

# **Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Advisory Council**

*Return to Work Act*

## **Annual Report 2015-2016**

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## Function and Purpose of the Advisory Council

In accordance with section 9 of the *Return to Work Act*, the functions of the Council are to:

- (a) keep the operation of the *Return to Work Act* under review;
- (b) make recommendations to the Minister on possible improvements to the administration of the *Return to Work Act* or the statutory scheme for the rehabilitation and compensation of injured workers' in the Northern Territory;
- (c) carry out investigations, at the request of the Minister, into questions about the rehabilitation and compensation of injured workers' and to report to the Minister on the results of the investigations; and
- (d) perform any other advisory functions relating to workers' rehabilitation and compensation as the Minister directs.

The Council is comprised of the person constituting the Work Health Authority under section 4(3) of the *Work Health Administration Act* and up to 10 other members appointed by the Minister.

Council members represent the Scheme stakeholders, including representation from industry sectors, employer and worker interests, persons involved in the rehabilitation of injured workers and insurers.

## Membership of the Advisory Council for 2015-2016

### Mr George Roussos, Roussos Legal Advisory – Chair

Mr Roussos is a partner of Roussos Legal Advisory and a strong advocate of the Northern Territory (NT) workers' rehabilitation and compensation system. He is a current member of the Scheme Monitoring Committee; a past president of the NT Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and was one of the consultants engaged to undertake a review of the Return to Work legislation. Mr Roussos was reappointed to Council.

### Mr Colin Chilcott, Insurance Council of Australia – Deputy Chair

Mr Chilcott is the State Manager - NT for QBE Insurance and the nominee of the Insurance Council of Australia. Mr Chilcott was reappointed to Council.

### Mr Stephen Gelding, NT WorkSafe – Work Health Authority

Throughout 2014-2015 Mr Gelding was the Work Health Authority and the Northern Territory representative for Safe Work Australia.

### Dr Gerry A Goodhand, Australian Medical Association

Dr Goodhand is a General Practitioner and the nominee of the Australian Medical Association. He regularly works with patients who are workers' compensation claimants. Dr Goodhand was reappointed to Council.

### **Ms Rachel Cassar, RL Consulting NT Pty Ltd**

Since 2008, Ms Cassar has worked for the national rehabilitation provider The Recovre Group as Business Manager. Ms Cassar has been actively involved within the Australian Rehabilitation Provider of Australia NT (ARPA NT), completing Secretary duties and being involved with monthly local and national meetings. Ms Cassar started her own business, RL Consulting NT Pty Ltd, in 2015. Ms Cassar was reappointed to Council.

### **Ms Sharon Roxby, Insurance Council of Australia**

Ms Roxby is currently the Workers' Compensation Manager NT for Allianz. Ms Roxby has extensive experience in leading Workers' Compensation claims teams with NSW TMF, NSW WorkCover and NT jurisdictions. Ms Roxby has specific expertise in the management of long claims and has had active involvement in personal injury claims management with particular focus on workers' compensation. Ms Roxby was reappointed to Council.

### **Ms Tracey Hayes, NT Cattlemen's Association**

Ms Hayes is the Chief Executive Officer of the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association; the peak representative body for the pastoral industry in the NT and an employment sector with over 2000 employees in businesses ranging from large corporate entities to small family operations. Ms Hayes was appointed as a new member of Council.

### **Mr Brett Hagan, Chamber of Commerce**

Mr Hagan was nominated by the Chamber of Commerce NT as their nominee for a representative of employer interests on the Council. Mr Hagan has been involved with the Chamber of Commerce NT since the mid 1980's and has held a position on their board since 2012. Mr Hagan has worked in the insurance industry since 1980 and has experience with claims, underwriting and account management. Mr Hagan was appointed as a new member of Council.

### **Ms Vicky Kossaris, Squire Patton Boggs**

Ms Kossaris is one of the leading insurance and workers compensation practitioners in the NT with over 14 years legal experience. Her current position is "Of Counsel" of the NT office of Squire Patton Boggs, and she has previously worked as an in-house solicitor for the Territory Insurance Office and representing the Victorian WorkCover Authority with statutory compensation and common law work cover claims. Ms Kossaris regularly provides advice and representation on significant issues impacting the NT Workers Compensation Scheme, including preparing submissions on behalf of the Insurance Council of Australia in response to the Workers' Rehabilitation and Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Ms Kossaris was appointed as a new member of Council.

### **Mr Tony Vidot, Nationally Accredited Mediator**

Mr Vidot has been appointed as a Mediator for NT WorkSafe since 2001. He is a member of the Australian Psychological Society and a Nationally Accredited Mediator. Mr Vidot works in a private dispute resolution/mediation practice focusing mainly on workers compensation and workplace relations issues. Mr Vidot was appointed as a new member of Council.

### **Ms Lisa Trahair, Workplace Injury Coordination**

Ms Trahair previously worked as a Workplace Injury Coordinator for Leighton Contractors, and was involved in a range of large scale construction projects; worked as an Injury Management Advisor for TIO and has her own company, Workplace Injury Coordination. This company provides a service to employers who are struggling to understand and manage work place injuries. Ms Trahair was appointed as a new member of Council.

## Activities of the Advisory Council for 2015-2016

### The Council met on four occasions during 2015-2016:

- 21 July 2015;
- 13 November 2015;
- 22 March 2016; and
- 2 June 2016.

### Key issues and items the Council addressed or considered included:

- proposed strategies for dealing with threats of harm to case managers by claimants;
- the National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS) and the impact this scheme may have on the NT workers compensation scheme;
- participation in the Safe Work Australia deemed diseases project;
- consideration of American Medical Association's Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment, Fifth Edition and the need for additional education for the medical profession if implemented;
- role of independent medical examiners and rehabilitation provider practices;
- provision in the statutory insurance policy relating to 'liability independent of the Act'; and in relation to certain policy endorsements; and
- the Alternative Employer Incentive Scheme.

## Planned Activities of the Advisory Council for 2016-2017

### Proposed work to be undertaken by the Council in 2016-2017 includes:

- the Permanent Impairment Guide;
- the Statement of Fitness for Work;
- monitoring Return to Work legislative changes;
- the Alternative Employer Incentive Scheme;
- ongoing review of NT WorkSafe guidance material;
- stakeholder input surrounding negotiated settlements;
- ongoing review of claimant satisfaction levels; and
- consideration of any other relevant issues that arise.