

Media Release

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FASTER AND FAIRER OUTCOMES FOR INJURED WORKERS

New laws introduced to Parliament today will ensure workers' compensation disputes are resolved in a more timely and efficient way – helping people get back to work as soon as they can.

The Andrews Labor Government's *Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment (Arbitration) Bill 2021* allows the Accident Compensation Conciliation Service (ACCS) to hear and make binding determinations on disputes not resolved by conciliation.

This Bill will deliver fairer outcomes – providing a simpler and cheaper alternative to court, leading to faster resolution of disputes.

Many injured workers are deterred by the cost, time and complexity of court proceedings, making this path to dispute resolution lengthy and stressful.

The proposed laws give workers the choice to have their matter instead arbitrated by the ACCS, who must commence a hearing within 30 days of the dispute being referred.

Once an application for arbitration commences, a hearing will generally conclude within 60 days, with a determination made within two weeks of the hearing concluding.

This will ensure these disputes are resolved within four months – which is less time than it takes to resolve most court proceedings.

The new laws will also help to free up court capacity and boost efficiency by diverting suitable claims away from the court system.

The Bill delivers on the Government's commitment to improve the dispute resolution process in line with a recommendation from the Victorian Ombudsman in its 2019 report *WorkSafe 2: Follow-up investigation into the management of complex workers' compensation claims*.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt

"We're strengthening workers' compensation laws and providing an additional low-cost way to resolve disputes so that all Victorians injured at work get the help and support they need to recover and return to their job."

"This model will avoid complex and costly court proceedings, particularly for lower value disputes – providing a faster and more effective pathway to resolution, with less stress and impact on recovery."

"These reforms put workers at the centre of the dispute resolution process – empowering them to choose the best way to advance their claim to reach a fast and fair outcome and making sure no one falls through the cracks."