



Dominic Perrottet MP

Minister for Finance and Services

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 26 June 2014

WORKERS BENEFIT FROM NSW GOVERNMENT'S SOUND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

NSW Minister for Finance & Services Dominic Perrottet today announced several enhancements to the 2012 Worker's Compensation Scheme reforms to better support injured workers returning to work.

"The NSW Liberals & Nationals Government has been committed to fixing the Workers Compensation scheme to make it both fair and sustainable," said Mr Perrottet.

"Labor left the scheme in a mess with a \$4.1 billion black hole, businesses facing premium rises of up to 28 per cent and 12,000 jobs at risk."

"Now that we have pulled the scheme out of Labor's deficit and returned it to surplus, we are in a position to better support the State's workers."

Mr Perrottet said changes to the Scheme would be made by regulation immediately and then completed with legislation in the future. Five changes would be made by regulation and assist thousands of workers who had claims before 1 October 2012. These include:

- ensuring continued access to hearing aids, prostheses and home and vehicle modifications and related treatment until retirement age;
- extending medical benefits for workers with 'whole person impairment' assessed between 21 per cent to 30 per cent, until retirement age;
- workers injured in the 12 months before retirement age will have the same entitlements as those who were injured at or after retirement age;
- ensuring workers continue to be eligible for weekly benefits until a disputed work capacity assessment has been resolved; and
- clarifying the entitlement to a 'second surgery' period for workers where the initial surgery requires a second surgery falling outside 12 month medical cap.

Mr Perrottet said the changes will increase Scheme liabilities by about \$280 million and can be absorbed by the existing surplus.

"Now that our hands are untied from Labor's financial mismanagement, we can make meaningful refinements to the Scheme that will better support injured workers."

"A sustainable scheme has also enabled the NSW Government to increase weekly income support for seriously injured workers by up to 70 per cent over the amount previously paid under the old system."

Mr Perrottet said a major focus of the government had been to reduce the burden on business to deliver productivity and economic growth for NSW.

“The 2012 reforms have enabled substantial premium reductions of 17.5 per cent in the past year, protecting thousands of jobs and returning over \$400 million dollars to the State’s economy,” he said.

“This is money that has been reinvested in creating safe workplaces and new jobs.”

The Minister said he is also asking WorkCover to better align some of its programs to support the objectives of the 2012 reforms.

“Our reforms have already seen NSW go from the lowest return to work rate in the country to the equal highest,” Mr Perrottet said.

“But I have now asked WorkCover to enhance the Return to Work Assist program to better support injured workers with a pre-existing disability, injured workers in regional and rural NSW and those employed by small businesses.”

“The 2012 reforms and these announcements today demonstrate that the NSW Government is meeting its objectives of increasing support for seriously injured workers and better assisting people to return to work.”