



# Rethink of Health and Safety at Work Amendment Bill urged

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A coalition of New Zealand's peak workplace health and safety organisations - representing employers, workers, and health and safety professionals - has written jointly to the Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety, Hon Brooke van Velden, and members of the Education and Workforce Committee, calling for refinements to the Health and Safety at Work Amendment Bill currently before Select Committee.

The letter has been written by representatives of employers, workers and health and safety experts and endorsed by nearly all the key players in the health and safety system.

"We support the intent of the Bill; to reduce unnecessary compliance burden and to continue to support reduction in workplace harm," said Mike Cosman, spokesperson for the New Zealand Institute of Safety Management.

"However, there are four areas of the Bill that we believe could unintentionally undermine those goals if not fixed."

The four areas of concern are:

-The definition of "critical risk" - the current definition of critical risk is ambiguous and may miss the biggest sources of workplace harm (musculoskeletal and psychosocial risks). This is likely to result in greater harm to workers and significant flow on costs to employers and ACC.

-The carve-out for small PCBUs - limiting small businesses' duties to critical risks only would remove protections for more than 90% of businesses and 25% of the workforce. Small businesses are generally less safe than their larger counterparts: We propose that they are helped more to keep their workers safe, not excused from doing so.

-The relationship between other laws and health and safety - allowing compliance with other laws to trump obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act may weaken protections in many sectors (including transport, healthcare, and education).

-Greater legal weight for Approved Codes of Practice (ACOPs) - provisions which lock in Approved Codes of Practice as 'safe harbours' risk locking in outdated standards and discouraging innovation.

"Now is a critical time to get the Bill right. We have offered to engage further with the Minister and the Select Committee to help develop workable, enduring solutions."

The joint letter is signed by the Business Leaders Health & Safety Forum, the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, the New Zealand Institute of Safety Management (NZISM), and the Health and Safety Association of New Zealand (HASANZ).

The letter is endorsed by the majority of the key players in the New Zealand health and safety; the EMA, the GM Safety Forum, Te Rōpū Marutau o Aotearoa, Women in Safety and Health Excellence NZ, Hazardous Substances Professionals NZ, the Institute of Organisational Psychologists, the NZ Occupational Hygienists Society, the NZ Occupational Health Nurses Association, Physiotherapy NZ, the NZ Society for Engineering Safety, Minex, Construction Health and NZ, ShopCare Charitable Trust, and the Forest Industry Safety Council.