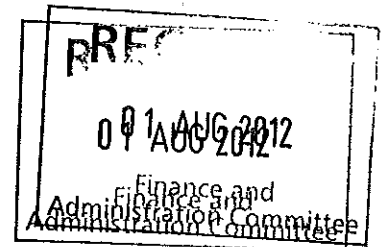




ADVANCED PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT



26 July 2012

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Finance and Administration Committee on the Operation of Queensland's Workers Compensation Scheme

The Research Director
Finance and Administration Committee
Parliament House
George Street,
Brisbane QLD 4000

Dear Members of the Committee

We are writing in response to the media release on 7 June 2012 in regards to Queensland Workers' Compensation Scheme review.

As a National Provider of Occupational Rehabilitation and Occupational Health Services, we acknowledge that the Queensland scheme is different to other State schemes, which in some parts is good. However, there are sections of the scheme that impact on good return to work outcomes and result in higher claim costs.

APM as been in operation in Australia for 17 years and over that time has seen many changes in the system across all jurisdictions. We conduct ongoing research and monitoring of our own performance and our long experience shows us that there are a number of critical drivers to successful return to work outcomes and lower claim costs.

One of the most critical metrics is the time delay between date of injury and date of referral to a rehabilitation provider, which in many cases, leads to impaired outcomes. A review of our own data would indicate that the average time lag from date of injury to date of referral ranges from 4 weeks to over 2 years – and despite attempts to improve this data, referral time now averages 26 weeks.

Industry research supports our findings and we know that the success of a return to work program is more likely in a program that has commenced as soon as possible after the injury. Claim costs, and particularly wage costs are also significantly lower the more timely rehabilitation intervention is.

In order for the scheme to improve performance and the outcome for injured workers and decrease costs, APM would suggest the following:

1. We would recommend that referrals be triggered once there is 5 days lost time. This will enable efficient and timely return to work outcomes.



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- 2 Refer to rehabilitation providers to assist with the whole claim and not just for one off assessments. This will allow for more accurate decision making about return to work goals and will provide earlier assistance for job seeking assistance if required.
- 3 Whilst it is important to obtain Nominated Treating Doctor's (NTD) approvals and to work with the NTD, it is important to note that a new system needs to be applied such as electronic lodgement of medical certificate to speed up this process. As has occurred in other jurisdictions (e.g. ACC in NZ) it maybe useful to consider using allied health assessments in lieu of a doctor's visit when there are untimely delays e.g. in regional locations there are frequent reports of delays of 4-6 weeks to gain a doctor's appointment.
- 4 The standard time frames for RTW be utilised by NTD's to lessen the amount of subjectivity and "*emotional*" decision making for common and less significant injuries and that these guidelines are transparent and also utilized by other service providers. In other jurisdictions eg WA; there is a requirement place don doctors to ensure certification and reviews occur more frequently.
- 5 As a service that is regularly in touch with employers, we would recommend that there be some incentive for employers who perform well with their WHS risk management as a means of improving the performance in the whole scheme.
- 6 Provide easy to understand information to injured workers about the QLD scheme, their obligations and their rights.
- 7 Improve claims management transparency regarding claims costs including review points and estimating guidelines so that employers can be fully aware of the need to encourage RTW and the impact on their premiums.
- 8 Reward employers that offer suitable duties for injured workers.
- 9 Determine effective work capacity testing with the use of appropriate, standardised testing that can be completed locally and efficiently.
- 10 To improve outcomes, the sector is keen to employ more experienced consultants. However, our research indicates that one of the key factors contributing to turn over is wages pressure. This in turn is due to the difficulty paying fair wages whilst the scheme is continually pushing down the price to be paid for services. This impacts our outcomes and in fact contributes to higher costs.

Should you require further details or would like to contact us, please do not hesitate to contact our Brisbane office on 07 3055 5555.

Yours sincerely

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