

## Recovery at Work

Work can be beneficial to both physical and mental health, as well as general wellbeing, and case studies show that work can help in recovery from injury.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) recognises the importance of good work and contribution to the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. The RACP endorses that with active assistance, good outcomes are more likely when individuals are supported to work when recovering at work following a period of injury or illness. \*1

icare's claims service model is designed to identify workers at risk of delayed recovery and return to work and implement tailored case management support through early and ongoing intervention. Our approach is based on the now well-established biopsychosocial model, which recognises that recovery from injury and illness is impacted by a variety of interconnected factors.

These factors include the type of injury or illness, co-morbid conditions, psychological matters and social issues such as the availability of support from employer, colleagues, family and other social networks.

Following the lodgement of a claim, and if time off work is required, the Case Manager will prepare a tailored Injury Management Plan in collaboration with the worker, the employer and the treating doctor. This plan will detail treatment required and goals for recovery at work, if possible, and return to work.

## Early Engagement

While many workers recover quickly and return to work, others may face a range of physical, social or psychological issues that may impact recovery. Following an incident, an injured worker's support network - their employer, health provider(s), family and friends and claims manager - can play a role to help communication and encourage early engagement to mitigate risks.

The RACP charter on Health Benefits of Good Work acknowledges the practice of positive relationships within workplaces are key determinants of individual health, wellbeing, engagement and productivity. For employers this extends to their practices after an injury or illness occurs in their workplace.

There are practical steps employers can take to help workers recover and return to work which include:

- Contacting your worker within first 48 hours to ask about their health
- Asking the claims advisor or case manager about the process, next steps, the injury management plan and your role
- Ensuring the worker understands your role as an employer to support their recovery
- Identifying a co-worker who can offer buddy support
- Scheduling regular contact
- Encouraging your worker to attend social work events
- Encouraging positive self-care outside of work
- Recognising the recovery milestones in the workplace, as appropriate to individual
- Considering meaningful duties and suitable work; and
- If an investigation is required, provide the insurer with all requested information throughout the claims management process.

## Suitable work

If a worker is not able to immediately return to their normal duties, an employer is obligated to identify if suitable work is available in the workplace. Suitable work could include modified tasks and duties, different hours or days of work, an alternative position in the same workplace, training to expand a worker's skill set and / or a different job location.

Employers should discuss with their claims advisor or case manager if they are eligible for additional programs and resources to help their injured or ill workers recover and return to work.

<sup>1</sup> Australian and New Zealand Consensus Statement on the Health Benefits of Work, (2011) The Australasian Faculty of Occupational & Environmental Medicine & The Royal Australasian College of Physicians [https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/afoem-realising-the-health-benefits-of-work-consensus-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=baab321a\\_14](https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/afoem-realising-the-health-benefits-of-work-consensus-statement.pdf?sfvrsn=baab321a_14)