

## **TASK FORCE REPORT PAVES WAY FOR NEW ‘SAFETY’ CULTURE, SAY LAWYERS**

Damaging and groundless stories about a so-called ‘compensation culture’ must now end, following publication today of the Better Regulation Task Force’s report Better Routes to Redress.

The Task Force explodes this long-standing ‘urban myth’ which has undermined the rights of injured people to claim compensation, led to misguided calls to minimise damages, and caused public bodies to adopt extraordinary practices through unnecessary fears of litigation, says the Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL).

“We must now start talking about a safety culture which will focus on preventing needless injuries from happening in the first place,” said APIL president, Colin Ettinger, today.

“The endless scaremongering about a non-existent compensation culture has diverted attention from the need to focus on protection of vulnerable people, provision of rehabilitation and proper compensation when things go wrong. And this is the driving force behind APIL’s new Safety Watch campaign.”

APIL has long called for proper regulation of claims management companies and fully supports the Task Force’s call for them to put their house in order. The association is also making great inroads into the development of mediation and rehabilitation in personal injury law, and is now finalising a code of practice on rehabilitation for its members, in conjunction with insurers and other stakeholders.

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But Ettinger sounded a warning about suggestions that more personal injury claims should be heard in the small claims court.

“Personal injury claims involve complex evidence which almost always demand legal guidance, and the cost system of the small claims procedure does not provide for this facility,” he said.

“Most personal injury claims are made against big business, or an insured defendant, who can afford legal representation in the small claims court. This tilts the playing field against the claimant and, if more claims are included, the end result could be that careless drivers or negligent employers will get away scot free, while innocent victims of injury remain uncompensated.”

He also urged caution about the suggestion that contingency fees should be introduced for personal injury claims. “Damages are calculated to the last penny in this country and there would be simply no capacity to deduct legal costs from an injured person’s damages without changing the way damages are calculated,” he said.

“But the Task Force clearly recognises the complexity of both these issues in its call for research, and we look forward to contributing to these discussions.”

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**Note to editors:** APIL has more than 5,000 members worldwide including solicitors, barristers, academics and students, who are dedicated to providing a voice for injured people. Our main objective is to ensure access to justice for injured people and focus on prevention of avoidable injuries. APIL is not a referrals company. For further details of APIL’s Safety Watch campaign, please see our new website at [www.consumersafetywatch.com](http://www.consumersafetywatch.com)

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