

25 May 2012

Ms Vanessa Viaggio
Principal Council Officer
Joint Select Committee on the NSW Workers Compensation Scheme
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

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Dear Ms Viaggio

Inquiry into the NSW Workers Compensation System

I refer to your letter of 22 May concerning the transcript of evidence and questions on notice.

We have no corrections to the transcript and our answers to the three questions on notice are as follows:

Question:

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: With issues like return to work, which many people and stakeholders have identified as a key area where the scheme certainly could do better, are your members generally able to provide return-to-work duties and meaningful work for injured people they have in their employ?

Answer:

The Chamber does not have any statistical data on return to work outcomes achieved by member companies. Our membership reflects the general profile of the businesses in the NSW economy so we have no reason to believe the outcomes achieved by our members would vary from those seen within the NSW workers compensation system generally.

Question:

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: What is the strike rate of that occurrence? Is this an impressionistic feedback from your members or is there data from a survey of your membership on which you gauge that? What is the level of information?

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Answer:

The chamber does not have any statistical data on members reporting instances of employees having been cleared for return to work seeking an alternative medical opinion which allows a continued absence from work. The other characteristic which seems to be attached to reports of these occurrences are the doctors concerned have reputation within the local business community for being willing to readily issue WorkCover Certificates and /or the injured worker has had previous experience of the workers compensation system.

Question:

The Hon. ADAM SEARLE: Again, if you do not know the answer to this question, you can take it on notice. With most work place injuries that lead to interaction with the workers compensation system, by and large do the injured workers remain in employment with your members or is the employment brought to an end by reason of the injury?

Answer:

Our advice from WorkCover is 79% of injured workers either don't have any time off or are back at work on normal duties within 5 days so termination by reason of a workplace injury is clearly an atypical outcome.

The Chamber Workplace Advice Unit receives around 20,000 calls from members annually on workplace related matters. Analysis of a two month sample of calls relating to termination received this year shows that 21 calls for the period concerned employees on workers compensation. On an annualised basis this equates to 0.6% of all calls received by the Workplace Advice Unit. It should be noted that a call from a member concerning the termination of an employee on workers compensation does not mean a termination has or will occur. Members often call for advice in order to better understand their rights and obligations as they work through the management of the workplace injury.

Yours faithfully 

 Greg Pattison
General Manager Workplace Solutions