



Injured police officers compensation laws spark row between John Rau and union

A WAR of words has erupted between the state's Attorney-General and the police union over claims used in their campaign against workers' compensation reforms, which he says are "incorrect".

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A WAR of words has erupted between the state's Attorney-General and the police union over claims used in their campaign against workers' compensation reforms which he says are "incorrect".

John Rau has accused the Police Association of South Australia of misrepresenting the support being provided to the face of the campaign, Senior Constable Brett Gibbons, under the new Return to Work scheme.

[Writing in Monday's Advertiser](#), Mr Rau says the union's campaign was built on "shaky foundations".

The Police Association hit back at Mr Rau, saying the union had "fought long and hard to make the Government see the abyss into which the act plunges injured police officers" and other unions hold similar concerns.

Earlier this month the union launched a high-profile campaign against the reforms featuring injured officers who they said would not qualify for ongoing financial compensation, including Snr Const. Gibbons, who was shot in the face.

The association's advertisement reads: "He will carry the scars for the rest of his life but now the Weatherill Government wants him to carry the financial burden of ongoing medical expenses too."

Under the new Return to Work Act, there is a two-year cap on income maintenance and a three-year cap on medical expenses.

Only workers who exceed a 30 per cent impairment scale would be classified as a "seriously injured worker" and receive benefits beyond those caps.

Mr Rau said that under the scheme a worker could be given an "interim determination" to be treated as a "seriously injured worker", providing support past those caps.

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Only once the injury was stabilised would the worker have a final assessment of their permanent impairment.

"I understand that the SA Police made exactly this decision for Brett in August this year," Mr Rau said.

"This means that there is no clock running against him.

"It has been reported that Brett may undergo further operations to improve his injury. The interim decision that Brett has been granted ensures that he has the certainty that his medical expenses and his income support will continue to be covered as he undergoes each of those operations."

Family First MLC Robert Brokenshire has introduced an amendment to the Police Act to restore compensation for police to the former level benefits of the old scheme on top of enhanced benefits under the new scheme, but the Government does not favour giving one group of workers a "special deal".

Mr Rau said the Government would review the Return to Work Act within three years.

He said it did appear under the new scheme ongoing medical operations and maintenance of equipment such as hearing aides was covered past the three-year cap but that workers may not be entitled to compensation for pharmaceutical drugs. He said that issue would be considered in the review.

Police Association state president Mark Carroll said the interim determination on Snr Const. Gibbons was simply a "stay of execution".

"It simply means SAPOL intends to consider Brett to have a 30 per cent whole-person impairment until he can formerly be assessed," he said.

"The interim determination simply means that SAPOL intends to consider Brett to have a 30 per cent whole-person impairment until he can be formerly assessed.

"But this determination bears absolutely no relevance to his post-assessment status."

Mr Carroll said the Attorney-General's assertion that "the matters so far raised by the Police Association ... are built on shaky foundations" was nonsense.

"And, if our foundations were shaky, why would firefighters, ambulance workers, nurses, public-service unions, the Australian Lawyers Alliance, the Law Society of SA and the Australian Medical Association all hold similar concerns about the act?" he said.

"The Police Association has fought long and hard to make the Government see the abyss into which the act plunges injured police officers.

"Since October 2014, we have continuously highlighted, publicly, the compensation predicament in which Brett and other injured police officers find themselves.

"We will not be bought off with lump sums when it comes to police officers with lifelong injuries, such as the incurable oral herpes Snr Const. Alison Coad suffers."



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