



Information bulletin: Evaluation of the Workers Compensation Certificate of Capacity for Tasmania

BACKGROUND

Workplace injuries are common in Tasmania and have a significant impact on both the individual and society. In 2022, 7,021 Tasmanians experienced a work-related injury or illness, or around 2.5% of the working population. Over the last 10 years, 46% of work-related injuries in Tasmania have resulted in at least one week off work. Work-related injury and illness are estimated to cost Australia \$28.6 billion annually, representing 1.6% of gross domestic product (1.3% in Tasmania). This figure reflects lost workplace productivity, health system expenses and societal costs (Deloitte, 2022).

There is now a strong evidence base to demonstrate that returning to work early after an injury improves recovery and having unnecessary time off work may be harmful – physically, psychologically and socially. In line with these findings, research has also shown that the longer an individual takes to return to a workplace, the less likely they are to return, regardless of the workplace or injury. Therefore, it is important to have appropriate processes in place that safely facilitate the return-to-work process for injured or unwell workers.

In February 2024, the WorkCover Tasmania Board introduced a new Workers Compensation Certificate of Capacity (Certificate) to replace medical certificates that were previously used to support worker compensation claims. To contribute to positive return-to-work outcomes, the new Certificate aims to improve communication between medical practitioners, employers and workers, enabling them to have a common understanding of what an injured worker can do (their capacity). It also aims to help insurers make well informed decisions regarding workers' compensation claims. To ensure a successful rollout, the WorkCover Tasmania Board has engaged Healthcare Management Advisors (HMA) to undertake a formative evaluation of the new Certificate.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the evaluation are to assess:

- The level of user satisfaction and any issues experienced by users when completing the new Certificate (users include medical practitioners, insurers/self-insurers, employers, workplace rehabilitation providers, and the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (TASCAT)).
- The suitability of completed Certificates for facilitating the return-to-work process; this includes whether the Certificates contain all the necessary information for stakeholders involved in the return-to-work process.
- If any issues arise during the workers compensation and return-to-work processes due to the introduction of the new Certificate.

The information captured during the evaluation is expected to be used to improve the structure and usability of the Certificate, benefitting all stakeholders.

EVALUATION APPROACH

The evaluation will involve:

- **Surveys, consultations and focus groups** with key stakeholders (including medical practitioners, employers, insurers, self-insurers, state services agencies, workplace rehabilitation providers, peak bodies representing workplace rehabilitation providers, Worker Assist Tasmania, Unions Tasmania, and the TASCAT) six-months after the rollout of the new Certificate (August–September 2024).

- **Analysis of a sample of completed Certificates** to determine whether they are being completed as intended (August–September 2024).
- **Development of a final report** presenting findings on the appropriateness, effectiveness, and usability of the new Certificate (November 2024).

KEY CONTACTS

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