

Question on Notice

No. 1649

Asked on 14 September 2016

MS LINARD ASKED THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, MINISTER FOR RACING AND MINISTER FOR MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS (HON G GRACE)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise on the progress of the workers' compensation certificate since its implementation from 1 July 2016?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Nudgee for her question.

The Palaszczuk Government is committed to ensuring rehabilitation and return to work are a priority for Queensland workers and employers.

Queensland is a signatory to the Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine and Royal Australasian College of Physicians' position statement *Realising the Health Benefits of Good Work*.

This statement highlights that being off work for long periods of time can significantly reduce the likelihood of a worker ever returning to work and can have a negative effect on the worker and their family.

In particular it indicates work plays an important role in any rehabilitation process because 'doing' promotes recovery. If a person is off work for:

- 20 days, the chance of ever getting back to work is 70%
- 45 days, the chance of ever getting back to work is 50%
- 70 days, the chance of ever getting back to work is 35%.

Evidence supports that recovering at work where possible and early return to work is a fundamental stage in an injured worker's recovery after a workplace incident.

A return to a normal life can reduce the financial and emotional impact on the worker and their family and improve the likelihood of an injured worker achieving a sustainable return to work outcome. It is good business for employers to help their injured workers with an early and safe return to work. Employers are able to retain the skills of their valuable workforce while they recover from their injury, increasing productivity and workplace morale.

The new *Work Capacity Certificate – workers' compensation* has been developed following significant consultation with doctors, unions, employers and insurers to facilitate positive and sustainable return to work outcomes for injured workers. The *Work Capacity Certificate* promotes a focus on what can be done to enable an injured worker to remain engaged with the workplace and get back to safe work sooner.

This new approach encourages all stakeholders to work together to assist injured workers remain at work and minimise the time spent away from the workplace. By having early return to work discussions and identifying what a worker can do, they can be supported back to the workplace as part of their rehabilitation.

The *Work Capacity Certificate* enables certifying doctors to initiate discussions about return to work as early as possible and integrate this goal into the worker's overall treatment and rehabilitation. Treating practitioners are best placed to identify any potential barriers that may prohibit a worker's successful return to work from the initial consultation.

A dedicated website (www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/medicalsupport) has been developed for doctors to help support them in their roles to certify injured workers based on their level of functional capacity. This website includes educational films and information to ensure that doctors understand their role and ability to contribute to facilitating early return to work for Queensland workers. Significant engagement with the medical profession commenced early in the year and continues to be undertaken to improve awareness and uptake of the *Work Capacity Certificate*.

The Office of Industrial Relations is continuing to consult with all stakeholders to obtain feedback on the *Work Capacity Certificate*. This feedback is being used to inform the development of innovative and meaningful education that will help support work engagement and improve outcomes.

A focus on an injured worker's functional ability provides the opportunity for stakeholders to keep workers engaged in the workplace while they recover. This proactive approach contributes to our overall objective to reduce claims durations and improve positive and sustainable return to work outcomes for Queensland workers and employers.