



Australian Government

Comcare

COMCARE SCHEME— WORKERS' COMPENSATION STATISTICS 2017–18

December 2018

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Contact us

Inquiries regarding the licence and any use of this document are welcome at:

Communications
Comcare
GPO Box 9905
Canberra ACT 2601

Ph: 1300 366 979

Email: communications@comcare.gov.au

www.comcare.gov.au

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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 'Related data sources'.

1.2 KEY FINDINGS

At the scheme level, for the five years from 2013–14 to 2017–18:

- the number of employees covered under the SRC Act has increased from 371 500 to 391 900 (refer to figure 2.1)
- the number of employees covered under the WHS Act has increased slightly from 409 800 to 415 100 (refer to figure 2.1)
- there has been a 30 per cent reduction in the incidence of claims received from 21.2 to 14.8 claims received per 1000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) employees (refer to figure 3.1)
- there has been a 40 per cent reduction in the incidence of accepted body stressing claims from 7.8 to 4.7 claims per 1000 FTE employees (refer to figure 3.7)
- there has been a 33 per cent reduction in the incidence of serious claims from 8.3 to 5.6 claims per 1000 FTE employees (refer to figure 3.5)
- median weeks of time off work for psychological claims has increased by 18 per cent from 16.8 to 19.8 weeks of time off work (refer to figure 4.3)
- the scheme has shown increases in the affirmation rate for reconsiderations and AAT decisions since 2013-14 (refer to table 5.1 and 5.2).

2 SCHEME PARTICIPATION

2.1 COVERAGE UNDER THE SRC ACT AND THE WHS ACT

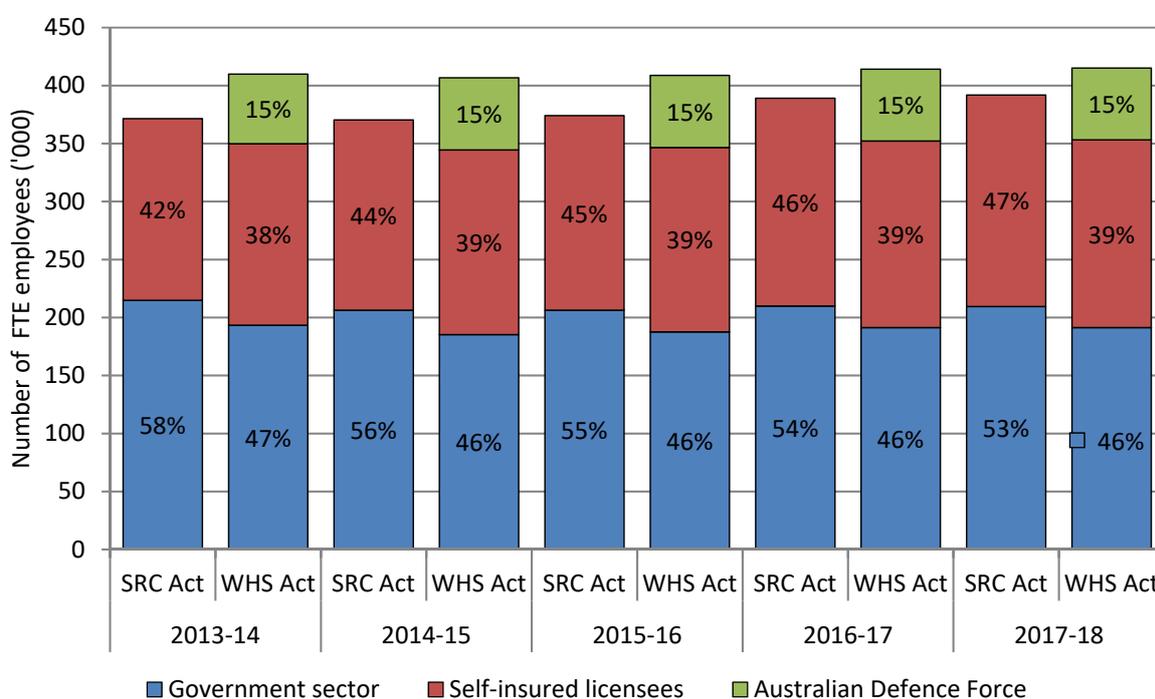
The Comcare scheme comprises employers covered under the WHS Act, the SRC Act or both Acts.

The WHS Act covers the Government sector (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 the Government sector (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 2018, there were approximately 391 900 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees covered under the SRC Act and 415 100 FTE employees covered under the WHS Act.

The total WHS Act FTE and proportions have remained relatively stable over the five years between 2013–14 and 2017–18.

The SRC Act FTE has increased (five per cent) over this period and the proportions have changed slightly, with a 16 per cent increase in the self-insured licensee FTE.

Table 2.1 Comcare scheme coverage as a percentage of Australian industry

Industry	SRC FTE at 30 June 2018			WHS FTE at 30 June 2018			Australian industry FTE at August 2018 '000	SRC as percentage of total industry	WHS as percentage of total industry
	Government sector* '000	Self-insured licensees '000	Comcare SRC jurisdiction '000	Government sector ** '000	Self-insured licensees '000	Comcare WHS jurisdiction '000			
Public Administration and Safety	165.9	7.0	172.9	205.3	0.8	206.1	825.0	21.0%	25.0%
Information, Media and Telecommunications	12.7	37.7	50.4	12.7	37.7	50.4	221.4	22.8%	22.8%
Financial and Insurance Services	1.3	64.2	65.5	1.3	60.5	61.8	458.6	14.3%	13.5%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	5.8	60.2	66.0	6.3	50.1	56.4	648.5	10.2%	8.7%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	14.6	0.0	14.6	14.8	0.0	14.8	1073.1	1.4%	1.4%
Manufacturing	0.5	5.6	6.1	3.1	5.6	8.7	976.4	0.6%	0.9%
Education and Training	4.4	0.0	4.4	4.4	0.0	4.4	1008.3	0.4%	0.4%
Construction	0.0	3.4	3.4	0.0	3.4	3.4	1194.3	0.3%	0.3%
All other industries	2.7	4.3	7.0	3.4	4.3	7.7	4580.7	0.2%	0.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	1.6	0.0	1.6	1.6	0.0	1.6	1679.0	0.1%	0.1%
All industries	210	182	392	253	162	415	12665.3	3.1%	3.3%

* Government sector includes 22 500 ACT Government employees

** Government sector includes 62 000 ADF employees

Notes:

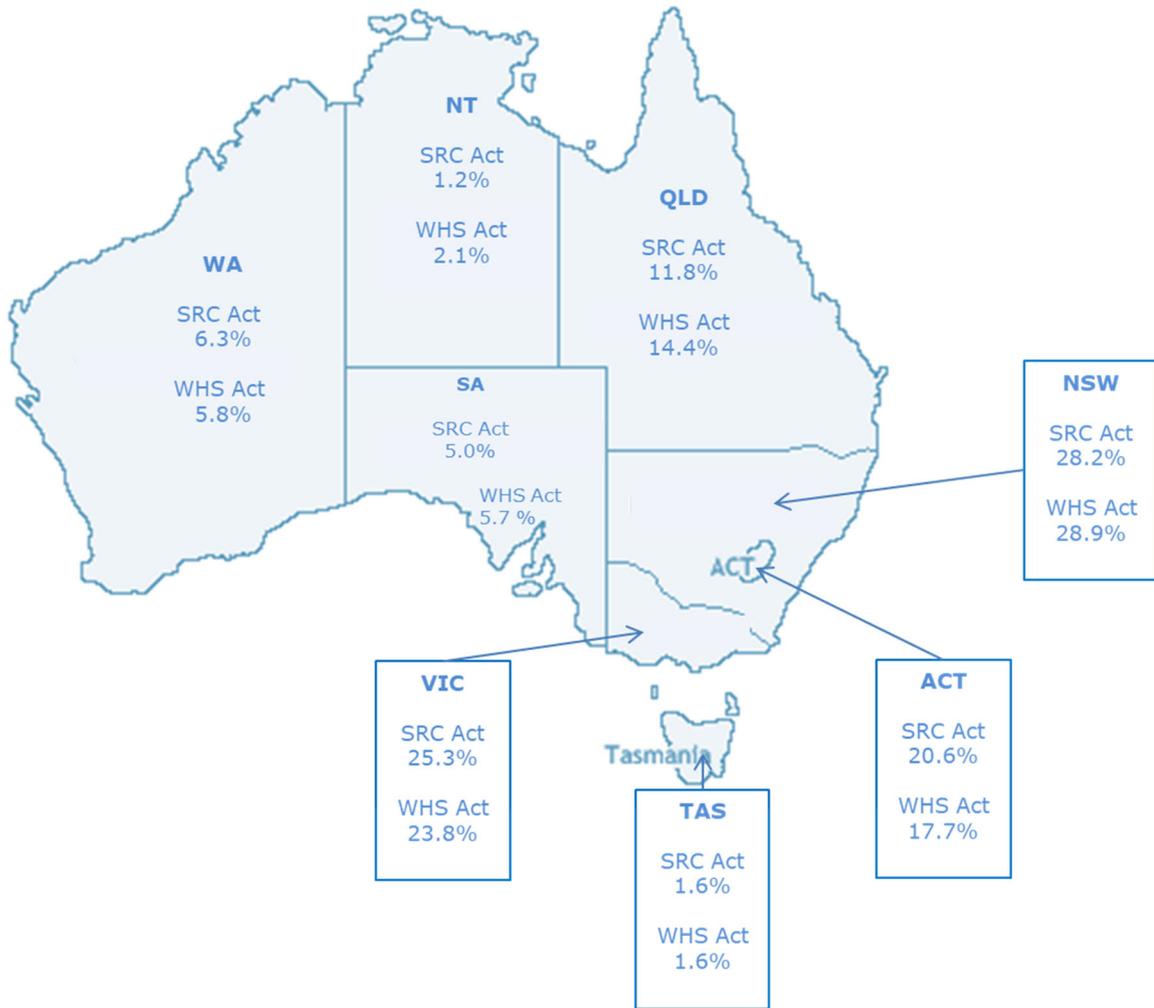
1. 'All other industries' includes: Accommodation and food services; Administration and support services; Agriculture, forestry and fishing; Arts and recreation services; Electricity, gas, water and waste services; Mining; Other services; Rental, hiring and real estate services; and Wholesale trade as defined in ANZSIC 2006.
2. Australian industry FTE estimate includes ADF.
3. Australian industry FTE source: ABS 6105.0 Australian Labor 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 industries.

The Comcare scheme's SRC Act jurisdiction covered approximately 3.1 per cent of all persons employed in Australia. The industry with the highest proportion of coverage is in the 'Public Administration and Safety' industry (21.0 per cent) followed by those employed in 'Information, Media and Telecommunications' (22.8 per cent) and 'Financial and Insurance Services' (14.3 per cent).

The Comcare scheme's WHS jurisdiction covered approximately 3.3 per cent of all persons employed in Australia. The 'Public Administration and Safety' industry has the largest proportion of coverage at (25.0 per cent), followed by the 'Information, Media and Telecommunications' industry (22.8 per cent) and the 'Financial and Insurance Services' industry (13.5 per cent).

Figure 2.2 Scheme coverage by location as at 30 June 2018



The Comcare scheme is a national scheme with employers and employees in every state and territory. The SRC Act may also cover locally engaged overseas employees. 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 2018 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 are a reflection of employee numbers (headcount), not full-time equivalents (FTE).

3 WORKERS' COMPENSATION

3.1 CLAIMS RECEIVED

The incidence rate of claims received in the Comcare scheme has been decreasing over time, reducing by 30 per cent from 2013-14 to 2017-18.

The Government sector experienced a 27 per cent reduction in the incidence of claims received, from 16.1 claims received per 1000 FTE employees in 2013-14 to 11.8 in 2017-18.

The self-insured licensees experienced a 35 per cent reduction in the incidence of claims received, from 28.0 claims received per 1000 FTE employees during 2013-14 to 18.3 during 2017-18.

Across the scheme, the percentage of disease and psychological claims has increased over recent financial years, whereas injury claims have shown a consistent decrease (figure 3.2).

Figure 3.1 Incidence of claims received

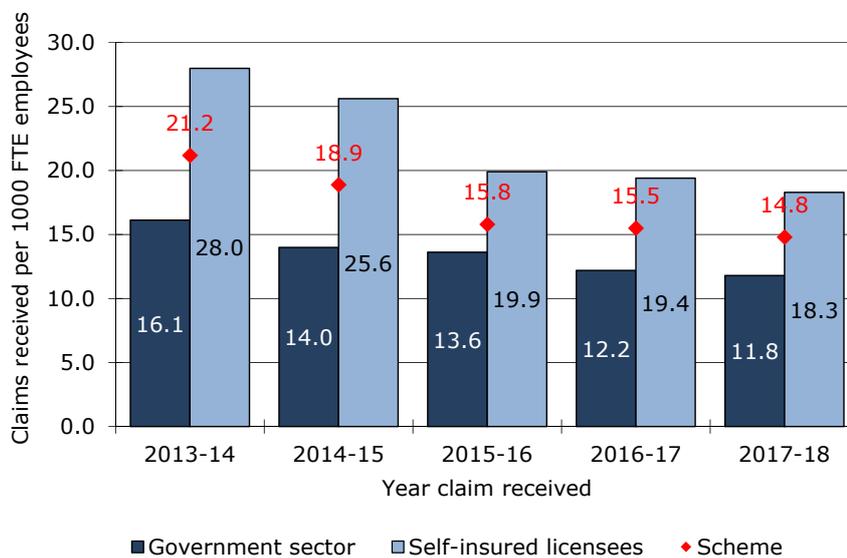
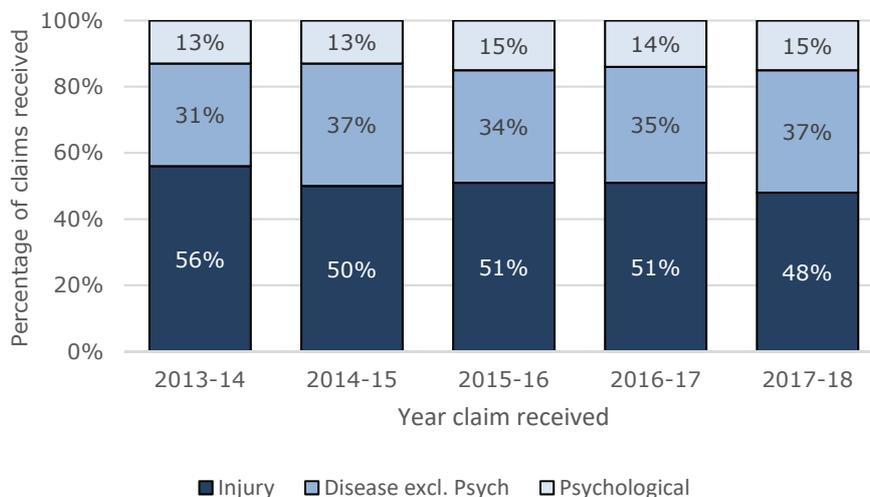


Figure 3.2 Percentage of claims received by type of claim



3.2 INITIAL CLAIMS ACCEPTANCE RATE

The initial claims acceptance rate represents those claims that had an initial liability determination made during the period 2013–14 through 2017–18, where the initial determination decision was to accept liability for the claim. This does not include claims accepted following reconsideration or review.

Figure 3.3 shows that 74 per cent of claims with a date of first determination in 2017–18 were initially accepted across the scheme, a reduction from 78 per cent in 2013–14. This was driven by a reduction in the Government sector initial claims acceptance rate over the period.

Figure 3.3 Initial claims acceptance rate

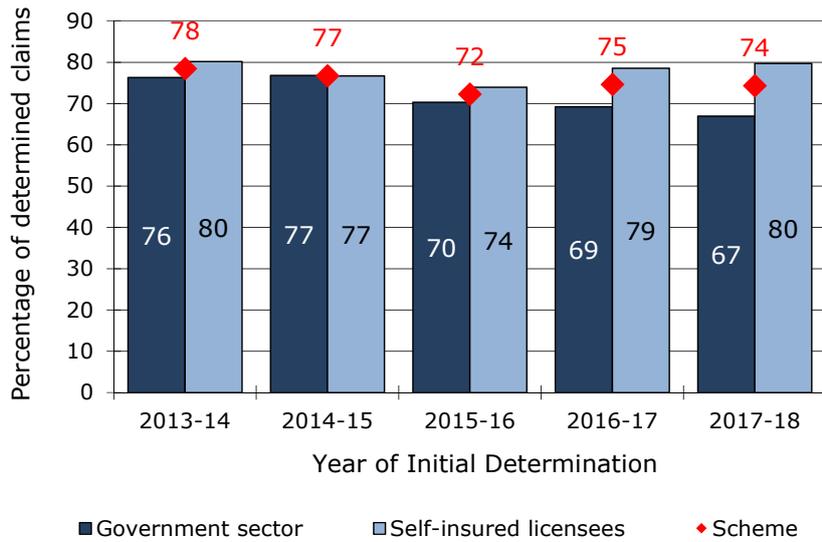
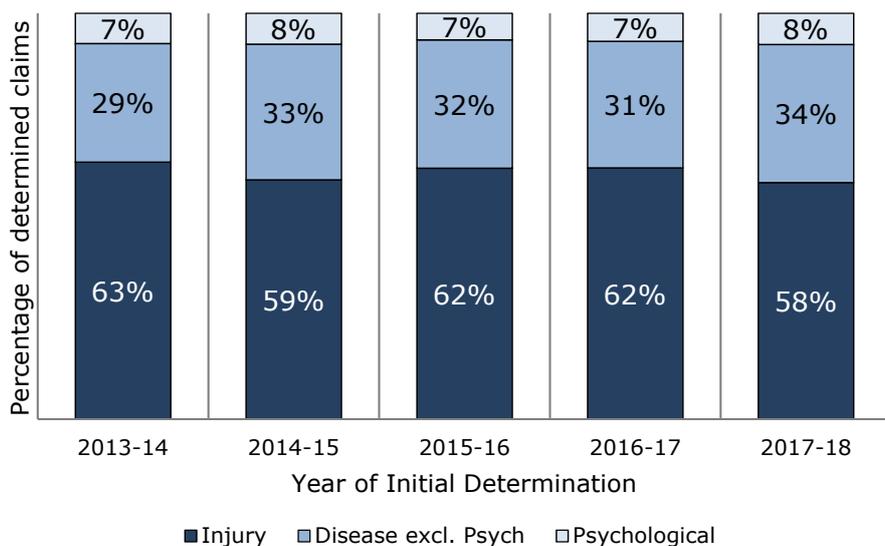


Figure 3.4 shows that the initial acceptance of injury claims continues to be the highest proportion of claims accepted across the scheme. There have been only minor shifts in these proportions over the reporting period.

Figure 3.4 Initial claims accepted by type of claim

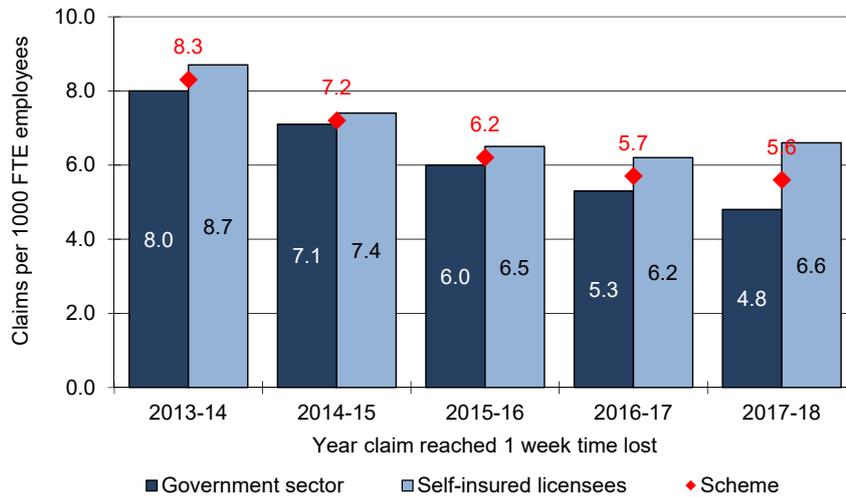


3.3 INCIDENCE OF SERIOUS CLAIMS

Serious claims are claims that result in a total of one week or more of lost time. The incidence rate of serious claims is the number of claims that reach one week or more of time lost per 1000 FTE employees during a given reporting period.

The incidence rate of serious claims has reduced by 33 per cent across the scheme over the last five years, though the rate of this decrease has slowed in the most recent financial year.

Figure 3.5 Incidence of serious claims

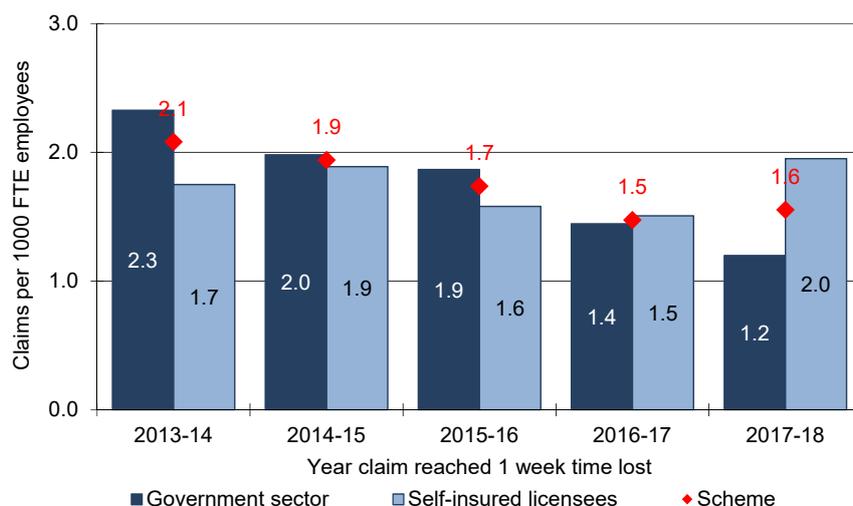


3.4 INCIDENCE OF SERIOUS CLAIMS FOR MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

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 disorders¹.

The incidence rate of serious MSD claims has increased slightly in 2017-18 with a rate of 1.6 claims per 1000 FTE in 2017-18, up from 1.5 in 2016-17. However, previous years data show a reduction over time, down from 2.1 claims per 1000 FTE in 2013-14.

Figure 3.6 Incidence of serious musculoskeletal disorder claims



¹ These are defined under the *Types of Occurrence Classification System 3rd Edition*, as published by Safe Work Australia.

3.5 BODY STRESSING

The lead mechanism of injury for accepted workers' compensation claims across the Comcare scheme is body stressing (table 3.2).

The scheme incidence rate of body stressing claims has reduced by 40 per cent, from 7.8 to 4.7 claims per 1000 FTE from 2013–14 to 2017–18. From 2013-14 to 2017-18 the incidence of accepted body stressing claims has fallen by 33 per cent for the self-insured licensees and 56 per cent for the Government sector.

Figure 3.7 Incidence of accepted body stressing claims

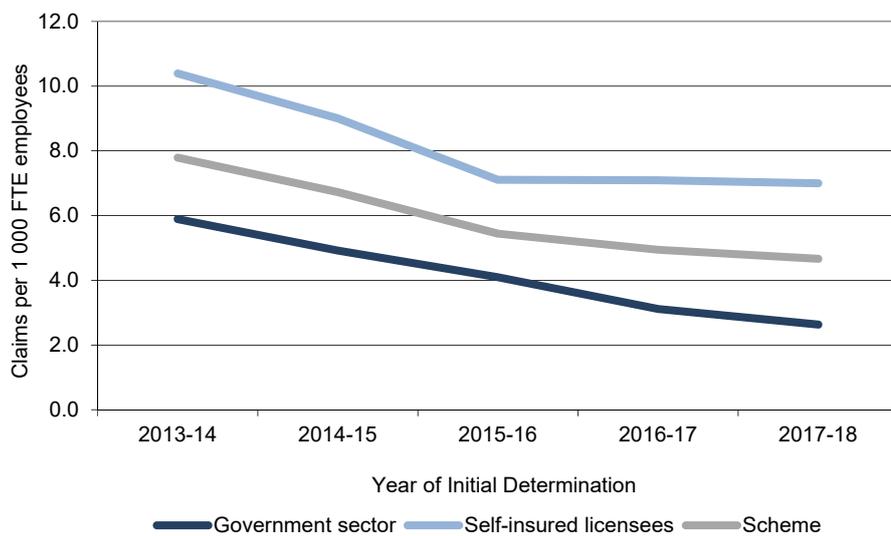
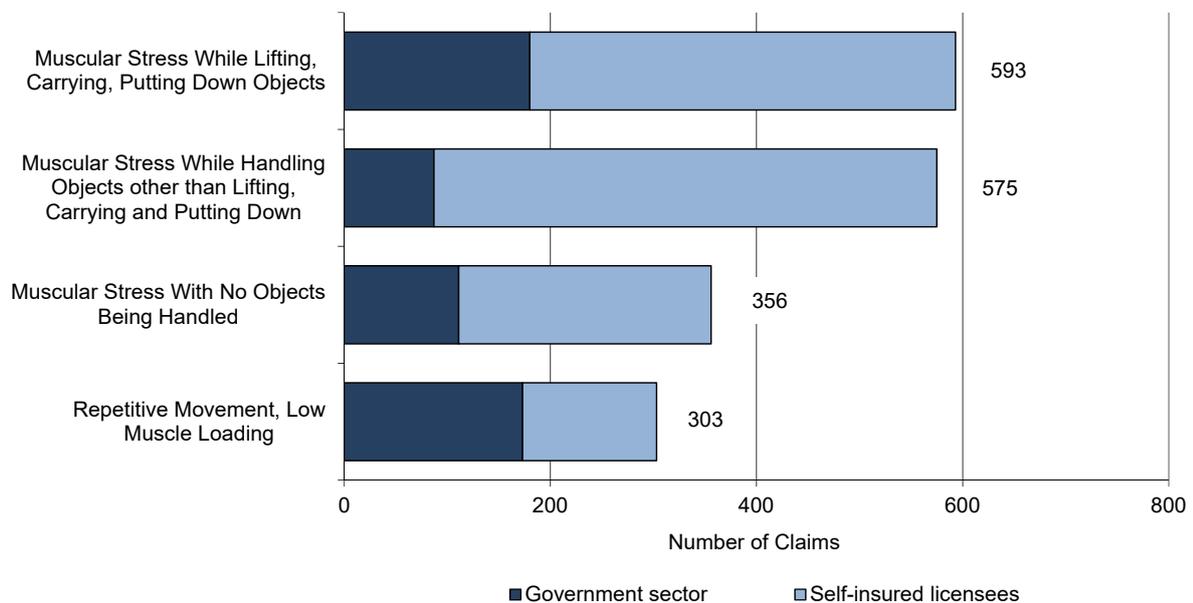


Figure 3.8 Body stressing claims by mechanism of incident—initially accepted in 2017–18

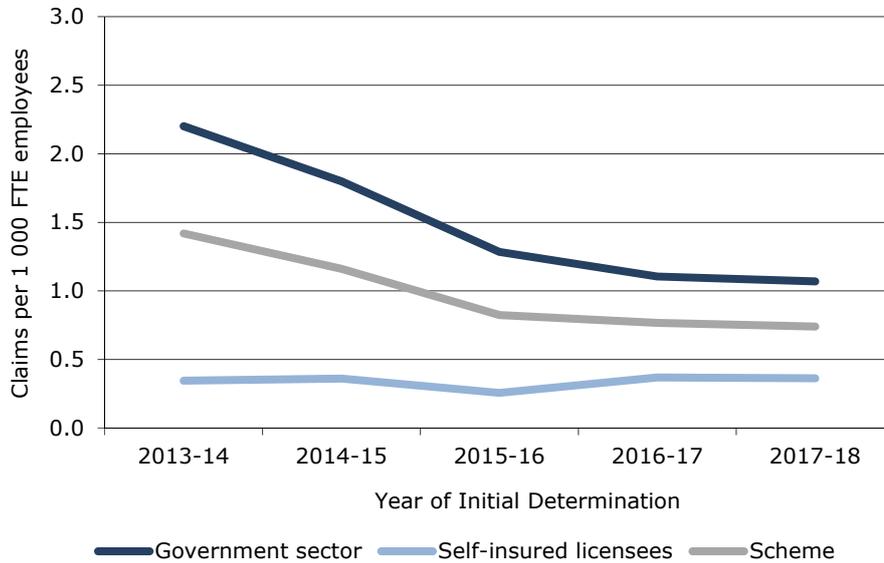


3.6 MENTAL STRESS

From 2013–14 to 2015–16, the incidence of mental stress claims across the scheme decreased by 42 per cent. This decrease was primarily driven by improvements in the Government sector outcome over the period.

2017-18 outcomes are consistent with those achieved in 2016-17 for both the Government sector and the self-insured licensees.

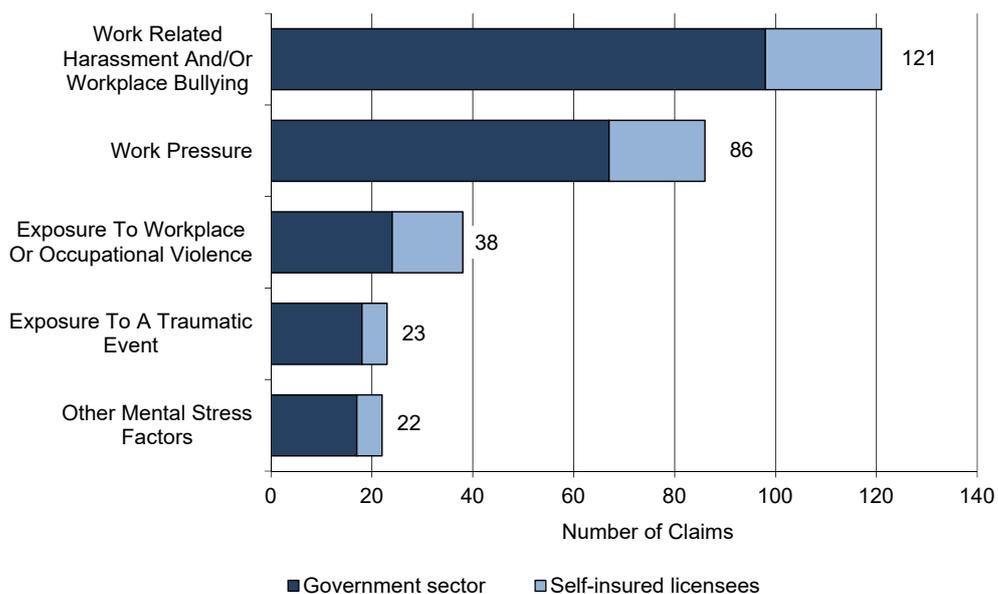
Figure 3.9 Incidence of accepted mental stress claims



A breakdown by mechanism of incident of the number of mental stress claims accepted during 2017–18 is shown in Figure 3.10.

Across the scheme, the most significant sub-groups for mental stress claims were work related harassment and/or bullying and work pressure (42 per cent and 30 per cent of these claims respectively).

Figure 3.10 Mental stress claims by mechanism of incident initially accepted in 2017–18



3.7 ACCEPTED CLAIMS BY TYPE OF CLAIM

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 2013–14 and 2017–18, the scheme has observed an overall reduction in the incidence of all claim types. Although, from 2016-17 to 2017-18 to incidence rate of accepted disease and psychological claims has increased.

Figure 3.11 Incidence of accepted injury claims

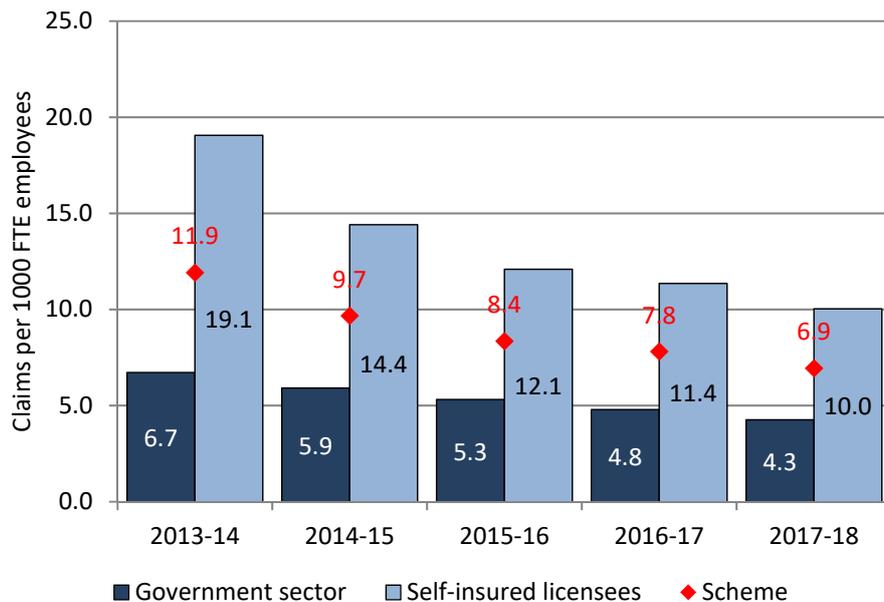


Figure 3.12 Incidence of accepted disease (excluding psychological) claims

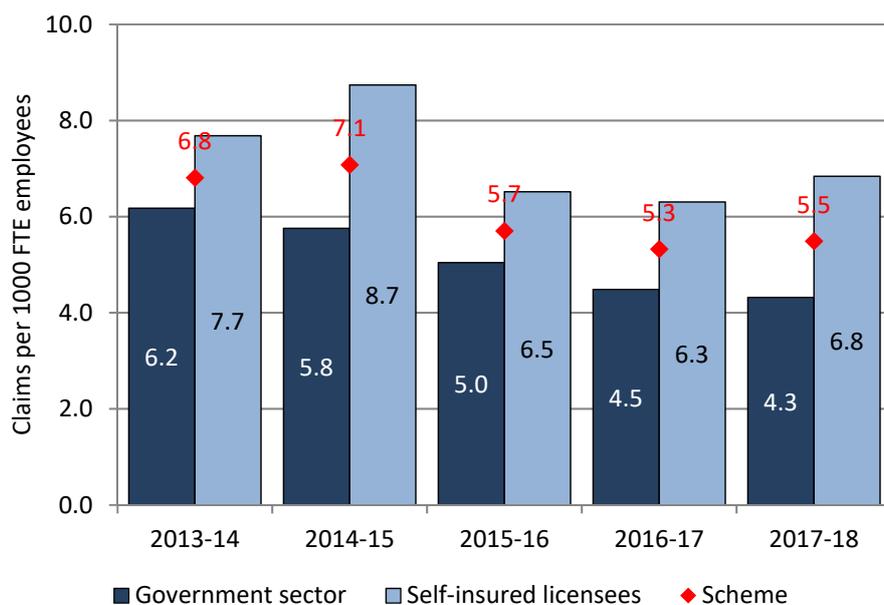
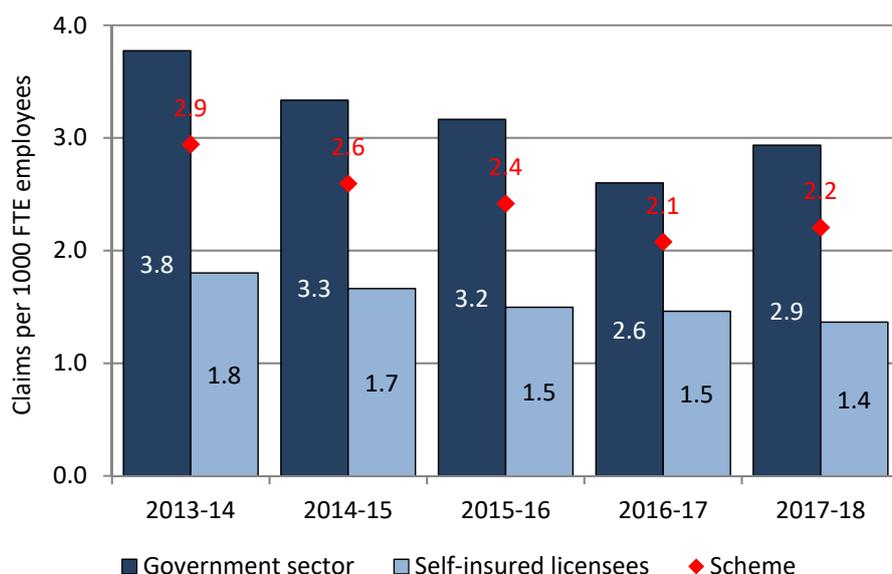


Figure 3.13 Incidence of accepted psychological claims



3.8 COMPENSATED WORKER FATALITIES

Table 3.1 presents compensated fatalities under the SRC Act since 2013-14. For completeness, total compensated fatalities, covering both injury and disease, are presented.

There were two claims accepted for a death due to injury during 2017-18.

There were 16 compensable disease death claims accepted by the scheme in 2017-18. Of these, four deaths were as a result of mesothelioma/asbestosis.

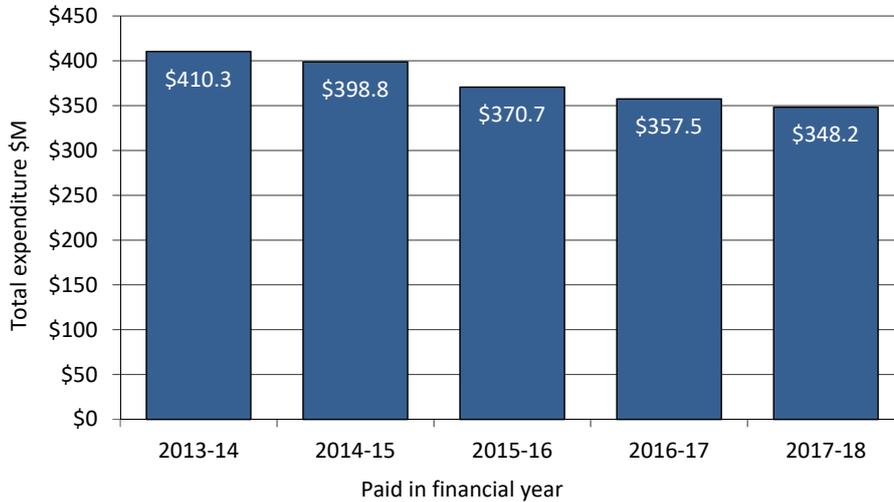
Table 3.1 Compensated fatalities under the SRC Act

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Scheme					
Injury	-	-	1	1	2
Disease	12	24	13	23	16
Government sector					
Injury	-	-	-	-	1
Disease	11	19	10	17	8
Self-insured licensees					
Injury	-	-	1	1	1
Disease	1	5	3	6	8

3.9 SCHEME CLAIM PAYMENTS

Total payments made for workers' compensation claims for the Comcare scheme have been decreasing since 2013–14. These payments include wage-replacement payments to injured workers and payments for medical, rehabilitation, legal and administrative costs. Figure 3.14 shows a 15 per cent reduction in payments over the reporting period.

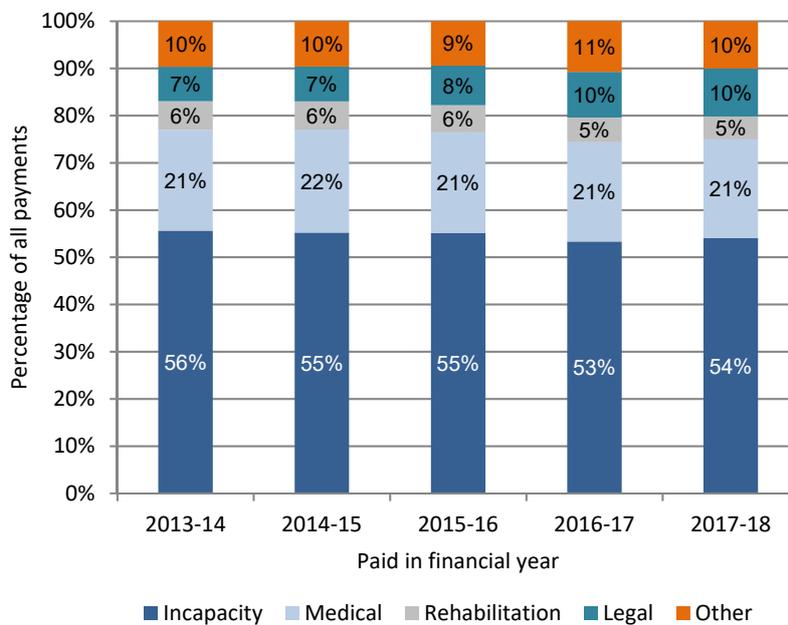
Figure 3.14 Workers' compensation payments by financial year



3.9.1 Claim payments by type

Figure 3.15 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 resulting in wage-replacement payments) has consistently been the leading payment type.

Figure 3.15 Workers' compensation payments by type



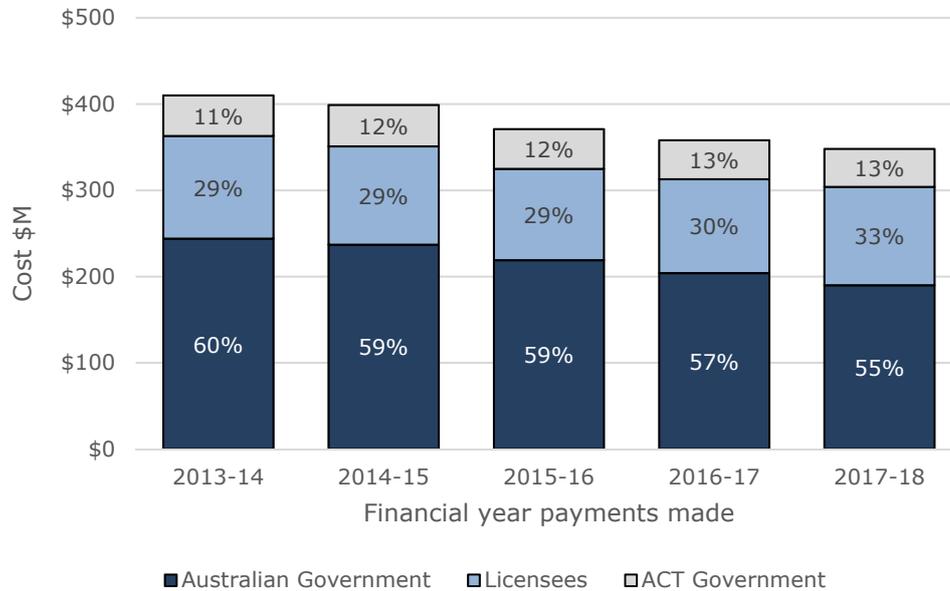
Note:

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

3.9.2 Claim payments by sector

Figure 3.16 shows claim payments by sector for the financial years 2013–14 to 2017–18. The proportions are consistent over the reporting period with the highest proportion, although reducing, remains the Government sector with over 50 per cent of all payments in all years reported. The proportion of payments for self-insured licensees has increased over the latest two financial years.

Figure 3.16 Workers' compensation payments by sector by financial year



3.9.3 Claim payments by mechanism of incident

Figure 3.17 shows the claim payments by mechanism of incident for the financial years 2013–14 to 2017–18. Body stressing and mental stress claim costs account for the highest proportion of cost over the five years reported.

Figure 3.17 Workers' compensation payments by mechanism of incident

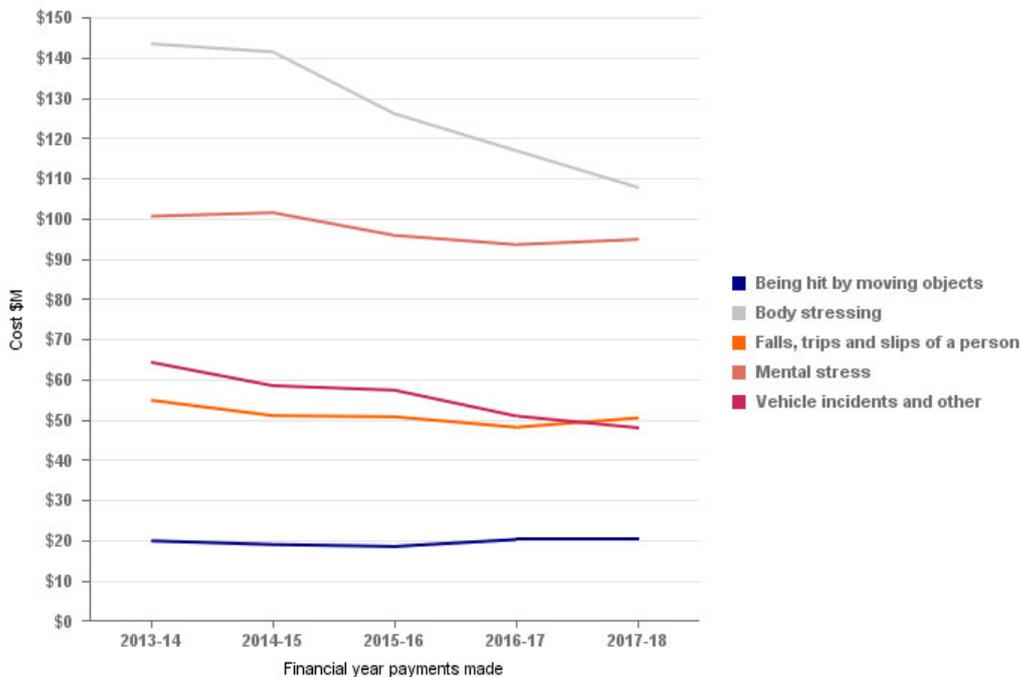


Table 3.2 shows a breakdown of accepted claims and claim costs by mechanism of incident during the latest two financial years.

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
2016–17*		
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%	100%
2017–18*		
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%	100%

* Year of initial determination or year payments made

During 2017–18, body stressing injuries/diseases accounted for approximately 43 per cent of all claims for the scheme, down from 44 per cent in 2016–17. These types of claims accounted for approximately 30 per cent of claim costs in 2017–18, compared to 36 per cent in 2016–17.

Mental stress claims accounted for approximately six per cent of all accepted claims in both 2017–18 and 2016–17. These types of claims accounted for 17 per cent of claim costs in 2017–18, compared to 22 per cent 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 2013-14 to 2017-18 that reached selected incapacity durations. The Government sector has higher proportions of claims reaching incapacity durations for all claim types than the self-insured licensees.

Psychological claims are reaching incapacity durations at higher percentage than injury or disease claims.

Table 4.1 Time lost to date

Time lost claims accepted in the period					
Time lost to date	2013-14	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2017-18
Government sector—injury					
Accepted claims	873	735	602	574	436
One week or more	79%	79%	80%	84%	77%
Six or more weeks	41%	42%	42%	43%	31%
12 or more weeks	29%	27%	28%	28%	14%
26 or more weeks	15%	15%	14%	15%	4%
Government sector—disease excl. psychological					
Accepted claims	663	542	454	342	257
One week or more	83%	87%	85%	85%	84%
Six or more weeks	50%	54%	52%	53%	40%
12 or more weeks	37%	38%	33%	38%	21%
26 or more weeks	19%	22%	18%	20%	3%
Government sector—psychological					
Accepted claims	427	336	240	213	170
One week or more	99%	98%	98%	98%	96%
Six or more weeks	84%	81%	85%	82%	80%
12 or more weeks	74%	69%	70%	73%	66%
26 or more weeks	57%	49%	49%	56%	39%

Self-insured licensees —injury					
Accepted claims	1511	1210	1077	1065	908
One week or more	60%	60%	62%	65%	67%
Six or more weeks	26%	26%	26%	30%	26%
12 or more weeks	15%	16%	15%	18%	12%
26 or more weeks	7%	8%	6%	8%	2%
Self-insured licensees—disease excl. psychological					
Accepted claims	463	539	393	444	476
One week or more	69%	71%	74%	76%	72%
Six or more weeks	34%	34%	33%	36%	30%
12 or more weeks	19%	20%	18%	18%	11%
26 or more weeks	10%	10%	8%	6%	2%
Self-insured licensees— psychological					
Accepted claims	43	47	45	57	54
One week or more	91%	94%	89%	95%	93%
Six or more weeks	56%	62%	60%	67%	67%
12 or more weeks	44%	47%	42%	56%	57%
26 or more weeks	35%	38%	33%	44%	28%

Note:

Due to the immaturity of the most recent years claim data. The information presented in the above table will change over time.

4.1.2 Median time lost

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 indicates the time that it takes for half of the claims with more than one week of time lost to return to work.

The following three figures show the median duration of time lost for claims accepted during the period 2013–14 to 2017–18. This is based on claims with 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 4.9 weeks during 2016–17 to 5.0 weeks during 2017–18 (figure 4.1).

For disease claims, the median duration of time lost has reduced from 5.5 weeks to 5.4 weeks over the same period (figure 4.2). Disease claims exclude those due to mental stress—these claims tend to have longer periods of time lost across the duration of the claim.

For psychological claims, the median duration of time lost has been increasing over the last two years for the scheme, from 15.1 weeks in 2015-16 to 19.8 weeks in 2017-18 (figure 4.3). Both the Government sector and self-insured licensees experienced increases in median incapacity of psychological claims from 2016-17 to 2017-18.

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

Figure 4.1 Median time lost—injury claims

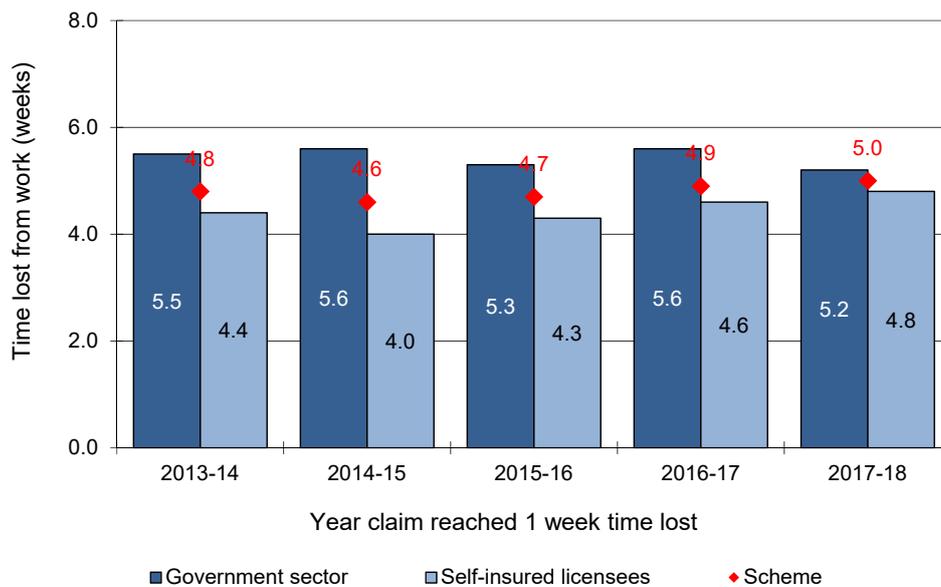


Figure 4.2 Median time lost—disease (excluding psychological) claims

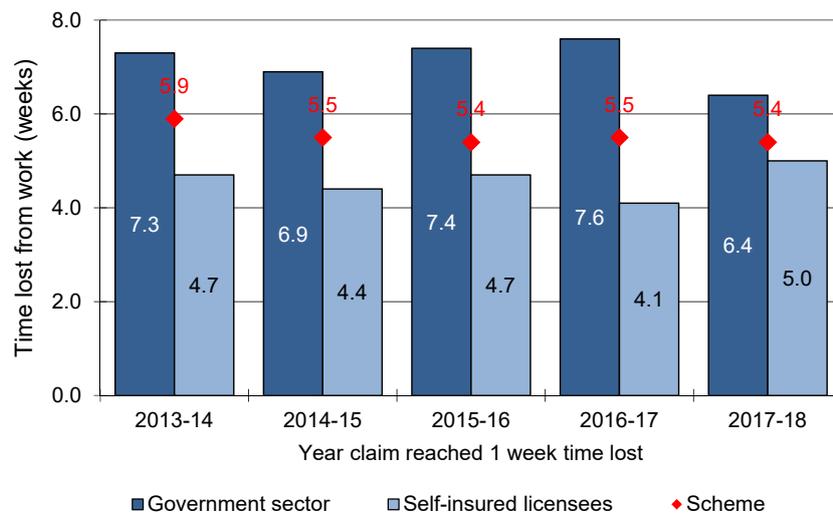
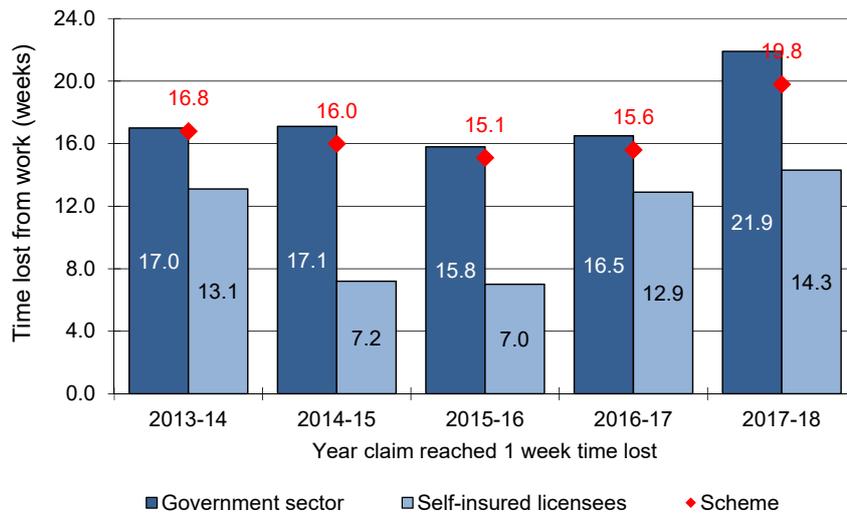


Figure 4.3 Median time lost—psychological claims



5 DISPUTATION

5.1 RECONSIDERATIONS

Table 5.1 provides data relating to requests for reconsideration received and decided during the period 2013–14 to 2017–18. The table also shows the percentage of original decisions which were upheld following a request for reconsideration (affirmation rate).

There has been a 14 per cent reduction in the number of reconsideration requests received across the scheme from 2016-17 to 2017-18. The scheme reconsideration affirmation rate has improved over time.

Table 5.1 Requests for reconsiderations summary

	2013–14	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18
Number of reconsideration requests received					
Scheme	2725	2747	3172	3169	2719
Government sector	1431	1520	1850	2111	1796
Self-insured licensees	1294	1227	1322	1058	923
Number of reconsideration requests decided					
Scheme	2588	2796	3116	3115	2660
Government sector	1319	1590	1812	2053	1795
Self-insured licensees	1269	1206	1304	1062	865
Affirmation rate* at reconsideration					
Scheme	79%	78%	82%	82%	86%
Government sector	72%	77%	83%	81%	88%
Self-insured licensees	85%	80%	80%	83%	81%

*percentage of original decisions affirmed

5.2 AAT APPLICATIONS

Information on the number of AAT applications received and finalised during 2013–14 and 2017–18 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 AAT request summary

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Number of AAT requests received					
Scheme	1143	1193	1405	1533	1326
Government sector	510	573	751	958	963
Self-insured licensees	633	620	654	575	363
Number of AAT requests finalised					
Scheme	1145	1216	1205	1589	1545
Government sector	430	485	520	692	768
Self-insured licensees	715	731	685	897	777
Affirmation rate at AAT					
Scheme	69%	68%	67%	69%	73%
Government sector	57%	60%	55%	60%	70%
Self-insured licensees	76%	74%	76%	76%	76%

*percentage of original decisions affirmed

Source: Administrative Appeals Tribunal

The scheme AAT affirmation rate (percentage of original decisions affirmed at the AAT) has improved from 69 per cent in 2013-17 to 73 per cent in 2017-18. The self-insured licensee AAT affirmation rate has been consistently higher than that of the Government sector 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 30 June 2018.

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

http://www.comcare.gov.au/Forms_and_Publications/publications/corporate_publications/comcare_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.

http://www.comcare.gov.au/the_scheme

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 weeks incapacity and median incapacity (latest 3 financial years for comparison)

http://www.comcare.gov.au/the_scheme/comparative_claims

Government sector premium rates by employer (latest four financial years for comparison)

http://www.comcare.gov.au/the_scheme/premium_paying_agencies/employer_premium_performance

List of current self-insured licensees under the SRC Act

http://www.srcc.gov.au/information_for_self-insurers/licensees

Safe Work Australia published information

Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012–2022

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/australian-work-health-and-safety-strategy-2012-2022>

Safe Work Australia’s Comparative Performance Monitoring Report (CPM), latest edition
<http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/statistics/pages/comparativeperformancemonitoring>

Key work health and safety statistics Australia 2018
<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/book/key-work-health-and-safety-statistics-australia-2018>

Comparison of Workers’ Compensation Arrangements in Australia and New Zealand, latest edition
<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/comparison-workers-compensation-arrangements-australia-and-new-zealand-2017>

National Return to Work Survey — Headline Measures Report, latest edition
<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/return-work-survey-2016-headline-measures-report-australian-and-new-zealand>

Type of Occurrence Classification System (TOOCS)
<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/type-occurrence-classification-system-3rd-edition-revision-1>

7 VERSION CONTROL

Version Number	Date	Description
1	November 2018	Original version.