

**Submission  
No 107**

## **INQUIRY INTO NSW WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME**

**Organisation:** Injury Management and Rehabilitation (IMR)  
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16 May 2012

The Hon. Robert Borsak, MLC  
Joint Select Committee on the NSW Workers Compensation Scheme  
Parliament House  
Macquarie St  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear The Hon. Robert Borsak

**RE: *Workers Compensation Scheme Issues Paper***

I am writing in response to the Workers Compensation Scheme Issues Paper, published by WorkCover NSW.

IMR is a member of the Australian Rehabilitation Providers Association NSW (ARPA NSW) and we support ARPA NSW's response to the issues paper.

As a rehabilitation provider who has been accredited to operate within the NSW Workers' Compensation system for over fifteen years we have been witness to the deteriorating performance of the Scheme and agree that there is a need for urgent action.

We believe approved workplace rehabilitation providers are uniquely placed to deliver a number of solutions to a failing scheme by offering a broader biopsychosocial approach to ensuring workers remain at work; or, return to work in the shortest possible timeframe.

Research completed by Casey in 2011<sup>1</sup> demonstrated that cases referred within the first 12 months post-injury achieved a much higher RTW rate, and had a significantly shorter period of rehabilitation at a significantly lower cost, than those referred after 12 months. Our own research takes this a step further and demonstrates that in order to achieve the best possible outcome (ie: durable return to work in the shortest possible timeframe and for the least cost) we need to receive the referral within three months of injury... and in fact, employers who we are working closely with to achieve GREAT outcomes often refer within days or in some cases hours of an injury. We all know that the longer an injured worker is off work, the less their chance is of being able to achieve a successful return to work outcome.

Over the past few years we have seen the role of Workplace Rehabilitation Providers slowly eroded as agents have taken more and more control of the initial phases of injury management and rehabilitation. Unfortunately this has seen a significant decline in the performance of the scheme and an ever growing number of tail claims which we believe is the result of poor claims management up front. Our ability to achieve return to work outcomes has been significantly impacted by the agents' inability to effectively triage appropriate referrals and an ever increasing delay in referral.

We believe that agents have been given the opportunity over the past few years to 'try' things their way and we are seeing first hand the impact of this.

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<sup>1</sup> Casey, P (2011). Effectiveness of Rehabilitation: RTW Outcomes. Report 4 of 4 prepared for Australian Rehabilitation Providers Association, April 2010.

**INJURY MANAGEMENT & REHABILITATION**

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Early referral to a workplace rehabilitation provider will achieve timely and durable return to work outcomes and, as a result will provide significant savings to the current Scheme. Workplace Rehabilitation Providers are the only allied health providers possessing the specific skillset directly targeted at addressing the full range of biopsychosocial factors that influence the capacity of the injured worker to return to work and move from benefits back to paid employment.

We eagerly await the outcome of this reform and hope that the government is courageous enough to make the significant changes necessary to positively impact scheme performance and ultimately give NSW workers access to the services they need to stay at work.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to respond to the issues paper. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly should you wish to discuss these matters further.

Sincerely,

Dawn Piebenga  
Managing Director, IMR