



6 June 2019

On behalf of the Australian Rehabilitation Providers Association NSW Council (ARPA NSW), we appreciate our ongoing involvement with SIRA in the development of these guidelines. We believe they mostly reflect well our previous recommendations and will serve the NSW scheme well. This could still be improved and we offer the following for consideration:

1. *“For health professions regulated by Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA): AHPRA registration (excluding student or provisional registration)”*

This exclude provision psychologist who currently play a significant role in this area. Provisional Psychologist with the appropriate experience are very well placed to be considered as an appropriate professional. Many have a number of years’ experience within the workplace rehabilitation sector and are working towards full registration. Indeed, many move outside of workplace rehabilitation once they become registered. This should be amended to include provisionally registered psychologists who also have the appropriate demonstrated training and experience.

2. *Relevant experience.*

The outline of relevant experience does not make reference to workplace rehabilitation. Considering the context of this area we believe that there should be very strong consideration given to a minimal level of experience in workplace rehabilitation. We understand that there may be some pressure not to make this a requirement however there needs to be significant consideration of the consequences. The HBOGW is still fighting to be recognised among many health professionals practicing currently. Indeed, many treating health practitioners are far more likely to suggest the person has less or no capacity contrary to the evidence and is commonly recognised as the most significant barrier to return to work and life. The guideline as it stands greatly exposes SIRA to newly formed groups of assessors who will meet the guidelines but have no discernible commitment to the HBOGW and in fact lean heavily in favour of plaintiff legal firms; or to treating practitioners who do not believe in HBOGW. There is nothing in this guideline that would stop a legal firm employing health professionals.

To avoid this and seek to move towards harmonisation which is a NSW Government objective, then alignment with the HWCA principles for WRP will provide a consistent guideline and also provide a performance measure that may be used to ensure those providing information that supports decisions, remains consistent with the evidence and the principles of the HBOGW. As it stands there would be no means to hold any health professional to account for the information that is provided. I note that this recommendation will not exclude information provided by treating health professionals who are not approved providers as that evidence must be taken into account by the WRP in the course of all intervention.

The focus is skewed towards vocational rehabilitation therefore could be strengthened by referencing experience in returning a person to their original employment which is the optimal goal. Further we believe it would be even better if the person needs to meet the principle-based framework for the provision of workplace rehab to be endorsed by HWCA.

Our recommendation is that approval for the provision of workplace rehabilitation be a mandatory requirement. This does not stop any health professional seeking this approval. However, it will help avoid the creation of an earning capacity assessment industry, driven by legal providers and insurers alike. If this is not adopted, then we believe that past experience within WRP should be an absolute minimum requirement for relevant experience.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the development of this guideline.

Yours faithfully



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