



Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities

Nationally Consistent Approval
Framework for Workplace Rehabilitation
Providers

GUIDE

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1. Introduction

Heads of Workers Compensation Authorities (HWCA)

HWCA is a group comprising the Chief Executives (or their representatives) of the peak bodies responsible for the regulation of workers compensation in Australia and New Zealand. This includes Australia's ten workers compensation authorities (six States, two Territories and two Commonwealth) and the New Zealand Accident Compensation Corporation.

The purpose of HWCA is to promote and implement best practice in workers compensation arrangements in Australia and New Zealand in the areas of policy and legislative matters, regulation and scheme administration¹.

At the HWCA workshop meeting on return to work, a reference group was assigned the task of outlining a nationally consistent accreditation/approval system for occupational rehabilitation providers.

During 2006 and 2007 the reference group agreed to a nationally consistent framework of approval where approval to operate as a workplace rehabilitation provider is required by jurisdictions. The group agreed that providers would apply to each jurisdiction for initial approval and demonstrate their ability to meet organisational capability standards, return to work service model principles and mandatory qualifications. If approved in one jurisdiction, others would recognise this status and ensure additional requirements were minimal, such as specific performance standards.

The purpose of a nationally consistent approval framework is intended to:

- provide a robust approval system across the jurisdictions
- enable the objective measurement of provider performance against conditions of approval
- establish standards designed to deliver high quality workplace rehabilitation to workers, employers and insurers.

The benefits of a nationally consistent framework include:

- an agreed and understood model of workplace rehabilitation
- increased uniformity of definitions and expectations of workplace rehabilitation providers
- a more robust exiting system that assures credibility of the approval framework
- increased understanding of expected standards of performance for employers, workers, providers and insurers
- reduced administrative costs and complexity for providers who work across jurisdictions
- reduced costs and complexity for employers and insurers who work across jurisdictions.

¹ Heads of Workers Compensation Authority home page <http://www.hwca.org.au/vision.php>

The national approval framework is a national system but does not decrease the insurer, provider and employer's responsibility to observe local purchasing and service delivery requirements.

Workplace Rehabilitation

Managing workers' injuries in the workplace to achieve early return to health and work are the central outcomes of the workers compensation system. The return to work services and the commitments, roles and responsibilities of participants within the system are designed to facilitate workplace rehabilitation in order to achieve these outcomes.

There is considerable evidence to support the concept that an offer of suitable work/employment and the engagement of key parties (worker, employer, doctor, insurer and other providers) in implementing injured workers' return to work significantly reduces the duration and associated costs of claims,² including improving social and health outcomes for the workers concerned (see Appendix 1 – Workplace Rehabilitation Model for more details).

Workplace rehabilitation providers identify and address the **critical** physical, psychological, social, environmental and organisational risk factors which many have an impact on a worker's ability to successfully return to work.

Services that assist a worker to return to work with the same employer may involve the following:

- early, accurate identification of risks, needs and abilities of the worker and workplace through worksite visits, consultation with the worker, employer and treating professionals, workplace assessment and/or vocational assessment
- designing and implementing return to work interventions to address the risks and match the needs and abilities of the worker and workplace (return to work planning and monitoring)
- negotiating, monitoring and adapting suitable duties to upgrade the worker's capacity to perform their pre-injury duties
- assisting the worker, employer and nominated treating doctor to manage the workers compensation system to achieve a safe return to work for the injured worker
- advising on workplace or work process modifications
- organising the supply of assistive equipment and ensuring the injured worker can safely utilise the equipment
- coordinating and mobilising required services and resources
- rehabilitation counselling and support to maintain the worker's motivation to return to work

² Institute of Health and Work, 2004. Workplace-based Return-to-work interventions: A Systematic Review of the Qualitative and Quantitative literature. Ontario.

- recommending, coordinating and monitoring on the job training if returning to a new job with the same employer
- setting expectations, developing agreed goals and defining the extent of the rehabilitation intervention
- advising on the need for ongoing treatment or rehabilitation, negotiating these with the insurer, employer or treating doctor if required to maintain the worker at work.

Services that assist a worker to return to work with a new employer may involve the following:

- assessing the worker's vocational potential and capacity through vocational assessment and counselling
- negotiating a job placement strategy that outlines the job placement services to meet the worker's needs
- preparation of the worker to seek and obtain a new job
- facilitating job search and placement support for job seekers
- assisting key parties to manage the workers compensation system to ensure a safe return to work
- assessing potential worksites to ensure the suitability of a new job or work trial placement
- advising on workplace or work process modifications
- organising assistive equipment to ensure the worker is safe to return to work
- mobilising services and resources such as on the job or formal training
- negotiating with employers regarding the use of employer incentives
- rehabilitation counselling and support to maintain the worker's motivation to return to work
- regularly and actively reviewing the goals and progress towards return to work
- setting expectations, developing agreed goals and defining the extent of the rehabilitation intervention.

Workplace Rehabilitation does not include:

- Work conditioning (exercise programs)
- Treatment (including clinical physical and psychological therapies)
- Overseeing/monitoring of injured worker's treatment
- Determining worker's ongoing entitlements
- Claims management
- Assessment of daily living.

Whilst rehabilitation providers may have the skills to perform some of these services the services are not considered workplace rehabilitation services.

Workplace Rehabilitation Providers

Providers in the field of workplace rehabilitation have the qualifications, experience and expertise appropriate to provide services in accordance with the following definition based on that developed by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (1995)³:

Workplace rehabilitation is a managed process involving timely intervention with appropriate and adequate services based on assessed need and is aimed at maintaining injured or ill employees in, or returning them to, suitable employment.

Rehabilitation providers are engaged to provide specialised expertise in addition to that generally available within the employer and insurer operations. Rehabilitation providers are engaged for injured workers where return to work is not straight forward. Service provision is largely delivered at the workplace by:

- identifying and designing suitable duties for the injured worker to assist employers to meet their obligations in providing suitable employment to injured workers
- identifying and coordinating rehabilitation strategies that ensure workers are able to safely perform their duties
- facilitating an early return to work of the worker
- forging the link between the insurer, employer and treatment providers to ensure a focus on return to work
- arranging appropriate retraining and placement in alternative employment when the worker is unable to return to pre-injury duties.

³ NOHSC: 3021 (1995), Guidance Notes for Best Practice Rehabilitation Management of Occupational Injuries and Diseases, April 1995.

2. Approval Framework for Rehabilitation Providers

The role of the Workers Compensation Authority (WCA) as the approval body for rehabilitation providers is to ensure minimum standards are consistently met in the delivery of rehabilitation services to injured workers and employers. The WCA is responsible for maintaining an approval framework that:

- seeks to ensure provider conformance with the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation
- creates an efficient and effective system in which rehabilitation providers can operate
- promotes collaboration and delivers outcomes to all stakeholders
- promotes innovation and continuous improvement in return to work solutions.

This guide outlines the approval framework for rehabilitation providers who satisfy the needs of the WCA across all jurisdictions in Australia where accreditation/approval is required. The application and evaluation process assures conformance with the Conditions of Approval. Feedback from key parties supports ongoing evaluation against the Conditions of Approval, whilst a focus on improvement activities promotes quality service delivery.

2.1 Conditions of Approval

The Conditions of Approval are the overarching requirements to operate as a rehabilitation provider. It is necessary for the provider to adhere to:

- the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation
- minimum qualifications for rehabilitation consultants
- a workplace model of rehabilitation
- minimum performance measures including return to work rates, costs and through put.

2.2 Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation

The Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation are the foundation elements of the organisation's service delivery model and define service provision, organisational and administrative infrastructure, staffing and quality service delivery principles.

2.3 Process for Approval as a Workplace Rehabilitation Provider

The following outlines a nationally consistent approval process for workplace rehabilitation providers. It does not imply automatic approval to operate in a second jurisdiction (see section 2.4 Cross Jurisdictional Providers – Mechanisms for Approval, Evaluation and Cancellation of Approval).

The application and evaluation processes outline how a provider seeks and maintains approval through conformance with the Conditions of Approval. In summary an organisation wishing to operate as a rehabilitation provider:

- makes an initial application to the WCA outlining how their organisation will meet the Conditions of Approval. If the application is approved, the provider is granted a three-year Instrument of Approval
- following initial approval may be required to undergo an independent evaluation 12 months after the application approval
- during their three years of approval is required to undertake an annual self-evaluation and may undergo a periodic evaluation and/or exception evaluation by an independent evaluator initiated at the discretion of the WCA within their jurisdiction
- if seeking to renew their Instrument of Approval is required to submit a renewal application prior to the expiration of the three-year approval period.

2.4 Cross Jurisdictional Providers - Mechanisms for Approval, Evaluation and Cancellation of Approval

For the purposes of approving, evaluating and monitoring a provider's performance, information may be exchanged between jurisdictions where providers operate or intend to operate in more than one jurisdiction.

Applications

Organisations wishing to be approved as a rehabilitation provider in several jurisdictions will submit an initial application to the jurisdiction in which the provider will undertake the majority of their work.

Providers approved in one jurisdiction may then apply to operate in another jurisdiction.

Approval to operate in the subsequent jurisdiction/s will depend on:

- current approval status in other jurisdiction/s
- submission of a business plan which demonstrates the ability to operate in that jurisdiction (see requirements in 4.2.1 Conditions for Multi Site Organisations)
- payment of the jurisdiction's set application fee.

Renewal Applications

Providers operating across jurisdictions will submit a renewal application to the jurisdiction in which the highest proportion of their work is delivered.

Renewal fees will be payable to each jurisdiction in accordance with local fee schedules.

Evaluations

For administrative efficiency of both providers and WCAs, the WCAs may collaborate in the evaluation of providers.

Where a need is identified to conduct a cross jurisdictional evaluation the WCAs will collaborate in designing an evaluation plan and consult the provider concerned in the development of the plan.

For example:

Victoria instigates an evaluation of the provider's application of the Principles for Workplace Rehabilitation. The provider has 11 sites and operates in another two jurisdictions (NSW and Comcare). Three sites are to be evaluated according to the sampling method, one site in Victoria and two sites in NSW (one of the NSW sites is to include a review of NSW and Comcare work). Victoria will conduct the Victoria site evaluation and may call upon the assistance of NSW and Comcare to conduct the NSW evaluations.

Cancellation of Approval

Grounds for cancelling a provider's Instrument of Approval are outlined in 4.4 Cancellation of Approval. Each WCA concerned will commence the cancellation process if a provider fails to remediate their nonconformance, as per the process outlined in 4.2.1 Assessing conformity.

For instance, taking the example above, if one of the sites during the evaluation process is assessed as nonconforming and fails to correct the nonconformance after an agreed specified period the cancellation process will commence. The WCA will advise the provider of the intention to cancel the provider's Instrument of Approval. The provider may provide evidence to WCA outlining why their Instrument of Approval should not be cancelled. If the evidence is inadequate the organisation's Instrument of Approval will be cancelled, following completion of the relevant jurisdictional appeals process.

For cross-jurisdictional providers this information will be exchanged between the relevant jurisdictions.

3. Conditions of Approval

The following conditions apply to Instruments of Approval for a workplace rehabilitation provider:

1. the rehabilitation provider must comply with the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation
2. the rehabilitation provider must ensure that all services are delivered in accordance with the workplace model of rehabilitation by persons who hold the minimum qualifications as defined in the model and in accordance with relevant jurisdictional service descriptions
3. the rehabilitation provider's management structure must include at least one person who holds rehabilitation consultant qualification outlined in the Principles and who is able to demonstrate at least five years' relevant workplace rehabilitation experience
4. the rehabilitation provider must participate in annual self-evaluations and in independent evaluations as required by the WCA to demonstrate compliance with the conditions of approval

5. the rehabilitation provider must demonstrate management of 12 cases of workplace rehabilitation activity within any jurisdiction in the preceding 12 months (due consideration will be given to providers servicing rural and remote areas)
6. the rehabilitation provider must maintain the minimum return to work rate (the rate will be determined by the working group after further analysis)
7. the rehabilitation provider must provide data to the WCA
8. the rehabilitation provider's facilities must provide a safe, accessible environment for workers, staff and visitors
9. the rehabilitation provider must remain financially solvent
10. the rehabilitation provider must notify the WCA in advance, or as soon as practical, if any of the following situations arise (the WCA will review the status of approval and determine whether the proposed arrangements comply with each Condition of Approval):
 - i. the business is sold or the controlling interest in the business is taken over by a new shareholder(s), owner(s) or director(s)
 - ii. the business changes its trading name or location of premises
 - iii. the business supplies or has connections with other suppliers of services within the workers compensation industry
 - iv. a new chief executive officer or director or principal head is appointed
 - v. there is a major change in the workplace rehabilitation services and/or program provided by the provider (such as loss of qualified staff)
 - vi. there is any other change that affects, or may affect, the provider's service quality and procedures
 - vii. the provider has entered into voluntary financial administration, becomes insolvent or is the subject of bankruptcy proceedings
 - viii. there are any professional misconduct proceedings being taken against the provider or any individuals employed or engaged by the provider.
11. the rehabilitation provider must accept that the WCA may
 - i. initiate an evaluation at any time during the period of the approval which may involve an evaluation of conformance to the Conditions of Approval, and/or
 - ii. consult with the relevant professional or industry associations in determining what are reasonable expectations regarding performance, and/or
 - iii. impose additional requirements, and/or
 - iv. exchange information with other jurisdictions on provider performance, and/or

- v. cancel approval status if the above conditions are not met.

4. Approval Process

Outlined below is a summary of the approval process. It includes:

- initial application for approval
- monitoring of provider performance
- application for renewal
- cancellation of approval
- provider withdrawal from service delivery
- regaining approval after withdrawing or having approval cancelled.

4.1 Initial Application

Organisations wishing to be approved as a rehabilitation provider will submit an initial application outlining how they will meet the Conditions of Approval. The application will include the following information:

- demographic, ownership and business details including association or connection with other organisations supplying services within the workers compensation industry
- details of their model of service delivery
- a statement of commitment to the Conditions of Approval
- staff details (as per the application form).
- two referee contact details.

The appropriate application fee will accompany the application (see Appendix 2 – Fees).

For the purpose of approval, a multi-site organisation is one with:

- a single caseload management system
- one system of management control over all sites (if sites or regions are autonomous then they must be evaluated separately)
- central management reviews and evaluations in accordance with the provider's internal evaluation processes.

The applicant will be advised in writing of the outcome of the assessment and, if successful, will be issued with a three-year Instrument of Approval. If unsuccessful the applicant will be advised of the reasons.

Instrument of Approval

Content

Each Instrument of Approval will contain the following:

- name and address of provider
- provider number
- date of issue
- date of expiry.

Period of Validity

Instruments of approval will be valid for a period of three years, subject to maintaining the Conditions of Approval.

Use of Instruments of Approval

References to such a document for advertising purposes will be limited to the information contained in the document. Where a statement is made it is recommended that it be in the following form: 'This *organisation* is approved by the Workers Compensation Authority to provide workplace rehabilitation services within the workers compensation system in xxxxx jurisdiction.'

4.2 Monitoring of Provider Performance

The WCA will review provider performance by analysing data from the WCA's database, complaints records, self-evaluation reports, improvement/action plans, onsite evaluations and information supplied to the WCA.

The quantitative data will include:

- annual throughput
- return to work outcomes
- costs.

The information will identify trends across the system, as well as identify individual providers performing outside the industry average.

Trend data will assist the WCA in determining possible initiatives to improve the system and to identify practices that are working well.

Information about individual performance may trigger further investigations through interviews with insurers and the provider and/or may initiate an exception evaluation of the provider's conformance with the Conditions of Approval.

4.2.1 Evaluation of Provider Conformance with the Conditions of Approval

The primary objective of an evaluation is to determine conformance with the Conditions of Approval and will be conducted by the WCA according to the following timeline:

First evaluation at 12 months

An independent evaluation may be conducted for provider organisations 12 months after approval of their initial application.

Periodic evaluation

The WCA will determine the schedule of periodic evaluations. Providers may undergo a periodic evaluation during each three years of approval.

The WCA will advise the provider organisation of the intention to carry out an evaluation at least one month prior to the evaluation date.

Evaluation by exception

Factors that will initiate an evaluation by exception may include public safety, previous and current provider performance, information obtained about provider activity during insurer reviews and complaints about provider performance.

Criteria for Evaluators

Independent (external) evaluations may be performed by WCA staff and/or an external professional evaluator/auditors engaged by the WCA for that purpose.

The evaluation team will include members with the following:

- successful completion of an ISO9001 lead assessor training course (or equivalent)
- a supervised period of training in practical assessment and auditing
- ability to demonstrate understanding of the Conditions of Approval for workplace rehabilitation providers
- at least five years' experience related to the workplace rehabilitation industry
- qualifications as per the rehabilitation consultant qualification outlined in the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation.

Pre-evaluation Requirements

In preparation for an onsite evaluation the WCA may review the following:

- staff employed by the provider organisation within the last 12 months
- number of cases managed by the provider organisation within the last 12 months and the number of current cases

- provider's annual performance data from the WCA's corporate data repository
- number and nature of any complaints about the provider organisation received by the WCA within the current approval period
- number and nature of any nonconformities recorded in the previous evaluation
- quality assurance improvement plans in response to the previous evaluation
- outcome of, and actions taken in response to, the provider's most recent annual self-evaluation
- certification against other standards obtained by the provider and verified by a recent audit report (may reduce sample size or recognise compliance with some of the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation)
- compliance with the jurisdiction's specific service and legislative requirements
- remedial action since the last evaluation.

The provider shall be advised of the evaluation plan and a timeframe for the completion of the evaluation.

Conditions for Multi Site Organisations

The following conditions apply to multi site organisations:

- the head office of the provider will be included in the evaluation sample
- selection of sites for evaluation will be in part random and in part targeted. A representative sample will be selected taking into consideration the:
 - results and reports of self evaluations
 - the number of sites
 - geographical dispersion of the sites
 - results and coverage of previous evaluations
 - variations in the size of the sites
 - variations in working practices and activities undertaken
 - spread of the organisation's personnel over the sites
 - previously mentioned considerations when planning an evaluation.

- sampling formula for site numbers for a single period is as follows:

Number of sites within the organisation	Number of sites to be evaluated
1-3	1
4-6	2
7-11	3
12-16	4
17-25	5
26-36	6
37-49	7
50 or more	The square root of the number of sites (rounded up)

Should one site be assessed as nonconforming the multi-site provider business will be at risk of losing their approval as an organisation.

Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation using the WCA evaluation tools, will consist of the combined evidence of the:

- existence and maintenance of systems and documented procedures that address the Conditions of Approval
- evaluation of the awareness and application of the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation
- evaluation of conformance with the Conditions of Approval.

Evaluation of conformance with the Conditions of Approval may include:

- desktop review of documented procedures
- examination of a sample of worker case records (samples will be representative of the organisation's caseload and categories. The sample size will be no less than 10 and no more than $0.6 \times \text{square root of the number of cases closed in the previous 12 months plus current cases}$)
- verification of the provider's self-evaluation
- obtaining feedback from stakeholders (may include sample of worker interviews, staff interviews, employer, doctor or insurer interviews and/or other WCAs)
- examination of provider documents and records that demonstrate the application of systems that enable the provider to meet the Conditions of Approval.

Whatever means of demonstrating conformance is used, the evaluator will ensure that there is verifiable objective evidence of achievement of the required outcomes.

The evaluation methodology and preparation of the evaluation plan will be developed on a case by case basis and made available to the provider one month prior to the onsite evaluation. The case records/files identified for review will be made available to the provider 48 hours prior to the onsite evaluation.

Assessing Conformity

In order to determine whether conformance with the Conditions of Approval has been achieved and is being maintained the evaluator will assess the degree, nature and significance of any nonconformity.

All Conditions of Approval must be met to maintain approval.

Each principle and its indicator will be assessed as either complying or non-complying.

Complying - the requirements of the principle are met.

Non-complying - the requirements of the principle are not fully met.

The following conformity ratings will apply to principles and each of the indicators.

Conformity - level 1

95% compliance with all indicators.

Conformity - level 2

At least 85% compliance with all indicators.

Nonconformity

Less than 85% compliance with all indicators.

Impact of Conformance Ratings on the Instrument of Approval

Conformity - level 1: no remediation plan required. Approval is maintained.

Conformity - level 2: evidence of implementation of corrective actions is to be submitted to the WCA within three months from the date the report is received. Failure to provide evidence of the correction within three months will result in automatic reclassification to nonconformity - level 3.

Nonconformity: a corrective action plan will be submitted to the WCA within 30 working days and on-site re-evaluation will be conducted within six months. Failure to correct nonconformance within the agreed specified timeframe will result in automatic cancellation of approval.

4.2.2 Self-evaluation and Declaration of Conformity

Self-evaluation

The rehabilitation provider will assess its conformance with the Conditions of Approval by conducting and documenting self-evaluation every 12 months, using the WCA evaluation tools.

It is recommended the evaluation will be carried out by a person or persons who:

- have successfully completed an auditor training course
- have a supervised period of training in practical assessment and auditing
- have at least five years' experience related to the workplace rehabilitation industry
- are not personally responsible for the aspects of the business that they evaluate (eg if evaluating case records, they should not have been involved in service delivery associated with the case or if evaluating staff files they should not be involved in supervision and training associated with the staff member).

For multi site organisations, refer to conditions for multi site organisations when developing the self-evaluation methodology.

Declaration of Conformity

A Declaration of Conformity is required to provide evidence that the Conditions of Approval are being adhered to and to maintain the confidence of the WCA, workers, employers and insurers.

The declaration must include the following components:

- name of the provider business
- the following conformity statement: 'The [name of provider business] is in conformity with the Conditions of Approval of workplace rehabilitation providers within the workers compensation system'.
- identification of the person(s) and their qualifications who conducted the evaluation, and a declaration that were not personally responsible for the aspects of the business that they evaluate (eg if evaluating case records, they should not have been involved in service delivery associated with the case or if evaluating staff files they should not be involved in supervision and training associated with the staff member).
- acknowledgement and acceptance of the consequences of making a false declaration
- the principal/s of the provider business to sign and the date of signing.

False Declarations

If a provider business is found to have made a false claim regarding conformance with the Conditions of Approval or in a Declaration of Conformity, the WCA will initiate a cancellation procedure outlined below in 4.4 Cancellation of Approval.

4.3 Applications for Renewal

Providers wishing to renew their period of approval will submit an application form, together with:

- updated demographic, ownership and business details
- updated details of their model of service delivery

- a statement of commitment to the Conditions of Approval
- a signed Declaration of Conformity to the Conditions of Approval
- updated staff details (as per the renewal application form)
- two referees
- copies of the most recent self-evaluation report
- details of any follow-up action taken as a result of those evaluations
- the appropriate fee.

The WCA will assess renewal applications against the Conditions of Approval with reference to:

- details of staff employed by the provider organisation
- the number of cases managed by the provider organisation within the approval period, and the number of current cases
- annual performance data as per the WCA's data analysis
- complaints about the provider organisation actioned by the WCA within the approval period
- the outcome of the provider's self-evaluation
- the number and nature of any nonconformities recorded in previous evaluations
- quality improvement plans
- verification of referees and responses from customers obtained through interviews with insurers, workers, employers and/or treatment providers
- performance information from other relevant jurisdictions for cross jurisdictional providers.

The applicant will be advised in writing of the outcome of the assessment and, if successful, a three-year Instrument of Approval will be issued. If unsuccessful the applicant will be advised of the reasons.

4.4 Cancellation of Approval

The WCA concerned may cancel a provider's approval in that jurisdiction at any time for non-conformity with the Conditions of Approval or if the provider organisation significantly changes a material characteristic of their business without prior notification to the WCA.

Grounds for Cancellation

Grounds for cancellation include, but are not limited to, the following circumstances:

- not conforming with the Conditions of Approval as agreed by the provider in the initial or renewal application
- not conforming with the Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation

- not meeting minimum performance measures
- failure to maintain staffing with appropriate qualifications at levels that enable adequate service provision
- not advising the WCA of a change of business arrangements
- making false statements within the initial or renewal approval application
- criminal conviction
- financial impropriety
- professional misconduct
- evidence of a serious health and safety risk to, or coercion of, injured workers
- demonstrated conflict of interest.

Process of Cancellation

Where a provider has failed to meet the Conditions of Approval and then failed to remediate their nonconformance, as per the process outlined above in 4.2.1 Assessing Conformity, each WCA concerned will:

- advise the provider of the intention to cancel the provider's approval. The provider may provide evidence to the WCA outlining why their Instrument of Approval should not be cancelled.
- review the provider's response and determine if cancellation of their approval will be activated, or whether a course of further corrective action by the provider is likely to ensure conformance with the Conditions of Approval
- if cancellation of a provider's approval is to proceed, prepare a submission outlining the reasons for cancellation and the details of the provider's response to the appropriate delegate with the WCA. If approved, the WCA will notify the provider of cancellation.

Appeals against cancellation will be lodged in writing, giving reasons, and will be considered in accordance with the appeal mechanism of the relevant WCA.

Providers whose approval is cancelled by the WCA must return their Instrument of Approval and cooperate in the transfer of current cases to another provider. Other jurisdictions will be advised of the cancellation of approval.

4.5 Provider Withdrawal from Service Delivery

Providers who cease workplace rehabilitation services must inform the relevant authority/ies, return the Instrument of Approval and cooperate in the transfer of current cases to other providers. Other jurisdictions will be advised of the provider's withdrawal from service delivery.

4.6 Regaining Approval after withdrawing or having approval cancelled

Directors and trustees of a provider that withdraws or has their approval status cancelled by the WCA will not be eligible to apply for approval until they can demonstrate to the WCA's satisfaction that the reasons for cancellation or withdrawal no longer exist.

5. Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation

The Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation are the foundation elements of the organisation's model of service delivery. The principles address service provision, organisational and administrative infrastructure, staffing arrangements and quality framework.

Providers are required to demonstrate how they will conform to these principles and its indicators in their initial application and in an ongoing way during the period of approval.

5.1. Service Provision Principles

Rehabilitation providers deliver services to workers and employers in a cost effective, timely and proactive manner to achieve a safe and durable return to work.

This involves:

1. a focus on return to work
 - a. expectations of a return to work are established early in service delivery
 - b. services are identified and delivered with a focus on maximising employment potential in relation to a worker's pre-injury employment
 - c. services are identified and delivered with a focus on return to work
2. timely intervention throughout service provision
 - a. workers receive prompt attention and intervention appropriate to their needs
 - b. barriers, risks and strengths are identified and strategies promptly implemented
 - c. services are actively coordinated and integrated with other injury management and return to work activities
3. effective service provision at appropriate cost
 - a. needs of the worker and employer are identified by means of adequate and appropriate assessment
 - b. service levels are commensurate with worker and employer needs
 - c. costs are commensurate with the range and extent of services provided

4. effective communication facilitates engagement of all parties (worker, employer, insurer and other service providers)
 - a. respectful, open and effective working relationships with and between relevant parties are established and maintained
 - b. the provider acts as a link between the workplace and treatment providers to translate functional gains into meaningful work activity
 - c. expectations of a return to work goal and services required are established with relevant parties at commencement and throughout service provision
 - d. progress is communicated with relevant parties throughout service provision
 - e. durability of employment is confirmed 13 weeks after placement (further consideration will be given when clarifying performance).
5. evidence based decisions
 - a. assessments demonstrate need for service
 - b. service selection is the most appropriate and cost effective of those available
 - c. all services are focused on and facilitate return to work.

5.2. Organisational and Administrative Principles

Business, governance and administrative arrangements provide an appropriate infrastructure for reliable and consistent service provision to workers, employers, insurers and other relevant parties.

This involves:

1. publicly available documented organisational philosophy that demonstrates a commitment to:
 - a. a workplace model of rehabilitation
 - b. a focus on an early, safe and durable return to work for injured workers
 - c. engagement of and respect for workers and employers
 - d. an equitable and consistently applied approach to recommending commencement and cessation of service delivery
 - e. customer focus that incorporates the management of solicited and unsolicited feedback with the aim of continuous service improvement
2. a comprehensive and robust corporate governance infrastructure, including:
 - a. systems of probity
 - i. avoidance of conflict of interest
 - ii. prevention, management and reporting of malpractice/fraud

- b. appropriate financial administration - accurate accounting
 - c. maintenance of appropriate and adequate insurances, including professional indemnity, public liability and workers compensation
 - d. data collection and analysis of provider performance
3. a records management system that meets State and Commonwealth legislation requirements but as a minimum must include:
- a. comprehensive, accurate and accessible records pertaining to all clientele
 - b. staff appointments, verification of qualifications and supervision arrangements
 - c. collection, collation and analysis of feedback and complaints
 - d. security of storage of records for at least seven years
 - e. provision of data that meets the WCA and customer requirements
4. privacy and confidentiality practices in compliance with relevant privacy legislation
5. safe work practices and return to work and injury management policies in compliance with:
- a. injury management and workers compensation legislation
 - b. occupational health and safety legislation.

5.3. Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Principles

Quality systems that ensure customer focused service delivery, and collect and monitor qualitative and quantitative data to identify areas of strength and opportunities for systems and service improvement.

This involves:

- 1. quality assurance
 - a. implementation of appropriate review mechanisms (eg self audits, peer reviews) to assure compliance with all Conditions of Approval
 - b. implementation and documentation of corrective and preventative actions and monitoring and review of their effectiveness
- 2. customer feedback mechanisms
 - a. collection, review and action on feedback from customers
 - b. implementation of a complaints management system
- 3. continuous improvement
 - a. Identification of opportunities for improvement
 - b. Planning, piloting, refinement and implementation of improvement strategies
 - c. Monitoring and review of their effectiveness.

5.4. Staff Management Principles

Service delivery staff and contractors will possess appropriate skills, knowledge, qualifications and experience. A robust induction and continuous learning and development program supports the acquisition and maintenance of staff skills and knowledge.

This involves: recruitment, qualifications, knowledge and experience

- a. staff have the appropriate qualifications for service provision
 - b. staff have knowledge of injury management principles and the relevant workers compensation legislation, policy and procedures
 - c. staff take into consideration industrial relations and human resource matters that may affect a worker's return to work
 - d. staff interacting with injured workers and workplaces have current checks and clearances where appropriate eg police, security and/or child protection.
2. induction and ongoing learning and development
 - a. staff are aware of and have access to current copies of all policies and procedures that relate to their work and understand their content
 - b. staff have appropriate supervision, support and peer review
 - c. staff members' compliance with their own professional codes of conduct is monitored.
 3. adequate staff resourcing
 - a. caseload management systems ensure efficient allocation of cases and that staff experience and skill levels match case complexity
 - b. handover practices ensure cases are reviewed and all parties are informed, to maintain continuity of care.

6. Qualifications

6.1 Rehabilitation Consultant Qualifications

As a Condition of Approval rehabilitation providers must ensure that staff employed are suitably qualified to provide workplace rehabilitation services.

As a minimum, workplace rehabilitation consultants must have:

- a qualification recognised, accredited or registered by one of the following associations or state registration boards:
 - Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (recognised)
 - Rehabilitation Counselling Association of Australia (recognised)

- Australian Association of Occupational Therapists (recognised/registered in QLD, SA, NT and WA)
- Physiotherapist Registration Board (registered)
- Australian Association of Exercise and Sports Science (accredited as Exercise Physiologists)
- Psychologists Registration Board (registered)
- Speech Pathology Australia (recognised)
- Australian Association of Social Workers (recognised)
- Medical Board (registered)
- Nurses Registration Board (registered)

and

- 12 months' experience in workplace rehabilitation. Where staff have less than 12 months' experience in workplace rehabilitation the rehabilitation provider will demonstrate that:
 - the staff member will participate in a comprehensive induction program
 - professional supervision will be provided for at least 12 months.

6.2 Workplace Rehabilitation Services Qualifications

Minimum qualification for specific workplace rehabilitation services

Some workplace rehabilitation services can only be delivered by designated professional groups. The minimum qualifications for professionals to deliver these services for workers with injuries are included in the description of the workplace rehabilitation services as specified by each jurisdiction.

7. Customer Feedback and Complaints Management

7.1 Feedback about Rehabilitation Providers

Providers will outline their customer feedback policy and procedures for managing complaints (see principle 5.3).

Providers will outline a complaints management approach that is consistent with international standards⁴ for effective complaints handling and includes the following:

- customer access to an open, easy to use and responsive complaints handling process
- resolution of complaints in a consistent, timely, systematic and responsive manner
- identification of trends and the proactive elimination of causes for complaint

⁴ [International standard ISO 10002:2004(E)]

- a customer focused approach to complaint resolution, including improving the skills of personnel in working with customers
- continual review and analysis of the complaints handling process, the resolution of complaints and process improvement
- management commitment and involvement in complaint resolution.

The WCA is itself committed to these elements when handling complaints from or about rehabilitation providers.

7.2 Feedback on the Approval Framework and Evaluation Process

The WCA welcomes feedback and will regularly seek comments on the approval framework, including the evaluation process. Feedback will be used to identify improvements that can be made to the approval system to ensure it promotes and facilitates the provision of timely and cost-effective rehabilitation services for workers and employers.

Appendix 1

Workplace Rehabilitation Model

Providers will use a model of workplace rehabilitation aimed at an early and safe return to work for injured workers.

Workplace rehabilitation is a service delivery model that involves a designated rehabilitation consultant responsible and accountable for coordinating services designed to achieve a cost effective, safe, early and durable return to work for the injured worker. Services move along a service delivery continuum of assessment of need, planning, active implementation and review of services and re-evaluation. This requires effective communication, decision-making, financial accountability and informed purchasing of services and resources.

1. Service Delivery Continuum

1.1 Assessment of Need

Early, accurate identification of risks and needs ensures the most appropriate intervention is applied to achieve a safe return to work.

Assessment of need occurs throughout the course of service delivery when new information is received.

1.2 Return to Work Planning

Return to work planning is required when all necessary assessments have been completed and a worker needs assistance to:

- return to work with the pre-injury employer, or
- undertake physical upgrading or transitional duties with a host employer prior to return to work with the pre-injury employer, or
- find a new job.

Return to work planning will:

- specify strategies that address the risks, needs and capacities as identified with respect to the worker's medical status, functional capacity, vocational status, psychosocial status, employer requirements, workplace issues and any other return to work barriers
- take place in consultation with the worker, the treating doctor, the employer (if the worker is still employed), the union (if involved) and other treating practitioners to align expectations of key parties
- be consistent with the insurer's injury/case/claim management plan
- take account of the preferred hierarchy for placement but not at the expense of the worker's needs and the employer's capacity, which is:

- same job/same employer
- different job/same employer
- similar job/different employer
- different job/different employer
- consider personnel management and industrial issues in the workplace and adopt strategies to address these issues if they act as barriers to return to work.

1.3 Active Implementation and Review

Implementing return to work services involves:

- coordination and timely mobilisation of services and resources
- cost effective service delivery that avoids unnecessary duplication and is integrated with treatment and provided in a timely manner
- regular, timely and active reviews of return to work strategy. These will be conducted to:
 - gather evidence of progress towards outcomes
 - review the impact of interventions on identified return to work needs
 - consider and act on new information
 - maintain contact and align expectations of all relevant parties.

1.4 Durable Return to Work

Durable return to work includes:

- setting expectations, developing agreed goals and defining the extent of the rehabilitation intervention
- advising on the need for ongoing treatment or rehabilitation and negotiating these with the insurer, employer or treating doctor if these are required to maintain the worker at work
- confirmation of durability of employment (if employed).

Appendix 2

Each jurisdiction will charge fees for initial and renewal applications and evaluations according to jurisdictional fee schedules.

Appendix 3

Glossary of Terms

Application - the act of applying the Conditions of Approval to the practices and services of workplace rehabilitation.

Compliance - the act of adhering to specific Conditions of Approval and specific Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation.

Conditions - the Workers Compensation Authority requirements.

Conformity - fulfillment of all Conditions of Approval.

Evaluation - systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining evidence to determine the extent to which the Conditions of Approval are fulfilled.

Evaluations by exception - evaluations conducted in response to specific information obtained or received by the Workers Compensation Authority.

Home jurisdiction - the jurisdiction where the provider's head office is located.

Instrument – the document of approval of workplace rehabilitation providers issued by Workers Compensation Authorities called certificate, agreement or instrument in some jurisdictions.

Insurer – organisations that manage workers compensation policies and claims. They include self and specialised insurers and scheme agents.

Non-compliance – the act of failing to adhere to a Condition of Approval or specific Principles of Workplace Rehabilitation.

Nonconformity – failure to fulfill the Conditions of Approval.

Periodic evaluation - evaluations scheduled within the provider's three-year approval period.

Reasonably necessary intervention – intervention that is appropriate, cost effective, accepted amongst professional peers and considered in light of alternative interventions.

Rehabilitation consultant - suitably qualified health/behavioural science professional employed by a rehabilitation provider.

Rehabilitation provider - organisation offering specialised rehabilitation services to assist injured workers return to work following a workplace injury.

Return to work coordinator – an individual appointed by the employer who has the responsibility for the practical implementation of the company's return to work policy and procedures.

Self Declaration of Conformity – commitment and demonstration to adherence to the Conditions of Approval through self-evaluation.

Service delivery plan - a statement of goals and objectives (and services required to achieve them) for an injured worker undergoing rehabilitation.

Suitable duties - duties for which an injured worker is suited while recovering from an injury. They are a short-term transitional arrangement.

Suitable work/employment – employment in work for which the worker is suited in relation to the worker's capacities, age, education, skills, work experience and place of residence.