



Big changes to unwieldy WorkCover beast may get it off its own life support system in 2015 - Patrick Boylen

WORKCOVER should mean cover at work. You get hurt, you're covered. When you're better, you go back to work.

Yet, as we enter 2015, South Australia has a WorkCover scheme that is the worst performing in the nation.

We have the worst premium rates for employers, the worst back-to-work figures, the biggest cost blowouts, the biggest debt.

In short, WorkCover has become an unwieldy beast. But as we welcome in a New Year, there is a ray of hope and 2015 could well be remembered as the year this beast was tamed.

From this month you will already start noticing some fundamental changes.

More than 1500 people who've been receiving weekly payments from WorkCover for longer than two-and-a-half years will be offered a lump-sum payment.

This is a significant change in direction by WorkCover and, while it will cost around \$100 million, it represents a commitment to "clearing the books" going forward.

It's also a move that will win broad support as it can be very hard to get people off WorkCover once they're on it.

Don't forget, many workers just want to exit the scheme with dignity and get on with their lives. This now lets them do just that.

Of course, the big changes kick in on July 1 and will affect everyone. Here are the most commonly asked questions:

What's the biggest change?

There will now be two categories: serious and non-seriously injured. Seriously injured



workers will be entitled to lifetime care and support.

Non-seriously injured can expect two years' worth of weekly payments, some medical expenses and the possibility of a lump-sum payment.

I was hurt before July 1 and I'm on WorkCover. Will anything change for me?

If you're seriously injured, there'll be no change. If you're not, then your weekly payments will cut out on 30 June 2017.

Will WorkCover still cover my medical expenses?

Yes, until 30 June 2018.

My employer was negligent. Can I sue under the new system?

No.

I have been injured but haven't filed a claim yet, is it too late?

There are time limits. Seek legal advice quickly.

When the new system starts, what will "seriously injured" mean?

The definition will be a person who has a Whole Person Impairment of 30 per cent more as assessed by the WorkCover guidelines.

What if I am under 30 per cent?

You'll be entitled to two years of weekly payments, three years' of medical expenses and an economic loss payment.

So, some big changes are

ahead and here's hoping they will be enough to get WorkCover off its own life support system.

What we must all remember is that SA's 430,000 workers have every right to compensation and our 50,000 employers also deserve a system that is fair and just.

It is the health of the state and our economy that is at stake.

In 2015 we now have a chance to get it right.

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BAD SHAPE: Seriously injured workers will be entitled to lifetime care and support.

Jay must come clean on Gillman deal



DEAN JAENSCH

IN November 2011, I listened carefully to a speech by Premier Jay Weatherill.

His theme was both welcome and impressive.

It vowed to reject the "decide then justify" approach to policies which characterised by Mike Rann's government, and vowed to apply a new principle of "consult then decide".

This principle was especially welcome as it was a commitment to transparency and open government.

Unfortunately, the Gillman land deal suggests that the speech was put aside. Over 40 years of closely watching politics, I have only rarely read such scathing judgments offered by two respected and independent assessors about the decisions - and hence the poor quality of governance.

A Supreme Court judge found that the decision was made "in disregard to prudent commercial principles".

It was "unlawful", as it did not comply with the Public Corporations Act.

The Auditor-General was no less scathing. He was critical of the decision to proceed without a current valuation of the land.

He stated that "the identified risks of perception and probity are not minimised". He criticised the Government's wording of its submission to Cabinet as "misleading".

It appears that the key concept of transparency did not even reach as far as the Cabinet. The Government's own urban development authority, Renewal SA, had considered the matter, and had recommended that the offer should be rejected.

But the Auditor-General found that this advice was not included in the submission to Cabinet, with the result that the submission was "misleading".

The Government's own Department of the Treasury rejected the deal, on the ground that refusing to hold an open competitive tender process raised the question of a lack of probity.

The Supreme Court's ruling was that despite the scathing criticisms made of the process,

It appears the key concept of transparency did not even reach as far as the Cabinet

the deal was valid. So it may well be, under the terms of the law. But the more that is revealed, the less the word "valid" can be used to describe the processes with the government.

Both Premier Weatherill and Minister Tom Koutsantonis have defended the deal, and have taken "full responsibility". But what does that mean?

The Government has advised that there is now a new "unsolicited bids policy", which may be a good thing. But to expect that justifies an apparent determination simply to move on, leaves too much which has

been swept under the carpet.

There will be implications, despite the fact that the court has ruled the sale valid. The Adelaide City Council has already started a case in the Supreme Court, seeking to be paid its share of the true value of the land. Senator Nick

Xenophon has argued that the whole matter justifies an urgent judicial inquiry into a "scandal". On the evidence we have seen so far, that seems justified.

But the strongest implication is for the Weatherill Government. It needs to follow up on its promise of transparency, and release a full and detailed account of what went on at every stage, who was responsible for what, and what will be done to ensure it never happens again.

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THE LAST WORD

WITH MARTY SMITH



MOUTHING OFF

(1) Oxymoron: Loyal opposition. (2) Palindrome: No, it is opposition. (3) Tabloid headline: "Trumpeter blows out his eyes". (4) In the Twitter-sphere: "I dragged myself to the gym today and noticed a girl standing on a non-moving treadmill texting for 45 min. She is living my dream." - US singer Josh Groban. (5) I am not making this up: US comedian-actor Bob Hope's pet poodle Toby liked skinless chicken with wild rice.

INSIGHT

"If you lived in your car, you'd be home by now." - bumper sticker.

QUOTE, UNQUOTE

"It's no wonder that truth is stranger than fiction. Fiction has to make sense." - US author-humorist Mark Twain.

KEEPING COUNT

6955 - the number of girls who completed their SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education) in 2010.

JUST A THOUGHT

A crisis is when you can't say "Let's forget the whole thing".

REMEMBER WHEN

Today is January 21, Squirrel Appreciation Day and the 21st day of the year. There are 344 days remaining until the end of the year. On this day:

1940: Retired professional golfer Jack Nicklaus was born in Columbus, Ohio.

1941: Supervisors prepared roast lamb with vegetables, peach sponge, lemon snow and date creams during a free cooking demonstration at the Adelaide Electric Supply Co Ltd, in Kelvin Building, North Tce, city.

1941: Folk singer-songwriter-guitarist Richie Havens, who was the opening act of the three-day Woodstock music festival in 1969, was born in Brooklyn, New York.

1950: The South Australian Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Henry Krips, with Sam Bor, English violinist and founder member of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, as soloist, performed at the Adelaide Town Hall.

1968: South Australian Opposition Leader Steven Marshall was born in Adelaide.

1974: Comedian and television compere Rove McManus was born in Perth.

1982: In the Australian series *Holiday Island*, on Channel 10, the arrival of a respected marine archaeologist and news of sunken Portuguese treasure excited the hotel staff.

1988: Radio station SAFM listed *Man of Colours*, by Australian rock band Icehouse, as Adelaide's No 1 hit album.

1993: During the current affairs program *Real Life*, on Channel 7, Sydney broadcaster Ron Casey said "Melbourne is a place where you go to wait for death".

1998: From the front page of *The Advertiser*: "The Federal Government was urged yesterday to investigate Greenpeace protests in the Great Australian Bight as tuna boat owners accused activists of "piracy" that threatened fishing crews' lives."

2008: From *The Times* in London: "Drinking just two cups of coffee a day during pregnancy can double the risk of miscarriage for expectant mothers, according to researchers in the U.S."

2014: English comedian Matt Lucas tweeted: "Rag-and-bone man just knocked on the door asking if we had any spare wood. I said no and told him to go away. He took a fence."

TODAY'S THOUGHT

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Romans 5:3-4

Bible for Today