



Opening Statement: Australian Lawyers Alliance Public Hearing: Proposed changes to liability and entitlements for psychological injury in NSW

Thank you, Chair, and I would also like to thank all members of the Standing Committee on Law and Justice for inviting the Australian Lawyers Alliance – the ALA – to appear at today's public hearing.

I am Rita Yousef, a member of the ALA's NSW Branch Workers Compensation Subcommittee, and I am a Special Counsel at Carroll & O'Dea Lawyers representing injured workers in NSW. We have prepared written submissions, so I don't propose to repeat them.

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this public hearing is taking place today – the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. I pay my respects to their Elders past and present, and to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples taking part in today's public hearing.

The ALA is a national association whose members are dedicated to protecting and promoting access to justice and equality before the law for all individuals. Our members and staff advocate for reforms to legislation, regulations and statutory schemes to achieve fair outcomes for those who have been injured, abused or discriminated against. The ALA is represented in every state and territory across Australia, and we estimate that our 1,500 members represent up to 200,000 people every year nationally.

ALA members, as legal practitioners who represent injured workers, are extremely concerned about the changes proposed in the Exposure Draft and the impact those changes will have on all injured workers in NSW, not just those who suffer psychological injuries.

Instead of drastically stripping away the rights of injured workers, the ALA contends that the NSW Government should instead be progressing measures which address prevention of injuries (both physical and psychological) in workplaces across NSW, as well as measures which support the rehabilitation and return to work for workers who are injured in NSW. Serious injuries affect workers

across all sectors. Workers such as the nurses who staff our hospitals and teachers deserve to go to work with peace of mind that there is a system they can rely on if they are injured at work.

The ALA acknowledges that reform is required to the scheme; however, the Exposure Draft is not the solution to the problems which are being considered by the Standing Committee.

The Exposure Draft appears to be a hastily prepared response to the problems facing the scheme, and the better approach would be for there to be extensive consultation with all stakeholders to explore scheme reform which will result in the desired outcomes.

Thank you again for the opportunity for the ALA to appear before this public hearing. I am happy to answer questions from the Standing Committee.
