

INQUIRY INTO NSW WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Name: Name suppressed
Date received: 21/05/2012

Partially Confidential

Submission to NSW Government Workers Compensation Enquiry.

To whom it may concern:

I wish to bring to your attention my circumstances and urge you not to reduce workers compensation rights to employees.

I am a 53 year old NPWS employee with over 31 years of employment with a NSW government department and suffer from the cumulative effects of hard work and physical labour where I now need knee replacement surgery due to bone on bone knee joints from osteoarthritis that my work roles have significantly contributed to with my doctor saying I had the knees of a 70 year old.

I have been a field officer, ranger, senior ranger and fire management officer and have constructed park facilities, participated in search and rescues and participated in bushfires and trained fire-fighters to the extent of holding the National Medal with a clasp.

I live in a rural area, as do most of my colleagues, in the Far South Coast of NSW and to access specialist treatment means I have to travel and the care and length of travel I need has been significant. I have to travel to Sydney to access my surgeon several times over 12 month period. The cost of doing this would be prohibitive (especially when I can't drive) and impacts significantly on my quality of life as there is limited expensive options.

My operation and treatment would have taken about a month from my work. I had a high tibial osteotomy to put off a knee replacement for approximately 10 years. I have to have a similar operation on my other leg but need the time to recuperate and gain strength to do the other leg. I was on restricted duties for approx 3 months and then was able to pass a Task Based Assessment to regain fire fighting fitness am now back on full duties.

I also need the confidence that these future requirements for my injury will be met. The length of my treatment so far is over 3 years for the identification, recognition and acceptance and assessment of the injury then the operation. Also in 10 years time I will need follow up procedures. I and people like me must have access to ongoing treatment to be able to carry out my work and live quality lives. Shorting the length of treatment is unfair and unjust when the injury and supervising doctors determine the duration of treatment and intervals between it.

On going medication costs for me if I had to buy that from my family budget could not be afforded. I have been of anitnflamatory medication which upsets my indigestion so another medicine is required, I would have to stop buying medicines.

I have had to give up some of my rec leave to make up for days taken for workers compensation to maintain my pay level and I have take 29 days workers compensation so far for this injury. My attendance at work over my entire career has been excellent with minimal sick days.

My injury requires short bursts of significant treatment over a long time to treat and recover from yet in that time I am still an effective and useful employee and maintain full duties with minimal absence.

If the time frame to be able to claim compensation for an injury that does not appear or impact until its cumulative effect or significance is realised I and my colleagues would be severely disadvantaged.

I come from a generation of workers more aware of and responsible for OH&S but that does not stop injuries. Education

I've worked very hard for the NSW government , I have risked my well being and have been exposed to dangerous situations and materials without any particular thanks or company benefit and the reason I have stuck at it is because I thought I had safety net through workers compensation and now I am at a stage where I need to claim some of those rights , it is about to be significantly reduced and access minimised I am very worried that my injuries won't get the on going treatment I deserve into the future to make my life pain free and maintain my mobility so I can continue to be of value as an employee and pursue my profession of fire and land management and enjoy my older age with some physical mobility and the assurance that treatment is available after I retire.

Yours Sincerely