

# Northern NSW Local Health District, in partnership with QBE Insurance

## Collaborative Injury Management

### overview

NNSW LHD covers the north-eastern NSW region and has 8 public hospitals, 18 Community Health Centres and other health care services that employ over 6000 staff.

The Work Health Safety & Injury Management (WHS & IM) unit is part of the Workforce Directorate of the Local Health District (LHD) which promotes a collaborative approach to injury prevention and injury management. NSW Health identified that the workers compensation deposit premium paid by NNSW LHD had grown considerably with the 2014/2015 deposit premium workers compensation a staggering \$6,839,041.

The most significant financial impact was time and speed taken of upgrades for a return to work (RTW).

To address the issue an Injury Management Gap Analysis (IMGA) was initiated. By evaluating RTW and injury management processes undertaken for workers compensation claims within NNSW LHD, the IMGA developed policies to improve procedures and support key stakeholders to facilitate early and sustainable return to work with effective injury management.

Northern NSW Local Health District (NNSW LHD) engaged QBE Insurance to develop a successful case management approach to injury management with the key objective of reducing claim duration and costs by improving return to work rates.

### background

The provision of a consistent methodology and best practice platform for injury management was always a challenge due to movement of agencies within departments. Following the introduction of the Allianz injury management pathways to the agency, the Department of Industry developed a manual outlining return to work time frames and treatments for common work related injuries. The model aimed to reduce return to work duration rates whilst ensuring a safe recovery

at work through the support of best practice and evidence based treatment.

A clear and consistent communication strategy was developed to ensure effective implementation of the model and to identify emerging trends. Regular monitoring activities including a weekly teleconference were put in place to ensure the project was effectively delivered.

### the journey to change

The Executive Committee supported 150 heads of departments and nurse unit managers to attend the first round of half day workshops across five Local Health District sites. Key actions focused on educating managers and supervisors on best practice injury management.

**“The turnaround in workers compensation performance reflects ... the leadership and hard work of the RTW team”**

Wayne Jones Chief Executive

Using the Work Health Safety Unit’s intranet site, a new procedure to improve the notification of after-hour injuries was implemented. In addition an Early Stakeholder Intervention program was utilised with QBEs support and a new online Injury Management System - Injury Connect was rolled out to improve record keeping.

### results

NNSW LHD’s contribution experience trends demonstrated significant reductions in deposit contributions and deficits year-on-year. NNSW LHD delivered 1 million dollars in savings between 2014/15 and 2015/16 funding years. This was followed by a \$400,000 savings between 2015/16 and 2016/17 funding years.

NNSW LHD are now are No.1 in the NSW Health North portfolio with regards to the best RTW performance

with their results outperforming NSW Health averages in all categories.

In addition to the financial benefits, the changes have resulted in a positive shift in workplace culture, moving from a practice of no contact between the claims manager and the employer/ employee, to a transparent and collaborative injury management model.

## challenges

The ongoing challenges for NNSW LHD will be managing an aging workforce and their non-work related injuries and illnesses. While they are common concerns for many government agencies, the average workforce age in regional areas is significantly higher

than metropolitan areas. The NNSW LHD's average workforce age is 48 years old.

## future strategies

The NNSW LHD has a renewed focus on continuous improvement for BAU processes with a plan for further training to engage staff and managers as well as undertake a Virtual Case Conferencing trial. Virtual Case Conferencing will enable NNSW LHD to develop stronger relationships with all stakeholders at medical reviews with injured workers.

QBE will also roll out laptops to NNSW LHD RTWC so case conferences can be held via skype. The laptops will have QBE Claims Centre and Injury Connect systems installed to allow RTWC to have a mobile desk with system access at their fingertips. Case conferencing will be held face to face via skype. The technology will provide outcomes to be recorded immediately into an electronic claims management system.