

Wednesday 3 February 2010

COALITION GOVERNMENT TO RE-WRITE WORKCOVER ACT

A Victorian Liberals Nationals Coalition Government will undertake a complete re-write of Victorian WorkCover legislation.

A full re-write is required to produce logical, simplified, and plain-language legislation in order to reduce complexity and cost for employers and protect the level of benefits for injured workers.

In 2007 the Labor Government commissioned Peter Hanks QC to undertake a review of the *Accident Compensation Act 1985* which underpins the WorkCover system. In December 2009 it introduced the *Accident Compensation Amendment Bill 2009* as Labor's legislative response to the Hanks Review. However, it failed to adopt his key recommendation of simplified, logical, and plain-language legislation.

Labor has ignored Hanks' number one recommendation of simplifying the legislation in a plain-language format. Instead, we have a Bill which adds 350 pages of amendments to an Act which is already 677 pages long.

The Coalition will implement Hanks' recommendation by re-writing and consolidating existing WorkCover legislation to make it simpler and clearer, so that all parties, employers, workers, agents and the VWA can understand and meet their obligations to support injured workers and return them to work as quickly as possible.

The Coalition has also expressed concerns at some provisions in Labor's Bill, including Labor's failure to fund increases in benefits beyond this year.

The Bill provides a range of increased benefits for injured workers, which we welcome, and thus we will not oppose the legislation. However, Labor has failed to fund these benefits beyond the current year, and we are concerned this may lead to higher WorkCover premiums.

Now is not the time to be driving up WorkCover premiums for Victorian employers who are just emerging from the effects of the economic downturn, and in the case of many small businesses, yet to show recovery.