



Australian Government

Comcare

Targets for Achieving Better Workplace Health, Safety and Rehabilitation

Australian Government
Premium Paying Employers
(Revised December 2003)



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Introducing health and safety targets

Commitment of an agency head and an organisation's leadership team to improving performance will lead to purposeful activity and managed change.

Target setting has emerged internationally and in Australia as a key strategy for engaging the interest of executive teams in improving health and safety at work. Targets influence forward planning and the development of practical measures to generate better outcomes in health and safety.

Australian workplaces achieving better performance

In 2002, the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council, chaired by the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, endorsed the release of the *National Occupational Health and Safety Strategy 2002 - 2012*. As part of this strategy, Ministers stated their commitment to achieving national targets to

- sustain a significant continual reduction in the incidence of work-related fatalities with a reduction of at least 20 percent by 30 June 2012
- reduce the incidence of workplace injury by at least 40 percent by 30 June 2012.

The strategy provides the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council with the framework for ensuring that there is a sustained and substantial improvement in Australia's occupational health and safety performance over the next decade.

Implementing the Council's targets in Australian Government employment will lead to improved management of work related injury, and better workplace health outcomes. The Australian Government is committed to meeting these targets on a jurisdictional basis. Performance against the targets is to be reported annually to Ministers.

The Minister wrote to his federal colleagues on 13 December 2002 advising them of this strategy and seeking their cooperation and that of agencies within their portfolios in implementing the strategy.

The Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission decided to go further than the national target for fatalities by setting a target for the Commonwealth jurisdiction of zero fatalities from injury.

Comcare is suggesting that in addition to the two National Occupational Health and Safety Strategy targets, Australian Government premium paying employers would adopt a further two targets that aim to improve return to work management and outcomes.

Together, the four targets form part of the Australian Government's program to encourage and monitor continuous improvement in workplace health, injury prevention and injury management.

The four targets are to

- **reduce the incidence of workplace injuries and diseases by 40 percent by 2012**
- **eliminate all fatalities due to workplace injury**
- **reduce the average lost time rate by 40 percent by 2012**
- **reduce the average time taken for rehabilitation intervention by 90 percent by 2012**

Working towards these targets will signal executive accountability for improved outcomes. It will involve managers in the implementation of better prevention practices and improved approaches to returning injured employees to productive work.

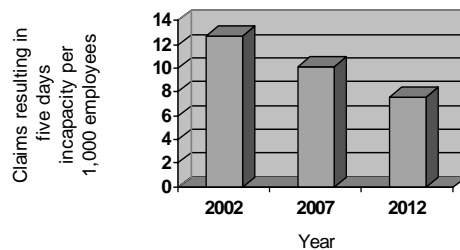
This brochure describes the targets and explains how achieving them will benefit employers and their employees.

What does this mean for premium paying employers?

Our aim in working with employers to achieve new health and safety targets is to effect a better quality of working life for employees, improved workplace health and productivity across workplaces, and containment of agency premium rates.

Reduce workplace injuries

In the year 2001-02 Australian Government premium paying agencies experienced 1,944 new compensation claims that resulted in five or more days of incapacity. This represents an average incidence rate of 12.7 claims per 1,000 employees. Against this background employers would adopt the target of reducing this by 40 percent to 7.6 claims per 1,000 employees by 2012. If total employment remained the same, that would mean over 750 fewer injuries or diseases in 2012.



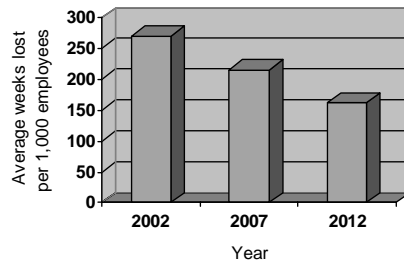
No workplace fatalities

In 2001-02 Comcare determined two new claims for fatalities that occurred as a result of workplace injury (as distinct from disease or journey claims). We aim to work with employers to help prevent all such workplace fatalities by 2012. This is subject to taking into account declarations by the Minister of Defence of warlike and non-warlike operations.

Reduce the average weeks lost time due to injury

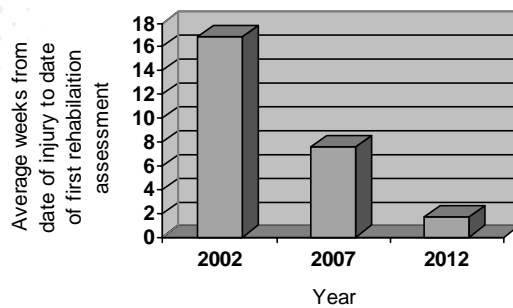
In 2001-02 Comcare paid compensation for a total of 41,486 weeks of lost time for injured employees. This was an average of 270 weeks per 1,000 employees. Against this background, employers would adopt a target to reduce this rate by at least 40 percent to 162 weeks per 1,000 employees

by 2012. If total employment remains the same, this would mean *that employers would have available to them more than 16,500 weeks of extra productive time.*



Reduce the average weeks taken for return to work activity to commence

In 2001-02, where employers initiated rehabilitation activity it took on average 16.8 weeks after the injury for a rehabilitation assessment to be arranged. There is considerable evidence that delayed rehabilitation intervention leads to increased claim costs. Given this background, employers would adopt a target to reduce this delay by 90 percent by 2012. That is, it would take, on average, *less than 2 weeks* for employers to initiate rehabilitation assistance for injured employees.



Where to from here?

Employers are asked to monitor their own progress towards meeting the targets over the next ten years. It is recommended that employers undertake annual reviews and report on progress against the targets as a normal part of the business planning cycle. Comcare will support employers to measure their performance by providing access to data via the Customer Information System. In addition, large premium paying agencies will be invited to sign a *Statement of Commitment* to demonstrate their agency's commitment to achieving the performance improvement targets.

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PUB 9 (Jan04)