



# STUART GRIMLEY MP

Member for Western Victoria  
State Leader of Derryn Hinch's Justice Party

## MEDIA RELEASE



### Grimley Fighting for Yogi's Law to Change WorkSafe Policy

*Embargoed until 12am 15 September 2021*

Derryn Hinch's Justice Party MP Stuart Grimley will today debate a motion that will give greater access to those seeking WorkCover compensation for psychiatric assistance dog and equine therapy payments.

The campaign is named 'Yogi's Law', after the assistance dog of mental health advocate Ron Fenton OAM. Since his first few weeks as an MP, Mr Grimley has met with many individuals who have found the WorkCover process adversarial and traumatic.

The catalyst for the motion were the many stories about PTSD sufferers' experience with WorkSafe and their reluctance to award costs for assistance dogs. Being a former Victoria Police SOCIT Detective, many policemen and women have shared their struggles with Mr Grimley.

WorkSafe have a Non-Established, New and Emerging Treatments and Services policy (NeNETS) where injured workers can claim costs for such treatments or services, such as plasma injections for tennis elbow or equine or canine therapies.

The issue is that WorkSafe has reportedly been changing this policy behind closed doors and interpreting it very narrowly, disallowing injured workers from claiming compensation for treatments. Mr Grimley has seen an internal WorkSafe circular telling claims workers not to accept claims for assistance dogs in certain circumstances.

Even when such claims are approved it can take nine months, due to there being no precedent for the policy. Each injured worker must prove the treatment works (despite workers in the past already establishing the evidence behind the treatment) which means workers need to engage expensive legal representation and fight for almost a year to get their claim.

In contrast, the Federal Department of Veteran's Affairs has a very transparent policy about psychiatric assistance dogs, where former veterans can access \$560 per quarter for expenses.

In the debate, the State Government will also be asked to recognise that PTSD sufferers prefer the terminology Post-Traumatic Stress *Injury* rather than Disorder, which is outdated and stigmatising.

Mr Grimley thanks the support of those with lived experience who have come forward to offer their support for the change, along with organisations such as the Community Advocacy Alliance, Blue Ribbon Foundation, Maurice Blackburn and other vocal supporters. All have expressed an availability for media comment upon request.

#### Quotes Attributable to Stuart Grimley MP:

"Psychiatric assistance dogs don't just fill a gap in the recovery and treatment of PTSD sufferers, they save lives and considerably change the quality of life for many people. WorkSafe's questionable conduct has been highlighted by two Ombudsman's Report and an ABC documentary and it needs to change urgently.

PTSD is especially prevalent among emergency services workers and as a former police officer, I know the mental struggles can eat away at you. It's time WorkSafe started respecting workers and being more transparent about its policies for accessing compensation.

Yogi's Law intends to make WorkSafe publish their NeNETS policy so people accessing compensation for equine or canine therapies know exactly what the eligibility criteria are and the rejection of such claims is only in exceptional circumstances.

Everyone deserves to get the treatment that is right for their own recovery journey."

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