmania are calling for. Namely a fair go for negligently injured workers."

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