

# Occupational health and safety

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HIC is committed to securing the health and safety of all its employees at work, in accordance with the requirements of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991*. A revised OHS Policy and OHS Agreement were implemented in July 2004. The policy and agreement is available to all employees through the HIC intranet.

The Safety Management Unit, located in National Office, provides for a strategic focus on the development of preventative strategies, with a view to reducing the number and severity of workplace injuries. All state headquarters and National Office have a designated position responsible for the day-to-day operations of occupational health and safety, rehabilitation and compensation.

## Significant achievements in 2004–05

During 2004–05, HIC continued to improve return-to-work case management practices,

resulting in containment of average claim costs and a reduction in the time taken to initiate rehabilitation intervention after injury.

State and National Office OHS officers/case managers are consistently initiating early intervention for new claims. Ongoing case manager training opportunities have resulted in improved collaboration between HIC and Comcare claims managers and rehabilitation advisers.

The Comcare Injury Management Scorecard highlights HIC's sustained performance in the quality of return-to-work programs undertaken by state and National Office case managers.

## OHS activities during 2004–05

HIC is participating in a Comcare pilot, the Early Intervention and Return to Work Program. The program aims to help improve the capacity of case managers to effectively manage potentially complex work-related injuries and

illnesses through the application of better practice models of intervention. The New South Wales and Queensland offices are both participating in the pilot program.

Another Comcare strategy that HIC is participating in is the Interagency Job Placement Program. This strategy was developed by Comcare to assist agencies to address the economic and social losses that occur when an employee on workers compensation is unable to return to their original place of work following an injury.

In November 2004, a three-day OHS/Case Managers Conference was held. The conference focused on 'building a safety culture', and included sessions on achieving health and safety and rehabilitation targets, current treatment practices for occupational overuse syndrome and sprain/strain injuries, understanding mental health, preventing psychological injuries, and risk management.

The Safety Management Unit provides quarterly reports to the state managers on their compensation and injury management performance. These reports provide information on how each state's performance is contributing to HIC meeting the Comcare Health and Safety and Rehabilitation Targets. To assist the states in continual improvement towards the targets, quarterly teleconferences are held with each state manager, HR manager and OHS/case manager.

Monthly teleconferences are conducted with all state and National Office OHS/case managers. The teleconferences are designed to assist OHS/case managers to keep abreast of the latest OHS and compensation issues and initiatives within the HIC. Issues discussed include:

- updates from the states on prevention activities
- progress with national initiatives
- rehabilitation issues and difficult workers compensation cases
- Comcare advice notices and training activities.

A new electronic hazard and injury report form has been developed. This database will allow for state and National Office OHS case managers to run reports on the numbers and types of hazards and injuries submitted in their states.

This year, the HIC again participated in the World Day for Safety and Health at Work. Various activities were conducted in our offices, including education and awareness sessions on good posture, back care and healthy

breakfasts and lunches; 'spot the hazard' competition; an OHS scavenger hunt; and introduction of an Occupational Health and Safety newsletter and an Equity and Diversity newsletter in National Office. The overall feedback received from staff was positive, and the day contributed to further OHS awareness in the workplace.

A user-friendly OHS intranet site was developed to assist employees and Managers/ Team Leaders to access OHS information on the intranet. The launch of the intranet site coincided with the promotion of World Day for Safety and Health at work. Keyboard stickers were distributed to all employees with the slogan 'OHS at your finger tips' with the website address. The keyboard sticker assisted in promoting the intranet site and encouraged employees to use the site.

Two OHS brochures were developed and distributed to all employees in December 2004:

- The *Occupational rehabilitation* brochure outlines HIC's commitment to providing rehabilitation to all employees who suffer an injury or illness, whether it is compensable or non-compensable.
- The *Guide to workstation setup* brochure advises employees on how to set up their workstations and who to contact if they need assistance.

In April and May 2005, Comcare conducted a SafetyMap audit as part of its Planned Investigation Program. The four sites audited were two Medicare offices (in Hobart and Coffs Harbour), the Compensation Recovery Section in Queensland state headquarters and the

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Branch in Barton, Canberra. Comcare provided a report on each site investigated and a whole-of-agency report. Appropriate action will be taken to address the recommendations outlined in the report.

The following policies have been developed and implemented throughout the year:

- manual handling policy
- thermal comfort guidelines
- safe handling of sharps guidelines
- substance abuse and gambling policy
- hazardous substances
- plant policy

Key OHS priorities for the next financial year include:

- conducting OHS risk management training throughout the organisation
- focus on the national OHS priorities:
  - occupational overuse syndrome and sprains/strains
  - psychological injuries
  - slips, trips and falls
  - reducing absenteeism as it relates to compensation
  - personal health and wellbeing

The statutory report required under section 74 of the *Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991* is included in Appendix A.