

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Changes to Victorian mental injury eligibility a backward step in managing psychological health**

The peak body for all psychologists in Australia says the imminent changes to Victorian mental injury eligibility under its WorkCover scheme are a backward step in managing psychological health and will place more burden on the mental health system.

Australian Association of Psychologists (AAPi) Director, Dr Katrina Norris, said removing stress and burnout from the eligibility for compensation is in direct contradiction to national guidelines and codes of practice for psychological hazards and psychological health and safety in the workplace.

“This is a step back in time for the management of psychological health in the workplace,” she said.

“Not recognising psychological injury as a result of work-related stress and burnout means individuals who are suffering under these circumstances can only access support through other mental health systems.”

Dr Norris said some would be reluctant to seek this support, due to cost difficulties, ineligibility for other subsidies (such as Medicare), or long waitlists.

Under the changes, due to take effect on 31 March, stress and burnout will no longer be accepted causes of mental injury. Workers will not be eligible for compensation where a primary mental injury has been caused by work-related stress or burnout caused by events that are considered usual or typical; and are reasonably expected to occur in the course of their duties.

“This so-called modernisation negates the importance of psychological wellbeing in the workplace and removes employer responsibility for work overload, stress and burnout,” Dr Norris said.

“It places undue pressure on an already strained mental health system with unrealistic timeframes and undervalues the primary treatment providers for mental health - psychologists.

“Prevention and holding employers to account is the only way to reduce compensation claims.”

#### **About AAPi**

*AAPi is a not-for-profit peak body for psychologists that aims to preserve the rich diversity of psychological practice in Australia. Formed in 2010 by a group of*

*passionate grassroots psychologists, AAPI's primary goal is to address inequality in the profession and represent all psychologists and their clients equally to government and funding bodies. Its primary mission is to lobby for equitable access for the Australian public to professional psychological services such as Medicare Better Access Scheme and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.*

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