

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Prison officers need frontline workers' compensation**

Prison officers who suffer life-changing injuries or witness horrific violence at work should have access to the same workers' compensation as other frontline workers, the Public Service Association says.

The union is pushing for prison officers and other justice workers in frontline positions to be able to access the same workers' compensation as paramedics, police and firefighters.

"Being a prison officer is the toughest job in the state," said Stewart Little, general secretary of the PSA. "In the course of a day they might respond to a medical emergency, quell a riot or deal with a violent offender.

"No one becomes a prison officer thinking it will be a walk in the park, they accept there are risks in the job. But unlike other frontline workers they don't have the comfort of knowing their employer will look after them and their families if they get hurt at work."

Between July 2019 and April 2020, there were 442 prison officers receiving workers compensation for physical injuries, and 99 for psychological. In the 2018/19 financial year there were 491 on physical workers compensation, and 114 for psychological injuries.

However, changes to NSW's workers' compensation scheme means there is no income or medical support for serious, longterm injuries. Workers' compensation stops after two-and-a-half years, and there are caps on what medical payments they can receive.

While other frontline workers, such as paramedics, police officers and firefighters, are excluded from these changes, prison officers are not.

"With the stroke of a pen the Premier could recognise prison officers as frontline workers to ensure they'd have the support they need if they're hurt."

Prison officers have kept NSW's jails free of COVID-19, but this has come at the cost of more volatile, violent prisons as prisons closed to visits.

"Throughout COVID-19 prison officers have been on the frontline - facing riots and violence everyday. They deserve to have this risk recognised and the reassurance that if the worst happens they will be looked after."

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