

ACC cover for maternal birth injuries

The Accident Compensation (Maternal Birth Injury and Other Matters) Amendment Bill 2021 has been introduced into Parliament, with the aim of providing more equitable coverage for injuries covered by the Accident Compensation Scheme, and to provide greater clarity for claimants, and to better give effect to the policy intent of the Accident Compensation Act 2001.

Maternal birth injuries (other than treatment injuries) are not eligible for cover under the AC Scheme, although they have the same characteristics as injuries (such as sprains or strains) already covered under the Act.

The Bill will extend cover to a specified list of maternal birth injuries that have the same characteristics as injuries that are already covered. This new cover is intended to apply to the specified list of maternal birth injuries (other than treatment injuries) that occur on or after the proposed commencement date of the Bill, which is 1 October 2022.

For clarity, maternal birth injuries that are treatment injuries can continue to be covered as treatment injuries.

The Bill will also make 5 additional policy changes to the AC Act and 7 technical changes intended to make the AC Scheme coverage more equitable, provide greater clarity for claimants, and better give effect to the policy intent of the AC Act.

Some of the additional policy changes are—

- clarifying the section 30 test for work-related gradual process, disease, or infection cover and restoring the more claimant-friendly test that was in place before 2010;
- reducing the threshold for injury-related hearing loss cover from 6% hearing loss to 5% hearing loss to ensure greater support for those with low-level hearing loss;
- ensuring legislative certainty that dependants of claimants will not be disentitled from fatal injury entitlements covered under the AC Scheme following a claimant's assisted death in accordance with the End of Life Choice Act 2019.

Source: legislation.govt.nz

12 months to raise sexual harassment grievances

The Employment Relations (Extended Time for Personal Grievance for Sexual Harassment) Amendment Bill has been introduced into Parliament.

Currently, an employee who wishes to raise a personal grievance that involves allegations of sexual harassment must do so in a period of 90 days.

The purpose of the Bill is to extend the time available to raise a personal grievance that involves allegations of sexual harassment from 90 days to 12 months. Coming forward to report sexual harassment can be difficult, and it is common for victims of sexual harassment to wait a long time before coming forward, if at all.

For a person who has been the subject of sexual harassment, 90 days may not be enough as it can take people some time to consider what has occurred and feel safe to raise it with others. This deadline

imposes an arbitrary deadline on victims of workplace sexual harassment and makes it less likely they can formally raise concerns about the behaviour of colleagues.

This Bill will improve the personal grievance process for victims of workplace sexual harassment by allowing them sufficient time to consider what has happened to them before deciding to come forward.

Source: legislation.govt.nz

Pacific Employment Action Plan

Diversifying the Pacific workforce, addressing barriers to employment and leveraging Pacific entrepreneurship are the key objectives of the Government's new Pacific Employment Action Plan launched by Minister for Pacific Peoples Aupito William Sio.

"The action plan sets out a vision to deliver better employment opportunities and services for Pacific peoples across employment, self-employment, and training," Aupito William Sio said.

"We are undertaking a range of reforms and reviews to ensure that we deliver greater impact for Pacific people across all areas that support people being in good work. Ensuring all Pacific communities can participate in a productive and dynamic labour market is at the heart of our Employment Strategy.

"The launch of the Pacific Employment Action Plan further strengthens discussion and engagement with Pacific communities to design an Employment, Education and Training system that works for them."

"Diversifying the Pacific workforce reflects the need to support Pacific inclusion across industries and occupations through workforce development initiatives, sector capability development and improvements.

"The plan's second objective identifies the importance of continued work to address systemic barriers faced by Pacific communities in the employment, education and training system".

"A key part of the plan is leveraging Pacific entrepreneurship which will enable Pacific people to create careers and business opportunities that reflect our cultural values and aspirations.

"This includes actions relating to work by the Ministry for Pacific Peoples' operational policy team to improve economic development through enhanced business services access, as well as through capital support for Pacific businesses and enhancing community business networks," Aupito William Sio said.

The Action Plan is one of seven population-specific employment action plans that support the Government's wider Employment Strategy led by the Minister for Social Development and Employment, Carmel Sepuloni.

"The Pacific Employment Action Plan is a great example of how the Employment Strategy will support Aotearoa New Zealand to become a more productive, sustainable and inclusive economy. Our Pacific communities play an integral part in growing our economy and this Plan will help us achieve that," Carmel Sepuloni said.

"The Employment Strategy aims to ensure people can fulfil their potential, find secure employment and have rewarding careers and it is important Pacific people have opportunities to shine. This needs to be done by addressing inequities in our society and ensuring people have the support they need to grow their skills and advance their careers.

"Our Government is committed to making sure our employment system and the programmes we've got in place like Apprenticeship Boost, He Poutama Rangatahi and Mana in Mahi, are well placed to help Pacific people into work now and in the future," Carmel Sepuloni said.

The Ministry for Pacific Peoples secured additional funding through Budget 2022 to support the continuation and enhancement of targeted employment and training initiatives for Pacific communities including:

- \$18.28m to continue the Toloa STEAM programme
- \$8m to continue delivering employment and training services through Tupu Aotearoa
- \$1.6m to maintain the Pacific Work Connect Service for Pacific migrants.

Source: [beehive.govt.nz](https://www.beehive.govt.nz)

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