

# COVID-19 AND INJURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICE INFORMATION SHEET

The COVID-19 pandemic may have an impact on the administration of claims and provision of medical services. The following policy positions for injured workers are published to provide consistent guidance to Crown agencies' Injury Management practice during this time and reflect the experience of relevant professionals based on the best available information at the time.

The advice will be updated regularly to reflect changing circumstances. Therefore, any printed version is only correct as at the date of publication.

## PP1 Determination of claims for COVID-19

For a disease such as COVID-19 to be compensable under the Return to Work Act 2014, it must be established on the balance of probabilities that the injury arose from employment and that employment was a significant contributing cause of the disease.

Questions may arise as to the exact time and place of contraction of the virus. As a result, it may be difficult to determine that employment was a significant contributing cause.

Each claim would need to be considered on its individual merits, having regard to the individual circumstances and evidence in relation to the claim.

Consideration may need to be given (but not limited to):

- work related travel to an area with a known outbreak; and
- work related activities that include engagement or interaction with people who have contracted the virus.

However, where an employee's employment puts them at a greater risk of contracting the virus, the significant contribution test may be easier to meet.

Interim payments can be made to a worker during the claim determination process. Safework Australia have released new coding arrangements for COVID-19 including COVID-19 related.

## PP2 Claim determination - partial deemed total

Injured workers with partial incapacity should be paid total incapacity if no appropriate work is available because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Working from home arrangements should always be considered both with respect to pre-injury employment and alternative employment placements.

## PP3 Whole Person Impairment (WPI) assessment

Despite an early suspension of referrals for whole person impairment assessments for workers requiring face to face assessment, there is currently no restriction on referring workers for whole person impairment.

Recommencement of referrals is subject to assessors:

- being available and willing to carry out whole person impairment assessments;
- observing the necessary infection control requirements and risk mitigation strategies; and
- using appropriate personal protective equipment during physical examinations.

Workers who, for personal reasons, do not wish to proceed with an assessment of their permanent impairment at this time will suffer no adverse claim consequences.

For assessors interstate who continue to be impacted by travel restrictions, please note that ReturnToWorkSA does not support the assessment of physical injuries via telehealth at this time.

## PP4 Extension of entitlements due to impact of current suppression measures on job seeking

At this point, agencies may determine their own policy position. OCPSE is currently investigating this further to determine how many current job seekers exist within agencies and how close they are to cessation of income maintenance entitlements. In addition, advice is being sought from the Manager, Employment Programs about whether there is any potential to support job seeking through the current mobilisation strategy.

**For more information please contact OCPSE Work Health Safety and Injury Management on 1800371333 press 4 or [ocpsewhsim@sa.gov.au](mailto:ocpsewhsim@sa.gov.au)**

