



**Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities**  
Australia and New Zealand

# HWCA

## Jurisdictional Scan

April 2008



Australian Government  
Comcare



## Features

<b>SCHEME MANAGEMENT</b> .....	2
- <i>Snapshot of Scheme Performance</i> - .....	2
<b>STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES</b> .....	17
- <i>Recent Publications</i> - .....	17
<b>RESEARCH</b> .....	51
- <i>Contact Details</i> - .....	51

### Aim of the document

In June 2007 Members endorsed the HWCA Work Plan 2007-2009. As a part of *HWCA Charter Objective 3: To share information on new initiatives or programs*, HWCA committed to producing a national environmental scan to be circulated amongst members prior to the February HWCA meeting each year. The aim of this scan is to identify and inform HWCA management, partners and stakeholders on developments and emerging issues in the field of workers compensation.

The project commenced in July 2007 with the formulation of a draft template and the development of the objectives and scope of the document. Scanning representatives were sought from each jurisdiction to be assigned responsibility for providing feedback on the proposed method and template, and to make available the information from their jurisdiction.

It is envisaged that this national environmental scan, or *HWCA Jurisdictional Scan*, will be a reference document for HWCA members that will detail legislative and scheme changes within jurisdictions, the internal development of strategies and new initiatives, and provide information on research undertaken on national and international issues relating to workers rehabilitation and compensation. The ultimate aim of the *HWCA Jurisdictional Scan* is to share knowledge and research between jurisdictions.



## SCHEME MANAGEMENT

### LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

#### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

##### Independent Review of the ACT Scheme

Early in 2007, a consortium led by Australian Health and Safety Services Pty Ltd along with partners: Canberra office of national law firm Dibbs Abbott Stillman and Melbourne based actuaries Cumpston Sarjeant Pty Ltd was engaged to undertake a review of the ACT scheme. After an intensive stakeholder consultation phase through the first half of the year, the consortium provided a final report to Government in August 2007.

The report can be found at: <http://www.psm.act.gov.au/workplaceleghtm>

The ACT Government will consider the 51 wide-ranging recommendations in the coming months, including consultation with its peak Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and Workers Compensation advisory body, the OHS Council.

#### COMCARE

On 29 March 2007, Federal Parliament passed the *Safety Rehabilitation Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006* (SRCOLA). SRCOLA amended the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRC Act) for most of SRCOLA's provisions on the day following its Royal Assent (13 April 2007).

The then Government's reasons for the changes were summarised as:

- Maintaining the financial viability of the SRC Act.
- Consistent with the recommendations of the Productivity Commission's 2004 *Inquiry into National Workers compensation and OHS Frameworks*.
- Restoring the original intent of the SRC Act 1988.
- Bringing the SRC Act more into line with other jurisdictions.

The changes were seen as:

- establishing a clearer link between what is in the employer's control and responsibility, and compensation, and
- better aligning the SRC Act to the duties of employers and employees under the Commonwealth OHS Act.

The changes:

- removed workers compensation coverage for journeys to and from work and, where there is a lack of employer control, from recess breaks,
- amended the definition of injury to restore its original intention – by excluding claims arising from reasonable administrative action undertaken in a reasonable manner,

#### - Snapshot of Scheme Performance -

##### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Privately underwritten scheme.

Self-insurers: 9

Average levy rate: 3.15% (06/07)

Max published levy rate: N/A

Funding ratio: N/A

Weekly benefits: First 26 weeks - 100% average pre-incapacity weekly earnings, less weekly earnings, down to 65% thereafter.

Lump sum maximum: \$174,150.28 for permanent impairment. No cap on settlements negotiated under common law.

Medical + hospital limit: No limit

Death lump sum maximum: \$174,150.28 + \$58.05 per dependent child per week + \$4,644.01 for funeral expenses

Claims agent(s): N/A

##### COMCARE

Central fund

Self-insurers: 18 (Nov 07)

Average levy rate: 1.55% (07/08)

Max published levy rate: N/A – experience rated.

Funding ratio: 110% (Jun 07)

Weekly benefits: 100% NWE to 75% from 45 weeks

Lump sum maximum: \$200,772 + additional entitlements available in some circumstances.

Medical + hospital limit: No limit

Death lump sum maximum: \$219,024 + up to \$9,297 funeral + weekly benefits for dependent children (Nov 07)

Claims agent(s): Comcare



- strengthened the connection between work and eligibility for workers compensation by requiring the employment contribution test for diseases to be at the 'significant' level (formerly 'material'),
- for claimants who are no longer employed by the Commonwealth or a licensee, it provided for their capacity to work outside that employment to be taken into account when calculating incapacity benefits
- widened the duty of employers to provide an employee with 'suitable employment',
- increased the maximum level of funeral benefits payable, and
- corrected anomalies in the SRC Act to improve its administrative efficiency and ensure the original policy intentions behind particular provisions are maintained.

For more information, see: [http://www.comcare.gov.au/src\\_amendments](http://www.comcare.gov.au/src_amendments)

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### Workers Compensation Changes

A series of workers compensation legislative reforms have been announced in New South Wales, with the intention to present draft legislation to Parliament early in 2008. The reforms include:

#### \$7500 Exemption Threshold

Employers with annual wages of \$7500 or less will no longer be required to hold workers compensation insurance, except where an employer engages an apprentice or is a member of a group of companies for premium purposes. New South Wales households will also automatically be covered for workers compensation, if they pay \$7500 or less to domestic staff. It is anticipated that these reforms will take effect later in 2008.

A worker of an employer that is not required to hold a policy will still be covered for workers compensation and employers will still have the same obligations as they do now to provide assistance with injury management and return to work.

The proposed changes further align New South Wales' arrangements with those in place under the Victorian workers compensation system.

#### Record Keeping Requirements

The period of time an employer is required to maintain wages records in New South Wales will be reduced from seven years to five years, aligning with the requirements in Victoria and the Australian Tax Office.

#### Benefit Improvements

Proposed benefit reforms include an increase in the statutory lump sum death benefit from \$331,250 to \$425,000. For the first time, the estate of an injured worker will receive the lump sum death benefit if the worker had no financial dependants. Dependent children of a worker whose death results from a work injury will be entitled to the full weekly benefit irrespective of whether they were wholly or partially dependent on the worker. It is anticipated these death benefit reforms will apply where a worker's date of death is on or after 24 October 2007.

## New South Wales

Managed fund

Self-insurers: 66 (Sept 07)

Target collection rate: 1.77% (31 Dec 07)

Max published premium rate: 12.517% (30 Jun 07)

Funding ratio: 107% (30 Jun 07)

Weekly benefits: 100% Award CWWR (excl OT) else 80% AWE to 26 weeks. From 27 weeks the lesser of the stat rate (+ payment for spouse/child) or 90% AWE (1 Oct 07)

Lump sum maximum: Permanent Impairment Lump Sum \$281,000 max (1 Oct 07)

Medical + hospital limit: \$50,000 or > amount prescribed or directed by WCC or approved by WCA (1 Oct 07)

Death lump sum maximum: \$331,250 + \$104.10 for each dependent child (1 Oct 07)

Claims agent(s):

Allianz Australia Workers compensation (NSW) Limited

Cambridge Integrated Services Australia Pty Ltd

CGU Workers Compensation (NSW) Limited

Employers Mutual NSW Limited

Gallagher Bassett Services Pty Ltd

GIO General Limited

QBE Workers Compensation (NSW) Limited



It is also intended that permanent impairment benefits be increased and that the maximum benefit amount be made available to a greater number of severely injured workers.

#### Proposed Medical Treatment

The Workers Compensation Commission in New South Wales will be empowered to determine whether an injured worker's *proposed future* hospital and medical treatment is reasonably necessary. This will allow for the timely provision of necessary medical treatment and thereby assist in the rehabilitation and return to work of injured workers.

#### Security for Self-Insurer Obligations

WorkCover NSW powers to obtain and manage securities from current and former self-insurers will also be enhanced to ensure that their ongoing workers compensation liabilities are provided for.

#### Premium Reduction

An average five per cent reduction in the target collection rate applied to policies commencing or renewed on or after 31 December 2007. Overall there have been five premium rate reductions in two years in New South Wales amounting to an average 30 per cent reduction in the target collection rate.

### **Review of Statutory Benefits**

WorkCover NSW is conducting a review of the level of benefits available to injured workers under the *Workers Compensation Act 1987*, which is being overseen by the WorkCover Board. The review will consider all aspects of the current statutory benefit system and provide advice on where improvements to benefits could be made. It is anticipated that the review will be completed in 2008.

### **Other Regulatory Amendments**

#### Reducing Red Tape

To align with Victoria, from 1 July 2007, certificates of currency within NSW are valid for up to twelve months, saving the State's businesses time and money. Previously New South Wales certificates of currency were only valid for up to four months.

To further reduce red tape, WorkCover NSW has also removed the requirement for employers to have an external auditor or tax agent certify their wages declarations prior to lodging with their workers compensation agent.

#### Premium Instalment Options and Early Premium Payment Discount

To enable businesses to better manage their cash flow, recent premium system reforms provide for payment of workers compensation premiums by monthly instalments (premium greater than \$5,000) or quarterly instalments (premium over \$1,000) for policies commencing on or after 30 June 2007. Further, if premiums are paid in full in advance, a discount of three per cent is available. This change aligns New South Wales with Victoria, Queensland and South Australia.

### **New Zealand**

Central fund  
 Self-insurers: 154 (Jun 07)  
 Average levy rate: 0.89% (07/08)  
 Max published levy rate: 7.46%  
 Funding ratio: 186% (Jun 07)  
 Weekly benefits: 80% average weekly income before injury.  
 Lump sum maximum: \$110,555.80 (80% impairment or higher)  
 Medical + hospital limit: No limit  
 Death lump sum maximum: \$5,333.86 for spouse, \$2,666.94 per child; plus other entitlements  
 Claims agent(s): N/A

### **Northern Territory**

Private insurers  
 Self-insurers: 5 + public service (Jun 07)  
 Average levy rate: 2.4% (Jun 07)  
 Max published levy rate: N/A  
 Funding ratio: 100+% (Jun 07)  
 Weekly benefits: 100% NWE to 75% from 26 weeks  
 Lump sum maximum: \$220,147 + additional entitlements available in some circumstances (Jan 08)  
 Medical + hospital limit: No limit  
 Death lump sum maximum: \$275,184 + extra for dependents (Jan 08)  
 Claims agent(s): TIO, CGU, QBE and Allianz



### Apprentice Incentive Scheme

WorkCover NSW introduced an Apprentice Incentive Scheme providing workers compensation premium exemptions for employers of apprentices in New South Wales. Under this program, apprentice wages are not used to assess an employer's workers compensation premium on new or renewed policies commencing on or after 4:00pm on 31 December 2006.

## NEW ZEALAND

### **Injury Prevention, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Amendment**

A Bill to amend the *Injury Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Compensation Act 2001* was introduced into Parliament in November 2007. Proposed amendments include:

- Clarifying cover for gradual process, disease or infection;
- Providing for cover for mental injury following a traumatic event in the workplace
- Improving the calculation of weekly compensation for seasonal or casual workers
- Providing for wider access to vocational rehabilitation provisions including removal of upper age limits and 3 year time limits.

The Minister for the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) anticipates that the Bill to bring the proposed changes into effect will come into force 1 July 2008.

### **Review of ACC's regulatory framework**

ACC participated in the Quality Regulation Review being led by the New Zealand Ministry of Economic Development. ACC has reviewed the issues raised by businesses in the four sector study reports produced as part of this review.

Work program initiatives include providing easily accessible information for businesses, simplifying communications and improving data collection and information sharing. The work program was completed in July 2007.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

### **Independent Review of NT WorkSafe**

In August 2007 a review of NT WorkSafe's OH&S operations and legislation - the *Work Health Act* - proposed placing the workers compensation components of the Act into a separate piece of legislation. Bills reflecting the main findings of the review have been passed by the Northern Territory's Legislative Assembly and will commence in early 2008. At this point the NT's *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act* will also commence. The review can be found on NT WorkSafe's website at [www.worksafe.nt.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.nt.gov.au). It is anticipated that during 2008 another independent review will examine the Northern Territory's workers compensation scheme and legislation.

## Queensland

Central fund

Self-insurers: 25 (Nov 07)

Average levy rate: 1.15% (1 Jul 07)

Max published levy rate: 5.878%

Funding ratio: 183.4%

Weekly benefits: For first 26 weeks: the greater of 85% of normal weekly earnings (NWE) or the amount payable under the industrial instrument. From 26 weeks to 5 years: greater of 75% of NWE or 70% QOTE (QLD ordinary time earnings)

Lump sum maximum: \$218,400 + additional entitlements available in some circumstances

Medical + hospital limit: Reasonable expenses.

Death lump sum maximum: \$409,090 + extra for dependents

Claims agent(s): N/A

## South Australia

Central fund

Self-insurers: 74 + Crown (Jun 07)

Average levy rate: 3.00%

Max published levy rate: 7.5% (cap)

Funding ratio: 64.7%

Weekly benefits: 100% AWE to 80% from 52 weeks

Lump sum maximum: \$131,000 + additional entitlements available in some circumstances

Medical + hospital limit: No limit

Death lump sum maximum: \$219,425 + extra for dependents

Claims agent(s): Employers Mutual Limited



## Changes to Legislation and Regulations

Cross border provisions in the Act commenced in April 2007. Now all Australian jurisdictions have this feature, which means that generally speaking an employer need only purchase one insurance policy for a worker, regardless of the fact that they may work from time to time in another state or territory.

Amendments to the *Work Health Regulations* which commenced in August 2007 have removed the ability for 'approved' labour hire firms to not to have to purchase workers compensation insurance.

## QUEENSLAND

In Queensland there are three parties involved in managing the workers compensation scheme.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, a Division within the Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, oversees workers compensation policy development as well as reviews and legislative changes for the Queensland scheme.

Q-COMP is the Queensland's Workers compensation Regulatory Authority and has responsibility for :

- monitoring insurance performance and compliance
- self-insurance applications
- reviews and appeals
- supporting and overseeing the Medical Assessment Tribunals (MAT)
- providing scheme-wide analysis and reporting

WorkCover Queensland is the statutory body which provides and manages workers compensation insurance for 148,000 employers in Queensland.

Employers are able to apply for a self-insurance licence providing they meet certain criteria.

### New legislative amendments

On 30 October 2007 the Queensland Parliament passed the *Workers compensation and Rehabilitation and Other Acts Amendment Act 2007* to provide improved benefits for longer term and severely injured workers. Following on from the premium reduction for the 2007- 2008 financial year to \$1.15 per \$100 of wages paid, the Act introduces changes to benefits which came into effect 1 January 2008. This is in keeping with the Government's commitment to maintaining balance in the workers compensation scheme between employer costs and workers' benefits. The key changes are:-

- removal of the one and two year step-downs. This change will provide injured workers with 75% of normal weekly earnings or 70% of Queensland Ordinary Time Earnings for the period they are off work between 26 weeks and up to five years.
- increasing the maximum additional lump sum compensation payment to \$218,400, in line with the base lump sum compensation entitlement. Access

## Tasmania

Private insurers

Self-insurers: 16

Average levy rate: 1.94% (07/08)

Max published levy rate: 8.2% (07/08)

Funding ratio: 168% (07/08)

Weekly benefits: 100% of the weekly payment for the first 13 weeks from the date of the initial incapacity. 85% of the weekly payment for the period 13-78 weeks. 80% of the weekly payment for the period 78 weeks - 9 years.

Lump sum maximum: \$222,267.15 (08)

Medical + hospital limit: No limits but entitlements cease after 10 years

Death lump sum maximum: \$222,267.15 + extra for dependents

Claims agent(s): N/A

## Victoria

Central fund

Self-insurers: 39 (31 Oct 07)

Average levy rate: 1.46% (30 Jun 07)

Max published levy rate: 11.79% (no cap)

Funding ratio: 134.3% (30 Jun 07)

Weekly benefits: 95% AWE to 75% from 13 weeks to a maximum of \$1210 per week

Lump sum maximum: \$384,180

Medical + hospital limit: No limit but benefits cease 52 weeks after cessation of weekly payments

Death lump sum maximum: \$257,210 + extra for dependents

Claims agent(s):

Allianz Australia Workers compensation (Victoria) Limited

Cambridge Integrated Services Victoria Pty Ltd

CGU Workers Compensation Ltd

Gallagher Bassett Services Workers Compensation Vic Pty Ltd

GIO Workers Compensation Ltd

QBE Workers Compensation Ltd



to the additional lump sum compensation is increased by reducing the threshold level of work-related impairment from 50% to 30%.

- removal of the nexus between weekly benefits and lump sum death benefits. Dependants of injured workers who die from their injuries will no longer have their lump sum entitlement reduced by the amount of weekly compensation benefits received.

The Act also introduces other changes to improve operation of the workers compensation scheme in Queensland. These include:

- a reduction in the time for a decision to be made on claims by insurers to 20 business days for all claims. Previously decisions were required within 40 business days for physical injuries and 60 business days for psychological/psychiatric injuries
- allowing insurers to advance amounts of lump sum compensation to workers experiencing financial hardship
- simplifying common law provisions so that when multiple injuries result from a single event a statutory assessment of each injury is no longer required. All injuries related to a single event can be dealt with in the proceedings without the delay that results from statutory assessment.

### Review of Allied Health Table of Costs and Supplementary Schedule

A revised Allied Health Table of Costs, Supplementary Service Schedule, Return to Work Service Schedule and Rehabilitation Support Service Schedule have been developed and became effective as of 1 July 2007. Information sessions to explain the process of the review and application of the new table and schedules for the respective providers have been held across Queensland.

The Tables can be viewed at:

<http://www.qcomp.com.au/healthprofessionals/fees.html>

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### Independent review of WorkCover scheme

In November 2006 the WorkCover SA Board proposed to the South Australian Government a range of changes to the workers rehabilitation and compensation legislation that it believes are essential in ensuring the Scheme's sustainability into the future. A copy of the document, 'WorkCover SA Proposed legislative change to the South Australian Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Scheme' is available on our website: <http://www.workcover.com>

On 29 March 2007, the Hon Michael Wright, Minister for Industrial Relations, announced an independent review into the WorkCover scheme. Coinciding with 20 years of operation, the review considered the fundamental structure of the legislation that establishes the WorkCover scheme and aims to ensure that the social and economic objectives of the Scheme can be met.

The independent review considered proposals by the WorkCover Board together with alternatives to reform the scheme affordable. The review objectives are that:

- Injured workers should receive fair and equitable financial and other support

### Western Australia

Funded by private insurer levy.

Self-insurers: 27 (Nov 07)

Average levy rate: 1.85% (Jul 07)

Max published levy rate: 8.51%  
(maximum recommended rate Jul 07)

Funding ratio: 113% (05/06)

Weekly benefits: 100% AWE, step down may apply after 13 weeks (may vary depending on conditions of employment)

Lump sum maximum: \$159,191 + additional entitlements available in some circumstances.

Medical + hospital limit: Medical \$47,727.00 (additional amounts may be applied for)

Death lump sum maximum: \$218,095 + extra for dependents

Claims agent(s):

Allianz Australia Insurance Ltd

Catholic Church Insurance Ltd

GIO General Ltd

Guild Insurance Ltd

Insurance Aust. Ltd T/AS CGU  
Workers Compensation

Insurance Commission of WA

QBE Insurance Australia Ltd

Vero Insurance Ltd T/AS Vero  
Workers Compensation

Wesfarmers Federation Insurance Ltd

Zurich Australian Insurance Ltd



that should be delivered efficiently and equitably and enable the earliest possible return to work.

- The average employer levy rate should be reduced and contained within the range of 2.25 per cent to 2.75 per cent by July 1 2009.
- The scheme should be fully funded as soon as practicable having regard to the above objectives.

The reviewers – two leading experts in workers compensation schemes, Alan Clayton and John Walsh – were expected to hand down their findings to the Government by 30 November 2007. However the review team requested a one-month extension to finalise the review. Due to the size and complexity of the work being undertaken, the Government granted the request. New laws are still expected to be operational by 1 July 2008. Other details of the review, including the full terms of reference and the WorkCover Board's Supplementary Proposal, are available on the following website: [www.premcab.sa.gov.au/wcompreview](http://www.premcab.sa.gov.au/wcompreview)

### **Parliamentary Inquiry into WorkCover**

On 17 October 2007, the Hon. David Ridgway, Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, moved that the Statutory Authorities Review Committee (SARC) 'inquire into and report on the WorkCover Corporation of South Australia' with regards to the Scheme's unfunded liability projections. After a brief debate, the motion was carried and WorkCover was required to provide the requested documents by 21 November 2007. These documents were delivered to SARC by WorkCover on 21 November 2007.

The announcement of the inquiry appeared in the *Advertiser* newspaper on 24 November 2007 and called for submissions to be made by 18 January 2008. The Committee also wrote to 98 'interested parties' advising them of the inquiry and the opportunity to make a submission.

### **Territorial/cross border**

On 26 September 2006, the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation (Territorial Application of Act) Amendment Act 2006* was passed in Parliament. The changes became effective on 1 January 2007.

The legislation brings South Australia's territorial provisions into line with those of the other states, as part of a national model of territorial/cross-border legislation. Limited retrospectivity and 'ex gratia' payment provisions are included in the legislation to ensure people who have 'fallen through the cracks' previously are not forgotten. These provisions did not come into force on 1 January 2007, as further work was required to prepare for their commencement; they instead came into effect on 13 September 2007.

### **Jockeys**

Regulations commenced on 1 June 2007 extending workers compensation coverage to licensed jockeys working in South Australia. Prior to that time only apprentice jockeys and 'elite' jockeys were covered under the Scheme, as they are employed either under a contract of service or are working directors of their own incorporated company, respectively.

Consequent to the amendment to the regulations, the WorkCover Board approved an amendment to the Levy Adjustment Scheme to allow for the imposition of a supplementary levy on Thoroughbred Racing South Australia (with their agreement). This determination was published in the South Australian Government Gazette on 31 May 2007.

### **Retirement Age**

Currently workers who are injured within six months of turning 65 years of age, or above this age are only entitled to six months of income maintenance, with complete cessation after 70 years of age. As the Australian population



ages, and yet is encouraged to continue working, some stakeholders have contended that the provision is discriminatory.

The Government believes it is timely to review these provisions, and the Stanley Review of workers compensation and occupational health, safety and welfare in South Australia made a recommendation that the Act be amended in this area. On 26 September 2006, a draft Bill was released to stakeholders for consideration on amendments to the existing retirement age provisions.

The independent review of the WorkCover legislation has been specifically requested to investigate the retirement age issue, and it is expected that it will make a recommendation on whether there should be legislative change relating to retirement age provisions.

## TASMANIA

### ***Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Amendment Act 2007***

Amendments to the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* took effect on 31 October 2007. The key changes include:

- improved compensation for industrial deafness. In the past some workers were unable to establish a claim for industrial deafness because their employer had failed to conduct baseline audiometric testing – the amendments have rectified this. The changes also clarify entitlement to medical and other benefits.
- a fairer method of calculating the rate of weekly compensation, especially for workers who have a short employment history and where the award does not include an ‘ordinary-time rate of pay’. Difficulties for these workers were highlighted in the court’s decision in *Thirroul Investments Pty Ltd v Foley [2003] TASSC 89* (24 September 2003). The amendments redefine ‘normal weekly earnings’ to allow earnings to be averaged over periods of employment of less than 12 months.
- workers compensation coverage for jockeys. A jockey or apprentice will be deemed to be a worker employed by the Tasmanian Thoroughbred Racing Council whilst:
  - engaged to ride a horse for fee or reward at a race meeting or official trial held in Tasmania under the Rules of Racing; or
  - engaged to ride a horse in a training session in Tasmania conducted by a licensed trainer or his or her delegate.

To be covered by the provisions, the jockey or apprentice must hold a licence or permit to ride under the Rules of Racing.

- addressing a Full Court of the Supreme Court decision that limited the ability of employers to recover compensation costs from a negligent third party.
- addressing the Supreme Court decision of *Cook v Miley [2007] TASSC 70* that found that the restrictions on access to common law inserted into the Act in 2001 only apply to actions against an employer. The amendments clarify that the restrictions also apply to actions against persons for whose acts the employer is vicariously liable eg a fellow worker.
- clarifying coverage of luxury hire car drivers and consolidating provisions relating to taxi drivers.
- amending the work-relatedness test for injury from ‘arising out of and in the course of’ to ‘arising out of or in the course of’, so it is clear that injuries can be compensable even when symptoms only become apparent after the worker has left the relevant employment. However to be compensable all injuries and diseases must be caused by work. Consequently conditions such as heart attacks and strokes that occur during the course of work will not be compensable unless employment was a substantial contributing factor. Adopting this disjunctive test brings Tasmania into line with other Australian jurisdictions.
- providing mechanisms for dealing with disputes between insurers and between employers, so where two or



more insurers or employers disagree about which of them is liable, neither the employer nor worker will be kept waiting for payment.

- updating long service leave provisions to increase the number and forms of long service leave covered by the Act and to align long service leave provisions with the existing annual leave provisions.

Other changes made by the Amendment Act:

- suspend weekly payments while the worker is in prison.
- require employers to display a summary of the Act and evidence of insurance cover.
- require employers to keep relevant employment records.
- make clearer that weekly payments are to be paid in the same way that wages were paid (unless there is a genuine agreement on an alternative method).
- clarify that the period of insurance 'excess' may be increased to four calendar weeks, corresponding to the first four weekly payments, whether those payments are for partial or full incapacity.

### **Review of Aspects of the Tasmanian Workers compensation System**

In July 2006, the Minister announced a review of aspects of the Tasmanian workers compensation system. Mr Alan Clayton was appointed by the Minister to conduct the Review; the WorkCover Tasmania Board is meeting the costs of the Review; and Mr Clayton regularly reported to the WorkCover Tasmania Board on its progress. Mr Clayton has consulted broadly throughout Tasmania.

The final report was presented to the Government in December 2007. The Government has released the report for public consultation with submissions due by 9 February 2008.

A copy of the report is available through the WorkCover website: [www.workcover.tas.gov.au](http://www.workcover.tas.gov.au)

## **VICTORIA**

### **Strategy 2012**

In 2006/07, the Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA) undertook research and extensive consultation to develop a five-year strategic plan. As part of the process of developing the five-year plan – Strategy 2012 – VWA's vision and mission were altered to better reflect core purpose:

- Vision: Victorian workers return home safe every day.
- Mission: Working with the community to deliver outstanding workplace safety, together with quality care and insurance protection to workers and employers.

The VWA's research showed that service delivery could be improved to meet the needs of different clients. Key work streams – Prevention, Agents, RTW and Health – will be overlaid with a focus on different-sized organisations. Government, Large, Medium and Small segment leaders will direct cross-organisational initiatives tailored to the needs of these client groups. Many of the initiatives and projects outlined in other sections of this document are part of Strategy 2012.

### **Scheme Overview**

In the last five years VWA in partnership with Victorian employers and workers, has:

- reduced the incidence of workplace injury by more than 18%;
- reduced the long-term scheme costs by more than \$1.5 billion;
- significantly improved client service;



- delivered the fourth successive 10% reduction in average premium; and
- improved the funding ratio from 80% to 134%.

The VWA's Strategy 2012, launched in 2007, sets ambitious future targets for the organisation and focuses on three fundamental areas of its business:

- Safety: working with the community to reduce the rate of injury in Victorian workplaces;
- Service: delivering high client satisfaction, sustainable return to work outcomes and lower business costs; and
- Sustainability: ensuring the long-term viability of the scheme through a vibrant and committed workforce, sound financial and claims management, and partnership with the VWA's stakeholders.

### Legislative and Regulatory Developments

The *Accident Compensation Act 1985* ('the Act') was amended on 15 August 2007 to:

- clarify the financial guarantee requirements on employers who exit the Victorian WorkCover scheme (or Victorian self insurer arrangements) to self insure under the Comcare scheme;
- include an offence provision to ensure enforcement against non-compliant employers; and
- mandate the return of the management of tail claim liabilities to the Victorian WorkCover Authority for Victorian self insurers who cease their self insurance arrangements under the Victorian scheme (removing a discretion ceased self insurers previously had).

The Transport Accident and Accident Compensation Acts Amendment Bill 2007, relevant parts of which commenced on 19 September 2007, also amended the Act to:

- restore the original approach to the assessment of permanent impairment for injured workers with spinal injuries in response to the decision of the Full Court of the Supreme Court in *Mountain Pine Furniture Pty Ltd v Taylor* (the assessment of permanent impairment is only to be carried where the worker's injury has stabilised and is to take into account the effects of any surgery);
- confirm and clarify that compulsory employer superannuation payments are not taken into account in the calculation of weekly benefit compensation (following a Northern Territory Supreme Court decision that found that employer superannuation should be included in the calculation of an injured worker's average weekly earnings); and
- increase the cap on counselling benefits for the families of deceased or seriously injured workers or transport accident victims to \$5000 (under the WorkCover scheme the maximum was previously \$1960).

### Accident Compensation Act Review

The Minister for WorkCover, Tim Holding recently announced an independent review of Victoria's *Accident Compensation Act 1985* and associated legislation aimed at updating and streamlining the legislation.

This independent review reflects the Victorian Government's commitment to ensure injured workers receive fair support and benefits and recognises that while the underlying principles of accident compensation laws remain sound, incremental changes have made them unnecessarily complex.

The review will be undertaken by Peter Hanks QC and supported by a joint Department of Treasury and Finance and WorkSafe Victoria Secretariat. Mr Hanks QC will meet and consult regularly with a stakeholder reference group established by the Minister.

A dedicated website has been set up, by the Secretariat, to provide detailed information on the Review, at: [www.compensationreview.vic.gov.au](http://www.compensationreview.vic.gov.au).



## Reducing Red Tape

Consistent with the Victorian Government's July 2006 Reducing the Regulatory Burden (RRB) Policy, the VWA has engaged independent consultants to cost the administrative burden on business of the not-for-profit sector of a range of initiatives introduced in the last 12 months. This is the first step in VWA's five year commitment (from July 2007) to reducing regulatory burden.

The RRB Policy, which sets targets for reductions in administrative burden of 15% by July 2009 and 25% by 2011, requires a detailed measurement using a Standard Cost Model (SCM) of any regulatory change materially affecting these sectors of the economy.

Agencies are required to undertake an SCM costing either before a regulation commences or within three months of its taking effect.

## Employer Service Improvement

In November 2007, WorkSafe Victoria secured licences for audit tools published by NIDMAR. The use of NIDMAR's Consensus-Based Disability Management Audit™ (CBDMA™) will form part of WorkSafe's Strategy 2012 programs for Large and Government Segment employers, with a pilot currently being undertaken with eight organisations. Further details regarding NIDMAR and the CBDMA™ are available in NZ's report.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### Evaluation of Reforms to Workers compensation Legislation

On 4 October 2004 the Western Australian Government passed the *Workers compensation Reform Act 2004* which was proclaimed in two stages on 4 January and 14 November 2005.

WorkCover WA conducted an 'Evaluation of the 2005 Legislative Reforms' (Evaluation) in late 2006. Comment was sought from key stakeholders on the reforms generally and a report on the Evaluation was recently published on the WorkCover WA website at: [www.workcover.wa.gov.au](http://www.workcover.wa.gov.au).

The principal recommendations in the Evaluation include:

- An assessment of processes in the Dispute Resolution Directorate (DRD) with a view to improving administrative procedures in the registry area, monitoring the timeframes and procedures involved in reaching arbitrator decisions and surveying the nature and incidence of interlocutory applications and their outcomes.
- Improvements in data collection technology for applications and related documents submitted to DRD.
- Legislative changes in the areas of common law provisions, approved medical specialists and insurer application of the injury management process.

A full list of the 39 recommendations is available on the WorkCover WA website at:

[www.workcover.wa.gov.au](http://www.workcover.wa.gov.au) > [Publications & Forms](#) > [Reports and performance](#).

WorkCover WA has commenced work to implement recommendations arising out of the evaluation, including a legislative development program. This will form part of a review of the *Workers compensation and Injury Management Act 1981* (the Act), that addresses both scheme design and benefit issues, along with a major overhaul of the structure of the statute to improve its clarity and flexibility. A timeframe for the review has not yet been determined.

### New costs scale for the DRD

The Costs Committee has finalised a review of the costs scale for legal practitioners and registered agents appearing before the WorkCover WA Dispute Resolution Directorate. The Costs Committee's Report and Determination were published in a Special Government Gazette on 7 November 2007.



## WorkCover WA Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment

The second edition of the WorkCover WA Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment has been in use from 26 November 2007. The Guides and a [fact sheet](#) outlining the changes are now available on our website.

## SCHEME FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND AGENT CONTRACTS

### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

For 2005/06, 13,067 premiums were paid totalling \$142.1 million. On these policies, 4006 claims were made with \$24.6 million paid to claimants. In 2006/07, 13,345 premiums were paid to ACT approved insurers totalling \$140.4 million, a decrease of 1.2% from 05/06. On these policies, 4454 claims were made with \$26.7 million paid to claimants so far.

Approved Insurers in 2006/07 were Allianz, CCI, CGU, GIO, Guild, QBE, Vero and Zurich.

### COMCARE

In the 2006–07 financial year some 90 per cent of Comcare's revenue was from cost recovered services (primarily workers compensation premiums, regulatory contributions and licence fees) with the remaining revenue provided through Government appropriations. These appropriations were increased in this year to assist in expanding the compliance and enforcement capacity following recent changes to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* (OH&S Act) to reflect its extended application to all organisations licensed to self insure under the SRC Act.

Premiums in 2007–08 will be 12 per cent lower for Australian Government agencies, down from an average rate of 1.77 per cent (2006–07) to 1.5%. Over 80 per cent of premium payers will pay a rate lower than the average premium rate (1.55%), two thirds will pay a rate less than 1%, and one third will pay a rate less than 0.5%.

The 2006-07 financial statements show:

- an operating result of \$44 million (\$35 million in 2005–06)
- total equity of \$115 million (\$71 million in 2005–06).

The SRC Act identifies the conditions for access to funding with respect to injuries incurred from 1 July 1989. Having regard to these provisions, at 30 June 2007 the ratio of assets to liabilities is 110 per cent (108 per cent at 30 June 2006), and the estimated reserve at 30 June 2007 was \$115 million (\$77 million at 30 June 2006).

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### Financial Performance

The WorkCover NSW Scheme has continued to improve its performance in the six months to June 2007. The latest independent valuation estimates the Scheme surplus has increased to \$812 million as at 30 June 2007 from \$416 million as at 31 December 2006. Over the same period, the Scheme's funding ratio has improved from 103.5 per cent to 107 per cent.

### Agent Contracts

In New South Wales, the Nominal Insurer manages the WorkCover NSW Scheme and Insurance Fund. The Nominal Insurer, represented by WorkCover NSW, has contracted seven Scheme Agents to deliver claims and policy services.

Performance based contracts between WorkCover NSW and Scheme Agents have been in place since January 2006. WorkCover NSW will tender with third party agents for a further five-year contract term commencing 1



January 2009. A contract term of five years will provide greater certainty for Scheme Agents and other providers considering investment in the New South Wales Workers Compensation Scheme, which will ensure the stability of services provided to the State's employers and injured workers.

## NEW ZEALAND

### Financial Performance

Overall income for the 2006/2007 year remained strong although slowing slightly in the last quarter. This growth continues to be driven by the strong New Zealand economic conditions and investment returns significantly higher than budget, exceeding market benchmarks by 0.4%.

The excellent performance against budget in relation to operating costs is the combination of tight budgetary control and timetable changes to the implementation of the new claims management system (EOS).

The solvency position of the Work Account remains strong and above target (funding ratio at June 2007 was 186%).

In the face of rising costs for the treatment of the injured, it is an ongoing challenge for ACC to maintain stable and fair levies. However to this end, the average levy rates were held within the target of no more than a 5% change for most groups of levy payers. Our investment performance certainly helped in this regard. The average levy for employers was 0.78c per \$100 of payroll.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Northern Territory workers compensation scheme is a no-fault privately underwritten scheme. It has four approved insurers (TIO, CGU, Allianz and QBE). The scheme continues to demonstrate a profit. During the year 2006/07 the average premium fell to 2.4%. The latest actuarial report on the scheme is available on the NT WorkSafe website at: [www.worksafe.nt.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.nt.gov.au).

## QUEENSLAND

The average premium rate for 2007-2008 has been reduced to \$1.15 per \$100 of wages. This is the third year in a row that the premium has been reduced. For the eighth consecutive year, Queensland offers the lowest average premium rate in Australia.

As the scheme insurer for premium paying employers, WorkCover Queensland comprises approximately 86% of the Queensland scheme. WorkCover Queensland has maintained its strong financial performance with an equity position of \$1.47 billion for 2006-2007 (up from \$1.39 billion in 2005-2006). The insurer has approximately \$3 billion invested under management with the Queensland Investment Corporation and, for the fourth year in a row, the performance of the portfolio has realised a double-digit return. The return on investment portfolio for 2006-2007 was 14.1%, after fees. The funding ratio of the scheme stands at a very healthy 183%.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### Financial Performance

On 29 September 2007 the WorkCover Board confirmed WorkCover's results for the year ending 30 June 2007. WorkCover's unfunded liability increased to \$843 million (compared with \$694 million in the previous corresponding period), after a loss of \$149 million for 2006-07. The Scheme is 64.7 per cent funded, compared with 65.0 per cent at 30 June 2006. The average levy rate for 2007-08 will remain at 3.0 per cent. This year's financial position has been impacted by the continued increase in the expected duration of very long-term claims, typically of 10 years or more, which account for almost 10 per cent of the total liability.



For further financial details, please refer to the 2006/07 WorkCover Annual Report, tabled in Parliament on 18 October 2007 and available from: <http://www.workcover.com>.

### Agent performance

1 July 2007 marked the end of the first year of sole claims management by Employers Mutual. During this time there was no further deterioration in return to work rates. However, there was insufficient improvement in the return to work rate for long-term claimants, resulting in a further increase in the estimate of the claims liability. It is early days for Employers Mutual and we remain confident that they will continue to improve return to work rates as we progress our joint strategies and continue to implement this partnership - WorkCover and Employers Mutual have developed a joint liability plan and joint program of work to continue to move forward.

It is WorkCover's belief that as well as the best practice claims management brought to the Scheme by Employers Mutual, there needs to be appropriate legislative support in order to achieve significant improvement in return to work rates of the scale required in South Australia.

## TASMANIA

The cost of workers compensation continues to fall. The average premium rate paid by employers in 2006 was 2.0% of wages. This is a decrease of 13% from the previous year's 2.3% of wages and is the fifth successive decrease in average premium rate.

The WorkCover Tasmania Board has recently reviewed and strengthened its claims management, safety management, and financial requirements for the scheme's self-insurers. The level of financial security (bank guarantees) was made significantly higher. Audits of self-insurers show improvements in claims management and safety performance. An emerging challenge is to balance proper scrutiny of these self-insurers while, at the same time, avoiding unnecessary duplication and red tape, particularly for the self-insurers with a multi-jurisdictional presence. The WorkCover Tasmania Board has committed to harmonisation of self-insurance arrangements, which will minimise the administrative burden on multi-jurisdictional self-insurers. It is pleasing to note that the largest percentage decrease in claim numbers occurred in the self-insurance sector: claims were down by 19.4% compared with an overall scheme to decrease of 2.9%.

## VICTORIA

### Financial Performance

In 2006/07, the VWA achieved another strong financial result based on improved claims management, with:

- \$729 million profit from insurance operations;
- \$394 million full-year actuarial release (or improvement in claims costs), the sixth successive release;
- continued improvement in the projected long-term costs of weekly payments and treatment. This is directly attributable to enhancing return to work outcomes for injured workers and a strengthened clinical focus in case management practices;
- the fourth consecutive annual 10% reduction in the average premium rate (announced in May 2007), from 1.62% to a new historical low of 1.46% of payroll, saving Victorian businesses a further \$168m in 2007/08 with accumulated savings of over \$1.7billion since 2004/05;
- outstanding net claims liabilities valuation of \$7.7billion resulting in a funding ratio of 134% at 30 June 2007.



## Premium

### A fairer and simpler Workplace Injury Insurance System

The VWA Fairer Simpler Premium system, introduced over the last four years, ensures that premium costs are distributed across employers fairly, according to their claims performance. The system has also strengthened the link between an employer's safety performance and its premium, enhancing incentives for sound occupational health and safety and good return to work practices.

### On-line remuneration

At the 2007/08 policy renewal, all employers were given the opportunity to estimate their 2007/08 remuneration and certify their 2006/07 remuneration on-line. In the first year of its operation, 17% of employers (29% of remuneration) used this facility.

### Compliance strategy

The current VWA strategy:

- substantially reduces penalties for employers who self disclose non-compliance during the self assessment review process;
- reduces penalties, on a sliding scale, for employers who cooperate with the audit process; and
- publishes in advance an annual program and industries/areas of special interest.

Yearly premium roadshow seminars are also run to educate employers about premium changes and how to ensure compliance with premium obligations.

## Agent Contracts

The Victorian WorkCover Authority has appointed six authorised Agents, consisting of personal injury insurers and specialised claims management organisations, to perform various services including premium collection and management, claims management and return to work activities, and occupational health and safety services. The current term of appointment expires on 30 June 2010.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Western Australian workers compensation scheme is privately underwritten by a total of 10 'approved' insurers and the most recent Comparative Performance Report indicates the WA scheme is currently 113% funded.

The scheme has experienced strong performance in recent years reflected in the continued reduction in premium rates, notwithstanding the significant increases in worker entitlements associated with the 2005 legislative reforms.

The average recommended premium rate of 1.85% for 2007-08 is the lowest rate since the establishment of the scheme in 1981. This performance is set against the dramatic growth in employment and remuneration associated with the resources boom in WA.



# STRATEGIES AND NEW INITIATIVES

## INJURY AND CLAIMS MANAGEMENT

### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

#### Manual Tasks Training

With the ACT being a predominantly small business jurisdiction, the Office of Regulatory Services has announced a number of initiatives tailored to the jurisdiction's needs. The manual tasks training program focuses on small businesses (up to 10 employees) within the retail industry whose employees are required to undertake manual tasks as part of their daily work activities. Australian worker's compensation statistics show that one third of all occupational injuries at work happen during manual tasks, with the retail industry identified as having a high number of manual task related injuries reported each year. The program is being conducted in conjunction with the Coles Group, and has been designed to assist the employer and their employees performing manual tasks to identify, access and control the risks associated with the tasks that are commonly being performed in the workplace. The program will be conducted at a number of the larger shopping centres throughout the ACT and will commence during late February and early March 2008.

### NEW SOUTH WALES

#### GP Engagement Strategy

General practitioners, in their role as 'Nominated Treating Doctor,' play a pivotal role in the New South Wales Workers Compensation System. Their cooperation and participation in the injury management plan for an injured worker is critical in achieving the system objectives of improving health and return to work outcomes for injured workers.

WorkCover NSW is implementing a multi-modal strategy to ensure that General Practitioners are actively engaged with the WorkCover NSW system and are easily able to access resources and information designed to increase their understanding of workers compensation, making it easier for them to carry out their role in the System.

#### Soft Tissue Guidance Material

WorkCover NSW is developing guidance material regarding soft tissue injuries to prevent transition from acute to chronic disability.

The soft tissue guidance material provides a framework and practical advice for managing soft tissue injuries in the first 12 weeks and aims to promote:

- successful, early and sustainable return to work
- a work centred individual approach to management
- active communication and collaboration between key parties

#### - Recent Publications -

##### Australian Capital Territory

[Statistics about ACT WorkCover Activities](#)

[Ten Steps to Safety – Small Business Health and Safety Toolkit](#)

[Partners in Safety Mentor Program 2007/08 Info Pack](#)

[Final Report on the Review of the ACT private sector Workers Compensation Scheme](#)

##### Comcare

[Annual report](#)

[Strategic Leadership](#)

[Performance measurement](#)

[Workplace safety](#)

[Return to work](#)

[Preventing and managing psychological injury](#)

[Case studies](#)

[Learning and development](#)

[Guide to 2007-2008 Premiums](#)

[Guide to Premium Devolution](#)

[Body Stressing Injuries Key messages for agency leaders](#)

[Body Stressing Injuries Key messages for case managers](#)

[Body Stressing Injuries Key messages for rehabilitation providers](#)

[Workers compensation: How Comcare determines claims made under the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988](#)

##### New South Wales

[Statistical Bulletin 2005/2006](#)

[Annual Report 2006/2007](#)



- evidence based practice
- cost effective, prompt and efficient interventions.

Most people recover from soft tissue injuries within four weeks of injury, and successful return to work is achieved in most cases. When progress is not as expected, it is important to initiate prompt and thorough screening and assessment to identify barriers to return to work.

### Scholarship Program

WorkCover NSW conducts a scholarship program to support and promote the development of workers compensation insurance industry professionals and increase case management capability in New South Wales.

The program offers two internal and five external scholarships each year for a range of postgraduate courses in personal injury management. The internal scholarships are available to employees of WorkCover NSW and the New South Wales Workers Compensation Commission. The external scholarships are open to all personnel working in the New South Wales workers compensation insurance industry, including those who work for the seven Scheme Agents operating in the WorkCover NSW Scheme, as well as specialised insurers and self-insurers.

Each scholarship is worth up to \$15,000 per year, with scholarships commencing from the 2008 academic year. A committee including representatives from unions and employers reviews the scholarship applications.

The courses available under the scholarship program have been developed by the Personal Injury Education Foundation and are offered through Deakin University. They include:

- Graduate Certificate of Management (Personal Injury);
- Graduate Diploma of Management (Personal Injury);
- Master of Management (Personal Injury); and
- Master of Business (Personal Injury).

### Case Management Vocational Training

WorkCover NSW, in cooperation with WorkSafe Victoria, is developing a Certificate IV course in case management aligned with a nationally recognised Financial Services (Workers Compensation) qualification, accredited by the (Federal) Department of Education, Science and Technology and recognised by the National Quality Council. This approach will achieve harmonisation of core competencies where possible and reinforce national portability and recognition of the resulting qualification.

WorkCover NSW is working closely with self and specialised insurers and Scheme Agents in developing the structure, format and content of the course to ensure it is in tune with the needs of the New South Wales industry.

At this stage it is proposed that the first units of the case management course will be developed in time for delivery in the 2008 academic year, with the later units

### New Zealand

[ACC Strategic Plan 2007-2012](#)

[ACC Injury Prevention Strategy 2007 - 2008](#)

[ACC Statement of Intent 2007-2012](#)

[ACC Annual Report 2007](#)

A full list of publications can be found [here](#).

### Northern Territory

Northern Territory Workers compensation Scheme Actuarial Report 2005/06 can be found on NT WorkSafe's website at [www.worksafe.nt.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.nt.gov.au) at 'actuarial reports.' It is anticipated that the 2006/07 report will be available at the same location from mid March 2008.

NT WorkSafe currently sits within the Department of Employment, Education and Training. To access this department's annual report go to [www.deet.nt.gov.au](http://www.deet.nt.gov.au) and the 'About Us' section.

### Queensland

[Department of Employment and Industrial Relations Annual Report 2006-07](#)

[Q-COMP The Workers compensation Regulatory Authority 2006 – 2007 Annual Report](#)

[Queensland Workers compensation Scheme Statistics Report 2005-2006](#)

[WorkCover Queensland Annual Report 2006 – 2007](#)

[From strength to strength - 10 years of success](#)



being developed throughout 2008.

## NEW ZEALAND

### National Serious Injury Service (NSIS)

The 2006/07 year saw much higher than forecast increases in serious injury social rehabilitation expenditure. For the first quarter of 2007/08 these costs have stabilised but within the 12-month rolling average remain at 9.4%. In response, the National Serious Injury Service (NSIS) was launched in Auckland / Whangarei in October 2007 and is being rolled out progressively throughout the country. By the end of the second quarter the service will be in place in Auckland / Whangarei and Midland and will manage over 50% of all seriously injured clients. By the end of the third quarter the service will be fully operational on a national basis where all new and existing seriously injured claims will be managed by the NSIS.

The two key objectives of the NSIS are increasing serious injury clients' participation in work and or community life, and stabilising the cost of ACC-funded support to serious injury clients. Work is currently underway to identify an efficient and sustainable price for services to support serious injury clients. A formal evaluation of the National Serious Injury Service will be completed by March 2009, which will also review suitability of the structure and size of the service.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

### Doctors Kit

An information kit for doctors, especially GPs, has been developed. It aims to explain the workers compensation system and the crucial role doctors have in it. The Northern Territory's Divisions of General Practice have agreed to provide it to our current and new GPs on an ongoing basis. The components of the kit can be accessed on our website at 'Doctors': [www.worksafe.nt.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.nt.gov.au)

## QUEENSLAND

### Centralisation of claims determination by WorkCover

Previously the WorkCover Queensland network of regional offices managed the determination of claims. In 2007 this was centralised to the Brisbane office to take advantage of economies of scale, ensure consistency and timeliness, and a large support network for WorkCover staff performing the same function of claim assessment. The result has been an improvement in the timeliness and consistency of decision making. It has also allowed regional people to concentrate on relationship management with key stakeholders, and case management of claims, assisting injured workers and their employers to minimise the impact of injuries/illnesses through prompt rehabilitation and return to work.

Monitoring and communication strategies for allied health providers have been implemented, designed to ensure optimum service delivery to injured workers within best practice guidelines

## South Australia

[WorkCover SA Annual Report 2006-2007](#)

[WorkCover SA Strategic Plan 2007-2008](#)

[WorkCover SA Environmental Scan: September 2007](#)

[WorkCover SA Statistical Review 2005-06](#)

[Injured Worker Product Suite](#)

[Facilitators and barriers to return to work: A literature review](#)

## Tasmania

A number of new publications were produced during 2006-07:

- Host Employers: Managing the Safety of Labour Hire Workers.
- Labour Hire Agencies: Managing the Safety of Labour Hire Workers.
- What is WST and what does it do?
- WorkCover Tasmania Advisory Unit.

A number of publications were reviewed, including:

- A Guide to the Election of ESRs.
- A Guide to Workers Compensation in Tasmania.
- Hazard Management: Play it SAFE.
- Plant Safety: Registration and Record Keeping Requirements Applying in Tasmania.
- Stress, Bullying, Alcohol and other Drug Misuse: Hidden Hazards: A Guide for Employers.
- What you don't know can hurt you.

A full list of publications can be found [here](#):



## Fax Fee Initiative

From 1 July 2006, WorkCover Queensland has paid a \$10 fax fee to doctors where they have facilitated the early lodgement of claims for work related injuries/illnesses, by faxing in a medical certificate, claim application form and their invoice which is also paid. The aim of the fax fee was to facilitate earlier return to work by the more timely provision of information to determine and manage claims.

22% of all claims are now received on the day of injury, and the initial post implementation review of the strategy has highlighted significant cost savings on claims received via this method. In summary, fax fee claims come in more quickly and are shorter in duration claims, have earlier return to work and reduced claims costs for employers.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

WorkCover has established an agreed Joint Program of Work with its sole claims agent, Employers Mutual, to deliver a number of initiatives, including:

### Participating Provider Network (PPN)

The Motor Accident Commission (MAC), WorkCover and TRACsa have committed to working together to develop a PPN being a *'collection (or network) of health service providers using a shared platform of evidenced-based, best practice clinical care, with the aim of providing timely and appropriate quality health care that restores people with compensable injuries to optimal post injury function, given their pre injury status, at the earliest possible time.'*

It is recognised by the three organisations that the development of such a PPN will take time and be completed in stages. Stage 1 will establish a base platform for the PPN which will see the development of an Injury Recovery Care Plan (IRCP) for a targeted audience of claimants. The IRCP will be regulated as service item codes on WorkCover's regulation fee schedules and will be available to all general practitioners by 1 October 2008. For WorkCover the target audience will be an 'initial IRCP' for workers within 2 to 3 weeks of their date of injury and who are not back at work full time. If the worker is still not back at work full time 6 weeks later, the GP will be able to complete a 'follow up IRCP'. These IRCPs will be sent to the claims manager to assist in their development and co-ordination of return to work strategies.

The objectives of stage 1 will be to improve timely co-ordination and provision of information by general practitioners to claims managers and the employer, with the aim of facilitating quicker recovery and return to work. It is anticipated that the effect will be reduced duration on the scheme and reduced service utilisation and costs. A monitoring and evaluation framework for stage 1 will be implemented as part of this project. The concept for stage 2 is also being explored and will build on stage 1. Initially we will explore developing a quality framework to which targeted groups of providers can commit. This quality framework could include elements such as defined provider competencies, completing IRCPs alongside best practice medicine within a compensation setting, ongoing training and education, paying incentivised fees and accountability.

## Victoria

Selection of 2007 publications:

[Annual Report 2007 - Victorian WorkCover Authority](#)

[Information for Medical Practitioners & Dentists - Prescribing medications and pharmacy items for workers - Victorian WorkCover Authority](#)

[Disclosing health information about WorkCover patients - A guide for healthcare professionals - Victorian WorkCover Authority](#)

[Job Seeking Assistance \(JSA\) Service Period Ready Reckoner - Victorian WorkCover Authority](#)

[Medications and Pharmacy Items - Information for Workers - Victorian WorkCover Authority](#)

[Community Integration Program, An overview for eligible injured workers - Victorian WorkCover Authority](#)

[Who's Who in the Claims Process - Victorian WorkCover Authority](#)

[Return To Work Inspectorate - Victorian WorkCover Authority](#)

[Fast Facts - Your Premium - Victorian WorkCover Authority](#)

[How to make a claim for dependency benefits - Victorian WorkCover Authority](#)

## Western Australia

All publications are available on our website at [Reports and performance](#):

- DRD E-Link newsletter (September 2007)
- Have your Say Survey (2007)
- Scheme Performance Report (June 2007)
- Quarterly Insurer Performance Report (June 2007)
- Quarterly Self-Insurer Performance Report (June 2007)
- Medical and Allied Health Performance Report (March 2007)
- WorkCover WA Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment (2nd Edition, November 2007)
- Evaluation of the 2005 Workers compensation Legislative Reforms (July 2007)



## Workplace Based Rehabilitation

WorkCover is exploring the feasibility of implementing workplace based rehabilitation in South Australia to help improve return to work and health outcomes for injured workers. Workplace based rehabilitation involves the use of workplace based rehabilitation coordinators by registered employers in South Australia, and will lead to improved return to work and health outcomes for injured workers.

The scope of the project is to determine the feasibility of introducing in South Australia the use of workplace based rehabilitation coordinators by registered employers who meet defined entry criteria. The project will include:

- Researching the use of workplace based return to work coordinators in other jurisdictions and by self-insured employers in South Australia
- Plan and implement a pilot of workplace based rehabilitation.
- Evaluate the outcomes of the pilot and make recommendations regarding the introduction of the model in the South Australian scheme.

## GP Incentives for Incident Lodgement

In order to improve early lodgement of claims, WorkCover is exploring the possibility to allow an injured worker to submit claim forms via the initial visit to the GP and send the original claim forms to the Employer.

This initiative encourages prompt lodgement of claims which has the potential for benefits for both workers and employers. For workers it means earlier medical intervention and rehabilitation, which has linkages to recovery and earlier return to work. For employers it could help to reduce employers' administration expenses as the GP has already sent in the PMC and claim form.

This initiative provides potential benefits for GP's as the claim is lodged sooner, the doctor receives payment faster and guaranteed payment of the initial consult. It is expected the GP will receive an incentive payment and guaranteed payment of initial consult for lodging the claim form, prescribed medical certificate and invoice within 24 hours.

## TASMANIA

### Return to Work and Injury Management Model

The WorkCover Tasmania Board approved the Tasmanian Return to Work and Injury Management Model and its implementation on 26 June 2007.

The Model provides a framework for improving and streamlining the management of workplace injury and illness. It aims to deliver better health and return to work outcomes for injured workers, with lower costs to employers and the workers compensation system. It is based on seven principles that are considered essential to achieving effective injury management. These elements are achieved by a number of strategies which the model sets out.

The development of the model involved extensive consultation with the following representative groups:

- workers and unions
- employers and industry groups
- insurers
- medical providers
- other health care providers

WorkCover Tasmania has commenced implementation of the Model and has developed an implementation plan, which details the priorities set for the successful implementation of the Model over the next 3 years. Key priorities for the first year of implementation include:



- legislation alignment.
- establishing new licence and permit conditions for insurers.
- enhancing existing and developing new WorkCover Tasmania systems and processes.
- education and promotion of the Return to Work and Injury Management Model.

## VICTORIA

### Agent Management

The VWA utilises a number of strategies to manage the performance of its Agents. The remuneration model is a key tool for driving improved performance. Particularly successful elements of the model are:

- the flexibility to annually set performance measures which support scheme strategies with financial incentives and disincentives;
- the lump sum incentive providing Agents with the opportunity to share in the overall success of the scheme, ensuring they stay focused on total liability management;
- measures with incentives that are not solely focused on liability management, such as sustained RTW and, in particular, injured worker service;
- measures with incentives and disincentives for completing steps in an audited process ('High Value Work Practices').

Other effective management practices rely on Agent reputation to drive Agent behaviour. A good example is the publication of Agent performance to specific audiences, such as:

- sharing all Agents' performance data with all Agents, including ranking of performance on key measures;
- providing Agent National Managers with a ranked scorecard of Agent performance; and
- publishing Agent performance in the Annual Report for stakeholders.

The VWA over time has established extensive forums for consultation with Agents, promoting a spirit of cooperation and a 'partnering' relationship. The annual Agent National Forum, attended by Agent national managers, has expanded to include participants from New Zealand, Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales. In 2007, the key issues arising from the Forum were people capability, scheme image and IT systems.

### Health Services

The Health Services Group (HSG) has been established as an unincorporated joint venture between the VWA and the TAC and will undertake projects that seek to improve delivery of health care and disability services to injured workers and TAC clients. This collaboration will also drive harmonisation and reduction of red tape. HSG has the following ten teams within it:

- Commercial
- Commercial Disability
- Mental Health
- Special Projects (including pharmacy)
- Communications and Client Support (including IT)
- Clinical Services (including Clinical Panels)
- Medical Practitioners
- Allied Health
- Hospitals



- Health Research

HSG has recently conducted a major strategic review and environmental scan for 2007/08 which has resulted in the establishment of a high level strategic platform. The strategy has a central focus on improving client outcomes and return to work. Seven key levers have been identified with a range of initiatives to be delivered in a five year program. The seven levers are:

- Shared Organisation Structure
- Connectivity and IT
- Leading Edge Purchasing
- Clinical Outcomes Focus
- Quality Providers
- Client/Worker Guidance
- Shared Health Research

The following are highlights of some key initiatives that have commenced:

#### Provider accountability and clinical governance

The HSG has extended the established program of clinical governance and peer review. The key initiatives to be implemented in the first year are:

- TAC and VWA Clinical Panels collectively managed within HSG;
- joint clinical justification/framework;
- critical intervention targets for hospital discharge and persistent pain;
- alignment of clinical policies; and
- outline identification and structured management approach.

#### Information technology

The HSG has centralised all health communications, IT development and project management. The significant opportunity to use IT enablement to promote evidence based medicine and assist providers in supporting injured workers has been identified. A common focus will be achieving client and provider portals to allow ready access to retrieve relevant and allowable health data, evidence based clinical policies and navigation tools to assist injured workers.

#### Corporate 'health and return to work outcome' metric

An Australian review of health metrics and measures has been completed (see Research section). In order to provide access to the best standard of care for its clients the TAC and VWA require information about client health outcomes and the effect of any changes in scheme design, policy and/or legislation on client health. In turn, this requires the establishment of baseline measures of client and injured worker health and regular monitoring of health outcomes. One focus over the medium term is to develop a suite of metrics assessing client health and RTW. It is envisaged that one outcome of this project will be corporate health KPIs that may be used to monitor scheme performance.

#### Quality providers

HSG has a number of activities to facilitate injured workers' access to quality treatment and effective RTW support. Initiatives that have commenced relate to specialist provider purchasing and management models. These are being developed for occupational therapy, mental health and physiotherapy with an emphasis on outcome based commercial arrangements and return to work as a premium treatment modality.



## Community Integration Initiative

In June 2007, the VWA commenced a new Community Integration Program with the TAC to provide the benefit of TAC's lifetime support model to VWA's catastrophically injured clients.

- The program is a service initiative to deliver long term support for injured workers to rebuild their lives and participate in community life.
- The program aims to move 145 eligible existing injured workers to TAC by December 2007 and to commence the program for new claims.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### Claims management (Inc Insurer Arrangements)

As a privately underwritten scheme the responsibility for claims management rests with approved insurers and WorkCover WA is not involved directly in this area other than to monitor compliance with legislative requirements. Insurer and self-insurer performance in this area is subject to ongoing monitoring and audit.

WorkCover WA is currently revising the existing performance monitoring framework for both approved insurers and self-insurers.

It is anticipated this framework will contain five principal components:

- systems based reporting and analysis based on WorkCover WA's 'Q1' data stream;
- annual actuarial measures of financial performance;
- self-audits of underwriting and claims management by insurers and self-insurers;
- regular surveys of worker and employer satisfaction with insurer and self-insurer performance to highlight areas of concern in their operations with the objective of identifying best practice solutions;
- WorkCover WA risk and issue based audits.

Quarterly Insurer Performance Reports, providing information on outcomes and activities associated with insurers and self-insurers, are published on the Workcover WA website at: [www.workcover.wa.gov.au](http://www.workcover.wa.gov.au)

## WORKER AND EMPLOYER PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT

### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

#### 'Partners in Safety' Mentor Program

This program encourages larger organisations to take on a mentoring role to a selected group of smaller businesses within the same industry, to assist them with improving their level of workplace safety, whilst complying with the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), workers compensation and injury management legislation.

The first industry chosen to participate in this program is the construction industry, and two of the major ACT construction companies – Bovis Lend Lease and Construction Control have committed themselves as mentors for the program. The program is proposed to run over an eight-month period, and will consist of a mix of workshops, site visits and discussions with designated OHS officers from the mentor organisation. The Office of the OHS Commissioner will also be providing technical and administrative support to all participants throughout the program. The new publication, 'Serious about Safety' pack, launched on the 31 October 2007, will be used by the mentees' during the program, to help guide them through the process of improving the overall safety of their business. The Serious about Safety pack looks at practical approaches to helping businesses achieve their OHS compliance. The pack contains a number of tools to assist businesses identify what they need to do to make their workplace safer.



On completion of the program successful mentees' will receive recognition and a certificate during the 2008 'Opt for Safety' Month.

### **Small Business Advisory Program**

This is a pilot program that will initially focus on 10 – 15 small – medium businesses across a range of industries within the ACT, and is a practical approach to assist businesses to achieve OHS compliance and best practice.

The program will incorporate the already established 'Small Business Tool kit' introduced by ACT WorkCover in 2003 and the 'Serious about Safety' program, currently being adopted and implemented by 5 other States as part of a National harmonisation approach toward guidance materials and tools. This program has been developed specifically with the needs and limited resources of small businesses in mind, to assist them achieve their occupational health and safety, workers compensation and injury management responsibilities, by implementing effective OHS Management strategies and processes, enabling them to achieve best practice within their industry.

The program is expected to commence in early 2008.

## **COMCARE**

### **Customer Relationships**

In 2006-07, Comcare offered key premium paying agencies Partnership Agreements. The agreements between Comcare and these customers will provide a framework within which to strengthen and support an effective relationship between the parties.

### **Customer Seminars**

In 2006-07, Comcare convened two rounds of customer seminars nationally, one in November 2006 on Bullying in the Workplace – New Perspectives on Prevention and Management and the other in May 2007 on New Ideas and Directions for Health and Safety in the Workplace.

The seminars continued to provide a balance of legislative advice, best practice models and workshops. This approach has seen a high level of stakeholder engagement giving Comcare considerable exposure to its jurisdiction. Approximately 800 delegates took part in the November 2006 seminar and 1000 delegates attended in May 2007.

The 2007 Comcare National Conference was held at the Hotel Realm, Canberra, on 24-25 October, 2007 and attended by over 420 delegates from across Australia. The theme for this year's Conference was 'Building business capability through workplace safety and rehabilitation' with a particular focus on rehabilitation and the effective management of durable return to work as important factors contributing to increased business capability.

## **NEW SOUTH WALES**

### **Worker Status Rulings**

The changing nature of employment relationships has meant some employers have difficulty understanding whose wages should be included in the calculation of their workers compensation premium.

WorkCover NSW has worked with employers, unions and associated groups to create a service to help employers determine whose wages should be included in calculating their workers compensation premium.

Employers in New South Wales can now contact WorkCover's dedicated worker status service for assistance which commenced on 13 October 2006 and is supported by:



- a dedicated worker status rulings branch within WorkCover NSW to provide specialised assistance to employers
- a dedicated toll-free hotline number for employers (1800 024 205)
- a self-assessment tool on the WorkCover website to help employers determine the status of their workers for premium calculation purposes:  
[http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/WorkersCompensation/PrivateRulings/Self\\_Assessment\\_Tool/default.htm](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/WorkersCompensation/PrivateRulings/Self_Assessment_Tool/default.htm)
- a provision for employers to apply to WorkCover NSW to issue a prospective private ruling as to whether a person, or class of persons, is a worker for premium calculation purposes. A private ruling is a binding notice that states whether a person, or group of persons, are workers or contactors for the purpose of including wages for workers compensation premium calculations.

### **Large Employer Premium Reform**

Further to a review of the workers compensation premium system undertaken in 2005, WorkCover NSW has recently conducted a series of stakeholder focus groups to test the market's response to the 'Burning Cost' premium model, with a view to possibly introducing it (as an *optional* alternative method for large employers) in New South Wales during 2008. Consultation will continue with a discussion paper to be released in early 2008.

### **Improving Services to Workers**

On 21 March 2007 it was announced that \$250 million, from the WorkCover NSW Scheme surplus of \$416 million, would be set aside for initiatives to assist workers. The WorkCover NSW Board has considered how best to utilise these funds to improve health and return to work outcomes for workers and will provide its recommendations to the Minister for implementation in 2008.

### **Manual Handling Summit Response Program**

At the New South Wales Safety Summit in 2005, every industry group identified manual handling as a priority area for action. In response, WorkCover NSW has developed a five-year program to address manual handling issues in the workplace. The Manual Handling Summit Response Program aims to reduce manual handling injuries by 40 per cent by 2012 and improve injury management and return to work.

## **NEW ZEALAND**

### **Workplace Safety Discounts Program Review**

The Workplace Safety Levy Discount Program was launched in June 2006 and has initially been made available to self-employed people and small-medium sized businesses that have up to \$380,000 per annum in liable earnings, or employ up to 10 full-time equivalent people, operating in the six industry sectors with the highest number of work-related injuries (agriculture, construction, forestry, motor trades, road freight transport and fishing).

The program is aimed at initiating improvements in workplace safety. It sets out to do this by offering an incentive in the form of a 10 per cent levy discount in return for demonstrating industry relevant capability in hazard identification and management, injury and incident investigation, emergency readiness and in the case of employers, training of employees.

An evaluation of the operational aspects of the program has been undertaken to identify process-related changes, where necessary can be made to help optimise its uptake. Ministerial approval is being sort to expand the program in April 2008.



### **ACC Partnership Program Review**

ACC is carrying out an operational review of the performance of the ACC Partnership Program. This is the first major review of the ACC Partnership Program since its inception in 2001. In conducting the operational review, ACC is working collaboratively with the key stakeholders of the Program, namely the Department of Labour, the Council of Trade Unions and Business New Zealand.

Workstreams, each led by a subject matter expert from the stakeholder sub-group, are focussing on the following areas:

- the employee/claimant experience, with regard to appropriate cover for personal injuries and the provision of rehabilitation and entitlements;
- the promotion of employee involvement in health and safety and injury management;
- appropriate entry and renewal standards for employers to become accredited;
- development of a robust and responsive monitoring program; and
- ensuring the value of the ACC Partnership Program for employers is commensurate with the assumed risk.

Recommendations for improvements will be made to the Minister for ACC in April 2008.

### **CoverPlus Extra Product Review**

CoverPlus Extra is an optional product for self-employed and shareholder employees and is the alternative to the mandatory CoverPlus product.

A holistic review is underway to enhance the proposition provided by CoverPlus extra and to increase access and distribution. The review includes customer research, product developments and process improvements. This forms part of the holistic customer centric strategy to deliver products and services that customers want.

## **QUEENSLAND**

### **Stakeholder liaison.**

WorkCover Queensland has enhanced its communication strategies to liaise more closely with union and industry representative groups, in educating and assisting small business with workers compensation enquiries.

WorkCover Queensland also offers free seminar presentations for business and industry throughout regional locations (in consultation with local industry and business groups), assisting employers to understand their rights and obligations with regard to workers compensation, as well as the factors affecting their premium.

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

WorkCover has established an agreed Joint Program of Work with its sole claims agent to deliver a number of initiatives, including:

### **Waiver of Employer Excess**

The purpose is to explore the feasibility of waiving the requirement of an employer to pay the first two weeks of income maintenance in order to reduce reporting delays, improve return to work and reduce claim costs.

The scope of the project includes:

- Researching of other jurisdictions regarding initiatives and legislative changes implemented to reduce reporting delays.
- Reviewing other initiatives / strategies used to reduce reporting delays.



- Cost modelling of impact of waiving first two weeks against potential benefits of reduced reporting delays, improved return to work and reduction in claim costs.
- Conducting further data analysis to determine where reporting delays are coming from ie; small, medium or large employers.

### **Job Seeking Incentive Program – ‘Corporate Champions’**

The aim of this program is to provide genuine work opportunities for job seeking, high risk and long term injured workers who have at least 20 hours capacity per week, in order to improve return to work rates and achieve scheme liability savings. A pilot commenced in December 2007 with a number of high profile ‘Corporate Champion’ employers, both registered and self insured, employing injured workers who are ready to return to work.

The scope of the project has included:

- Researching other schemes and initiatives to determine how our proposed incentives compare.
- Determining cohort of claims that would be suitable for placement with Corporate Champions.
- Determining an incentive scheme that differentiates from WorkCover’s RISE scheme and is administratively simple for Employers Mutual to implement.
- Determining appropriate per centage incentive payments and other benefits that make it attractive for Corporate Champions to participate in the program.
- Cost modelling of program.

Corporate Champions will work with Employers Mutual to identify suitable workers who are then job-matched to vacant positions and eventually selected. Assistance will be provided to the employers and workers in order to ensure the sustainability of the return to work and incentive payments will be paid to the employers at key milestones 6, 12 and 18 months from commencement of worker in the job.

## **TASMANIA**

### **WorkCover Advisory Unit and Its Achievements**

The WorkCover Advisory Unit began operating in February 2007, with four major projects (all of which continue into 2007–08). The Unit helps employers in priority industries improve their OHS and injury management performance, and supports the WorkCover Tasmania Board’s strategy to improve OHS by providing consultative, educative, informative and advisory initiatives. The Unit:

- promotes prevention as an integral part of a workplace safety culture and management system.
- develops consultative and collaborative relationships with workers, employers and other relevant parties.
- encourages joint employer and worker involvement in OHS and supports the principles and practices of injury management.
- identifies opportunities for improvement and possible solutions that may support workplaces to address safety issues and effect a program of continuous improvement.
- incorporates a follow-up strategy to gauge the progress of workplace improvement programs.

## **VICTORIA**

### **Small Employer Support Package**

A Small Employer Support Package, designed to provide simple, yet comprehensive support to workers and employers in the workplace soon after injury, will be developed and piloted over 2007-2009.



The model aims to provide education and support to those workers and employers who need it most, recognising the needs of workers and employers with limited or no experience in facilitating RTW after injury.

### **Host Employer Program**

A Host Employer Program will be developed over the next 18 months (2009). The program aims to enable potential subsidised 'work trials' or opportunities for workers to test their readiness for RTW. This program will be particularly useful for small employers who may not have any suitable duties available.

### **Employer Education and Support**

#### Improved guidance on RTW

Materials for workers and employers will be tailored (where possible) to the experience of workers and employers from different employer segments (segmentation by employer size – small, medium, large and government).

#### RTW Networks

Designed for those who are responsible for managing injured workers in the workplace or who play a role in helping them back to work, the RTW Networks are aimed at enhancing an employers skills, knowledge and capacity for an early and sustainable RTW for injured workers.

There is also an opportunity for employers to share their RTW ideas and experiences with each other. The Networks are currently running quarterly in western, northern and southern regions of Victoria.

#### RTW Coordinator E-Comms

E-Comms allows RTW Coordinators to keep up to date with the latest in RTW and provides a mechanism through which VWA can engage with this audience directly. RTW Coordinators registered through the RTW Coordinator database receive the following support tools electronically to assist them in performing their roles within the workplace:

- the return to work coordinator newsletter – 'Learn to Return' – which is full of information about RTW, relevant research findings and details of any upcoming VWA events related to RTW;
- details of VWA approved RTW Coordinator training;
- the opportunity to meet with other employer representatives to learn more about return to work through networking events; and
- return to work publications and tools.

#### RTW Co-ordinator Training

A two day RTW coordinator training program has been developed to ensure that RTW coordinators have the right skills and knowledge to perform their role effectively. The training program is specifically designed to enable and up-skill RTW coordinators, but is also of value to those in associated roles such as line managers, supervisors and health and safety representatives. The program is endorsed by the VWA and conducted by training providers approved by the VWA.

### **Service Initiatives**

#### Client Surveys

The VWA runs a significant client satisfaction survey program. In 2007/08, 6,900 injured workers (including injured workers of self-insured employers) and 1500 employers will be surveyed. For the first time, this year, more extensive analysis was conducted on injured worker satisfaction results to better understand the drivers of satisfaction. Key findings were that:

- telephone service is a key driver of overall satisfaction;



- Independent Medical Exams, late payments and adverse decisions have a significant impact on satisfaction and the importance of different service attributes depending on the experience; and
- negative experiences compound to cause greater dissatisfaction.

Further research on the drivers of client satisfaction will be undertaken in 2007/08.

#### Service Events

In November 2007, the VWA held a Service Innovation Day. This event focuses on using innovation and sharing ideas to drive improved service through a program that includes: recognition of good service; how good service can make a difference to an injured worker's life; and a panel discussion on practical innovations.

#### Complaint Handling

With a view to continuously improving processes for the benefit of clients, the VWA complaint handling processes were further upgraded during the year, with:

- new features to increase the efficiency of complaint recording and to ensure that captured complaints are appropriately addressed within set timeframes;
- more comprehensive reporting to enable the identification of any systemic issues;
- a significant increase in the volume of complaints being recorded and resolved at the Agents and a slight reduction in volume of complaints that are being escalated to the VWA over the last 12 months.

#### Communications

A major project was commenced during the year, in collaboration with Agents, to improve the quality of written communications sent to workers, dependants, employers and providers, including:

- developing the WorkSafe Victoria Writing and Communications principles which aim to ensure communication is consistently well-structured, easy to understand and free of jargon; and
- applying these principles to reviewing and rewriting key batches of claims related letters and all new brochures and fact sheets.

Building on the principle of clear and empathetic communication, work continues on the key initiative of introducing industry-wide telephone service monitoring, as over 80% of workers surveyed recall having telephone contact with their Agent. All six VWA Agents now undertake call monitoring and coaching of their claim staff to improve the quality of service provided over the telephone. The VWA is also developing a scheme-wide service charter.

#### **Self-insurance**

The VWA continues to implement the recommendations from the 2005 report of the Review of Self-insurance Arrangements in Victoria allowing self-insurers to have a clearer understanding of the VWA's expectations.

Following extensive consultation with self-insurers, a new and more sophisticated performance management system was introduced, giving a clear and transparent set of indicators and indicative benchmarks against which to assess whether a company is 'fit and proper' to be a self-insurer and a documented approach to assessing performance against the indicators and benchmarks at approval and re-approval.

In 2007, an annual performance report was developed and released to each of the self-insurers for the first time, enabling the VWA and the self-insurers to fully understand performance (relative to comparable scheme employers and others) and also gauge performance against the 'fit and proper' criteria on an on-going basis. This will allow the VWA to work with self-insurers to ensure any identified poor performance is improved.

The VWA has introduced a 'trigger and consequences' model ensuring that the consequences of any failure to improve are well understood. The system will also enable the recognition of high performance.



## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### Employer programs (inc self-insurers)

#### National

WorkCover WA is participating in a number of national initiatives aimed at improving the harmonisation of workers compensation schemes across the country. In the interest of national harmonisation for those employers with self-insurer arrangements within both Western Australia and other state jurisdictions, the 'WorkCover WA Guidelines for the Approval and Review of Self-Insurers' have been redrafted in line with Heads of Workers compensation Authority (HWCA) recommendations.

#### Publications

Also focusing on self-insurers is the publication 'Self-Insurance in Western Australia, a Historic and Current Overview November 2006', which provides a broad overview of self-insurer arrangements in this State, available on the WorkCover WA website at: [www.workcover.wa.gov.au](http://www.workcover.wa.gov.au).

#### Compliance and Education

WorkCover WA instigates regular compliance and education initiatives for employers to ensure employers meet their responsibilities with regard to insurance, injury management and return to work programs. In 2006/2007 targeted compliance programs were conducted on a regional basis and in the residential and commercial construction sectors.

### Injured worker programs

#### Advisory Services

WorkCover WA's 'Advisory Services' has been established to assist stakeholders within the WA workers compensation system. The unit provides guidance and assistance to all parties within the workers compensation system on their rights and obligations, facilitating better, more informed decisions. Assistance and guidance is also provided to parties in the resolution of disputes, reducing the number of potential formal dispute applications being lodged in the Dispute Resolution Directorate.

#### Seminars

WorkCover WA, in conjunction with [IFAP](#), a not-for-profit safety and health training and consulting organisation, offers information seminars for injured workers every two to three weeks. This two and a half hour session covers workers' entitlements, the claims process, legislation relating to workers compensation, and responsibilities of parties in the system. The session also explains the injury management process, the role of approved vocational rehabilitation providers and the services they offer. No fee applies.

## REHABILITATION AND RETURN TO WORK

### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

#### Certificate IV in Case Management

It is widely known that case management is a specialised skill and that case managers are instrumental in achieving desirable outcomes for injured workers and employers. Through the renewed ACT Safety First Project, the ACT Government has held talks with vocational education providers in the region with a view to offering case managers an accredited qualification. The Australian Rehabilitation Providers Association (ARPA) has shown an interest in offering a Certificate IV in Government (Injury Rehabilitation Management). However, in order to ensure their course is recognised within the broader Australian Qualifications Framework, ARPA is currently in the process of having it accredited with the Accreditation and Registration Council. The outcome of that process should be known early in 2008.



The certificate will offer participants a nationally recognised qualification dedicated to the learning needs of Injury Management professionals both old and new. With Comcare being the only organisation in the region who offered case management training in the past, a dedicated and nationally recognised qualification delivered locally by the vocational education sector fills a recognised gap and is sure to prove popular into the future.

## COMCARE

As Claims services provider, Comcare supports Australian and ACT Government premium paying employers by promoting prevention and an early intervention approach to injury management. This support includes access for employers to assistance from Comcare through qualified rehabilitation and OHS advisors with experience in injury prevention and management to help the employers to achieve reduced incidence of injury to and early and safe return to work of their injured or ill employees.

### Approved Rehabilitation Providers

In 2006, Comcare invited the scheme's Approved Rehabilitation Providers (ARP) to apply for the triennial renewal of their approval status under the SRC Act. It is only 'approved' rehabilitation providers who are able to deliver rehabilitation programs under the Act.

In 2006 there were 180 ARPs and of these some 130 applied for renewal to operate in the next 3 year period. Applicants were required to demonstrate their capacity to achieve Comcare's outcome and service standards as well as being required to satisfy a number of mandatory qualification, financial probity and insurance criteria.

Twenty per cent of the applicants, including a number of major and multi-state providers, were granted conditional approval. These 'conditionals' will undergo a formal review in 12 months to satisfy Comcare that they are consistently achieving the required outcome and service standards. Comcare has also required the 'conditionals' to put in place specific strategies to address the issues noted in the renewal assessment.

Some ARPs were not approved as they had not met the mandatory criteria and operational standards in force for the last approval period, or had not undertaken a satisfactory number of cases in the jurisdiction since they were last approved.

Comcare's operational standards for 2007-2010 require that ARPs meet the following outcomes on closed rehabilitation plans:-

- a 90% return to work rate
- a median cost of \$1,980, and
- a median duration of 19 weeks

Comcare also identified a number of providers undertaking a minimal amount of SRC Act rehabilitation programs and they were encouraged to become more active in this jurisdiction in order to maintain approval.

For more information see: <http://www.comcare.gov.au/rehabilitation>

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### Rehabilitation Provider Framework

The current occupational rehabilitation provider accreditation framework has been in place in New South Wales since 2000. WorkCover NSW is reviewing its accreditation framework to ensure there is greater alignment and support of the legislative changes made since 2000.

In reviewing the occupational rehabilitation provider accreditation framework, consideration will be given to the three key functions that WorkCover NSW undertakes:

- the regulatory role over the System that includes the Nominal Insurer, Self Insurers and Specialised Insurers



- the Nominal Insurer managing the Scheme Agents under contract
- the accreditation body for the occupational rehabilitation industry in New South Wales.

## NEW ZEALAND

### Rehabilitation Services

ACC is implementing an ongoing program to ensure a focus on sustainable client outcomes – referred to as the Rehabilitation Framework. There has been significant progress with regard to initial implementation activities, including the following that are relevant to workers compensation provision:

- Introduced a simplified social rehabilitation assessment tool, and a more comprehensive strategic review of home support services – currently at implementation planning phase
- A comprehensive reform of systems for supporting people with serious injury has commenced, with two pilot sites testing new approaches (which includes supported employment)
- Developed 'relationship training' for staff working directly with clients, for roll-out later in 2007
- Development of improved pain management support
- Home based rehabilitation service specifications that are aligned across ACC and health have been prepared
- Establishing a partnership and pilot with the Ministry of Social Development to enable ACC clients' access to employment services.

### Canada's National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR)

In May 2007 ACC secured five-year New Zealand licences for audit tools published by NIDMAR.

The National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR), based in Canada, is an education, training and research organisation that focuses on the implementation of workplace-based reintegration of workers with disabilities. It is committed to reducing the human, social and economic costs of disability.

NIDMAR is internationally recognised, and is considered to be a world leader in best practice in disability management. Products and services of NIDMAR have been adopted in a number of jurisdictions, including Germany, Ireland and the United Kingdom. NIDMAR has also played a significant role in the development of the International Labour Organization (ILO) *Code of Practice on managing Disability in the Workplace*.

The three key products and services available from NIDMAR are: occupational standards, training and certification, and an audit tool. The NIDMAR standards, audits and training programs are being increasingly adopted by in western jurisdictions.

The audit tool provided by NIDMAR is the Consensus-Based Disability Management Audit™ (CBDMA™). This tool can be used by employers to benchmark and evaluate their implementation of disability management in the workplace as a part of quality improvement.

Consistent with the consensus basis of NIDMAR, ACC has formed an Implementation Steering Group (comprising both ACC and external representatives) and will now work with key stakeholders (government and non-government agencies, industry/employers, unions, and relevant educational institutions) with a view to initiating a whole-of-country approach to the implementation of NIDMAR products in New Zealand. It is expected that NIDMAR training and certification will be widely available in New Zealand from July 2008.

### Home support strategy

Home support services assist ACC claimants to participate in their rehabilitation and/or increase their independence in the community.



ACC has developed a home support strategy to ensure an adequate supply of safe, quality services for claimants. Home support includes home help, attendant care and child care.

Steep growth in the cost of social rehabilitation, particularly attendant care, is a significant driver of increased liability on the ACC Scheme. Projected increases in the costs of social rehabilitation entitlements have been built into the liability over the next five years but ACC must control the ongoing cost of home support services to manage future scheme liability. The new strategy is built around four workstreams:

1. *Matching services to meet claimant needs* by simplifying assessment processes, improving access to services by introducing easier and faster referral processes and developing new services such as revised packages of care
2. *Improving the quality of services* by specifying the quality of services and improving the monitoring of services
3. *Supporting claimants with non-contracted providers* by developing and implementing a holistic policy on non-contracted providers to ensure claimants make informed decisions about the appropriate mix of providers, receive quality care, are supported to put appropriate arrangements in place for securing home support services (eg choice of employment arrangement, taxation, KiwiSaver etc) and family carers receive appropriate levels of pay, training and support
4. *Achieving sustainable funding* for home support services by reviewing pricing, increasing funding levels and aligning prices with the health sector.

### **Occupational Health Nurse Pilot**

This pilot is a process improvement initiative focused on achieving changes in general practitioner documentation of time off work and improvements in the process of vocational rehabilitation. The initiative enables a general practitioner to refer a claimant to an Occupational Health Nurse for an early intervention in the return to work process. The initiative is to be delivered for claimants and employers on the first working day after the general practice consultation, with the aim of keeping people at work after an injury, when this is clinically appropriate. The pilot is currently being undertaken and a report is due in May 2008.

## **QUEENSLAND**

### **Case management for the seriously injured.**

WorkCover Queensland has reviewed and implemented changes to the management of serious injury claims, which includes workers with serious head and spinal injuries, traumatic amputations, and other catastrophic injuries. The complete management of these claims, from acute care through to community-based rehabilitation and to claim closure has been centralised to a specialised team of highly qualified case managers with experience in dealing with the unique needs of these workers and their families.

Previously the management process was to manage the claims centrally through the acute phase only, and then refer the claims to the network of regionally based Customer Service Centres. This new approach has increased consistency in decision making on significant rehabilitation expenses, such as personal care programs, home and vehicle modifications.

### **Host employment program**

WorkCover Queensland coordinates rehabilitation for workers who have a workers compensation claim. The majority of workers are able to return to work with their employer. Some, however, are unable to be rehabilitated at their employer's workplace or in their current job. WorkCover coordinates 'host suitable duties programs' for these workers at another workplace with a host employer.



A 'host employer' is an employer who agrees to have an injured worker at their workplace when the worker is unable to participate in rehabilitation with their original employer. WorkCover pays the workers' wages when they participate in a host suitable duties program with a host employer. These programs normally run for three to six weeks. A host employer does not have to employ a person after their program has ended.

A host suitable duties program is a graduated work program that helps workers to improve their work fitness. They are run in a similar manner to a suitable duties program, except that different arrangements are made to manage the role of the host employer, the worker must attend a different place of employment for a set period, and WorkCover Queensland has to provide a suitable temporary place of employment for the injured worker. A WorkCover Queensland customer advisor will oversee the host suitable duties program. The customer advisor is the main point of contact for all parties, liaising with the host employer, the worker's original employer, treating doctor and other health providers.

A health provider will visit the worksite with the worker to develop the program so that it matches the person's abilities with appropriate job tasks and working hours. These tasks and hours are often increased during the program as the worker recovers.

An injured workers' customer advisor, rehabilitation coordinator (or employer) and treating doctor develop a host suitable duties program taking into consideration:

- the worker's condition and stage of recovery
- the worker's pre-injury employment and tasks they are now capable of doing
- the worker's relevant medical information
- the workplace assessment completed by a physiotherapist, occupational therapist, or other health provider
- the host employer's workplace rehabilitation policy and procedures
- the worker's age, education, skills and work experience
- advice from a physiotherapist, occupational therapist, or other health providers.

Fact sheets on the program are available on WorkCover's Queensland's website:

[http://www.workcoverqld.com.au/host\\_program\\_fact\\_sheet](http://www.workcoverqld.com.au/host_program_fact_sheet).

### **Rehabilitation self-assessment tool**

Q-COMP has developed and disseminated a self-assessment tool for Queensland employers and Rehabilitation and Return to Work Coordinators (RRTWCs). The use of the self-assessment checklist is voluntary and was developed to provide a framework for those employers who wish to assess their workplace rehabilitation systems for the purpose of continuous improvement.

As workplace rehabilitation has a crucial role in reducing the cost of workplace injury, it is important for employers to identify where to focus their efforts in improving workplace rehabilitation processes and procedures to achieve continuous improvements in outcomes. The self-assessment checklist is intended to assist employers to assess their performance over several key categories related to the provision of workplace rehabilitation. The categories include legislative obligations as set out in the *Workers compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003* and the *Workers compensation and Rehabilitation Regulation 2003* (Queensland). Best practice indicators developed from various sources in the rehabilitation literature are also included. The checklist can be viewed at:

[http://www.qcomp.com.au/downloads/employers/self\\_assessment\\_checklist.pdf](http://www.qcomp.com.au/downloads/employers/self_assessment_checklist.pdf)

### **Rehabilitation and Return to Work – Better Practice Guide for Employers**

Following the interest generated by the Employers Self-assessment tool for workplace rehabilitation, Q-COMP will publish a 'Better Practice Guide for Employers' in January 2008. This guide arose out of stakeholder requests and



is designed to assist RRTWC with better rehabilitation practices. The draft guide can be viewed at: [http://www.qcomp.com.au/downloads/employers/better\\_practice\\_return\\_to\\_work\\_guide.pdf](http://www.qcomp.com.au/downloads/employers/better_practice_return_to_work_guide.pdf).

### **Cross Border Recognition of Rehabilitation and Return to Work Coordinators (RRTWC's) in Queensland, NSW and Victoria – Administrative Arrangements**

For rehabilitation coordinators registered in Victoria or New South Wales to gain accreditation as a RRTWC in Queensland, Q-COMP has developed a workbook style training module to educate these persons in relevant aspects of the Queensland scheme. On completion of the module, these persons will need to provide Q-COMP with evidence of their training in NSW or Victoria before being granted accreditation in Queensland.

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

### **Vocational Rehabilitation**

On 1 July 2006 WorkCover SA implemented a number of vocational rehabilitation reforms as recommended by the 2005 Alan Clayton report.

These reforms were introduced through new contracting arrangements and were aimed at:

- improving provider management by WorkCover
- clearly defining roles and responsibilities between respective parties
- increasing provider skill and competency levels
- increasing provider remuneration
- increasing performance accountability and monitoring.

The reforms were introduced around the same time WorkCover SA entered into sole claims agent arrangements with the appointment of Employers Mutual. Over the last 18 months these reforms have been bedded down and have continued to evolve through working closely together with the vocational rehabilitation industry and Employers Mutual.

An evaluation of vocational rehabilitation services was completed in October 2007 to understand how well the new arrangements were working. The findings of this evaluation were positive overall with some recommendations for ongoing improvement. In line with this, in November 2007 WorkCover's Board decided to renew contracts with providers under new terms and conditions to allow maximum flexibility for the claims agent to optimally access and utilise vocational rehabilitation services.

The process for renewing vocational rehabilitation provider contracts will commence with the call for expressions of interest on 21 January 2008. It is expected that new contracts will be effective 10 March 2008.

### **Social rehabilitation project**

One of the findings of an internal WorkCover SA report on how to improve service delivery to workers with a serious injury, was the need for more thorough guidelines for claims managers to appropriately determine a range of social rehabilitation entitlements for injured workers.

Since this report, WorkCover has developed an overarching policy framework to assist the development of operational guidelines for WorkCover's sole claims agent, Employers Mutual. The types of products and services under consideration include: attendant care, housing modifications, vehicle modifications, travel and accommodation for workers and their families, domestic and gardening help, childcare services, respite care, family counselling and the provision of rehabilitation equipment and aids.

The first phase of this project will see operational guidelines in place for key items of social rehabilitation by April 2008.



### **Treatment resource and educational assistance tool (TREAT)**

On June 18, WorkCover SA launched its new TREAT (Treatment Resource and Educational Assistance Tool) website.

[TREAT](#) is an online resource for health professionals, providing best practice information about managing workers compensation injuries in South Australia. The website was developed in response to recommendations from the Review of Health Care Infrastructure carried out by Associate Professor Kathy Alexander in 2005. The development and implementation has been in conjunction and consultation with key stakeholder and health professional groups.

TREAT is multidisciplinary with a particular focus on soft tissue injuries, the acute/sub acute phase of injury, best practice in workers compensation and the prevention of chronic injuries.

The release of TREAT is the first phase of WorkCover's ongoing strategy of supporting and providing information for health providers. The website will continue to be updated and expanded in the future.

## **TASMANIA**

### **Accreditation of Rehabilitation Providers**

The Regulation of Workers Compensation Rehabilitation Providers Working Group researched various models for the regulation of rehabilitation providers; developed a discussion paper; and released a paper for stakeholder comment in August 2006.

Stakeholder comment was received October 2006. From this, the Working Group produced an accreditation of rehabilitation providers model, which set out:

- the accreditation requirements and process.
- the professional standards applying to the accreditation of rehabilitation providers.
- prohibited conduct and disciplinary proceedings.
- the establishment of a rehabilitation advisory committee.

The model also sets out transitional arrangements for people currently practising as rehabilitation providers, but who do not meet the educational or other requirements for immediate accreditation. The model stipulates that accreditation will be granted for three years.

The Rehabilitation Advisory Committee will be established to:

- review, analyse, evaluate and advise the WorkCover Tasmania Board about the accreditation of rehabilitation providers including the extent, scope and effectiveness of accreditation arrangements.
- conduct (or cause to be conducted) regular audits of rehabilitation providers in accordance with proposed arrangements.
- review and analyse the effectiveness of occupational rehabilitation services and consumer satisfaction about the functions performed, services provided and employment outcomes achieved.

The WorkCover Tasmania Board approved the Model in August 2007.

## **VICTORIA**

### **Return to Work**

#### Triage System

The development of a 3-part Triage System will be undertaken and piloted over the next two years (to 2009). The Triage System aims to assist Agents to focus their most skilled resources on claims that are most likely to exceed expected time off work. 1. The Analytical Triage tool, utilising demographic, employer and injury and claim data, will



identify high priority claims at registration. 2. For those cases where RTW has not occurred within a specified timeframe, the Psycho-Social Questionnaire will identify any potential psychosocial barriers to RTW. 3. Injury Duration Benchmarks will allow the 'flagging' of cases where more intensive management is required.

#### Workplace Rehabilitation Counselling

The Workplace Relationship Counselling Service will be developed and piloted over 2007-2009. The aim is to provide a clearly defined service to address interpersonal conflict when it is the major barrier to RTW. The service would utilise qualified mediators, at the workplace, for a fixed fee. The initial pilot will be run within the Government sector.

#### Early Return to Work

The Early Return to Work Project will be piloted in 2007/08. This program will provide support and targeted education and tools to Agents to improve how we assist workers, employers and other relevant parties to maximise opportunities for timely and appropriate RTW.

#### Return to Work Inspectorate

A 12 month pilot of a RTW Inspectorate was launched in September 2006. The objective of the Inspectorate is to ensure employers meet the legal obligations of the *Accident Compensation Act 1985*, and promote effective occupational rehabilitation of injured workers, leading to early and sustained RTW. The functions of the RTW Inspectorate is to:

- raise awareness of the obligations of employers;
- identify non-compliance;
- facilitate the development of RTW plans through provision of relevant information;
- encourage the establishment of occupational rehabilitation programs; and
- encourage better liaison between key stakeholders.

Program evaluation was undertaken in August 2007, and overall satisfaction with the RTW Inspectorate was found to be very high.

### **Occupational Rehabilitation**

#### Original Employer Model

The Original Employer Model's objectives are to optimise conditions under which injured workers can return to work with their original employer. The model provides incentives to Occupational Rehabilitation (OR) providers for achievement of outcomes, including partial and full RTW, and return to sustainable/productive duties. Implementation will commence in 2008.

#### JSA/WISE

The Job Seeking Assistance (JSA) program and Workplace Incentive Scheme for Employers (WISE) are programs designed to support injured workers who are unable to return to the workplace where their injury was sustained.

JSA service is aimed at equipping injured workers with the skills needed to secure new employment. WISE is aimed at securing full/part-time permanent employment for workers who are ready, fit and motivated to return to work, but do not have the option of returning to work for their previous employer by offering eligible new employers financial incentives and workplace injury insurance protection.



## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### Code of practice for injury management

The 2005 Reforms to the Western Australian workers compensation legislation formalised the approach to injury management advocated by WorkCover WA for a number of years. A code of practice for injury management, which has the same power as subsidiary legislation, was gazetted and complementary guidance notes for the code of practice developed.

The guidance notes clearly establish the roles of the various parties in injury management and provide information on the development of workplace injury management policies and return to work programs.

The guidance notes are available on the WorkCover WA website: [Guidance Notes for the Injury Management Code of Practice](#).

### Three-year injury management campaign

In 2007, WorkCover WA committed to a three-year injury management campaign designed to increase awareness of injury management among stakeholders with the objective of improving return to work outcomes. WorkCover WA will take a social marketing approach to the campaign, involving public relations programs and networking opportunities for stakeholders, media programs, educational initiatives, information and training strategies, marketing and advertising. The campaign will also involve market research, review of best practice injury management models, a review of WorkCover WA data with regard to return to work rates, monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure the success of the campaign and extensive consultation with stakeholders.

### Have Your Say Survey

A 'Have Your Say Survey' was recently conducted by WorkCover WA among workers with an open claim. The survey canvassed workers' views about the operation and effectiveness of the scheme to obtain a better understanding of their perceptions and experiences in a number of areas including 'Returning to Work' and 'Workplace Culture'. The initial report of outcomes from the survey is available on the WorkCover WA website at: [www.workcover.wa.gov.au](http://www.workcover.wa.gov.au).

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

#### Possible AIMS database upgrade

The recently completed review of the ACT Workers Compensation Scheme highlighted the potential for the Accident Information Management System (AIMS) database to incorporate third-party insurance related data and recommended that developing a new generation database with enhanced capabilities would enable better monitoring of scheme performance and offer clearer feedback to stakeholders.

When the Office of Regulatory Services (ORS) was formed early in 2007, it was recognised that as part of the change process there was potential for the information systems that support the various functions to be integrated, expanded and/or upgraded.

The ACT Government is currently reviewing its regulatory requirements and exploring the possibility of implementing an enhanced data system within ORS.



## COMCARE

### Customer Information System

Comcare's Customer Information System (CIS) provides access for customers to on-line claims data and reporting mechanisms. Through CIS, customers can measure and monitor their injury management and claims performance including claims that require intervention and rehabilitation support.

### Electronic communication project

Comcare has embarked on a project in partnership with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) to streamline communication between Comcare and the ATO through two-way electronic transmission and receipt of claims management and return to work documentation. When completed, the ATO will have an information technology interface with Comcare which will allow it to complete and submit occupational health and safety incident reports and workers compensation claims electronically. Once documents have been completed by the relevant areas of the ATO, they can be submitted electronically to Comcare via Fedlink together with imaged attachments. Comcare has also developed a secure data link with the ACT Government enabling the transmission and receipt of routine correspondence between Comcare and ACT Government agencies. At this stage, only ACT Health has accessed this arrangement.

## NEW ZEALAND

### Payment options

ACC is developing additional payment options to the levy-payer market. Levy payers are now able to pay by one-off direct debit and select any date for direct debit payments. The next step in this project is to focus on the expansion of on-line payment options.

### ACC on-line strategy

As part of ACC's online strategy, several new initiatives have been developed. They include:

- ACC making provision for payments via electronic transfer for customers of the major trading banks. It is envisaged that this facility will be available to customers of all major banks by January 2008.
- Customer Services Representative (CSR) support provided through the Business Service Centre (BSC) on the ACC internet so that customers can have online real time communications with CSR's as an alternative to support via the phone.
- Progression of a mechanism for online ACC payments to be made by credit card for customers via ACC internet site (this deliverable planned to be achieved by March 2007).

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Work Health Information System is currently being reviewed and rewritten. This is a data collection system which collects and provides reports on all operational areas of NT WorkSafe: workers compensation, rehabilitation, occupational health and safety, electrical and mine safety. The new program will be trialled in early 2008 with a cut-over on 1 July 2008.



## QUEENSLAND

### Workers compensation Statutory Law Decisions Database

Q-Comp has introduced a Workers compensation Statutory Law Decisions Database. QWCDec (pronounced 'quick deck') is a searchable online database of Industrial Magistrates and Queensland Industrial Relations Commission statutory workers compensation decisions since 1 July 1999 and is accessed from the Q-COMP website. Q-COMP is responsible for maintaining the database and ensuring decisions are regularly updated within a month of being handed down.

The database is a valuable research and education tool for Queensland Workers compensation Scheme stakeholders. It is particularly useful for those involved in difficult legal scenarios where past legal precedent can assist in the decision making process.

### Electronic transaction options

WorkCover Queensland has implemented a number of new initiatives for injured workers and employers to enable some interactions to occur electronically. Claim lodgements are able to be done either over the phone with customer contact centre staff during business hours, or alternatively over the internet at any time of the day. Additionally, employers are able to lodge their premium renewal information via phone or internet. In its first year of operation approximately 42% of premium renewals were received electronically.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### Project Harry

On 7 May 2007, Julia Davison, CEO WorkCover SA, signed an agreement between IBM, Cúram Software and WorkCover for the provision of a software solution to replace WorkCover SA's legacy application suite (also known as IDEAS and dotcom).

Cúram is a commercial software product specifically designed for social enterprise management organisations such as WorkCover. IBM is a global IT organisation that has had a strategic alliance with Cúram since 2000.

The design stage of the project commenced in early June 2007 and continued until November 2007. Subject to Board approval, the implementation is scheduled to commence in January 2008 with completion likely in 2009.

## TASMANIA

### Development of Work Related Fatalities Database

Workplace Standards Tasmania and WorkCover Tasmania have recently centralised their data collections and recording of work-related fatalities. The result is the Work Related Fatalities Database, which is to be administered by the WorkCover Branch.

### Knowledge Management System

The WorkCover Tasmania Board in June 2007 approved funding to acquire a new Knowledge Management System. The new system will not be limited to just storing claims, payments and premium data but will have the capacity to integrate all the functions of the WorkCover Tasmania Board into a single system, to greatly enhance the WorkCover Tasmania Board's monitoring and analysis capability.

As part of the project proposal, the unit assessed the existing systems arrangements, developed an IT strategy for the Branch, and prepared a business requirement specification for the new system. Preparing a detailed project plan and technical and functional specifications are the first priorities for 2007–08.



## VICTORIA

### IT Shared Solutions (ITSS)

In 2007 the information technology departments of the VWA and the TAC agreed to form the unincorporated joint venture under the banner IT Shared Solutions (ITSS). ITSS provides information technology services exclusively to both agencies, and will optimise the collective IT resources through the implementation of a common IT systems platform where similar requirements exist.

In 2007-2008, major investments in shared platforms will commence. The work plan for 2007/08 is underpinned by the imperatives - investment in new technologies, delivering excellent services on existing platforms, and building organisational capability. Initiatives for 2007/08 include:

- Self-Assessment On-line (ORR) - Extension of on-line services to provide facilities for small employers to submit their annual remuneration on-line and receive their estimated premium.
- The Foundation Project – This project will establish effective information governance and implement key information management tools and capabilities.
- The Integrated Party/Location project will provide essential support for cross business unit initiatives.
- Triage Tool – An improved Triage Tool that receives claims data and outputs claims classification.
- Claims Strategies Systems of Work (CSSoW) – This system will replace part of the existing claims management system (CASE), and will provide the ability to conduct multi-disciplinary tasks for delivery of segment based services and case pathways.
- PACE (Premium Audit Compliance Environment) – Workflow Enhancement to support end to end audit process.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

### Q1 specification

WorkCover WA has continued to work with insurers and self insurers to improve the quality of returns, statements and information required under the Act under the 'Q1' data specification. Revision of the specification is anticipated in conjunction with the implementation of a new performance monitoring framework for self-insurers and insurers currently under development.

### Internal Data Management and E-Lodgement

A central data management system is currently being developed for the WorkCover WA Dispute Resolution Directorate. Opportunities for online lodgement of dispute applications and related documentation are also under consideration.

## COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING AND EDUCATION

### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

#### OHS Safety Summit

The OHS safety summit is an inaugural event for the ACT. The summit is aimed at improving work place safety through the coordination and partnering of industry groups, unions and government in addressing the serious workplace safety risks within industries across the ACT. The summit will encourage communication and consultation between industry groups and others involved in the field of occupational health and safety by allowing them the opportunity to discuss a range of OHS related topics ultimately aimed to improve the future of workplace



safety across ACT industries. These topics include: the future direction of OHS; delivering greater awareness opportunities; developing more effective OHS strategies and activities; improving OHS safety outcomes; and reducing work related injury costs to industry. The summit is planned to take place mid 2008.

## COMCARE

In 2007/08 Comcare will be undertaking a variety of communication activities targeted to our jurisdiction. Key activities will aim to give employers and employees the opportunity to explore and expand their knowledge relating to the important and topical issues of workplace health and safety.

Comcare recently introduced a new corporate identity with a vibrant and contemporary look that complements the agency's commitment to helping employers and employees ensure they have Australia's safest workplaces.

Shortly, Comcare will expand its identity through a redevelopment of its website – [www.comcare.gov.au](http://www.comcare.gov.au) and aims to apply this refreshed identity across new and targeted workplace safety campaigns.

### KEY ACTIVITIES:

**Comcare Customer Seminars** – will be held in early 2008. These free half or full day seminars will be held in every major state and territory across Australia and are designed to explore pertinent jurisdictional issues as well as provide an update of major Comcare activities and overall scheme performance.

**2008 Comcare National Conference** – will be held on 22 to 24 October 2008 at the National Convention Centre, Canberra. This three day event will explore a broad range of issues impacting on our jurisdiction as well as targeted workshops covering physical and psychological workplace injuries.

**2008 SRCC Safety Awards** – will be held in October 2008. Now in its eighth year, the SRCC Awards are designed to reward and recognise Government and private sector organisations that operate in the Commonwealth occupational health and safety and workers compensation jurisdiction, and that excel in the areas of workplace health, safety, prevention and rehabilitation. Nominations for the 2008 Awards program will open in April 2008. Finalist and winners will be granted exclusive permission to utilise the SRCC Awards branding (Award logo and official trophy) in their own marketing and recruitment advertising, as a demonstration of their commitment to workplace health and safety.

**Website redevelopment** – Comcare's internet will be redeveloped focussing on useability, content and design. Milestones in the redevelopment project will ensure it is relevant, structured according to end users and technologically appropriate.

**Publications** – will be reviewed in line with any jurisdictional changes. Comcare will also be developing a comprehensive publication about Comcare and its scheme, and a variety of Fact Sheets as easy reference points for all stakeholders.

**Media Relations** – will continue to evolve. Comcare will aim to proactively engage media outlets to advise on the jurisdiction's results and achievements.

### External training

Comcare delivers an integrated learning and development program which also includes tailored in-house training courses, networking opportunities, seminars, conferences and customer focus forums.

Activities during the year centred on:

- integrating injury management functions into the human resource management framework
- encouraging leadership commitment to prevention and rehabilitation
- ensuring line managers meet responsibility for the cost of workplace injury
- implementing a rehabilitation policy based on early assistance to injured employees



- making rehabilitation programs available for non compensable injuries
- giving safety and rehabilitation a high profile and communicating frequently with staff and managers about activities and strategies
- ensuring that line managers are trained to support prevention and return to work.

Courses covered the following topics:

- [Approved rehabilitation provider training](#)
- [Case management](#)
- [Preventing workplace injuries](#)
- [The role of a personnel area](#)
- [The Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988](#)
- [Training for Self Insurers](#)
- [Workplace Injury Prevention and Management for Supervisors](#)
- [Back on Track](#) (back injury prevention)
- [Employee Information / Induction Sessions.](#)

A calendar detailing the full range of programs and activities is available on Comcare's website at:

[www.comcare.gov.au](http://www.comcare.gov.au)

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### Assisting Small Business

WorkCover NSW provides small and medium businesses with accurate and practical advice and assistance in relation to workplace health and safety, workers compensation and effective return to work strategies for injured workers, through its Business Assistance Branch using various tailored programs including:

- Public Workshops.
- Workplace Advisory Visits.
- Safe Business Advisory Forums.
- Safe Business is Good Business Website.
- WorkCover Safety Bus.
- Small and Medium Business Mentoring Program.
- Small and Medium Business Self Assessment Tool.

The Business Assistance Branch is also rolling out Small Business Forums across New South Wales to ensure each region gets the opportunity to contribute and be heard in relation to safety and workers compensation matters that affect their business. These forums will meet four times per year at a time and place appreciative of the demands placed on businesses. Participants will drive the Forum agendas.

### Fraud Website

WorkCover NSW has updated its website to include dedicated web pages providing advice to stakeholders on the key indicators of fraudulent activity, how suspicions may be reported and potential ramifications. It is anticipated this will increase awareness amongst stakeholders as to the evidence required to build a fraud case and therefore improve the quality of the referrals received.



## NEW ZEALAND

### Invoices

Invoicing for the 2007/08 levy invoicing cycle has commenced for employers and self-employed people, with business levy-payers now receiving invoices based on a new levy invoice design.

The re-design of the invoice was prompted by a need to simplify the invoice in order to clarify the levy calculation, the data used and the process for invoices that have not been paid by the due date. Initial feedback on the design has been positive.

### Local Partnerships

Progress continues to be made in our partnership approach to working with employers including District Health Boards. Additionally this strategy is also being employed to assist in educating customers of the scheme including its products via training providers and financial services organisations.

ACC and the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) have been collaborating over the past year on the development of a schools-based workplace health and safety teaching program. This is designed to provide information to secondary students on workplace hazards, and their health and safety rights and responsibilities as employees.

## QUEENSLAND

One of Q-COMP's primary roles is to educate and inform stakeholders about Queensland's workers compensation scheme, which it carries out by conducting communication activities and programs that meet stakeholders' needs.

### Education and awareness

Q-COMP delivers relevant information across the state to health professionals, legal professionals, insurers, employer groups, union delegates, rehabilitation and return to work coordinators and approved training providers through seminars, workshops and presentations.

WorkCover Queensland also conducts annual stakeholder forums to give and receive feedback to stakeholders on the performance of WorkCover and opportunities for improvement.

### Publications

Q-COMP produces a number of publications including a series of stakeholder newsletters. The newsletters are distributed electronically every quarter and include:

- Health Report (for allied health professionals)
- Rehabilitation Report (for employers and rehabilitation and return to work coordinators)
- Insurer Report (for insurers)
- MAT Quarterly Report (for Medical Assessment Tribunal members)

Other stakeholder publications produced by Q-COMP include fact sheets, guidelines and checklists. Examples of these include The Better Practice in Return to Work Guide, Helping you get the Measure of Workplace Rehabilitation and the Rehabilitation and Return to Work solutions and concepts wheel.

Q-COMP also regularly submits articles to the Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland's monthly periodical *Doctor Q*, providing medical practitioners with up-to-date and relevant information about the scheme.



## Online Learning System

Q-COMP is currently developing an online learning system to make access to education and information even more accessible to stakeholders.

## Annual Grants

Q-COMP provides annual grants to the Australian Industry Group, Commerce Queensland, Australian Workers Union and Queensland Council of Unions to supply a range of external information services, including seminars, electronic and web-based information and a toll free telephone service, that educate and raise awareness amongst their members.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### Recovery and return to work awards

WorkCover launched its inaugural Recovery and Return to Work Awards 2007 on 17 May 2007 in recognition of the outstanding efforts of South Australians who have demonstrated excellence in the workers compensation environment focusing on recovery and return to work and/or the community. Individuals, employers, health and rehabilitation service providers and claims managers were encouraged to enter, in a range of categories:

- Individual achievement award
- Small employer excellence award
- Large employer excellence award
- Self-insured employer excellence award
- Service provider achievement award
- Claims manager excellence award.

All finalists and winners were announced and profiled at WorkCover's 2007 Recovery and Return to Work Awards ceremony which was held in conjunction with the annual conference, *Return to Work is part of Recovery: Working together for best practice injury management*, on 19 September 2007. Each award recipient received a prize to the value of \$3000 and a trophy and certificate.

A first in South Australia, the awards celebrated and rewarded excellence in injury management and return to work for injured workers and employers. The awards promote and raise awareness of best practice – all leading to improved return to work outcomes. Stakeholder feedback on the awards and the event was very positive. Further information on the Awards can be found on WorkCover SA's website at: <http://www.workcover.com>.

### Annual conference

WorkCover SA's second annual innovative return to work and injury management conference, *Return to work is part of the recovery: Working together for best practice injury management* was held on Thursday 20 September 2007. The keynote presentations were made by Dr Sally Nikolaj, President of Nikolaj Consulting in Canada: '[Best practice disability management: A Canadian perspective](#)' and Greg Tweedly, the CEO of the Victorian WorkCover Authority: '[Improving recovery and return to work outcomes: Victoria's experience](#)'.

Dr Nikolaj was instrumental in developing and overseeing a network of more than 18,000 health care providers in Alberta, Canada, and discussed return to work initiatives through innovative partnerships and health care management. Mr Tweedly discussed Victoria's experience in improving recovery and return to work outcomes.

Around 300 delegates attended the one-day conference, representing injured workers, unions, employers, claims managers from Employers Mutual, health care providers, vocational rehabilitation providers and WorkCover SA; feedback on the event was very positive.



## TASMANIA

### Manual Handling, Slips and Trips in Hospitals

Tasmania is the lead jurisdiction responsible for developing a national Heads of Workplace Safety Authority compliance campaign that will target manual handling, slips and trips in hospitals.

The campaign will further investigate issues identified in previous campaigns (such as the Design 4 Health manual handling campaign of 2004). The areas examined will also align with the national priority to reduce high incidence/severity risks in the health care sector.

## VICTORIA

### Marketing program

#### Homecomings campaign

In October 2007, VWA was awarded two separate marketing effectiveness awards at the AMI (Australian Marketing Institute) 2007 Awards for Marketing Excellence. The Homecomings public awareness campaign won the coveted Marketing Program of the Year Award and the Award for Social Marketing. The campaign has been adopted by three other Australian states (NSW, Qld and WA).

#### Return to Work campaign

Research conducted in 2005 and 2006 revealed an attitudinal gap in the acceptance of RTW as a positive and necessary process by employers (particularly small/medium), injured workers and their colleagues. The 'Return to Work' advertising campaign was developed with the objectives of:

- raising awareness and acceptance that RTW is a valuable process for both employers and employees;
- improving the attitude towards the RTW process by all parties.

The 'Return to Work' advertising campaign aired in 2007 and has been effective in delivering the message that employers should keep in touch with injured workers while they are recovering away from work.

#### Supervisor campaign

VWA launched the supervisor campaign in October 2007. VWA recognises the role that the immediate supervisors/managers of 'hands on' workers can have in influencing attitudes and behaviours regarding OHS in the workplace, their working lives and their commitment to work. A strong safety culture conveyed to workers by their immediate managers or supervisors shows workers that they are valued by their employers. Job satisfaction, commitment and loyalty are strengthened – a very real benefit to employers. VWA's new advertising campaign uses Australian black humour to ask Victorians to consider the consequences of their actions.

To support the development of this campaign, an independent organisation conducted research for VWA to gain greater insight into the attitudes and actions of supervisors/managers. Focus groups and a quantitative survey of 1160 people in supervisory positions captured views on workplace health and safety but also attitudes to workplace relationships.

### Personal Injury Education Foundation (PIEF)

#### Postgraduate program

Together with TAC, the VWA established the Personal Injury Education Foundation (PIEF) in early 2006. The Foundation is an independent, membership-based, not-for profit organisation. Members of the Foundation include Australian and New Zealand workers compensation regulators, motor accident compensation regulators, personal injury insurers and specialised claims management organisations. The Foundation in conjunction with Deakin University has developed postgraduate qualification in personal injury management, believed to be the first of its kind. The following postgraduate qualifications are being developed:



- Graduate Certificate of Management (Personal Injury)
- Graduate Diploma of Management (Personal Injury)
- Master of Management (Personal Injury)
- Master of Business (Personal Injury).

In February this year, participants from across Australia and New Zealand commenced the inaugural postgraduate program and in September, the Foundation delivered its first specific personal injury unit, 'Scheme Policy and Design', at a three day residential program with 46 students in attendance. The Foundation is now in the process of developing its next two units: 'Claims Management Strategy' and 'Scheme Assessment and Economics' which will be delivered from 4 May – 9 May 2008. The next intake for the postgraduate program will be in March 2008.

#### Personal injury conference and awards program

The Foundation will hold its inaugural 'Personal Injury Management Conference' at the Sydney Convention Centre on 20 and 21 October 2008. Additionally, an Australian and New Zealand Personal Injury Awards Program is currently being developed which will be held in conjunction with the Conference.

#### **Vocational Qualification Framework**

The VWA has focused on improving the capability of Agent employees during 2006/07 through a number of initiatives.

- Chairing the National Project Reference Group of the Industry Skills Council (Innovation and Business Skills), for the development of a vocational education qualification stream specific to the workers compensation industry.
- This work resulted in the national endorsement of new and revised units of competence to support the Certificate III and IV in Financial Services (Workers Compensation) and the Diploma of Personal Injury Management (Workers Compensation).
- During 2006/07, 90 employees from VWA, its Agents and self insurers have either commenced or completed a CIII, CIV or Diploma qualification tailored to the workers compensation industry and in particular, the Victorian scheme.
- The qualifications provide professional recognition of the skills and knowledge of claims managers, and are believed to be the first of their kind within Australia.
- Key features of the vocational education programs include self paced learning guides; 'minimal impact' off the job workshop days; workplace based assessment activities and projects; and the involvement of industry subject matter experts at every stage of the project.
- Building on this work, the VWA and WorkCover NSW are now collaborating on the development of training materials (contextualised to both environments) for the delivery of the new Certificate IV in Financial Services (Workers Compensation) qualification.

#### **Premium Compliance Qualification**

WorkCover Victoria and its Agents were invited by Business Skills Victoria to participate as industry representatives on the Steering Committee for the development and accreditation of a Certificate IV in Premium Compliance qualification. This initiative was the result of VWA identifying the need for a premium specific industry qualification and approaching Business Skills Victoria for assistance in doing so. The Office of Technical and Tertiary Education (OTTE) funded the development of the qualification including the creation of new units of competency specific to the premium role. This is another first for the industry, with the opportunity for the qualification to be endorsed at a national level in the future.



### **Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)**

In the last 12 months 268 Agent and VWA staff have undertaken the 2 day ASIST workshops, conducted by Lifeline Melbourne to help claims managers appropriately respond to, and manage, calls from injured workers who are at risk of suicide. Additional features of this initiative included pre and post work (ie case studies) that helped participants align VWA procedures to the ASIST intervention model; and a 'Refresher' workshop at the 12 month anniversary of training date. In September 2007, Lifeline Melbourne nominated the VWA for Suicide Prevention Australia's 'Life' Awards for Healthy Work in the Business and Industry Award category, in recognition of VWA's efforts.

### **Injury Support and Service Awards**

In 2005, the Victorian Agent Awards, now named the 'Injury Support and Service Awards' were established to:

- recognise outstanding contributions to the workers compensation scheme and its stakeholders by Agency employees in Victoria;
- encourage innovation and process improvements to the scheme;
- foster a climate and culture of continuous improvement; and
- promote the industry as an occupation of choice.

These awards have been strongly embraced by the employees of the VWA agents with almost 300 attending the awards night in April 2007.

The awards for 2007 will be presented at a dinner event on 1 May 2008 and will cover the following categories:

- Personal Injury Management Professional of the Year
- Improving Client Performance
- Excellence in Return to Work
- Excellence in Customer Service
- Excellence in Innovation
- Outstanding New Starter
- Outstanding Contribution by a Team
- Outstanding Contribution by an Individual

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

### **New Corporate Image**

In 2007 the Board approved a new corporate image for WorkCover WA which complements the agency's strong client service focus and enhanced role in actively engaging stakeholders. A new website, stationery and other branding initiatives promote a fresh approach and attitude to dealing with stakeholders and clients.

The following educational initiatives have also been introduced:

### **Seminars**

- Scheme Update, A new Scheme Update seminar provides stakeholders with updates on the health of the workers compensation scheme; and WorkCover WA's initiatives and key projects.
- The Workers compensation System: What You Need to Know - A new full day seminar for specialist psychologists and other health professionals.



### **Injury Management Conference**

A conference was held on 16-17 October 2007 to bring together key participants to examine/showcase emerging trends in research and injury management best practices. The Conference objectives were to:

- Increase conference participants' knowledge of emerging trends and issues from research in the area of workers compensation and injury management.
- Stimulate conversation and debate about injury management best practices and initiatives.
- Offer an opportunity for conference attendees to share knowledge and experience with other stakeholders and industry professionals.

The 'Working together...a better future' conference featured a host of international, national and Western Australian speakers and attracted more than 300 delegates.

Initial feedback from the two day conference indicated that it succeeded in informing and educating attendees from a range of professional backgrounds about best-practice injury management and other areas of the workers compensation and injury management system

### **DRD E-Link newsletter**

The DRD E-Link newsletter was published online in September 2007 and will be released on a two monthly basis. The DRD E-Link communicates the latest information and news from WorkCover WA's Dispute Resolution Directorate. Regular items will include feature articles, news, notes on practice and procedure, and other useful information.



## RESEARCH

### COMCARE

Comcare's research agenda is aimed at driving continuous improvements in the scheme's performance in the areas of injury prevention, rehabilitation and return to work and fair and equitable workers compensation. During 2007, Comcare adopted research guidelines to govern its research activities going forward. The guidelines will ensure that Comcare's research activities are directed to the business needs of Comcare and the wider jurisdiction by ensuring consistency and compatibility with National OHS and workers compensation research agendas and Comcare's strategic framework and Business Plan.

The Research Plan for 2007-08 includes the following projects:

- Management of psychological injury cases. The project will investigate the management of psychological injury cases by Comcare and employers to identify possible reasons for long incapacity durations and look for best practice examples in case management.
- Long duration claim indicators. This project will focus on the characteristics of long duration claims to identify possible indicators of long duration claims. The project will test the accuracy of existing Comcare claim management risk types and indicators identified in recent research to derive a more relevant set of claim markers for focusing early intervention and specific case management activities.

### NEW SOUTH WALES

#### Stakeholder Index Project

WorkCover NSW has commenced a Stakeholder Index Project as part of a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, designed to support injury and illness prevention.

A total of 107 stakeholders and customers of WorkCover NSW participated in a series of workshops held across New South Wales, including employers, workers, Scheme Agents, self insurers, legal and medical providers and accredited trainers and assessors.

Workshop participants were asked about their experience of interacting with WorkCover NSW and their view of the ideal world for OHS, injury management and workers compensation. The results confirm the value of the current projects being undertaken to further improve the alignment of our services to stakeholder and customer needs.

The index is a quantifiable measure of the service experience of WorkCover's stakeholders and customers. Outcomes of the workshops will result in a baseline measure upon which future measures can be undertaken to determine the impact of service strategies on stakeholder and customer perceptions.

The initial results and the forward measurements will assist WorkCover's strategic

#### - Contact Details -

##### Australian Capital Territory

**ACT Department of Justice and Community Safety, Office of Regulatory Services**

##### **ACT WorkCover**

Brett Phillips  
Executive Director, Office of Regulatory Services  
[brett.phillips@act.gov.au](mailto:brett.phillips@act.gov.au)

(02) 6205 0200  
[www.workcover.act.gov.au](http://www.workcover.act.gov.au)  
[www.ors.act.gov.au](http://www.ors.act.gov.au)

##### Commonwealth

##### **Comcare**

Alex O'Shea  
Manager, SRC Policy  
[o'shea.alex@comcare.gov.au](mailto:o'shea.alex@comcare.gov.au)

1300 366 979  
[www.comcare.gov.au](http://www.comcare.gov.au)

##### New South Wales

##### **WorkCover NSW**

Kathy Skuta  
Manager, Policy and Research  
Workers Compensation Division

13 10 50  
[www.workcover.nsw.gov.au](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au)



planning to better align activities and services with the needs of the New South Wales community.

### Small Business Longitudinal Study

Creeda Project Pty Ltd has been engaged by WorkCover NSW to undertake a longitudinal study with 450 small businesses in New South Wales over a three-year period. The aim of the study is to improve OHS and workers compensation practices in the small business sector and the services provided to small business by WorkCover NSW.

The study commenced in September 2006 and will continue over a three-year period. The study method includes a one-off tele-survey of over 700 small businesses from across 13 industries. 450 small businesses will be tracked with an annual in-depth interview over the three years. Every year, 60 of the businesses from the in-depth interviews will be invited to participate in focus group meetings, to discuss matters in more detail.

## NEW ZEALAND

### Noise Induced Hearing Loss

ACC is investing in a research program with the Health Research Council and Department of Labour (DoL). The research focuses on noise induced hearing loss. The objective is to establish a knowledge base that will identify the nature and extent of the problem in New Zealand in both work and non-work environments to enable the development of effective interventions. The research will be completed by March 2008.

### Hazardous Airborne Substances in the Wood Conversion Industry

DoL's 'Workplace Health and Safety Strategy for New Zealand' identified airborne substances as a key occupational health issue, believing that such substances are a leading cause of premature death from occupational disease in New Zealand. ACC has procured research to investigate the occupational health risks arising from hazardous airborne substances in the wood conversion industry.

### Review of Occupational Lung Cancer Guidelines

This project aims to systematically review the existing criteria or guidelines used to identify occupational lung cancer from international literature. Particularly, to find and review the policies or conditions used by insurance companies to accept occupational lung cancer claims.

### Case control study of risk of venous thromboembolism in sedentary workers

The Medical Research Institute of New Zealand is conducting a case-control study aimed at determining the relative risk of venous thromboembolism (VTE) with seated immobility. Preliminary studies by the same group of researchers

### New Zealand

#### **Accident Compensation Corporation**

Jackie Fawcett  
Research Manager  
[jackie.fawcett@acc.co.nz](mailto:jackie.fawcett@acc.co.nz)

+64 (04) 918 770  
[www.acc.co.nz](http://www.acc.co.nz)

### Northern Territory

#### **NT WorkSafe**

Sue Carter  
Manager, Rehabilitation and Compensation  
[sue.carter@nt.gov.au](mailto:sue.carter@nt.gov.au)

(08) 8999 5010  
[www.worksafe.nt.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.nt.gov.au)

### Queensland

#### **Department of Employment and Industrial Relations**

#### **QCOMP**

#### **WorkCover Queensland**

Bevan Hughes  
Acting Director  
Workers Compensation Policy Branch  
Department of Employment and Industrial Relations  
[bevan.huges@deir.qld.gov.au](mailto:bevan.huges@deir.qld.gov.au)

(07) 3225 2390  
[www.deir.qld.gov.au](http://www.deir.qld.gov.au)  
[www.workcover.qld.gov.au](http://www.workcover.qld.gov.au)



suggested that seated immobility at work may represent a common and important risk factor for VTE, similar to long haul traveller's thrombosis. However further evidence was needed to examine this hypothesis, hence ACC procured this case-control study. The case group will consist of 100 consecutive patients <65 years of age attending Wellington Hospital VTE clinic. The same number of patients of a Coronary Care Unit will be studied as a control group. The study findings are expected to have major occupational health significance and could inform future intervention programs aimed at reducing the risk of VTE arising from seated immobility at work. The project will be completed by January 2008.

## QUEENSLAND

### Researching durable return to work

Research agency Campbell's annual Return to Work Monitor reports that 81% of injured workers with claims greater than two weeks managed a durable return to work at nine to ten months after injury. Q-COMP's insurer data shows 97% of injured workers were back at work at the end of the claim.

In 2006-2007, Q-COMP commissioned a survey of 9,000 workers who had a claim finalised with a self-insurer to look at whether their return to work was durable. At the time of the survey, 92% of injured workers who responded were still at work six to 12 months after the claim had finalised. Regular collection of this data is under consideration.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### Role of workplace in RTW

The literature review undertaken by the Australian Institute for Primary Care of La Trobe University for WorkCover SA in 2006, on the facilitators and barriers to return to work and subsequent internal research, identified that the cultural dynamics of the workplace are a key determinant of return to work outcomes. This project aims to supplement our quantitative knowledge of our operating environment with qualitative intelligence on organisational policies and practices of our employers.

WorkCover appointed the Australian Institute for Social Research (AISR) to develop a benchmark to evaluate change over time for one industry and across various industry sectors. 'Off-the-shelf' instruments are not readily available for research into workers compensation, therefore significant effort is being invested in the development of robust methodology. The initial target sector is the aged care industry and the project is currently in the data acquisition phase. It is envisaged other industry sectors will be targeted following the completion of this phase.

### Psychosocial factors in musculoskeletal disorders

The La Trobe literature review also identified the psychosocial factors of the injured workers as a major factor in return to work. The development of

## **South Australia**

### ***WorkCover SA***

Paul McEvoy  
Manager, Policy and Government  
Relations  
[pmcevoy@workcover.com](mailto:pmcevoy@workcover.com)

13 18 55  
[www.workcover.com](http://www.workcover.com)

## **Tasmania**

### ***WorkCover Tasmania***

### ***Workplace Standards Tasmania***

Rod Lethborg  
Principal Policy Adviser (Workers  
compensation)  
Workplace Standards Tasmania  
[rod.lethborg@justice.tas.gov.au](mailto:rod.lethborg@justice.tas.gov.au)

(03) 6233 7657  
[www.workcover.tas.gov.au](http://www.workcover.tas.gov.au)  
<http://www.wst.tas.gov.au/>

## **Victoria**

### ***Victorian WorkCover Authority***

### ***WorkSafe Victoria***

Robin Trotter  
Manager, Corporate Strategy and  
Planning  
[robin\\_trotter@workcover.vic.gov.au](mailto:robin_trotter@workcover.vic.gov.au)

(03) 9641 1555  
[www.workcover.vic.gov.au](http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au)



psychological symptoms after sustaining a physical injury often limits the recovery and return to work of injured workers. This pilot is taking a phased approach with the aims of refining the methodology; testing models developed overseas and validating for local conditions and is being conducted in conjunction with the University of South Australia.

The overall structure is a prospective, longitudinal study of injured workers with disorders of the low back whilst in the acute phase. The worker is tracked through to the chronic phase whereas those workers that return to work in this period form a natural control group. The psychological status of the worker at various stages of the claim is established by input from the worker, treating doctor and clinical psychologist with the aim to link the data to the claims management data.

### **Redesigning the workplace for the ageing society – Swinburne University**

The Business Work and Ageing Centre for Research at Swinburne University of Technology is undertaking a three year project to determine the effective management of the ageing workforce and overcoming age barriers to continued employment. WorkCover SA, an industry partner on the steering committee, is interested in the outcomes from the qualitative and quantitative research being conducted within employers such as RACV, Qantas, Laminex and Australian Catholic University.

At the core of this project is the testing and validation of the work ability index (WAI) for Australian workplaces. The WAI, developed in Finland, is an instrument commonly used in European countries to determine the physical, mental and social ability of a worker to remain in the workforce. Dr Ilmarinen of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health is collaborating with Swinburne on this project.

### **Ageing workforce**

The change in demographics evident in Australia is of particular interest in South Australia. WorkCover SA is interested to learn the impact of the ageing workforce on the workers compensation system.

The aim of this project will identify the wider dynamics impacting the ageing workforce for the SA workers compensation scheme such as: test common assumptions of workforce participation; profile the South Australian workforce; predict the makeup of future work force; determine the potential impact on future injury rates; elaborate on age-related health conditions and the potential impact on workers and the workplace. The findings from this research will assist in estimating the claims liability in coming years.

### **Work-related hearing loss and return to work outcomes in SA**

Access Economics have conducted an analysis of WorkCover data to establish the number of workers who have experienced work-related hearing loss, and the impacts on those workers, including the use of hearing aids and return to work patterns. Cost utility analyses established that hearing aids provided by WorkCover were cost effective for worker's well being.

This research followed earlier work by Access Economics in the report *Listen*

### **Western Australia**

#### **WorkCover WA**

Paul Brookes  
Principal Policy Officer-Legislation  
Scheme Development Division  
[paul.brooks@workcover.wa.gov.au](mailto:paul.brooks@workcover.wa.gov.au)

(08) 9388 5555  
[www.workcover.wa.gov.au](http://www.workcover.wa.gov.au)



*Hear*, stating that hearing loss is still a high cost work-related illness for workers compensation schemes. The results from this analysis indicate that prevention efforts should still be a strong focus in the workplace.

### **Participation in the Personal Injury Education Foundation (PIEF) study tour to Canada and the United States**

As a member of PIEF WorkCover SA sent a delegate on the 2007 study tour to visit workers compensation authorities, research institutes and to attend the Workers Compensation Research Group meeting in Massachusetts. This trip was a valuable opportunity to learn from overseas organisations, it provided an idea of: the level of investment in research in workers compensation and safety; the particular areas being researched; who uses the outcomes of research; and to identify the gaps in the research. In addition, it was an opportunity to develop a network of international contacts, enabling greater access to researchers and their findings and enhancing the local research agenda.

## **TASMANIA**

### **Long Term Benefits Study**

The WorkCover Tasmania Board has engaged the University of Tasmania to undertake a study focusing on the social, health and economic outcomes for longer-term workers compensation recipients. This study, known as the Long Term Benefits Study, will explore the following questions:

- What are the financial, social and health situations of long-term workers compensation recipients?
- Are there significant differences in the long-term financial, social and health outcomes of different compensation pathways?
- What are the drivers for decision-making associated with the different compensation pathways?

The University is using a multi-disciplinary approach covering the economic and social aspects associated with claims. The study is being undertaken in three phases:

1. a quantitative survey (by mail) of a sample of 700 or more longer duration workers compensation recipients by mail (this phase is nearing completion);
2. a qualitative in-depth interviewing study of a selected group of longer duration workers compensation recipients; and
3. a longitudinal project following the progress of a sample of workers compensation claims over a 12-month period.

## **VICTORIA**

### **Health Research Unit**

The Health Research unit is responsible for the overall strategic direction of the research and development agenda for VWA and TAC as it relates primarily to health matters. This team also leads a highly connected scientifically based research and development program for the Victorian Neurotrauma Initiative (VNI) in close conjunction with financial partners.

### **Health Outcomes**

VWA is currently using a number of scheme measures as a proxy for health outcomes, eg benefit durations and continuance rates. From 2007/08 there will be increased focus on improving clients' outcomes. The Health Research unit has undertaken a scan on health outcome measurement, the purpose of which was to:



- identify the current status of client health outcome measurement in Australian CTP and workers compensation schemes;
- identify key Australian researchers in the health outcomes field; and
- identify health outcomes measures used by overseas jurisdictions and research bodies.

### **Ambassador Program**

In 2006 VWA and TAC established a collaborative international study tour, the Ambassador Program, which is open to employees of both organisations and the VWA's Agents.

The program is designed to capture learnings from identified exemplars in particular areas of subject matter of interest and is intended to develop on-going relationships with identified experts; provide an opportunity for joint learnings which support and enable business plans/strategies; and offer development opportunities for talented employees.

In 2007, ambassadors visited the United Kingdom, Switzerland, France, Germany and Sweden and the key learning themes identified for the Program were:

- prevention;
- community (including social marketing);
- claims management (including payment systems and systems change);
- return to work;
- health – preferred provider arrangements;
- change management.

### **PIEF International Study Tour**

The Foundation has sent two representatives in the last two years to North America in order to:

- gain research and expertise to assist in the development of the postgraduate program;
- raise the international profile of the Foundation;
- establish relationships with other organisations, and
- identify keynote speakers for the Personal Injury Management Conference.

### **Return to Work Fund**

The Return to Work Fund (RTW Fund) was created to support initiatives that focus on improving opportunities for injured Victorian workers to successfully return to work. The RTW Fund encourages and supports collaboration between employer and worker groups and workplace parties to increase Return to Work (RTW) opportunities. It commenced in July 2006 and applications closed on 31 October 2007. The following projects have been approved for funding:

#### More durable RTW outcomes through awareness

*Victorian Trades Hall Council - 3 years*

The central aims of this project are to raise awareness of workplace parties of their rights and obligations on RTW issues; improved capabilities among workers and employers; and provide tools (ground level support and training) to improve RTW.

#### Improving communication, improving outcomes

*Australian Services Union (Private Sector Branch) - 3 years*



The purpose of this project is to explore stress claims in the community sector and the legal industry; to develop a model for early intervention; and evaluate RTW programs in host organisations for sustainable return to work (stress injury).

#### RTW Co-ordinator information package for small\medium employers

*VECCI - 1 year*

The purpose of this project is to develop and deliver a four-hour seminar specifically designed to provide SME's with a basic understanding of the RTW process and how they can best meet their associated legislative responsibilities. These seminars will be supported by targeted guidance material and a telephone hotline to support RTW related enquiries.

#### Project ICE - Intervention, Communication and Education

*Murray Goulburn Cooperative Co Limited - 18 mths*

This initiative is targeted at providing customised tools to support the delivery of early intervention strategies to rural Victorian employers, taking into particular consideration barriers which may be unique to regional areas for example access to health care services, availability of general practitioners and allied health services.

#### Changing the culture - An integrated workplace health management approach to improve RTW outcomes

*St Vincent's and Mercy Private Hospitals - 2 years*

The purpose of this project is to test the hypothesis, that by creating a positive and supportive workplace culture in the hospital, it is possible to reduce injury claims and achieve more timely, effective and sustainable RTW outcomes. This project will develop and test an integrated RTW approach that will prospectively trial a range of workplace based initiatives across two campuses.

#### Nurses return to work in hospitals

*Australian Nursing Federation - 2.5 years*

This project is designed to assist the hospital and aged care sector to improve rehabilitation and RTW outcomes for injured ill nurses and staff, and reduce the human and financial cost. This project aims to identify barriers to and factors for successful RTW for nurses; develop and implement RTW pilot programs with 7 hospitals; develop 'Best Practice Guidelines for RTW in hospitals'; and develop training targeting RTW issues specific to this industry.

#### Return to Work Project 2007

*Ballarat and Gippsland Trades and Labor Council - 2 years*

This initiative is aimed at raising awareness amongst all workplace parties, in regional Victoria, about their rights and obligations in relation to RTW issues. This project will identify problems in RTW unique to regional Victoria and identify factors that are contributing to successful RTW. This initiative will identify and develop workable solutions including targeted solutions resource pack and RTW Reference Centre for these regions.

#### Educating for early return target

*Bendigo Health Services - 1 year*

This initiative will develop a training module, in consultation with key stakeholders, for undergraduate medical and physiotherapy students, which target the benefits and mechanisms of facilitating positive RTW outcomes. This training module will be supported by a resource kit, which in addition to being available to students, will be disseminated to current medical and physiotherapy providers in the Bendigo region to support service delivery.

#### Development of an effective manager training program in the process of injury management to facilitate an early RTW

*Barwon Health - 2 years*

This initiative will develop, based on the existing RTW Coordinator Training Program, a tailored package for managers and supervisors. Central to the main aim of this initiative is increasing manager and supervisor awareness. The face to face training program will be supported by the development and implementation of an



online competency based assessment tool that will form part of an annual refresher program for management and supervision.

#### Padre Pio Project

*Catholic Education Commission of Victoria - 18 mths*

This initiative will develop and implement an early intervention strategy targeted at employee's presenting with signs of workplace stress. Information packs will be developed and disseminated to support the project, and mediation services will be utilised both pre and post claim lodgement.

#### A collaborative approach to improving durability of employer/employee RTW

*National Union of Workers - 3 years*

The purpose of this initiative is to develop a model that facilitates workplace support to injured workers and their employers. This initiative will develop and trial a tailored RTW Training Program targeted at Health and Safety Representatives. In addition to the training the NUW will be providing assistance to employers and employees to facilitate the integration of these trained Representatives into their workplaces.

#### Alternative RTW model research project

*RCSA - 12mths*

The purpose of this initiative is to assist 'job ready' injured workers to return to work, when they are unable to return to their pre-injury 'host employer'. This initiative will research a complementary model that establishes a collaborative RTW solution with existing RTW services.

#### RTW Knowledge Base

*ResWorks - 12mths*

This initiative will develop and pilot a research database, to translate landmark RTW research into transparent practical knowledge for all stakeholders. Access portals will allow access to information specific to the needs of workers, employers, treating practitioners and insurers.

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Research has been undertaken for the following publications which are available on the WorkCover WA website:

- Self-insurance in Western Australia: A historic and current overview.
- Common Law proceedings in Western Australia.

### **Have Your Say Survey**

A 'Have Your Say Survey' was recently conducted by WorkCover WA. The survey was developed in consultation with key stakeholder groups in the Western Australian workers compensation system and distributed to over 41,000 workers injured at work during the 2005/06 financial year. The Have Your Say (HYS) Survey is the first of its kind and is believed to be the single most comprehensive data collection strategy ever to be adopted by a workers compensation jurisdiction. Information in relation to key areas was collected, including, making a claim, assistance received, returning to work, workplace culture, and experience with WorkCover WA and the respondent.

The initial report of outcomes from the survey is available on the WorkCover WA website at:

[www.workcover.wa.gov.au](http://www.workcover.wa.gov.au).

