



Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities

Australia and New Zealand

MEDIA RELEASE

HWCA look at ways to improve workers' compensation

4 July 2008

The Chair of the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities, Jon Blackwell, today announced the outcomes of last week's HWCA meeting in Perth.

"I am pleased to say that HWCA is continuing its progress in harmonising workers' compensation administrative arrangements across jurisdictions," he said.

The HWCA endorsed the position paper, *Nationally Consistent Approval Framework for Workplace Rehabilitation Providers*, which will soon be available on the HWCA website (www.hwca.org.au).

The framework has been developed to provide a robust approval system for providers working in multiple jurisdictions. An implementation strategy for applying the guidelines across jurisdictions is currently under development.

A number of harmonised self insurance arrangements have now been implemented. The, HWCA's self-insurance projects are now complete with the national OHS audit tool now having been adopted by the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ) as one of its occupational health and safety management systems (OHSMS) certification standards.

This will give self insurers an accredited program for OHSMS certifications and for benchmarking their systems against regulatory requirements. HWCA will monitor self insurers' adoption of the national audit tool.

"Members agreed that joint annual meetings with the Heads of Compulsory Third Party (HCTP) insurers are beneficial, with the second meeting to take place in Sydney in October 2008," Mr Blackwell said.

"Members also agreed that a joint HWCA – HCTP Working Group be established to address the management of catastrophic injury claims," he said.

Prior to the meeting, the HWCA also held a workshop to discuss Biopsychosocial Rehabilitation, its application and impact on factors that lead to delays in recovery.

Members agreed to establish a national working group to research a consistent approach to developing early screening tools and triage processes for workers at risk of long-term disability.

Members were briefed on the inaugural Personal Injury Management Conference, to be held in Sydney from 19 – 21 October 2008.

"The conference is an important initiative of the Personal Injury Education Foundation, whose aim is to ensure and enhance professional development for all people working in the personal injury industry," Mr Blackwell said.

Australia's first national *Excellence in Personal Injury Management Awards* will be presented at the conference. Further information on the conference and awards can be accessed at www.pief.com.au.

Further information about the activities of the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities in Australia and New Zealand, including the group's current work plan, is available from the website at www.hwca.org.au

Media contact for NSW: John Kirby or Wendy McKenzie on (02) 4321 5474 or 0413 186 799

Chair: Jon Blackwell (CEO, WorkCover NSW)
HWCA Secretariat: C/- WorkCover NSW, Locked Bag 2906 Lisarow NSW 2250
Email: HWCA.Secretariat@workcover.nsw.gov.au



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COMMUNIQUÉ OF MEETING OUTCOMES

The Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities (HWCA) discussed and agreed to the following key matters at its 27 June 2008 meeting.

National Accreditation of Rehabilitation Providers

The Working Group released a discussion paper to examine a nationally consistent approval framework for workplace rehabilitation providers. Written submissions were received from a number of industry bodies.

HWCA members have now endorsed the Position Paper, which will soon be available from the HWCA website. An accompanying Question and Answer document will also be posted on the website. Phase 2 harmonisation activities are currently being developed.

National Self Insurance Working Group

The Working Group has completed a number of harmonisation projects, namely, the multi-state financial application process, a consistent dispute management process, the use of a common set of financial indicators and consistent templates for bank guarantees and security requirements. Work is now focusing on the implementation of the National Occupational Health and Safety Audit Tool (NAT). As timeframes for implementing the NAT vary across jurisdictions, HWCA agreed to develop an implementation time line for posting on the website. It is envisaged that this information will update stakeholders in respect to progress in their jurisdiction.

Joint HWCA and Heads of Compulsory Third Party (HCTP) Meeting

Members agreed to hold annual HWCA and HCTP meetings, with the second meeting to take place in Sydney in October 2008.

Comparison of Permanent Impairment Assessment and Tools

In April 2008, training was held in Brisbane on how to apply the methodology of the new AMA 6th Edition *Guide to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*.

Members agreed that it would be desirable to have a consistent permanent impairment assessment tool across jurisdictions. Working Group members will continue to work towards overcoming concerns raised about the AMA 6th Edition and will assess the possible economic impacts of introducing on a jurisdictional basis.

Biopsychosocial Rehabilitation Model

Members attended a workshop on the Biopsychosocial approach to rehabilitation. They agreed to establish a national working party to further research a consistent approach to developing early screening tools and triage processes for those injured workers at risk of long-term disability.

Personal Injury Education Foundation

Members were briefed on the inaugural Personal Injury Management Conference, to be held in Sydney 19 – 21 October 2008. The Conference is an initiative of the Personal Injury Education Foundation (PIEF), a consortium of regulators, insurers and claims management organisations, which have consolidated their efforts to encourage and promote professional development within the industry. Information on the conference can be accessed from PIEF's website on www.pief.com.au

Next meeting and workshop

The next HWCA meeting will be held on 22 October 2008, in Sydney, NSW.

News and updates

Further news and updates regarding the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities in Australia and New Zealand are available on the website at www.hwca.org.au

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Email: HWCA.Secretariat@workcover.nsw.gov.au