

Hon. Brooke van Velden
Minister for Workplace Relations & Safety

Dear Minister

We are dismayed that WorkSafe has announced a restructure that will see 54 more roles lost, and the disestablishment of the health team, which will undoubtedly lead to an increase in health-related harm and deaths in workplaces across the country.

This is in addition to WorkSafe having already cut 113 roles – 15% of its staff late last year.

Under your watch WorkSafe's capacity to enforce health and safety regulations and protect workers from harm is being gutted.

Aotearoa New Zealand's record on workplace health and safety is costing the lives of so many workers, and instead of working to turn that record around, your actions and the Government's austerity programme will put workers lives in danger.

Dozens of New Zealand workers die each year as a result of workplace injuries. In addition, estimates suggest that 750-900 workers die each year from work-related occupational diseases such as asbestosis and cancers.

Following the Pike River Mine tragedy, the Independent Taskforce on Workplace Health and Safety called for a regulator that had both the mandate and resources to be a visible and effective best practice regulator. Reducing WorkSafe's capacity now risks going back to how things were in the lead up to Pike.

This disregard for working people is totally unacceptable. Workers deserve to be able to go home at the end of the day safe and well.

Workers will need to issue you an improvement notice if you don't start taking health and safety seriously and use your role to bring down our abysmal injury and death rates.

You and your Government are overseeing an all-out assault on working people – while gutting WorkSafe, you are leaving workers in the ditch on Holidays Act reform, undermining personal grievance claims, and threatening to weaken health and safety law. This is on top of scrapping fair pay agreements, bringing back 90-day fire at will agreements and redrafting employment law on behalf of the multinational corporation, Uber.

Working people are sick and tired of your extreme anti-worker agenda. It's well past time you learnt the requirements of your role and put the health and wellbeing of workers above the interests of big business.

Enough is enough. We are putting you on notice.



Rachel Mackintosh

Acting NZCTU President