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## **ACC Futures Coalition welcomes early moves to improve ACC**

The ACC Futures Coalition is welcoming the Minister of ACC's announcement that she intends to introduce a number of changes to ACC. The Coalition sees this as a first step to more substantial reform of the scheme, but is disappointed that these initial changes don't go further.

"It is great that the Minister will be introducing the Accident Compensation (Maternal Birth and other Matters) Bill," said Hazel Armstrong Co-convenor of the ACC Futures Coalition, "and that she is attending to the problems claimants have been facing with the 3 step test for work-related gradual process, disease or infection cover. Placing the burden of proof back on ACC to demonstrate that a disease or infection is not work related should be a great relief to many injured workers and we welcome it."

"There has also been a lot of concern recently about the approach ACC had been taking to birthing injuries and we are pleased to see that Minister Sepuloni will be introducing legislation to address the most pressing issues," said Ms Armstrong. "We know that many women's and birthing groups have been angered by ACC's policy review last year that had led to a significant drop off in the number of women who had experienced perineal tears getting cover under the scheme. The changes should address these immediate issues and we will work with these groups to consider whether further changes are required."

While welcoming these changes the Coalition was disappointed that the threshold for injury-related hearing loss would remain, albeit lowered from 6% to 5%.

"We were hoping it would be removed entirely," said Ms. Armstrong, "as it is the only exclusion that uses a percentage impairment to determine cover in the Act and it cannot be reached without substantial hearing loss. 5% is an improvement but the underlying approach still remains."

"The ACC Futures Coalition had a list of changes that we were hoping to see in the first legislative tranche under this government and while we would have liked to see more substantial reform we welcome these changes as a positive first step and we will be pushing for more extensive measures in the near future," said Ms Armstrong.

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*The ACC Futures Coalition is a group of health providers, lawyers, ACC consumers, academics and unions campaigning to maintain and improve ACC and keep it publicly owned.*

*We were set up in 2009 after attacks of the scheme and signals from the government to privatise various ACC accounts and open these to competition. Since then decisions taken by the government have undermined the integrity of the scheme by limiting entitlements and access to entitlements, and moving long term claimants off the scheme, often before they are ready. We have therefore reviewed our aim which is now:*

*"To build cross-party support for retaining the status of ACC as a publicly-owned single provider committed to the 'Woodhouse Principles', and a 'no fault' compensation social insurance system for all New Zealanders. Our commitment is to have an ACC scheme that has integrity and the trust of the public of New Zealand, and is focused on injury prevention, treatment, complete rehabilitation and compensation for the injured claimant."*