



Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities

Australia and New Zealand

5 March 2008

MEDIA RELEASE

Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities look at ways to improve workers compensation

The Chair of the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities, Jon Blackwell, today announced the outcomes of the group's February meeting.

A number of key issues were discussed during the meeting held in Brisbane on 29 February, which addressed the way jurisdictions could work together to address common workers' compensation issues.

HWCA working groups, including the National Self Insurance Working Group and the National Accreditation of Rehabilitation Providers Working Group, provided progress reports for placement on the HWCA's website.

"Mr Alan Clayton from the International Disability Management Standards Council spoke with HWCA members about how new internationally recognised audit and evaluation tools, training could add value in benchmarking and continuous improvement in this area," Mr Blackwell said.

"Prior to the meeting, the HWCA also held a workshop to discuss its future role in the context of proposed harmonisation arrangements"

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

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COMMUNIQUÉ OF MEETING OUTCOMES

The Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities (HWCA) discussed and agreed following key matters at its 29 February 2008 meeting.

Definition of a Worker

Cross-Border Coverage of Expatriates

Under common cross-border provisions workers are connected to one particular state or territory through a series of tests. Some jurisdictions have expressed concern that the tests could apply to a worker who has never resided in Australia.

HWCA has asked the Definition of a Worker Working Group to further examine the issue of workers' compensation cover for expatriates, in particular the definition of "working temporarily overseas", with a view to developing guidelines around the issue.

Legislative meaning of the word "usually"

The Definition of a Worker Working Group will also examine the interpretation of the word "usually" used in the *Guide to Cross Border Workers' Compensation Provisions* and provide recommendations to HWCA members at the June 2008 meeting.

National Accreditation of Rehabilitation Providers

The Working Group agreed to release a discussion paper to examine a nationally consistent approval framework for workplace rehabilitation providers.

The group agreed that providers would still apply to each jurisdiction for approval/accreditation but if providers are already accredited/approved in one jurisdiction, other jurisdictions would recognise their status and keep any additional requirements, such as specific performance standards, to a minimum.

Once finalised, the position paper will be released to industry members for consultation.

Personal Injury Education Foundation (PIEF)

The inaugural personal injury management conference will be held in Sydney on 20-21 October 2008.

Members considered a number of key themes for the conference, which will be launched on 10 April 2008 in Sydney.

PIEF's second intake of students has now commenced their training.

Comparison of Permanent Impairment Assessment and Tools

Members discussed the provision of training in applying the methodology of the American Medical Association *Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*, 6th Edition (AMA6). This will be a one-day training session, to be held in April 2008.

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It has also been proposed that comparative assessments be performed in each of the participating jurisdictions to give an indication of the merits of the 6th edition relative to those currently being used.

National Self Insurance

HWCA members noted the successful completion of this project and that the National Audit Tool has been implemented in most jurisdictions.

Presentation by Mr Alan Clayton

Mr Alan Clayton from the International Disability Management Standards Council spoke with HWCA members regarding current international aspects of disability management, particularly in relation to Certification of Return to Work Coordinators and Disability Management Professionals.

Jurisdictional Scan

HWCA members agreed to endorse the *Jurisdictional Scan Report* and publish it on the HWCA website. This project commenced in July 2007 with the development of the objectives and scope of the document. In the following six months, a National Working Group of 'Scanning' representatives was drawn from each jurisdiction and extensive consultation and research undertaken both to develop and complete the first *Jurisdictional Scan*.

The intention of this scan is to identify and inform HWCA members, partners and stakeholders on developments and emerging issues in the field of workers' compensation. It is envisaged that the document will be a useful reference detailing legislative and scheme changes within jurisdictions, development of strategies and new initiatives, and providing 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. The HWCA agreed to prepare and release the *Jurisdictional Scan* report on a periodic basis.

Work Plan Update

The HWCA work plan is now available on the HWCA website. It details the HWCA's priorities for the next three years.

Progress against the National Accreditation of Rehabilitation Providers, National Environmental Scanning and National Self Insurance projects will be posted on the website shortly.

Next meeting and workshop

The next HWCA meeting is scheduled to be held on 27 June 2008, in Perth, Western Australia.

News and updates

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