

# Hon Amy Adams

Minister for Courts

# Hon Nikki Kaye

Minister for ACC



21 July 2015

**Media statement**

## **Further consultation on improving resolution of Accident Compensation appeals**

Courts Minister Amy Adams and ACC Minister Nikki Kaye have today announced further consultation on the proposed Accident Compensation Appeal Tribunal.

“The Government agreed in April 2014 to establish a new Accident Compensation Appeal Tribunal to replace two existing appeals bodies. The proposal was part of a package of reforms aimed at updating and modernising the justice system. The new tribunal process is expected to be faster, while still maintaining a fair process, and will have greater flexibility in resourcing,” Ms Adams says.

“The proposal is aimed at reducing the time it takes to deal with accident compensation appeals. Appeals are taking an average of more than 650 days, which is far too long for people wanting resolution of their ACC claim.

“Cabinet agreed in June that the proposed tribunal won’t be progressed through the Courts and Tribunals Enhanced Services Bill at this time, to allow more evaluation of initiatives to reduce the number of accident compensation appeals, and allow further consultation.”

The Judiciary, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and ACC were consulted about the proposed tribunal, and the Government has agreed that lawyers, advocates, ACC claimants’ support groups and disabled people’s organisations should also have the opportunity to take part in consultation.

In light of the good work being done by ACC around early dispute resolution and to enable consideration of other options, Cabinet decided to allow more time before further progressing the proposed tribunal.

Ms Kaye says the number of reviews of ACC decisions has decreased steadily, from around 10,000 a year to 6000 a year.

“An ACC Early Resolution pilot, aimed at resolving disputes before they go to a review hearing, has seen resolution rates increase from 14 per cent to 38 per cent in participating branches, since the trial started in 2014.

“I’m pleased to confirm that ACC expects to roll out this alternative dispute resolution process nationally by the end of the year. We want to ensure people can resolve disputes early, and this will also ease pressure on the court system, which is one of the key aims of the proposed tribunal.

“I have also asked officials to review the regulations which set the rates paid to legal and medical professionals, for the work they do as part of ACC reviews. It’s really important that people have good access to these professionals, and that they’re adequately compensated for their work.

“The targeted consultation announced today will invite submissions from key stakeholders such as claimant support groups, advocates, lawyers and disabled people’s organisations.

“A discussion document to inform the consultation will be released within the next couple of weeks. I will also meet with a number of stakeholders to hear their views first-hand,” says Ms Kaye.

Ms Adams says, “I recognise it can be hard for people who’ve experienced the trauma of being injured and wish to dispute their claim. That’s why the Government is focused on a range of initiatives to ensure some of our most vulnerable have access to better and more timely dispute resolution.”

Cabinet has confirmed that consultation will run until September 2015, and it will consider how to continue with the proposed tribunal in December.

A copy of the cabinet paper considered by Cabinet on 22 June 2015 seeking agreement to further consultation on the proposed tribunal is available at [www.mbie.govt.nz/about-us/publications/cabinet-papers/further-consultation-on-proposed-accident-compensation-appeal-tribunal.pdf](http://www.mbie.govt.nz/about-us/publications/cabinet-papers/further-consultation-on-proposed-accident-compensation-appeal-tribunal.pdf).

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