

Agency Performance

Service 1 – Scheme regulation

The scheme regulation activities and services combine:

- education and information
- standards and monitoring
- compliance.

Education and information services

Education and information services are provided to scheme participants and the general community to increase knowledge of their rights and responsibilities with respect to workers' compensation and injury management legislation and processes. Strategies aim to assist with minimising the social and economic impact of work-related injuries. Services include:

- [responding to enquiries](#) on all aspects of workers' compensation and injury management via telephone, written correspondence or in person through counter enquiries
- updating, amending and distributing [publications](#) about various aspects of workers' compensation and injury management
- provision of online publications and other information about WorkCover WA, the workers' compensation and injury management scheme and events of interest to stakeholders
- assisting customers with a focus on early intervention strategies to prevent issues between scheme participants escalating into applications for dispute resolution
- delivery of a range of education sessions



“An injury management system ensures that injured workers can either remain at work, or return to work, as quickly as possible.”

- [training](#) for [vocational rehabilitation](#) providers, [audiometric officers](#) and audiologists on online applications
- data capture and quality assurance about all workers' compensation policies and claims, vocational rehabilitation case details and audiometric test results.

In 2008/09, the five most common enquiries made by injured workers and employers related to:

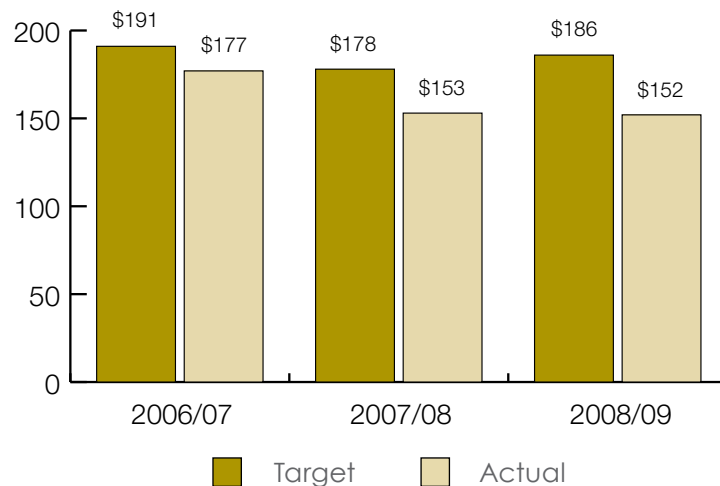
- [workers' compensation claims process](#) and procedures
- [injury management/return-to-work](#)
- [vocational rehabilitation](#) entitlements
- [dispute resolution](#)
- [weekly wage rates and entitlements](#).

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Standards and monitoring

Through its standards and monitoring activities, WorkCover WA approves and monitors the performance of the following service providers: insurers, self-insurers, vocational rehabilitation providers, audiometric officers, audiologists, medical specialists and registered agents. Standards and monitoring activities ensure compliance with relevant legislation and the delivery of appropriate standards of service, in accordance with conditions of approval.

Average weighted cost per regulation activity



WorkCover WA's key standards and monitoring initiatives and activities in 2008/09 were:

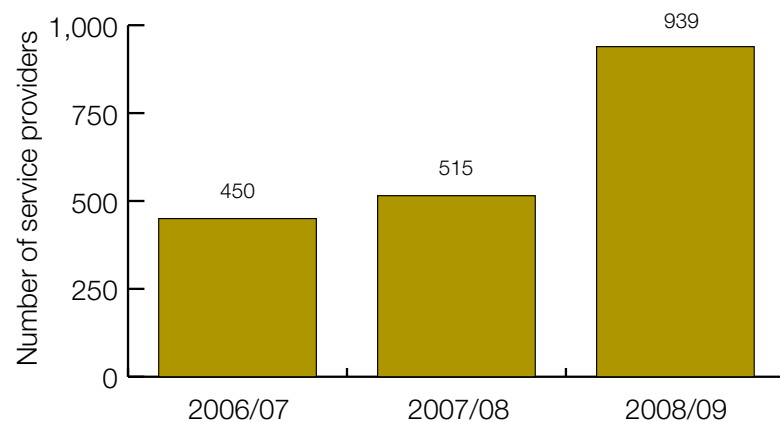
- performance reviews for approved insurers, self-insurers and the Insurance Commission of Western Australia
- development of performance indicators to monitor insurer performance
- review and assessment of the performance of all approved vocational rehabilitation providers in relation to data quality and timeliness
- approval and monitoring of registered agents, audiometric officers and audiologists
- approval of medical specialists including interstate approved medical specialists to undertake impairment assessments
- independent guidance provided in relation to matters relating to injury management and return-to-work
- management of complaints against service providers from workers and allied health providers in relation to compliance with relevant legislation and conditions of approval
- approval of applications by approved insurers to load the recommended premium rate by more than 75 per cent on the basis that the claims experience of the employers warranted such a loading.

In 2008/09 there were 43 **complaints against service providers:**

- 37 about insurers
- 3 about approved vocational rehabilitation providers
- 2 about registered agents
- 1 about self-insurers.

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Number of service providers monitored



Compliance services

WorkCover WA’s compliance and investigation activities ensure that employers comply with workers’ compensation legislation.

The 2008/09 activities included:

- enquiries about lapsed policies and new business/owner entity checks
- processing of policy cancellations
- investigation of complaints, enquiries and reportings
- prosecutions.

Employer compliance - insurance

	2008/09 Target	2008/09 Actual	2007/08 Target	2007/08 Actual
Percentage of workers covered by a current workers’ compensation policy	95%	95%	95%	95%

Types of compliance activities

Type of Activity	Details	Number
Inquiries	Lapsed policies; cancellations; new business and new owner checks	24,172
Investigations	Complaints, enquiries and reportings	148
Prosecutions	Completed	1
	Referred to the State Solicitors Office	9

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WorkCover WA's safety net system

The WorkCover WA safety net system ensures injured workers receive appropriate assistance and services to support their return to work. The agency reviews claims that meet the criteria listed below to determine whether timely injury management and vocational rehabilitation services have been provided:

- a worker's period of incapacity exceeds four consecutive weeks
- there appears to be no return-to-work or vocational rehabilitation commenced
- there is no redemption and second schedule payment reported
- the claim has not been finalised.

Insurers and self-insurers are required to report to WorkCover WA the status of claims which meet the criteria within five working days. The system acts as a safeguard to encourage the provision of appropriate injury management consistent with the nature and severity of the injury sustained by the worker.

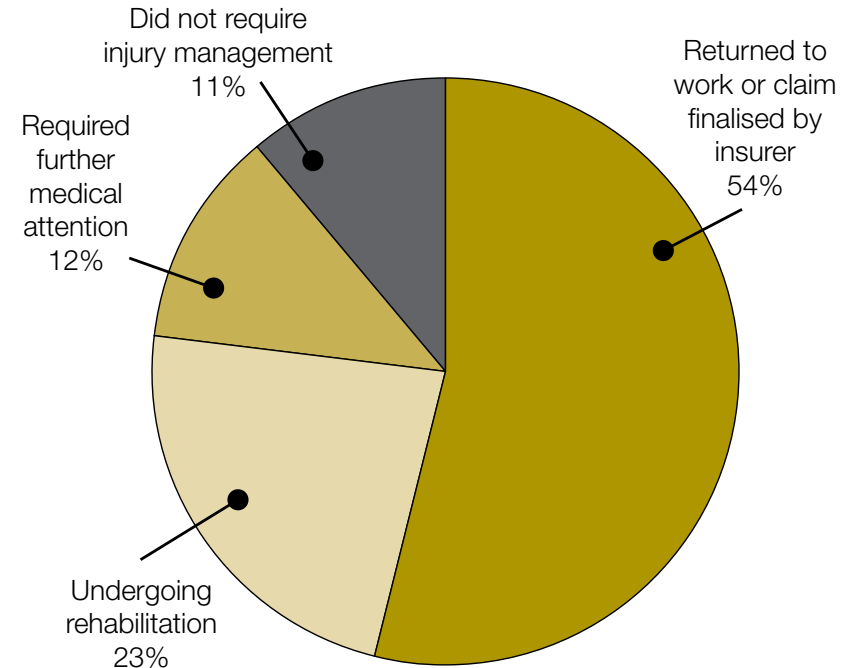
Employer compliance - injury management

	2008/09 Target	2008/09 Actual	2007/08 Target	2007/08 Actual
Percentage of lost-time injuries with an appropriate injury management response	98%	100%	90%	98%

Of the 7,007 injury management responses received for 2008/09, WorkCover WA advised that:

- 54 per cent of injured workers had already returned to work or had their claim finalised by the insurer
- 23 per cent were undergoing rehabilitation
- 12 per cent required further medical treatment
- the remaining 11 per cent did not require injury management intervention for reasons such as pending settlements, other employment, moved interstate or overseas, withdrawal from the workforce or full-time study.

WorkCover WA safety net



Key initiatives and activities

The key 2008/09 activities provided for scheme participants are detailed below.

All stakeholders

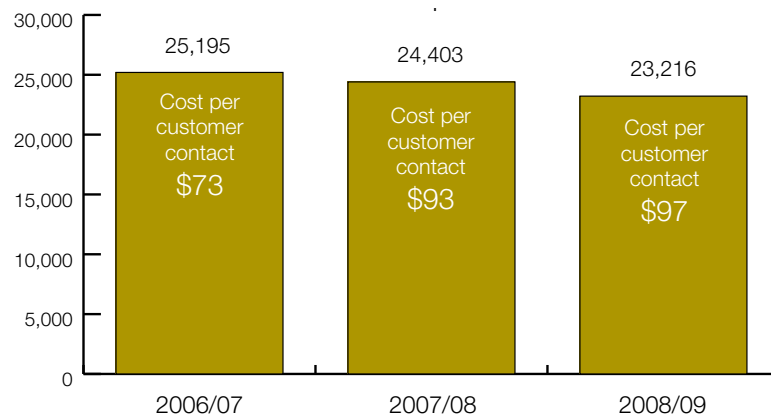
- The ‘Introduction to WorkCover WA’ information details WorkCover WA’s role, responsibilities and key functions.
- Stakeholder reference groups were established to inform the review of publications.
- More than 23,000 enquiries relating to all aspects of workers’ compensation and injury management were resolved.

- Assistance was provided to 1,284 customers focused on early intervention to prevent issues between scheme participants escalating into applications for dispute resolution.
- Education sessions were conducted in the Pilbara and metropolitan areas for medical practitioners, employer groups, allied health providers, unions and workers.

Injured workers

- Assistance was provided to injured workers with potential noise-induced hearing loss claims about the process to determine if there is a compensable loss.
- Notifications lodged by the employer of their intention to dismiss a worker were processed to ensure compliance with the Act.

Number and cost of enquiries answered



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Employers

- Training sessions were provided for consultants delivering WorkSafe's ThinkSafe Small Business Program (co-funded by WorkCover WA) to increase awareness of the workers' compensation and injury management responsibilities of small business owners.
- Approximately 24,000 inquiries were conducted to ensure employers had current workers' compensation insurance.

Approved medical specialists

- Training sessions for medical specialists on the [WorkCover WA Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment](#) were conducted.
- A specialised training session on the assessment of permanent psychiatric impairment was facilitated.
- Twenty new medical practitioners attained approved medical specialist status, increasing the total number of approved medical specialists across WA to 181.

Medical and other allied health

- Education sessions for general medical practitioners were delivered in Geraldton.

Insurers

- Performance reviews were conducted for nine approved insurers and the Insurance Commission of Western Australia with the recommendation that all underwriting approvals be maintained.
- Under section 161 of the Act, Wesfarmers General Insurance Ltd was granted approved insurer status, effective 1 April 2009.
- Under section 161 of the Act, Vero Insurance Ltd request for revocation as an approved insurer was granted, 1 April 2009.
- Fifteen applications by approved insurers to load the recommended premium rate by more than 75 per cent (on the basis that claims experience of the employers warranted such a loading) were approved.

Self-insurers

- Twenty-four self-insurers were reviewed. Their continuation as exempt employers under the Act was endorsed. Reviews for the remaining three self-insurers are currently being conducted.
- Under section 168 of the Act, the Coles Group Ltd request for revocation of exemption was granted, 31 March 2009.
- Under section 164 of the Act, Wesfarmers Ltd was granted exempt employer status, 31 March 2009.
- The group employer arrangements were extended for two exempt employers:
 1. Bluescope Steel Limited
 2. WALGA (Western Australian Local Government Association).

Vocational rehabilitation providers

- Online approved vocational rehabilitation provider (AVRP) courses and assessments were conducted. At the end of the financial year there were 36 AVRP in WA; 21 agency providers, 11 single providers and 4 employer-based providers.

Audiometric officers and audiologists

- Approval was granted to 133 new audiometric officers and audiologists. At the end of the financial year there were 479 audiometric officers and audiologists in WA.
- Performance reviews for all audiometric officers and audiologists were conducted. This resulted in a finding that 79 audiometric officers were not meeting agreed performance criteria and therefore their approval status was cancelled.
- Online training courses for audiometric officers were delivered in accordance with the conditions of approval for audiometric officers and audiologists.
- One new calibration laboratory, one new signatory, 283 booths and 252 audiometers were approved.
- There were 817 workers identified with potential noise-induced hearing loss claims. As part of this process, arrangements were made for 74 full audiological and 54 otorhinolaryngological (ENT) assessments and there were 61 successful claims for work-related gradual onset noise-induced hearing loss, consisting of 56 first election (10%) claims and five subsequent election (5%) claims.

Registered agents

At 30 June 2009, approved 208 registered agents to represent parties in the dispute resolution process. Of these, 148 were employees of approved insurers, 46 were employees of legal firms, seven were employees of self-insurers, three were representatives of a prescribed organisation (Asbestos Disease Advisory Service), two were independent agents, one was a State union representative and one was a Commonwealth union representative.