

THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND WORKERS' COMPENSATION STRATEGY 2009 – 2012

INTRODUCTION

The Strategy is an initiative of the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities (HWCA), which includes representatives from Australia and New Zealand government agencies responsible for the regulation and/or delivery of workers' compensation services. It identifies a common set of objectives, principles and priority areas to improve workers' compensation and injury management arrangements, while maintaining fair, affordable and financially viable workers' compensation schemes. The Strategy has been developed with flexibility to allow for the various regulatory environments across jurisdictions.

The implementation of the Strategy will support and strengthen relationships between governments, agencies, service providers, businesses and employees across Australia and New Zealand. The identified priority areas will guide regulators to work cooperatively and take a holistic approach to improving outcomes for injured workers.

HWCA acknowledges it must work with stakeholders (such as the Heads of Compulsory Third Party Insurers, the Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities, the Safe Work Australia Council and industry partners) to achieve our shared goals of best practice injury prevention, injury compensation and rehabilitation.

It is envisaged the Strategy will complement initiatives already underway as part of the *National Occupational Health and Safety Strategy 2002 – 2012* and the Safe Work Australia Council's current strategic and operational plans.

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

HWCA's role is to promote and implement best practice in workers' compensation arrangements in Australia and New Zealand in the areas of policy, regulation and scheme administration. All parties have a shared commitment to work towards improving workers' compensation services and outcomes, rehabilitation and return to work of injured workers across jurisdictions to the extent of their regulatory capacity.

As members of HWCA, we undertake to:

- implement the Strategy
- work cooperatively on the priorities and objectives identified in the Strategy
- review progress towards achievement of the Strategy outcomes
- refine and develop the Strategy in light of progress and achievements
- work in partnership with stakeholders to achieve the Strategy objectives.

OUR VISION

Socially and financially responsible workers' compensation arrangements that meet the needs of Australian and New Zealand workers and employers, based on effective injury management and durable return to work practices.

OBJECTIVES

HWCA considers the objectives outlined below to be integral to the success of the Strategy and improving workers' compensation and injury management arrangements and outcomes.

- We will facilitate best practice services to injured workers and employers to assist recovery by focusing on:
 - employer engagement
 - insurer/agent and third party provider service delivery
 - superior health and social outcomes

- We will build sustainable workers' compensation schemes by focusing on:
 - containing liability and systems/administration costs
 - optimal premium setting and collection
 - working in partnership with stakeholders to identify and encourage the use of complementary injury prevention and management initiatives
 - training and retaining skilled and experienced staff (insurer/agent and injury management professionals).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Implementation of the Strategy will be in accordance with the following guiding principles:

- commitment to the agreed measures for improvement in workers' compensation arrangements and injury management
- sharing information about interventions in respect of priority areas
- sharing experience/knowledge through information exchange
- using our best endeavours to incorporate priority areas in our business planning processes
- working cooperatively with the Safe Work Australia Council to improve workers compensation arrangements

PRIORITY AREAS

To achieve the Strategy's objectives, jurisdictions will focus on four priority areas over the next three years:

1. Efficient claims management
2. Best practice, evidence-based injury management and return to work initiatives
3. Engagement with third-party service providers
4. Research and identification of emerging trends.

While HWCA has identified these priority areas, we recognise there are linkages between the priority areas. For example, best practice injury management requires efficient claims management.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The measures below will be used to track progress against the objectives of the Strategy, taking into account the variations between public and privately underwritten schemes. HWCA will review the measures annually to ensure relevance and accuracy.

- Measure 1: Return to work
- Measure 2: Cost of claims
- Measure 3: Scheme financial viability
- Measure 4: Employer satisfaction with the claims management process
- Measure 5: Employee satisfaction with the claims management process
- Measure 6: Research Agenda Implemented
- Measure 7: Professional development activities targeted for claims management staff

IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REPORTING

HWCA will oversee implementation, monitoring and reporting against the Strategy. A coordinated action plan will be developed and implemented within six months of implementing the Strategy, which will outline how progress against identified measures will be monitored and reported to governments and other stakeholders.