



# COASTAL Neurosurgery

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Mitchell Hansen  
Neurosurgical Society of Australasia  
PO Box 23337

Re: State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) feedback on the model of care for the management of low back pain

Dear Mitchell,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute my opinion on the model of care for the management of low back pain.

I am a practicing Neurosurgeon in Gosford. For almost 20 years I have been looking after injured workers with spinal injuries. Unfortunately, last year when the liberal government made significant changes to SIRA through reductions in doctors' fees, it had a major impact on the local area. There was a draconian reduction in fees in NSW for caring for injured workers under the SIRA scheme.

With our increasing insurance costs, running costs of the practice it is not viable to see workers compensation patients anymore. Unfortunately, the consultation fee is half of that for a normal patient yet there is a much higher workload dealing with the paperwork and return to work co-ordinators.

It is no longer viable to continue looking after injured workers, particularly with all the paperwork and reports needed for Workers Compensation. Unfortunately, the patients are having to wait longer to be seen, which in turn, impacts the overall outcome of the treatment and leaves patients suffering for longer periods than necessary.

In a local area such as Gosford where there is no public Neurosurgical service the injured workers who are often socioeconomically deprived, they are no longer able to access prompt neurosurgical care and despite our attempts they seem to have fallen on deaf ears and my concern is that the local injured workers are the patients who will pay the price.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Marc Coughlan  
Neurosurgeon

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SPECIALISING IN: MINIMALLY INVASIVE SPINAL SURGERY, COMPLEX SPINAL SURGERY, ARTHROPLASTY