



safe work australia

**NATIONAL WORKERS' COMPENSATION
ACTION PLAN 2010–2013**

**ROADWORK
AHEAD**

Preamble

Workers' compensation arrangements should be aimed at delivering consistent and improved responses to and management of work related injuries, illnesses and deaths. Ultimately modifications to arrangements should aim to achieve a reasonable balance between the interests of employers and workers while, at the same time:

- a. supporting effective and early return to work
- b. providing fair compensation for work-related injuries, illnesses and deaths
- c. reducing the overall social and economic costs to the community of work-related injuries, illness and fatalities, and
- d. ensuring that employer costs are equitably distributed and contained within reasonable limits.

Currently inconsistent workers' compensation arrangements across Australia are seen by many to lead to less equitable, effective, efficient, comprehensible and sustainable outcomes for workers and employers.

The Action Plan will involve the development of policy proposals which identify and assess sustainable opportunities for improved response to and management of work related injuries, illnesses and deaths. These would determine if changes will improve outcomes for workers and employers and provide or enhance:

- equity for employees or employers
- certainty in the operation and application of the legislation
- clarity and consistency of process
- clarity of guidance and information for workers and employers, and/or
- improved relationships between workers, employers and others.

Members have advised that some arrangements will not be included for consideration in the current Action Plan.

Outcomes

1. Stakeholders' issues relating to workers' compensation matters are identified and considered when developing policy proposals to improve sustainable responses to work related deaths, injury and illness and their management for:
 - a. employers with workers in more than one jurisdiction, and
 - b. the Commonwealth, States and Territories.

Objective One: Communicate effectively on nationally significant workers' compensation matters

[Safe Work Australia Act Part 2, s6.10 & s6.12, s6.13]

Action Area 1:

Establish and maintain consultation mechanisms on workers' compensation matters with key employer, worker and government representatives and others as required:

- Support and provide advice to the Strategic Issues Group (SIG) on Workers' Compensation.
- Establish and implement a Workers' Compensation Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement Strategy including:
 - engagement with members' stakeholder networks to inform, consult, involve and collaborate with them and report back outcomes to SIG-Workers' Compensation
 - organise, maintain and report on outcomes from Temporary Advisory Groups
 - work in conjunction with Research Evaluation and Data Groups and report relevant outcomes
 - conduct further stakeholder discussion forums as required and report outcomes, and
 - provide information for inclusion in Safe Work Australia web pages, news articles and other sites on relevant matters.
- Provide national policy responses to Ministers, WRMC, the Australian Government and other key organisations.
- Liaise with HWCA as required.

Action Area 2:

Establish and maintain liaison mechanisms with key international stakeholders:

- Establish and maintain relationships with selected international workers' compensation bodies.

Objective Two: Undertake policy research on high priority workers' compensation arrangements

[Safe Work Australia Act Part 2, s6.1, s6.10 & s6.11, s6.12]

Action Area 3:

Investigate and report on policy matters referred to or relevant to Safe Work Australia:

- Consider recommendations from the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs *Inquiry into Workplace Exposure to Toxic Dust* including:
 - Develop nationally consistent approaches to compensation of asbestos related diseases,
 - i. undertake a comparative analysis of existing compensation arrangements, and
 - ii. propose national policies and programs to develop consistent arrangements for WRMC consideration.
 - Approaches to improved research and data on toxic dusts.
- Consider and develop policy responses to ratified international agreements and International Labour Organisation Conventions, including Recommendation 194 List of Occupational Diseases.
- Consider recommendations from the Older People and the Law report relating to ageing and retirement, and develop policy responses.

Action Area 4:

Investigate and report on options for nationally harmonised tools and guidance on return to work matters that will aim to improve associated outcomes:

- Analyse and report on themes and consistency of current guidance material, and
- develop nationally consistent guidance material on agreed topics.
- Develop a set of RTW measures that evaluates performance and informs guidance.

Action Area 5:

Investigate and report on options for nationally consistent arrangements for assessment of permanent impairment (PI):

- Investigate choices for assessment tools, and
- analyse and report on options to promote national consistency.
- Develop agreed nationally consistent PI approaches and guidance material, and
- promote nationally consistent use of PI tools and guidance materials.



Action Area 6:

For agreed terms investigate and report on options for nationally consistent definitions for the purposes of workers' compensation:

- Investigate and analyse current workers' compensation definitions, and
- report and propose options for nationally consistent definitions for each topic.

Action Area 7:

Investigate and report on options for work related death benefits and determination of financial dependents:

- Investigate and analyse options, and
- report and propose options for nationally consistent approaches.

Action Area 8:

Investigate and report on issues of concern for multi-state employers:

- Investigate and analyse issues, and
- report and propose options for nationally consistent approaches.

Action Area 9:

Investigate and report on options for nationally consistent approaches to self insurance:

- Investigate and analyse issues, and
- report and propose options for nationally consistent approaches.

Objective Three: Provide evidence to inform and evaluate workers' compensation policy and performance

[Safe Work Australia Act Part 2, s6.7, & s6.8]

Action Area 10:

Collect, analyse, enhance, maintain, and report on national workers' compensation data and performance:

- Continuously improve and report results from:
 - The National Data Set on Workers' Compensation, and
 - other national fatality, injury and disease data.
- Provide enhanced annual reports, for example:
 - Comparative Performance Monitoring.
 - Comparison of Australian and New Zealand Workers' Compensation Arrangements.
 - Divergence in Workers' Compensation Arrangements.
- Periodically report on the economic costs of injury and disease.

Action Area 11:

Undertake, analyse, monitor and report on high priority workers' compensation research including:

- Development and implementation of a set of national RTW measures.
- Best practice approaches to injury management and return to work.
- Social marketing approaches to communicating key workers' compensation messages.
- Legal and actuarial benchmark studies for agreed topics.

Action Area 12:

Scan and report on nationally significant emerging workers' compensation issues to the SIG on workers' compensation including:

- Social and economic policies.
- Workforce demographics and employment trends.

Action Area 13:

Establish and maintain a workers' compensation data and research hub.

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Objective Four: Evaluate and Report on Action Plan

[Safe Work Australia Act Part 2, s6.7, s6.8, s6.10 & s6.12]

Action Area 14:

Evaluate and Report on effectiveness of the Action Plan:

- Develop an Evaluation Plan.
- Evaluate outcomes of current Action Plan.
- Develop and negotiate scope and contents for a new work program.
- Develop a draft National Workers' Compensation Action Plan 2013-15 for consideration by WRMC.

