

South Australian 'Return to Work' Scheme

October 2014

On 30 October South Australian Parliament passed the Return to Work Bill, which creates an entirely new scheme to provide early intervention for injured workers.

Premier the Hon Jay Weatherill MP described new Return to Work scheme as the most significant South Australian industrial relations reform in over 25 years. The new scheme will replace the South Australian *WorkCover* scheme from 1 July 2015 and is predicted to save registered businesses in South Australia more than \$180 million per year.

Currently South Australia has the lowest return to work rate in the country. To improve this, the new scheme will provide early and intensive case management to injured workers to support their return to employment. A key aspect of the scheme will be the establishment of an enforceable right for employees to return to work as a part of their recovery.

The legislation also provides a number of improvements to the current *WorkCover* scheme for injured workers, including:

- the restoration of payments during disputes;
- improved strategies to equip workers who may not be in a position to return to their pre-injury employment to better compete for work in the open labour market;
- targeted return-to-work services as opposed to a one-size-fits-all approach;
- the creation of an employment facilitation fund to assist workers to develop skills, knowledge, capacity and capabilities that will enable them to transition to other work; and
- a dispute resolution process which will increase the speed at which disputes are heard and determined.

The Bill was developed and prepared over a number of years with the assistance of trade unions, employer groups, management at *WorkCover*, and the legal profession. It also received the support of the Opposition and the cross benchers.

The legislation as passed is available [here](#).