



Australian Government

Comcare

COMCARE SCHEME— WORKERS' COMPENSATION STATISTICS 2016–17

December 2017

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

Comcare has published this document as part of its legislative functions under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRC Act) and the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act).

This document supports and complements other data and information published by Comcare as part of these legislative functions. For more information, see 6.3 Related data sources.

1.2 KEY FINDINGS

At the scheme level, for the five years from 2012–13 to 2016–17:

- > the number of employees covered under the SRC Act has increased from 377 600 to 388 400 ([refer to figure 2.1](#))
- > the number of employees covered under the WHS Act has reduced slightly from 414 600 to 410 600 ([refer to figure 2.1](#))
- > there has been a 34 per cent reduction in the incidence of claims lodged from 23.2 to 15.2 claims lodged per 1000 FTE employees ([refer to figure 3.1](#))
- > there has been a 33 per cent reduction in the incidence of serious claims from 8.8 to 5.9 claims per 1000 FTE ([refer to figure 3.3](#))
- > consistent with the reduction generally in the incidence of lodged and accepted claims, there has been a reduction in the incidence of body stressing claims (44 per cent) and mental stress claims (54 per cent) ([refer to figures 3.12](#) and [3.14](#))
- > median incapacity has remained stable at approximately five weeks for injury claims and seven to eight weeks for disease claims ([refer to figures 4.1](#) and [4.2](#))
- > there has been an increase in the number of requests for reconsiderations and appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal ([refer to tables 5.1](#) and [5.2](#))
- > there has been an improvement in the reconsideration and AAT affirmation rates ([refer to table 5.1](#))

2 SCHEME PARTICIPATION

2.1 COVERAGE UNDER THE SRC AND WHS ACTS

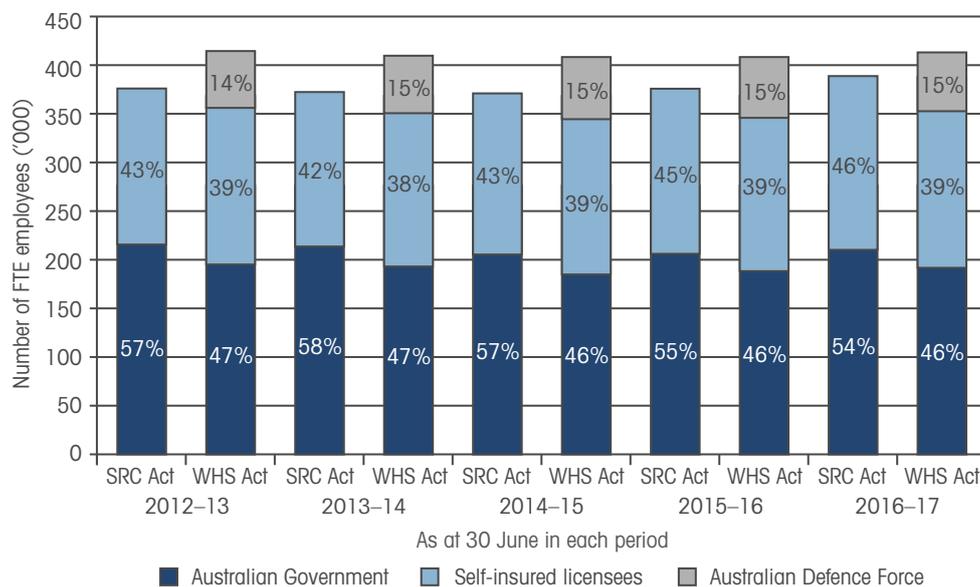
The Comcare scheme comprises of employers covered under the WHS Act, the SRC Act or both of these Acts.

The WHS Act covers Australian Government entities (excluding the Australian Capital Territory Government), 30 self-insured licensees, the Australian Defence Force, and a number of Commonwealth public authorities covered only by the WHS Act.

The SRC Act covers Australian Government entities (including the Australian Capital Territory Government) and all self-insured licensees.

For more information on self-insurance under the SRC Act, refer to the [Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission website](#).

Figure 2.1 Scheme coverage



As at 30 June 2017, there were approximately 388 400 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees covered under the SRC Act and 410 600 FTE employees covered under the WHS Act.

The total WHS Act FTE and proportions have remained relatively stable over the five years between 2012-13 and 2016-17. The SRC Act FTE has increased (three per cent) over this period, and the proportions have changed slightly, with an 11 per cent increase in the self-insured licensee FTE.

Table 2.1 Comcare scheme coverage as a percentage of Australian industry as at 30 June 2017

Industry	SRC FTE at 30 June 2017			WHS FTE at 30 June 2017			Australian industry FTE at May 2017 ('000)	SRC as percentage of total industry	WHS as percentage of total industry
	Australian Government FTE* ('000)	Self-insured licensees ('000)	Comcare SRC jurisdiction ('000)	Australian Gov't FTE** ('000)	Self-insured licensees ('000)	Comcare WHS jurisdiction ('000)			
Information, Media and Telecommunications	11.9	38.5	50.4	11.9	38.5	50.4	214.1	23.5%	23.5%
Public Administration and Safety	166.8	6.0	172.8	202.8	0.8	203.6	798.6	21.6%	25.5%
Financial and Insurance Services	1.3	63.5	64.8	1.3	59.6	61.0	433.5	14.9%	14.1%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	5.8	58.1	63.8	6.2	49.2	55.4	623.1	10.2%	8.9%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	14.5	–	14.5	14.6	–	14.6	1030.9	1.4%	1.4%
Manufacturing	0.5	5.8	6.3	3.2	5.8	9.0	903.7	0.7%	1.0%
Education and Training	4.5	–	4.5	4.5	–	4.5	973.0	0.5%	0.5%
Construction	–	2.7	2.7	–	2.7	2.7	1099.6	0.2%	0.2%
All other industries	2.7	4.3	7.0	3.1	4.3	7.4	4498.7	0.2%	0.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	1.5	–	1.5	1.5	–	1.5	1578.9	0.1%	0.1%
All industries	209	179	388	249	161	410	12154.1	3.2%	3.4%

* Australian Government includes 22 200 ACT Government employees

** Australian Government includes 62 000 ADF employees

Notes:

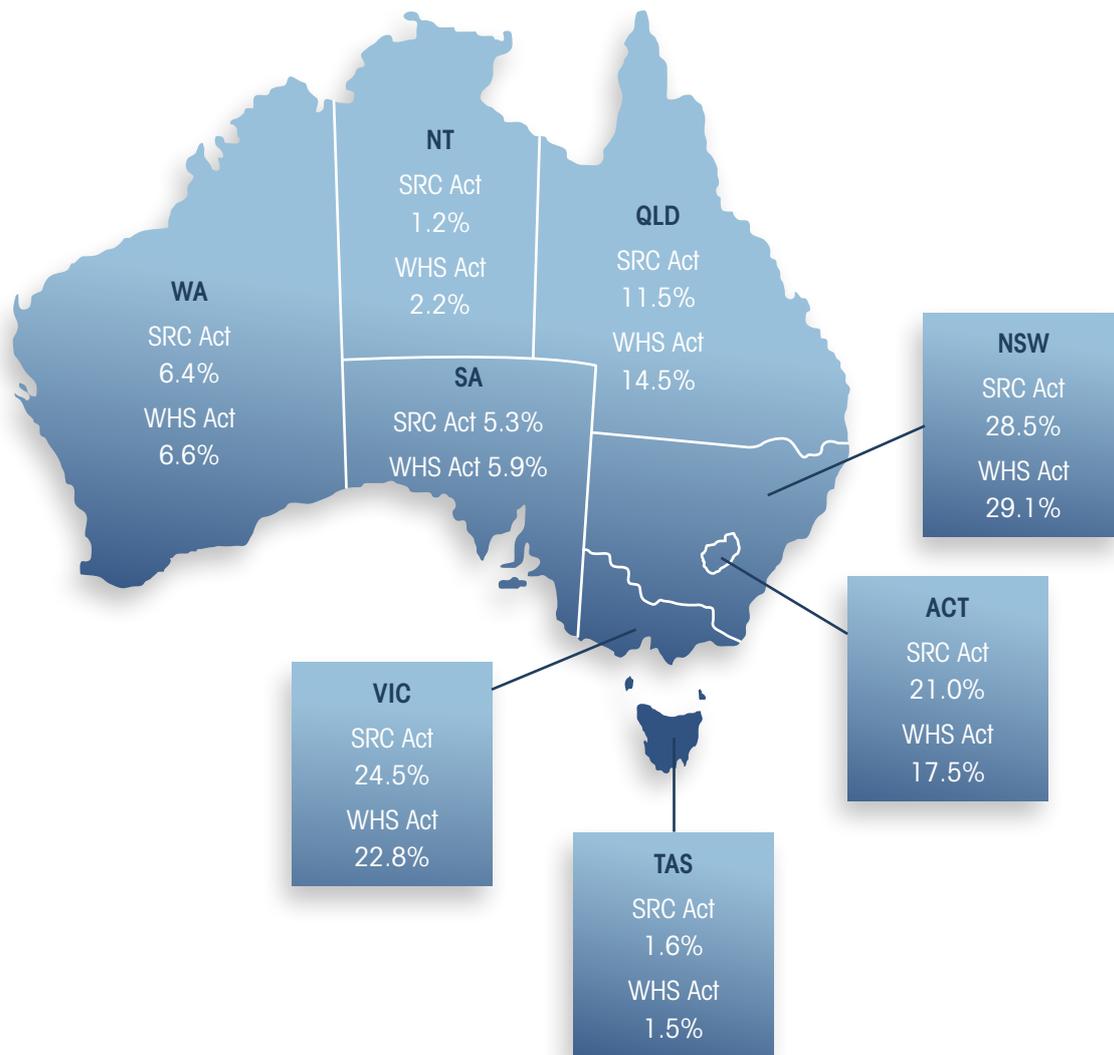
1. 'All other industries' includes: Accommodation and food services; Administration and support services; Agriculture, forestry and fishing; Arts and recreation services; Electricity, gas, water and waste services; Mining; Other services; Rental, hiring and real estate services; and Wholesale trade as defined in ANZSIC 2006.
2. Australian industry FTE estimate includes ADF.
3. Australian industry FTE source: ABS 6105.0 Australian Labour Market Statistics.
4. Totals may not sum from components due to rounding

The Comcare scheme covers a broad range of industries. Table 2.1 provides a breakdown of FTE employees covered under the SRC Act and WHS Act, by Australian and New Zealand Industrial Classification (ANZSIC), as a percentage of all Australian industry as at 30 June 2017.

The Comcare scheme's SRC Act jurisdiction covered approximately 3.2 per cent of all persons employed in Australia. The highest proportion of SRC Act coverage is in the 'Information, media and telecommunications' industry (23.5 per cent) followed by 'public administration and safety' (21.6 per cent) and 'Financial and insurance services' (14.9 per cent).

The Comcare scheme's WHS jurisdiction covered approximately 3.4 per cent of all persons employed in Australia. The highest proportion of WHS Act coverage is in the 'Public administration and safety' industry (25.5 per cent), followed by the 'Information, media and telecommunications' industry (23.5 per cent) and the 'Financial and insurance services' industry (14.1 per cent).

Figure 2.2 Scheme coverage by location as at 30 June 2017



The Comcare scheme is a national scheme with employers and employees in every state and territory. The WHS Act also covers workers based overseas including Australian embassy staff working abroad.

The geographic distribution of employees covered by the SRC and WHS Acts across all Australian states and territories as at 30 June 2017 is provided in Figure 2.2. The majority of workers covered by the Comcare scheme—approximately 29 per cent—were located within New South Wales. The figures in Figure 2.2 is a reflection of employee numbers (headcount), not full time equivalents.

3 WORKERS' COMPENSATION

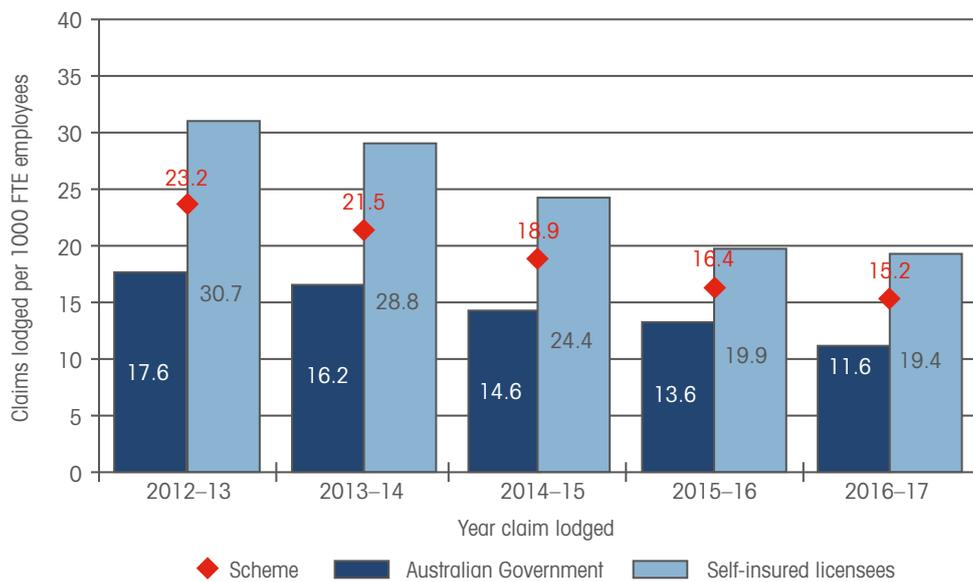
3.1 CLAIMS LODGED

The incidence rate of claims lodged in the Comcare scheme has been decreasing over time, with the 2016–17 rate of 15.2 claims per 1000 FTE being approximately 34 per cent lower than the rate in 2012–13 of 23.2 claims per 1000 FTE.

The Australian Government experienced a 34 per cent reduction in the incidence of claims lodged, from approximately 17.6 claims lodged per 1000 FTE employees during 2012–13 to approximately 11.6 claims lodged per 1000 FTE employees during 2016–17.

The self-insured licensees had a 37 per cent reduction in the incidence of claims lodged, from approximately 30.7 claims lodged per 1000 FTE employees during 2012–13 to approximately 19.4 claims lodged per 1000 FTE employees during 2016–17.

Figure 3.1 Incidence of claims lodged



3.2 INITIAL CLAIMS ACCEPTANCE RATE

The initial claims acceptance rate represents those claims that had an initial liability determination made during the period 2012–13 through 2016–17, where the initial determination decision was to accept liability for the claim. This does not include claims accepted following reconsideration or review.

Figure 3.2 Initial claims acceptance rate

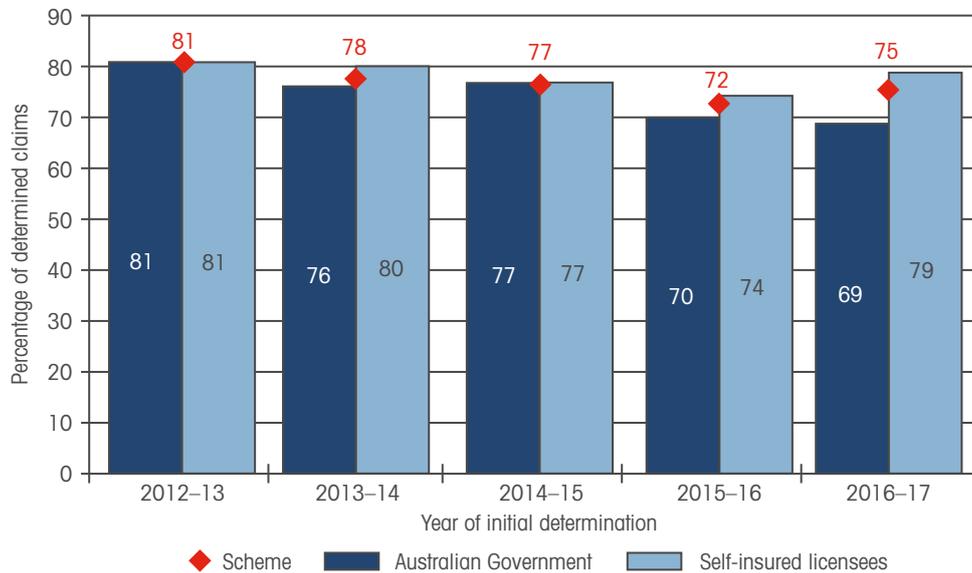
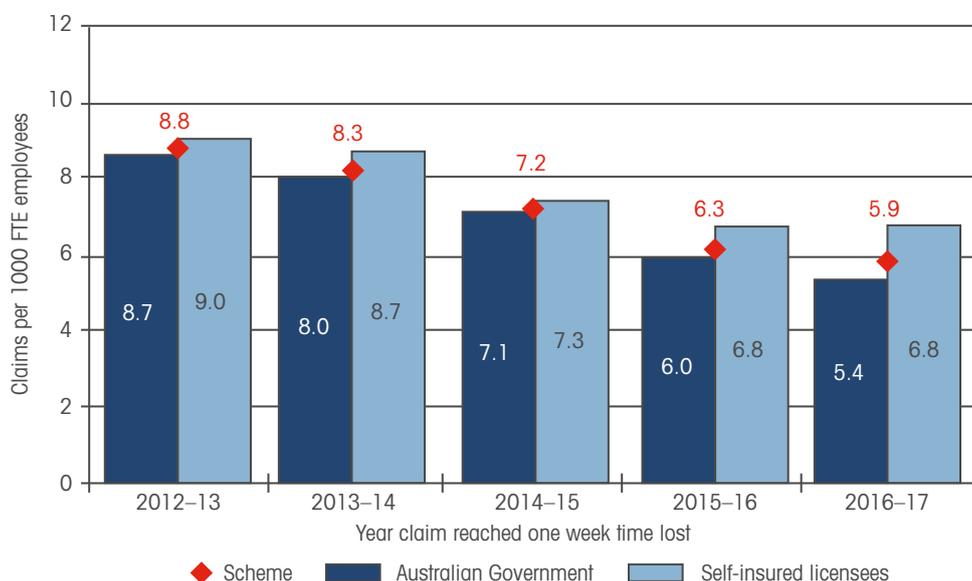


Figure 3.2 shows that 75 per cent of claims with a date of first determination in 2016–17 were initially accepted across the scheme, a reduction from 81 per cent in 2012–13. This reduction was driven mostly by a reduction in the Australian Government initial claims acceptance rate.

3.3 INCIDENCE OF SERIOUS CLAIMS

Serious claims are those claims that reach one week or more of time lost during the reporting period. Figure 3.3 shows the incidence rate of serious claims for 2012–13 to 2016–17. Since 2012–13, the incidence rate of serious claims has reduced for the scheme by 33 per cent.

Figure 3.3 Incidence of serious claims



3.4 ACCEPTED CLAIMS BY NATURE OF INJURY

Figure 3.4, figure 3.5 and figure 3.6 show the incidence of claims accepted during the period 2012–13 to 2016–17 by the major nature of the injury/illness that lead to the claim for workers’ compensation.

An injury is generally the result of a single identifiable incident that can be pinpointed to a specific time and place, such as a vehicle accident, while a disease usually results from repeated or long-term exposure to an agent or event such as repetitive typing, or long-term exposure to agents such as dust or asbestos.

Under the SRC Act, psychological conditions are determined using the disease provisions.

Between 2012–13 and 2016–17, the scheme has observed an overall reduction in the incidence of injury, disease and psychological claims.

Figure 3.4 Accepted injury claims



Figure 3.5 Accepted disease (excluding psychological) claims



Figure 3.6 Accepted psychological claims



3.5 AUSTRALIAN WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGY 2012–2022

The Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012–2022 (Australian Strategy) is published by Safe Work Australia and sets national work, health and safety targets for performance improvement through to 2022.

There are three targets outlined in the Australian Strategy:

1. A reduction in the number of worker fatalities due to injury of at least 20 per cent.
2. A reduction in the incidence of claims resulting in one or more weeks off work of at least 30 per cent.
3. A reduction in the incidence rate of claims for musculoskeletal disorders resulting in one or more weeks off work of at least 30 per cent.

3.5.1 Compensated worker fatalities

The Australian Strategy target is to reduce worker fatalities due to traumatic injury by at least 20 per cent. Comcare has set a scheme target of zero fatalities.

Table 3.1 presents compensated fatalities under the SRC Act since 2012 13. For completeness, total compensated fatalities, covering both injury and disease, are presented.

There were two claims accepted for a death due to injury during 2016–17.

There were 22 compensable disease death claims accepted by the scheme in 2016–17. The Australian Government reported 16 of these deaths and six were reported by self-insured licensees. Of these, 19 deaths were as a result of mesothelioma/asbestosis.

Table 3.1 Compensated fatalities under the SRC Act

	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
Scheme					
Injury	3	2	1	1	2
Disease	26	12	21	12	22
Australian Government					
Injury	2	-	-	-	-
Disease	20	11	16	9	16
Self-insured licensees					
Injury	1	-	-	1	1
Disease	6	1	5	3	6

3.5.2 Incidence of claims resulting in one week or more time lost

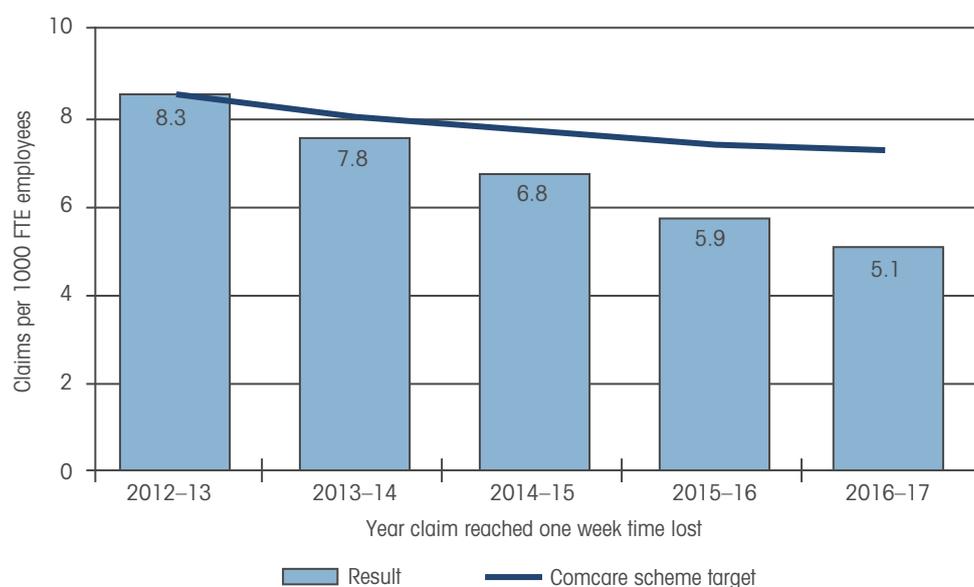
Performance against the Australian Strategy is based on the incidence of claims (excluding commuting claims) that first reached one week time lost during the period.

The Comcare scheme target for this measure is calculated as per guidance from the Australian Strategy, which averages the incidence rates in the three reporting periods from 2009–10 through 2011–12 as the baseline for this measure. The target over time has been developed as a linear reduction of three per cent in each year (to achieve a 30% reduction in line with the strategy), commencing in the 2012–13 reporting period.

Figure 3.7 shows scheme performance has continued to improve in 2016–17 with the incidence rate reducing to approximately 5.1 claims per 1000 FTE against a target for 2016 17 of 7.3 claims per 1000 FTE.

The results below differ from those presented in Figure 3.3 Incidence of serious claims due to differing methodologies¹.

Figure 3.7 Accepted claims with one week time lost



¹ This measure is calculated using the incidence rate of claims for Australian Government premium payers and self-insured licensees. ACT Government claims have been excluded from this measure as its preventative performance is not regulated in the Comcare scheme.

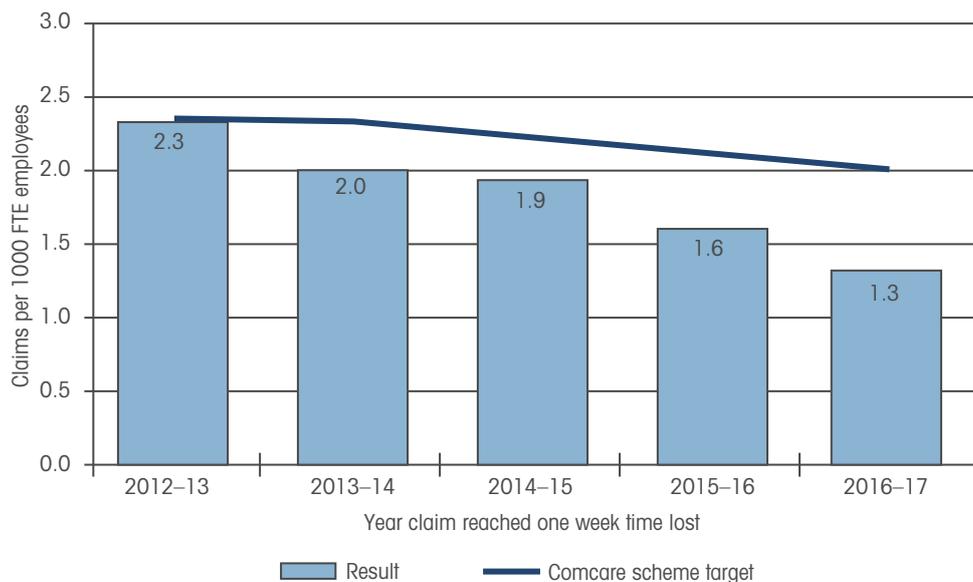
3.5.3 Incidence rate of claims for musculoskeletal disorders resulting in one week or more time lost¹

Musculoskeletal disorders (MSD), as a nature of injury, include joint diseases such as osteoarthritis, spinal conditions such as disc displacement, sciatica, and a range of muscle, tendon and related tissue disorders².

The incidence rate of MSD claims has also been reducing over time, down from 2.3 claims per 1000 FTE in 2012–13 to 1.3 claims per 1000 FTE in 2016–17 (figure 3.8).

The baseline rate for this measure has also been based on an average of the incidence rates in 2009–10 through 2011–12, producing a starting measure of 2.3 claims per 1000 FTE with a 10 year target of 1.6 claims per 1000 FTE.

Figure 3.8 Accepted claims for musculoskeletal disorders with one week time lost



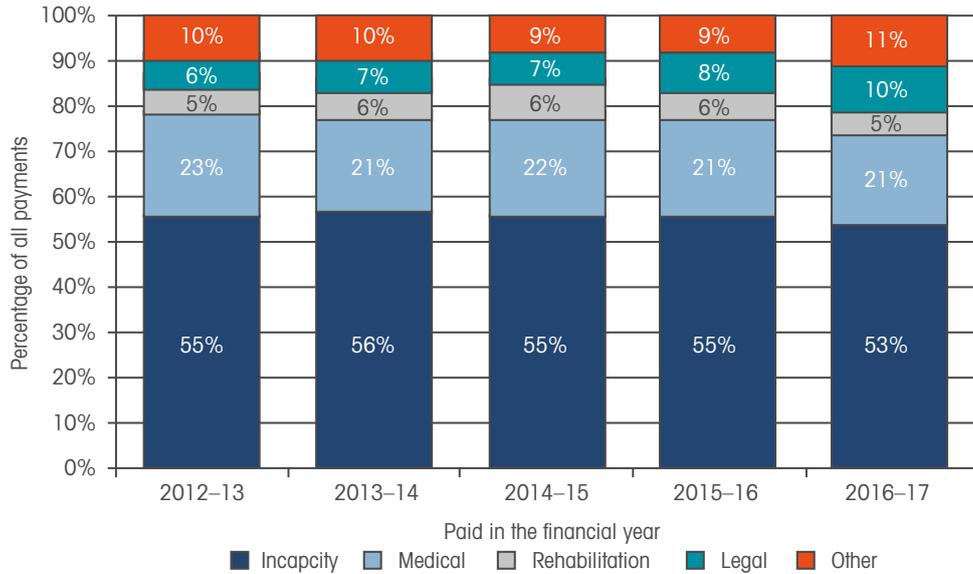
3.6 SCHEME CLAIM PAYMENTS

Total payments made for workers’ compensation claims for the Comcare scheme have been decreasing since 2013–14. These payments include payments to injured workers and payments for medical, rehabilitation, legal and administrative costs.

3.6.1 Claim payments by type

Figure 3.9 shows the proportion of claim payments in each financial year by payment type. This shows that over time, incapacity (diminished ability to engage in work) has consistently been the leading payment type.

Figure 3.9 Workers’ compensation payments by type



Note:

‘Other’ includes: Death benefits, lump sum payments and non-compensation payments such as travel (excluding ambulance) costs.

3.6.2 Claim payments by mechanism of incident

Figure 3.10 shows the top five claim payments by mechanism of incident for the financial years 2012–13 to 2016–17 as a proportion. Body stressing and mental stress claim costs account for the highest proportion of cost over the five years reported.

Figure 3.10 Workers' compensation payments by the top five mechanisms of incident

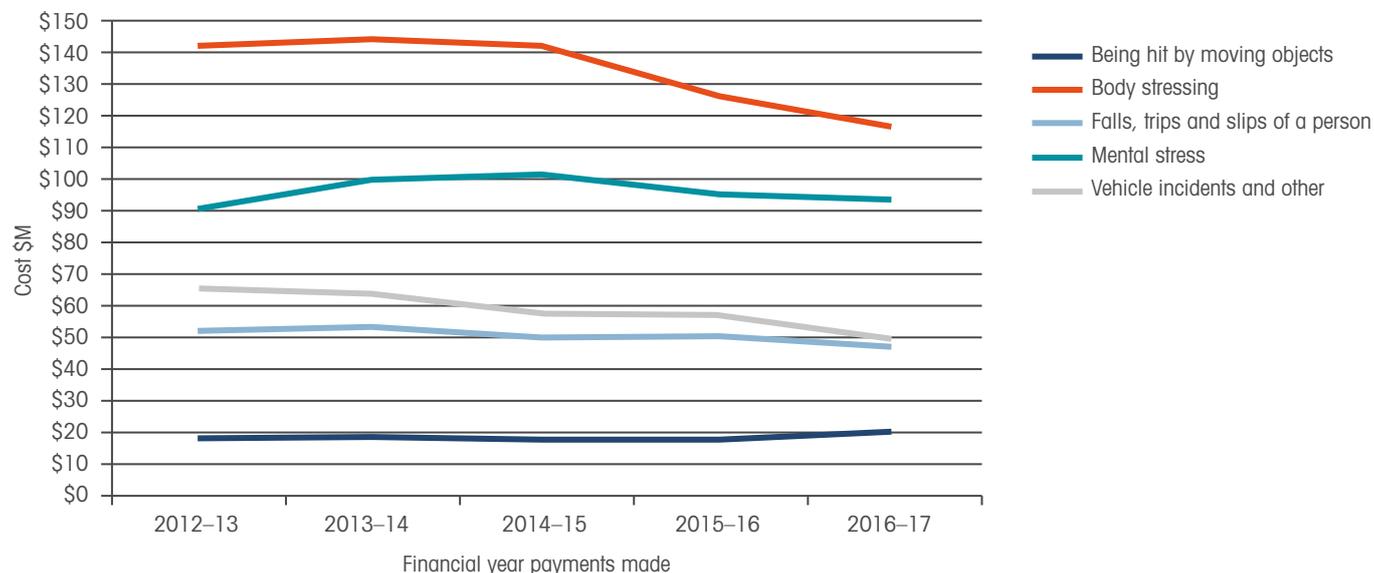


Table 3.2 shows a breakdown of accepted claims and claim costs by mechanism of incident during the latest two financial years.

Table 3.2 Percentage of claims accepted and payments made by mechanism of incident

Mechanism of incident	% of all accepted claims in the financial year	% of total claim payments made in the financial year
2015–16*		
Body stressing	44%	36%
Falls, trips and slips of a person	22%	17%
Being hit by moving objects	10%	6%
Vehicle incidents and other	10%	12%
Mental stress	6%	22%
Hitting objects with a part of the body	5%	2%
Sound and pressure	1%	<1%
Chemicals and other substances	<1%	3%
Heat, radiation and electricity	<1%	2%
Biological factors	<1%	1%
All mechanisms of incident	100.0%	100.0%
2016–17*		
Body stressing	43%	30%
Falls, trips and slips of a person	23%	17%
Being hit by moving objects	11%	7%
Vehicle incidents and other	8%	11%
Mental stress	6%	17%
Hitting objects with a part of the body	5%	2%
Chemicals and other substances	1%	8%
Sound and pressure	1%	<1%
Heat, radiation and electricity	1%	7%
Biological factors	<1%	<1%
All mechanisms of incident	100.0%	100.0%

* Year of initial determination or year payments made

During 2016–17, body stressing injuries/diseases accounted for approximately 43 per cent of all claims for the scheme, down from 44 per cent in 2015–16. These types of claims accounted for approximately 30 per cent of claim costs in 2016–17, compared to 36 per cent in 2015–16.

Mental stress claims accounted for approximately six per cent of all accepted claims in both 2016–17 and 2015–16. These types of claims accounted for 17 per cent of claim costs in 2016–17, compared to 22 per cent in 2015–16.

3.7 BODY STRESSING

As shown in figure 3.11, the lead mechanism of injury for accepted workers' compensation claims across the Comcare scheme is body stressing. The scheme incidence rate has dropped from 8.9 claims per 1000 FTE to 4.8 claims per 1000 FTE. The incidence rate for self-insured licensees remained static from 2015–16 to 2016–17.

Figure 3.11 Incidence of body stressing claims—scheme

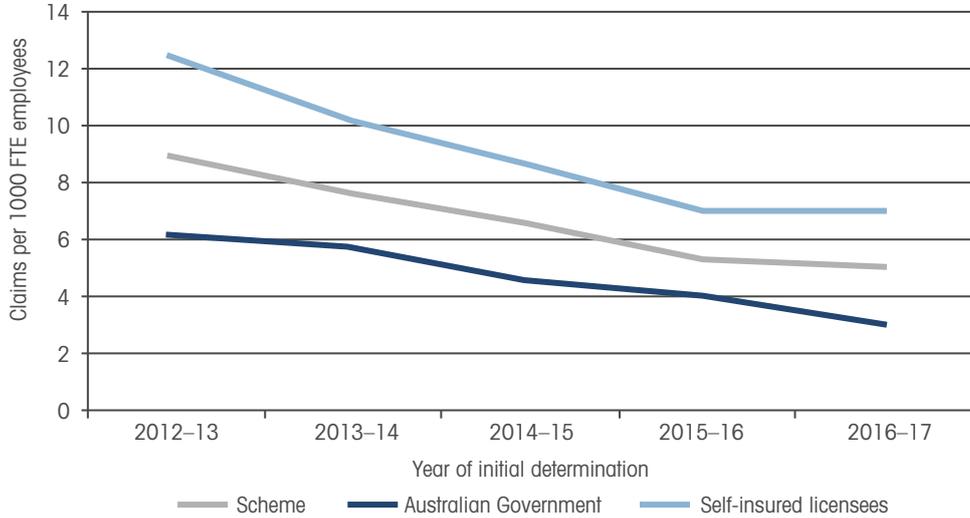
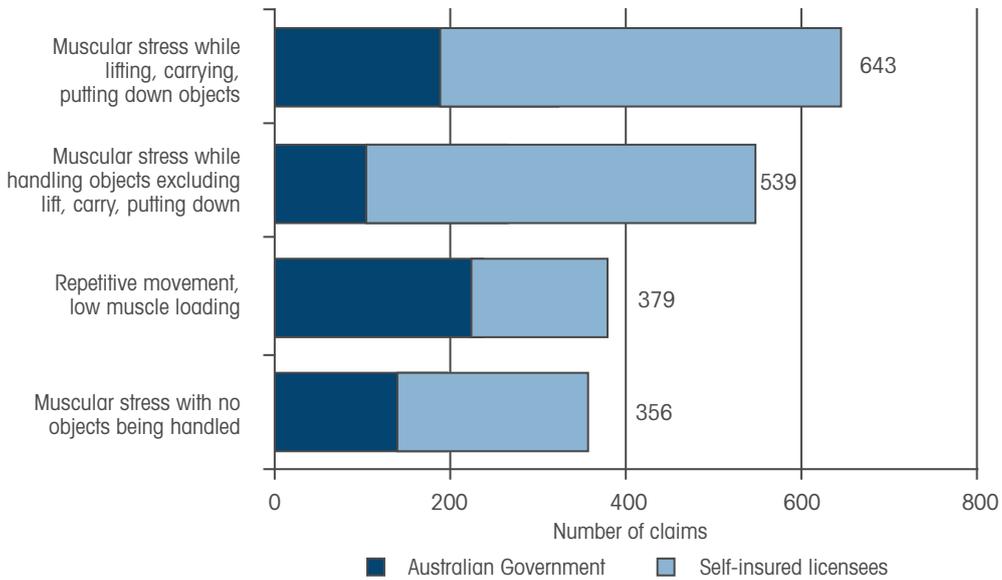


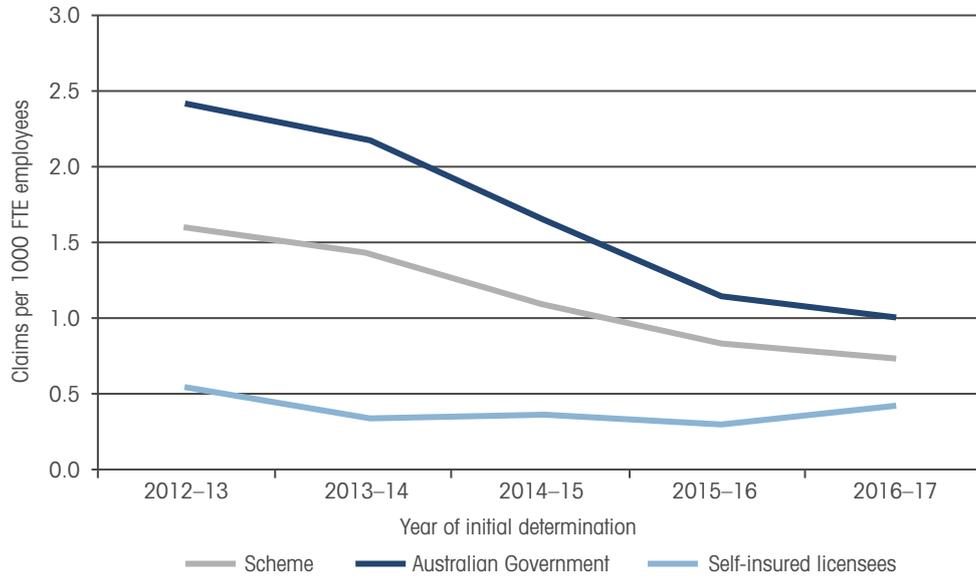
Figure 3.12 Body stressing claims by mechanism of incident—initially accepted in 2016-17



3.8 MENTAL STRESS

Over the period 2012–13 through 2016–17, the incidence of mental stress claims across the scheme has decreased by 54 per cent (figure 3.13). While the incidence rate in the self insured sector has been consistently lower than that of the Australian Government, there have been significant improvements in the Australian Government incidence rate since 2012–13, which have contributed strongly to the overall scheme result.

Figure 3.13 Incidence of mental stress claims—scheme

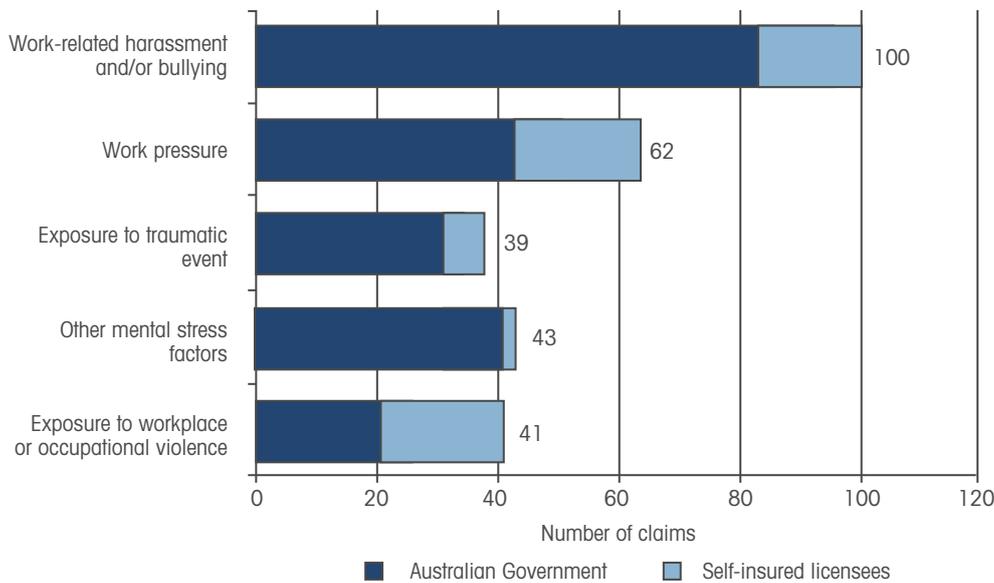


Mental stress claims initially accepted in 2016–17

A breakdown by mechanism of incident of the number of mental stress claims accepted during 2016–17 is shown in Figure 3.14.

Across the scheme, the most significant sub-groups for mental stress claims were work related harassment and/or bullying and work pressure (35 and 29 per cent of these claims respectively).

Figure 3.14 Mental stress claims by mechanism of incident initially accepted in 2016–17



4 REHABILITATION AND RETURN TO WORK

4.1 CLAIM DURATION

4.1.1 Time lost to date—incapacity durations

Table 4.1 shows the percentage of accepted claims, with time lost, during the period 2012–13 to 2016–17 that reached selected incapacity durations. The data show that claim durations for Australian Government are longer than for self-insured licensees.

Table 4.1 Time lost to date

Time lost claims accepted in the period					
Time lost to date	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
Australian Government—injury					
Accepted claims	955	871	735	589	496
One week or more	76%	79%	79%	80%	82%
Six or more weeks	40%	41%	41%	41%	38%
12 or more weeks	28%	29%	27%	27%	20%
26 or more weeks	15%	15%	14%	13%	6%
Australian Government—disease*					
Accepted claims	1169	1085	873	679	460
One week or more	90%	89%	91%	90%	87%
Six or more weeks	66%	63%	64%	62%	59%
12 or more weeks	53%	51%	49%	44%	42%
26 or more weeks	38%	34%	32%	27%	19%
Self-insured licensees—injury					
Accepted claims	1609	1511	1205	1140	1101
One week or more	57%	60%	60%	62%	64%
Six or more weeks	26%	26%	26%	25%	25%
12 or more weeks	16%	15%	15%	15%	12%
26 or more weeks	8%	7%	7%	5%	3%
Self-insured licensees—disease*					
Accepted claims	624	504	583	436	529
One week or more	69%	71%	72%	75%	77%
Six or more weeks	34%	36%	36%	34%	34%
12 or more weeks	21%	21%	22%	18%	18%
26 or more weeks	9%	12%	12%	9%	7%

*Inclusive of psychological disease claims

4.1.2 Median time lost—injury and disease

The median time lost measure provides the middle point of time lost in each reporting period, for both claims due to injury and claims due to disease. This measure can be a useful indication of the time that it takes for half of the claims with more than one week of time lost to return to work.

The following two figures show the median duration of time lost to date for claims accepted during the period 2012–13 to 2016–17. This is based on those claims reaching one week or more of incapacity that had an injury date between three and 18 months prior to the calculation date.

Across the scheme, the median incapacity for injury claims has risen slightly from 4.6 weeks during 2015–16 to 4.9 weeks during 2016–17 (figure 4.1).

For disease claims, the median duration of time lost has reduced from 7.3 weeks to 6.9 weeks over the same period. Disease claims include those due to mental stress—these claims tend to have longer periods of time lost across the duration of the claim.

Both figures below show that the median duration of incapacity for self-insured licensees' claims was consistently lower than for the Australian Government.

Figure 4.1 Median incapacity—injury claims

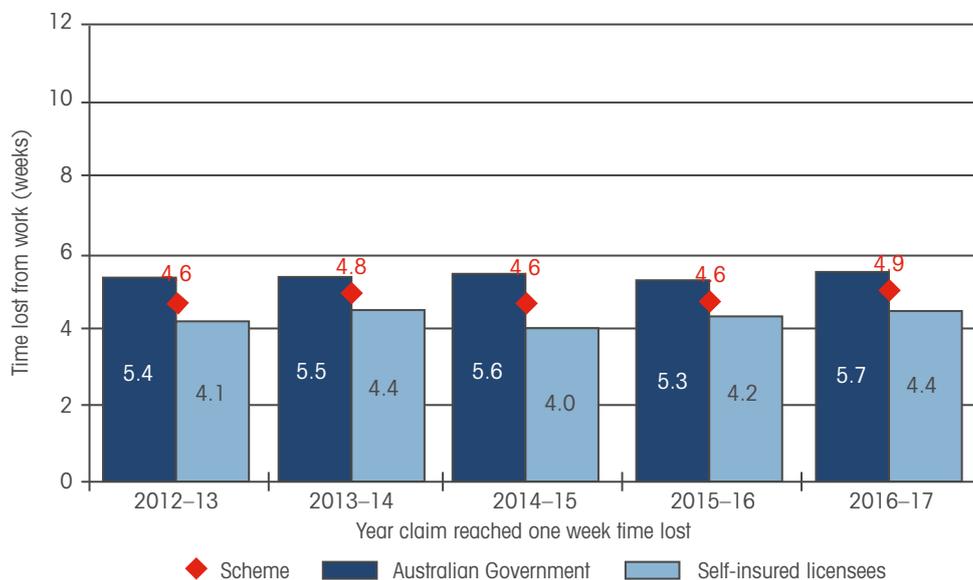
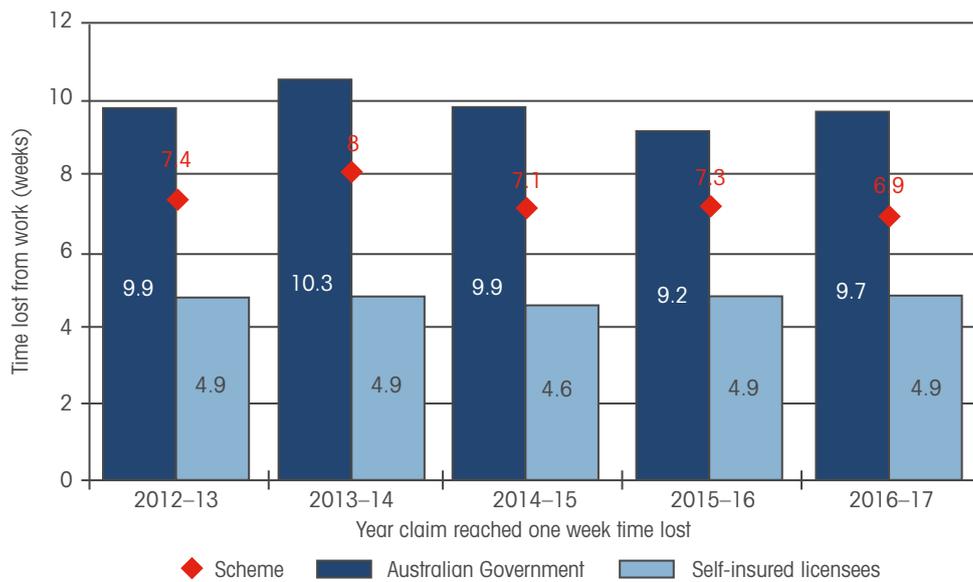


Figure 4.2 Median incapacity—disease claims

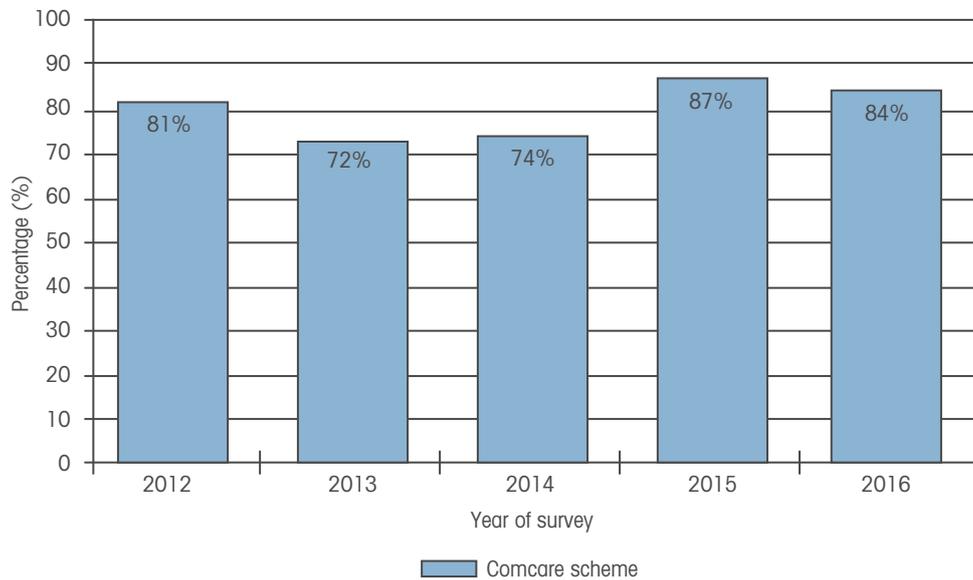


4.1.3 Current return to work rate

Comcare conducted an independent Return to Work Survey from 2011 to 2016.

Figure 4.3 shows the proportion of survey participants who took time off work, who had returned to work and were working at the time of interview.

Figure 4.3 Current return to work rate



5 DISPUTATION

5.1 RECONSIDERATIONS

Table 5.1 provides data relating to requests for reconsideration received and decided during the period 2012–13 to 2016–17. The table also shows the percentage of original decisions which were upheld following a request for reconsideration (affirmation rate).

There has been a 33 per cent increase in the number of reconsideration requests received across the scheme since 2012–13. This increase was driven by an 82 per cent increase in requests received from the Australian Government. The scheme reconsideration affirmation rate has improved over time.

Table 5.1 Requests for reconsiderations summary

	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
Number of reconsideration requests received					
Scheme	2385	2725	2747	3166	3182
Australian Government	1161	1431	1520	1850	2108
Self-insured licensees	1224	1294	1227	1316	1074
Number of reconsideration requests decided					
Scheme	2251	2588	2796	3110	3113
Australian Government	1033	1319	1590	1812	2053
Self-insured licensees	1218	1269	1206	1298	1060
Affirmation rate* at reconsideration					
Scheme	74%	79%	78%	82%	82%
Australian Government	72%	72%	77%	83%	81%
Self-insured licensees	76%	85%	80%	80%	83%

*percentage of original decisions affirmed

5.2 AAT REVIEWS

Information on the number of AAT applications received and finalised during 2012–13 and 2016–17 are provided at table 5.2. The AAT applications data does not correlate to the AAT outcomes data as the outcomes data does not consider the application received date.

Table 5.2 shows that applications to the AAT that were finalised increased by 77 per cent for the Australian Government from 390 during 2012–13 to 692 during 2016–17, reflective of the increase in the number of AAT requests received over the same period. Self-insured licensees also had an increase in the number of AAT requests finalised over the same period, from 627 to 897 (43 per cent).

Table 5.2 AAT request summary

	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17
Number of AAT requests received					
Scheme	907	1143	1185	1385	1510
Australian Government	393	510	573	750	955
Self-insured licensees	514	633	612	635	555
Number of AAT requests decided					
Scheme	1017	1145	1216	1205	1589
Australian Government	390	430	485	520	692
Self-insured licensees	627	715	731	685	897
Affirmation rate* at AAT					
Scheme	64%	69%	68%	67%	69%
Australian Government	52%	57%	60%	55%	60%
Self-insured licensees	71%	76%	74%	76%	76%

*percentage of original decisions affirmed

Source: Administrative Appeals Tribunal

The scheme AAT affirmation rate has improved since 2012–13, from 64 per cent to 69 per cent. The self-insured licensee AAT affirmation rate has been consistently higher than that of the Australian Government over the five-year period.

6 DATA SOURCES AND RELATED INFORMATION

6.1 ADVICE TO READER ON THE DATA

Claims based data can be subject to development and may therefore differ to other Comcare publications and future updates of the data provided within this document.

6.2 DATA SOURCES USED IN THIS PUBLICATION AND DATA NOTES

Scheme performance information presented in this document has been compiled from a variety of sources including workers' compensation claims and survey data.

Workers' compensation claims data presented in this report are extracted from Comcare's Data Warehouse using data as at 31 July 2017.

FTE employee data are collected by Comcare from all Australian and ACT Government and self insured licensees. Australian Defence Force (ADF) FTE is obtained from the ADF Annual Report or the Department of Defence directly.

The *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2007* amended the provisions of the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* to remove coverage for injuries sustained during non-work related journeys. Therefore, injuries sustained while travelling to and from work are not included in this report.

6.3 RELATED DATA SOURCES

Comcare published information

[Comcare and SRCC Annual Reports](#)

[Comcare's scheme performance webpage is updated quarterly and provides information on its regulatory activity \(incident notifications and enforcement activities\), workers' compensation data \(claim types, duration and costs\), court and AAT proceedings and Scheme sustainability.](#)

[Comcare's Comparative claims data is updated annually and provides a breakdown, by sector and employer, of claims received, accepted, claims reaching one or more week incapacity and median incapacity \(latest 3 financial years for comparison\)](#)

[Australian Government premium rates by employer \(latest four financial years for comparison\)](#)

[List of current self insured licensees under the SRC Act](#)

Safe Work Australia published information

[Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012–2022](#)

[Safe Work Australia's Comparative Performance Monitoring Report \(CPM\), latest edition](#)

[Comparison of Workers' Compensation Arrangements in Australia and New Zealand, latest edition](#)

[National Return to Work Survey — Headline Measures Report, latest edition](#)

[Type of Occurrence Classification System \(TOOCS\)](#)

7 VERSION CONTROL

Version Number	Date	Description
1	November 2017	Original version

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