

C9 Workplace Health and Safety

The Department is committed to improving workplace health, safety and injury management for its employees in line with the ACT Public Sector Workplace Health Strategic Plan 2008-12. This commitment was recognised in the ACT Work Safety Awards 2009 with a highly commended award in the 'best solution to a workplace health and safety issue' category.

Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) and Injury Management Improvement Strategy

The Department developed the *Workplace Health and Safety and Injury Management Improvement Strategy 2009-12* (Improvement Plan) in this reporting period. The Improvement Plan addresses the recommendations made in the 2009 Workplace Health and Safety Baseline Gap Analysis, conducted under the *ACT Public Sector Workplace Health Strategic Plan 2008-2012*, and builds on the existing injury prevention and injury management strategies aimed at reducing numbers of workplace injuries, claim size and frequency.

A comprehensive review of workplace health and safety communication is currently underway as an action arising from the Improvement Plan. An online Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Reference Manual is a key part of this review.

Injury Prevention Agreement

An Injury Prevention Agreement is in place between ACT public sector employers and unions, which describes arrangements for facilitating ongoing cooperation and consultation between the Department, unions and employees on workplace health and safety issues.

Injury Prevention and Management Policy Committee

The Injury Prevention and Management Policy Committee facilitated consultation and is overseeing the development of the online WHS Reference Manual and Improvement Plan and the auditing of school safety checks. The Committee also oversaw the implementation of strategies to resolve identified injury prevention and management matters, such as contractor arrangements, height safety training, outdoor education, performing arts risk assessments and improved asbestos management.

Work safety representatives

In accordance with its obligation under the *ACT Work Safety Act 2008*, the Department consulted with employees during February

2008 and 95 Work Consultation Units were formed for the 2009-10 reporting period. Elections for Work Safety Representatives for the 2010 to 2012 period were undertaken in February 2010. Ninety-seven representatives and 69 deputies were elected. Work Safety Representative training was provided in September 2009; March and May 2010. Four Work Safety Representative Network meetings were conducted to support representatives during the reporting period.

Injury prevention and management programs

A range of programs were initiated or implemented to ensure the health, safety and welfare of staff at work and to improve return to work outcomes for this reporting period, including:

- safety checks undertaken throughout ACT public schools during the year to identify hazards and implement control measures
- workstation assessments carried out for staff in central office and schools
- injury management practices focused on early intervention and the early engagement of rehabilitation providers to ensure prompt rehabilitation assistance irrespective of injury liability status
- influenza vaccinations offered free of charge for all departmental staff to prevent illness and minimise absences. Hepatitis A and B immunisations were also provided to relevant staff
- staff and their immediate families accessed the Employee Assistance Program for a combination of work related and personal issues. There were 337 new referrals during the reporting period
- injury prevention and management related training, including risk assessment, contractor arrangements, manual handling, height safety and sharps handling training for business managers and building service officers, chemical training for school science assistants and manual handling training for special school staff
- managers, principals and supervisors had support and information on early intervention and rehabilitation strategies through *Supporting Our Staff – a Manual for Managers Managing Injured Employees*
- continued liaison with Shared Services Health and Safety team to provide workplace health and safety advice and services.

Investigations

There were 40 staff and 1,043 student notifiable accidents reported

to ACT WorkCover in accordance with the *ACT Work Safety Act 2008*.

Under section 166 of the Work Safety Act, the Department was issued with:

- one Provisional Improvement Notice which was subsequently revoked following investigation by ACT WorkCover
- one Prohibition Notice (PN) in relation to the collapse of a retractable ladder system that was found to have been incorrectly mounted by the installing contractor. The Notice was lifted following corrective action.

Injury prevention and management targets

The Department is working towards improving workplace health and safety performance through implementing the Improvement Plan. The timeliness of reporting accidents and incidents has improved with staff access to online reporting and early intervention strategies, such as referrals to the Safety First Physiotherapy Program, return to work coordinators, and the Preferred Provider Panel and Redeployment Network Panel for rehabilitation services. The Department worked closely with the Shared Services Health and Safety Team on the High Cost Claims Project and Manual Handling Improvement Project.

The 2009-10 premium rate for the Department was 2.6 percent, and there was a decrease in the number of claims reported with 146 claims accepted for the year ending December 2009. The early intervention focus adopted by the Department has seen a reduction in the number of workplace injuries reaching 5 days incapacity and the average time lost rate (average number of weeks time off for workers' compensation per 1,000 employees).

Target 1: Reduce the number of claims reaching 5 days incapacity by 40 percent

Table C9.1: Number of new claims reaching five days incapacity and rate per 1,000 employees, 2001-02 to 2009-10 and targets for 2010-11 and 2011-12

Experience quarter ending	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
# new 5 day claims	72	101	92	89	98	101	80	85	80		
Rate per 1000 employees	17.3	23.5	20.5	19.7	23.4	22.8	18.0	19.6	17.5		
Departmental target	17.3	16.6	15.9	15.2	14.5	13.8	13.1	12.4	11.8	11.1	10.4
ACTPS # new 5 day claims	412	472	449	441	459	379	291	330	333		

Rate per 1000 employees	25.3	27.4	25.9	25.9	26.4	21.9	16.3	17.9	17.9		
ACTPS Target	25.3	24.3	23.3	22.2	21.2	20.2	19.2	18.2	17.2	16.2	15.2

Target 2: Eliminate all fatalities due to workplace injuries

There were no fatalities from workplace injuries during the reporting period.

Target 3: Reduce the average lost time rate by 40 percent

Table C9.2: Number of weeks incapacity and rate per 1,000 employees, 2001-02 to 2009-10 and targets for 2010-11 and 2011-12

Experience quarter ending	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Weeks incapacity	2,001.5	2,286.5	2,223.8	2,228.4	2,544.5	2,274.9	2,129.2	2,398.8	2,114.7		
Rate per 1000 employees	480.6	533.0	495.5	492.6	608.0	514.3	478.5	552.5	463.2		
Departmental target	480.6	461.3	442.1	422.9	403.7	384.4	365.2	346.0	326.8	307.6	288.3
ACTPS Target	801.1	769.1	737.0	705.0	672.9	640.9	608.8	576.8	544.8	512.7	480.7

Target 4: Reduce average time taken for rehabilitation intervention by 90 percent

This target focuses on the average time taken to initiate formal rehabilitation under the provisions of the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*. The average time taken during the reporting period was 18 weeks.

Performance against this target is influenced by the nature and complexity of each claim and the timeliness of claim lodgement.

For more information contact:

Director
Human Resources
Telephone: (02) 6205 9202