ACC assistance to the families of Pike River Coal Mine workers

Questions and Answers

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1. What assistance is available to the families of the 29 Pike River Coal Mine men?

Entitlements include:

- **Funeral Grant**

Families can receive funeral grants of up to $5541.23.

- **Survivor's Grant**

A survivor's grant is a one-off payment to the partner, children and other dependants of someone whose death was the result of an accident. The amount payable is $5940.91 for a spouse or partner and $2970.47 for each child under 18 or other dependant.

- **Childcare**

Childcare payments can be made to the caregiver of each child, for up to five years or until the child turns 14.

Only children living in New Zealand are eligible for childcare payments. All childcare payments are non-taxable.

Maximum child care payments per week are:

- for one child – $126.33
- for two children – $151.58 ($75.79 for each child)
- for three or more children – $176.86 (divided evenly)

- **Weekly Compensation**

If the person who has died was an earner at the time of their death (paying income tax and ACC levies in New Zealand), weekly compensation payments are paid to the spouse or partner and dependant children based on a percentage of earnings.

2. Are employers required to make the first week weekly compensation payment?

No, the first week weekly compensation is not payable. Instead families will receive the survivors weekly compensation from the date of death calculated at the "long term rate" i.e. 80% of earnings over the past year.

3. Is a survivor's weekly compensation subject to abatement rules – i.e. if the families continue to receive the mine workers wages will their survivor's weekly compensation be reduced?

No, the survivor's weekly compensation is not subject to the abatement rules and will not be reduced in the event that the employer continues to pay the mine workers wages.

4. How is weekly compensation calculated?

A Pike River Coal Mine victim's spouse or partner can receive weekly compensation payments of up to 60% of 80% of their spouse or partner's previous year's earnings. In addition to this, children or other dependants receive up to 20% of 80% of the deceased person's earnings. The amount paid to the victim's spouse may be less than 60% if there are more than two eligible children or other dependants but the total payable to all surviving dependants cannot exceed 80% of the worker's earnings.

Weekly compensation is payable to the spouse for either five years, or until the youngest child in their care turns 18. It is payable to the children or other dependants until they turn 18, or 21 if they are in full-time study.

5. Are unborn children considered to be dependents?

Yes, ACC covers an unborn child of a deceased. A child born within 12 months of an accidental death will receive support.

6. What can funeral grants be used for?

The funeral grant may be used for burial, cremation, and related ceremonies. The grant can also cover memorial costs if the body is not recovered. It can be used for transporting the body back to the deceased's homeland. The funeral does not need to be in New Zealand.

7. How much is the support provided likely to cost ACC?

It is too soon to accurately determine this. ACC's focus at this point in time is to provide support to those affected.

8. What steps has ACC taken to ensure its Greymouth staff can provide necessary assistance to the families of the 29 Pike River miners?

ACC is prepared for major events like this where there are multiple claims. ACC is able to lodge claims based on basic information, does not require specific forms, and does not need to wait for people to make contact. All 29 claims for the miners have since been lodged with ACC, based on information supplied by the NZ Police and Pike River Coal.

ACC has already deployed a senior staff member to Greymouth to assist the families and help local ACC staff. Information packs for the families have been put together, and ACC has been compiling information about the miners' employment status and relevant personal details to ensure a prompt response.