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Injured workers worse off under Senate Comcare recommendations

A Senate committee has recommended passing legislation which will leave nearly 400,000 workers covered under Comcare, the national workers' compensation scheme, with inadequate cover if they are injured or ill at work.

Unions are disappointed the Senate committee examining the Abbott Government's *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Comcare) Bill* has recommended changes that will leave ordinary workers worse off.

The Bill will restrict eligibility for accessing compensation and rehabilitation services, reduce or cut compensation payments and make it harder for injured workers to appeal unfair decisions.

This will result in lower Occupational Health and Safety standards and will severely disadvantage injured or ill workers.

The legislation will shift the costs of workplace injuries or illnesses from employers to workers.

An average worker who is seriously and permanently injured at work could lose \$120,000-\$325,000 in benefits over a 20 year period.

Workers covered include large private employers, such as banks and transportation companies, and public sector workers.

The ACTU opposes the Government's push to remove workers' rights to compensation and believes the Comcare scheme should operate at the same standard, or exceed current State and Territory schemes.

Unions will lobby all cross-bench Senators to stand up against the Abbott Government's harsh changes and protect the rights of workers to access a fair workers' compensation scheme if they are injured at work.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick:

"The Abbott Government continues to attack workers by absolving big business' responsibility and placing the burden on injured or ill workers."

"The Comcare Bills are the Abbott Government's gift to big business at the expense of injured workers."

"The Abbott Government should be focused on improving Comcare to be on par, or exceed current state and territory schemes that would increase protections for workers."

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