



17 January 2007

Committee Secretary  
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee  
Department of the Senate  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: Inquiry into the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006**

I am writing to express concern regarding amendments contained in the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006 which may have an unintended negative effect.

More than one million people in Australia experience depression, anxiety or a related substance use disorder each year. With depression affecting one in five people at some point in their lifetime, these figures have a significant impact in Australian workplaces. People with depression, anxiety and related disorders in the workplace are often stigmatised due to a lack of understanding or negative attitudes towards the illness.

The awareness, recognition and acknowledgement of depression in the workplace *is* growing among employees and employers. I am concerned that the proposed changes may affect an employee's decision to tell an employer about their depression. Disclosure is vitally important in order for people to seek help, treatment and for early intervention and prevention. **It is estimated that the cost of lost productivity due to untreated depression in Australia is \$4.3 billion per annum.**

Of particular concern is the amendment of the definition of 'injury' to exclude injuries arising from administrative action, albeit done in a reasonable manner, and the amendment to the definition of 'disease' from a 'material' degree to a 'significant' degree. It is our understanding that these changes will make it more difficult for individuals with a psychological illness/injury to make a successful claim for workers compensation.

In addition, and perhaps most importantly, I am concerned at the inclusion of a consideration of predisposition in the definition of disease and would encourage an analysis of the potential operation of this clause, as it may be discriminatory.

Given the above concerns, I request the Senate Committee re-examine the bill taking into account the potential effects for people living and working with depression, anxiety and related disorders. *beyondblue*, the health and community sectors are making great strides to address depression and mental health in Australia including in the workplace through early intervention and prevention. This is reflected by COAG's \$1.9 billion investment in world leading national mental health reforms. I hold concerns that the proposed amendments may discourage the increasing openness on depression in the workplace in contrast to the mental health reforms.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leonie Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, stylized 'Y' at the end.

Leonie Young  
CEO *beyondblue*