

IMPAIRMENT INSIDER

ISSUE 12
DECEMBER 2023

Introduction

I am sure that most of you would appreciate the sentiment “Where has this year gone?”, and so as we prepare for another festive season break I personally wanted to thank every one of you for your contribution over the course of 2023.

Whether it be attending and contributing to assessor forums, participating in working parties for the Impairment Assessment Guidelines 3rd edition or spending time providing feedback on the IAGs or the Impairment Assessor Accreditation Scheme, a big acknowledgement and thank you. We could not achieve this without your support. I look forward to catching up with you all at the End of Year function on **Wednesday 6 December at the Saracens Head.**

Some news from the Impairment Assessment Advisor team; Sue and Cass have been joined by Scott Liebezeit. Scott comes to us with a great deal of experience in the WPI space and is already contributing enormously. It goes without saying that Sue and Cass are very happy to have the assistance of a new team member.

A couple of other call outs from me. Simon Hynes continues his program of work reviewing the Impairment Assessor Accreditation Scheme. Don’t miss his update in this edition. Also, Mia Bell, Secretariat for the SRCG, provides an important update on the IAG 3rd edition.

The IAA team, as always, have provided some very useful information about the fee schedule and its application, multilateral communication, interpretation of the IAGs and an important message that all assessors are required to use the ReturnToWorkSA report template when completing their assessment. So, all in all, a very informative read that I wouldn’t want to keep you from!

See you at the End of Year celebration.

Julianne Flower
Leader Scheme Support



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IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Changes to WPI assessment fee schedule

Further to the information provided in the **Impairment Insider newsletter issue 11 (July 2023)**, assessors have requested that further examples be provided in calculating the appropriate fee in the event of multiple impairments being requested for assessment.

		Number of body parts											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Number of body systems	1	S	M	M	C	C	VC	VC	HC	HC		Standard (S)	\$1,113.80
	2		M	C	C	VC	VC	HC	HC			Moderate (M)	\$1,392.40
	3			C	VC	VC	HC	HC				Complex (C)	\$1,763.70
	4				VC	HC	HC					Very Complex (VC)	\$2,261.00
	5					HC						Highly Complex (HC)	\$2,575.00

Examples:

1. The request letter asks that the assessor provide assessments for:

Date of injury	Injury / condition
13/05/2005	Lumbar spine strain
7/09/2009	Lumbar spine strain
12/12/2012	L4/5 disc prolapse

With reference to the fee matrix, this assessment is for one body system and one body part so attracts a [standard report fee](#).

2. The request letter asks that the assessor provide assessments for:

Date of injury	Injury / condition
12/03/2015	Right knee lateral meniscal tear scarring
10/04/2018	Left knee medial meniscal tear
01/06/2021	Right knee dislocation
18/11/2021	Right knee replacement scarring

With reference to the fee matrix, this assessment is for two body systems (lower extremity and skin) and three body parts (right knee, left knee, skin) and attracts a [complex report fee](#).

3. The request letter asks that the assessor provide assessments for:

Date of injury	Injury / condition
01/06/1991	Lower back injury
17/10/1993	Left shoulder injury
03/05/1994	Lower back strain
12/12/1996	Left shoulder injury, skin
27/02/1998	Upper back strain
15/09/1998	Lower back strain, upper back strain
14/06/1999	Lower back injury
26/02/2002	Jarring to neck
30/04/2003	Right lateral epicondylitis
26/05/2003	Left lateral epicondylitis
15/11/2005	Lower back strain
11/09/2007	Right knee strain
11/03/2008	Aggravation of neck injury
12/09/2010	Left shoulder bursitis and impingement, skin
19/10/2011	Neck strain, left shoulder strain

In this instance, as the number of body systems and body parts falls outside the matrix, the requestor should request two separate appointments and split the assessments across the appointments with like body parts assessed together, where possible.

First appointment - two body systems (spine and lower extremity);
three body parts (lumbar, thoracic, right knee)
= **Complex**

Date of injury	Injury / condition
01/06/1991	Lower back injury
03/05/1994	Lower back strain
27/02/1998	Upper back strain
15/09/1998	Lower back strain, upper back strain
14/06/1999	Lower back injury
15/11/2005	Lower back strain
11/09/2007	Right knee strain

Second appointment – three body systems (spine, upper extremity and skin); five body parts (left shoulder, neck, left elbow, right elbow, skin) = **Very Complex**

Date of injury	Injury / condition
17/10/1993	Left shoulder injury
12/12/1996	Left shoulder injury, skin
26/02/2002	Jarring to neck
30/04/2003	Right lateral epicondylitis
26/05/2003	Left lateral and medial epicondylitis
11/04/2008	Aggravation of neck injury
12/09/2010	Left shoulder bursitis and impingement, skin
19/10/2011	Neck strain, left shoulder strain

IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

When can you charge for a supplementary report?

A supplementary report fee only applies where there is a request for a separate report that addresses matters additional to the original request. This often includes the provision of further information to support the request. A supplementary fee does not apply when ReturnToWorkSA seeks clarification on your report as a part of the compliance review process. This is because corrections or amendments to a report are already provided for in the original report fee and thus do not attract an additional fee (refer to note 4 of the relevant report fee).

What if there aren't any errors in my report?

Corrections and/or amendments extend beyond errors and may include instances where further information relating to your rationale is required. This is necessary to ensure the report is following the methodology of the Impairment Assessment Guidelines and to confirm compliance. In these instances, an additional fee does not apply for the time spent reviewing the clarification request and/or amending your report as necessary.

Further information can be found in the Permanent Impairment Fee Schedule.



Multilateral communication - a new approach to seeking clarification

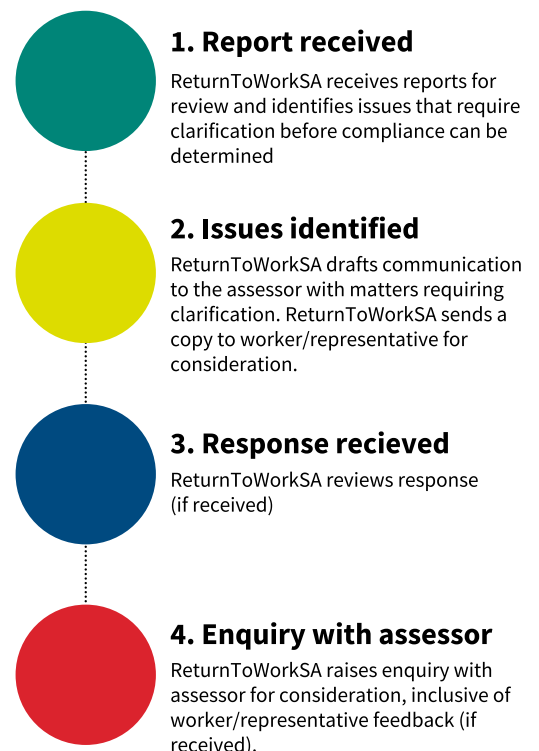
Since the introduction of the Impairment Assessment Guidelines in 2015, ReturnToWorkSA has been reviewing WPI reports to ensure the Guidelines have been applied accurately. This is because only reports that comply with the Guidelines can be used to determine a worker's entitlements. In cases where determining compliance is challenging or an issue is identified, ReturnToWorkSA communicates with the assessor to seek clarification, aiming to ensure compliance with the Guidelines.

Since 2015, the WPI landscape has changed considerably, including an increase in both the number and complexity of assessments. During this time, some decisions of the South Australian Employment Tribunal have remonstrated unilateral communication in the compliance process.

As a result, ReturnToWorkSA has commenced a multilateral communication process in instances where clarification is required to determine compliance with the Guidelines.

The worker or their representative will be provided a copy of the matters requiring clarification prior to this request being sent to the assessor. The worker or their representative has the opportunity to contribute to this process and raise any additional matters for clarification.

Your feedback is appreciated on this new process. If you have any questions, concerns or feedback please don't hesitate to contact Impairment Assessment Services on wpi@rtwsa.com or 8238 5960.



Mastication and deglutition

Often in the assessment of mastication and deglutition, assessors report a history of partial or full dentures due to teeth clearance in the past.

The management of dentures was the subject of SAET decision - *Figallo v ReturntoWorkSA* [2017] SAET 121 (6 October 2017). In this case the worker had a prior history of top dentures, but as a result of the work injury lower dentures were required to be fitted. The worker reported that as a result of the lower dentures she was restricted to soft food or food finely cut up. The decision centred around whether dentures constitute a prosthesis or not and therefore whether they are required to be removed for the purpose of the assessment. His Honour Justice JP McCusker found that false teeth come within the meaning of 'prosthesis'.

Section 1.39 of the IAGs directs that assessments must be conducted without orthoses and/or prostheses, except where these cannot be reasonably removed for the examination.

In providing an assessment for mastication and deglutition in cases where the worker wears dentures, assessors should consider the impact on chewing and swallowing without the dentures in situ.



Rating Meniscectomy surgery in the knee

Workers may present for a WPI assessment after undergoing multiple meniscectomy procedures for a knee injury. AMA5 Table 17-33 allows for an assessment of 2%LEI(1%WPI) for a partial medial or lateral meniscectomy or 7%LEI(3%WPI) for a total medial or lateral meniscectomy.

It is not uncommon for a worker to have undergone multiple partial meniscectomy surgeries for the same meniscus. As only a part of the meniscus is removed each time, the impairment rating remains as 2%LEI(1%WPI) irrespective of further removals of a part of the meniscus – i.e. the resultant impairment remains as a partial meniscectomy.

However, if the history indicates that the worker has undergone a partial medial or lateral meniscectomy followed by a total meniscectomy of the same meniscus, the impairment rating is 7%LEI(3%WPI) as the resultant impairment is a total meniscectomy.



Referrals are coming to Online Services

For WPI and IME assessments.

A secure way to do business with us.

The way ReturnToWorkSA referrals are managed is changing in February 2024.

We've heard your feedback about having better visibility of your referrals from our claims agents and their status.



better visibility of each referral and the worker's claim details



manage referrals and all documentation associated with them in one place



receive and submit documents securely and efficiently

Get ready now

If you're not registered for our Online Services, set up an account now to be ready to receive referrals online.

For more information on how to register, [enter your details here and our team will help you.](#)

If you're one of the many practices already registered, you can continue to upload documents online and we will be in touch with more information about referrals soon.

An update on the review of the Impairment Assessment Guidelines

The Stakeholder Representative Consultation Group (SRCG) conducted consultation on the recommendations of the medical sub-Committee during July to September 2023. Over 50 submissions were received, including some from Impairment Assessors.

The SRCG thanks everyone who reviewed the materials or provided feedback during the consultation.

Following consultation, the SRCG reviewed all of the feedback and many of the medical questions were referred back to the medical sub-Committees.

We are now in a Technical Review phase. A complete set of draft chapters has been reviewed by a Medical Expert in NSW, Professor Ian Cameron. The CRPS and Psychiatric Disorders tools are currently under review by a range of medical experts in South Australia and interstate.

The next stage will be formal drafting, and a review by Senior Counsel and the Scheme actuaries. This is expected to be completed by the end of this year, so that a draft of the Guidelines can be issued for formal consultation early in 2024.



Impairment Assessor Accreditation Scheme Review

Thank you to those who provided feedback as part of Phase 1 of the Impairment Assessor Accreditation Scheme Review.

We received a significant amount of feedback which we are currently reviewing. All of this feedback will be considered as we look to develop a proposed draft of the new Impairment Assessor Accreditation Scheme.

There will be an opportunity for you to provide further feedback on the proposed draft during Phase 2 in early 2024.

If you have any questions in relation to the review of the Impairment Assessor Accreditation Scheme please contact Simon Hynes on **0448 511 774** or email **simon.hynes@rtwsa.com**



Impairment Assessment Report templates

It is a requirement of both your accreditation and the Impairment Assessment Guidelines to use the impairment assessment report template created by ReturnToWorkSA.

These templates have been developed to provide guidance on what information is required to support your rating of impairment and can be tailored accordingly to include additional information relevant to your assessment. A noise induced hearing loss template is currently in development and a draft will be provided for feedback in due course.

The templates for physical and psychiatric assessments can be downloaded from the ReturnToWorkSA website. To reduce the enquiries from ReturnToWorkSA and/or the requestor, it is recommended that you follow the required template and provide comprehensive detail under each subject heading.

If you have any questions, concerns or recommendations regarding the templates, we encourage you to contact Impairment Assessment Services on **8238 5960** or **wpi@rtwsa.com**.



ReturnToWorkSA Online Services

As a Whole Person Impairment Assessor, you are able to access to ReturnToWorkSA's Online Services, allowing you to submit documents securely and efficiently.

Not only is submitting documents via our Online Services more secure than email, it also helps in:

1. **Efficient delivery:** Your documents will always be sent to the right person promptly
2. **Invoice upload:** Complementing the document submission process, our Online Services also allow you to submit your invoices
3. **Elevated security:** Our Online Services use security protocols that surpass traditional email, ensuring the safe transfer of sensitive worker information
4. **No large file sending by email:** Keep your inbox free from large files.

We acknowledge the importance of keeping the data of injured workers secure. Submitting documents via our Online Services is one way we can help.

Start submitting documents online now!



You or your clinic may already have a registration for online services and, as such, will see a new 'document upload' tile on your dashboard. Alternatively, if you don't currently have a registration, please contact Impairment Assessment Services at **wpi@rtwsa.com.au** or by phone **8238 5960**.





END OF YEAR CELEBRATION

Please join us and your colleagues for an end of year celebration so we can say thank you for your valuable contribution to the IAG and IAAS Review.

When: Wednesday 6 December

Time: 4:30pm - 6:30pm

Place: The Saracens Head
82 Carrington Street

Beer, wine and cocktail food will be provided.

[Click here to RSVP](#)

GENERAL UPDATES

New applications

We are currently accepting applications for the below listed body-systems

- Hematology
- Endocrinology
- Ophthalmology
- Cardiovascular
- Gastroenterology
- Urology
- Respiratory

If you have any colleagues interested in applying to become an Accredited Permanent Impairment Assessor in the Accreditation Scheme, please ask them to contact Amara on **(08) 8233 2277** or wpi@rtwsa.com for further discussion.

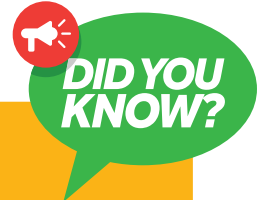


Did you know you can access previous editions of this newsletter?

Have a question about how to manage a particular assessment? Try looking through some previous editions of the Impairment Assessor Insider in case we have clarified it earlier.

The **impairment assessor news and resources page** on the ReturnToWorkSA website contains all previous editions published since the Return to Work Scheme came into effect, as well as notices, templates and other resources.

If you have an idea for an article or resource you would like to see on that page, please let us know at wpi@rtwsa.com or call our Impairment hotline on **(08) 8238 5960**.



The preferred and most secure way for you to submit your report is as a PDF.

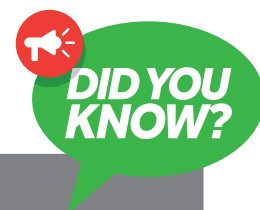
Your submitted version should include your report and any attachments as one document (excluding invoice).

Questions, concerns or content suggestions

The whole person impairment process is extensive, complex and prone to change in light of significant legal decisions. We aim to make these newsletters engaging and relevant to current topics.

If you have any queries, concerns or content suggestions email us at wpi@rtwsa.com or phone our Impairment hotline on **(08) 8238 5960**.





Invoicing – where to send

Invoices for impairment assessment reports are managed and paid for by the requestor, not by ReturnToWorkSA (except those reports requested by our EnABLE team).

To avoid any delays in processing your invoice, assessors are reminded to forward the invoice directly to the requestor by emailing it separate to the report (in word, PDF or image file format) using the following addresses:

Gallagher Bassett:	invoices@gb.rtwsa.com
EML:	accounts@eml.rtwsa.com
EnABLE:	EnABLE@rtwsa.com
Self-insured:	to the requestor

Please ensure you have the claimant details clearly identified on the invoice. If you have approval for additional costs, this is best attached with your email to ensure prompt payment.



Where ReturnToWorkSA requires clarification before your report can be marked as compliant, this is not considered a supplementary report.

Corrections and amendments to a report after initial submission are covered in the agreed PIA fee and do not attract an additional fee.

Supplementary fees apply where a request for further opinion after the fact has been made by the requestor.

Update your Assessor listing

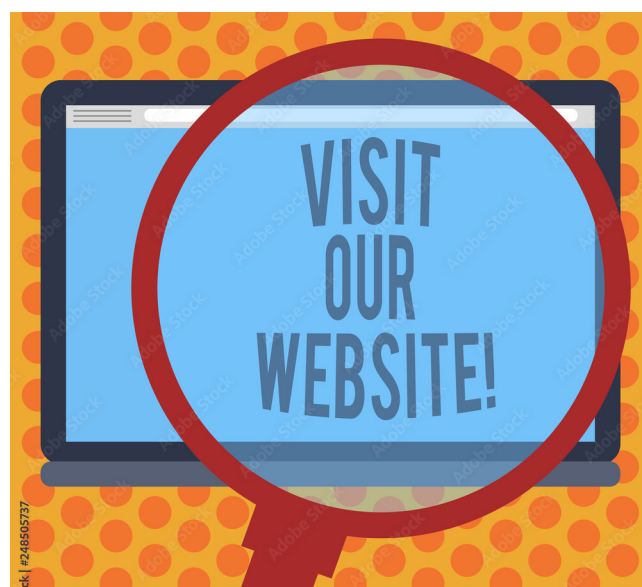
To ensure our **public listings** are current, please notify us if your details require updating.

This may include changes to your address, practice details, COVID-19 vaccination requirements or an update to your referral requirements.

We also publish information about areas of special clinical interest, spoken languages and consultation in rural and remote areas.

Please email us at wpi@rtwsa.com or call our Impairment hotline on **(08) 8238 5960**.

A requirement of your accreditation is to maintain adequate insurance cover. If you have renewed this recently, please provide us with a copy of your certificate of public liability and professional indemnity insurance.



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