

EPIC Latest News

Did you know that, in certain circumstances, you are permitted to evaluate a worker's degree of permanent whole of person impairment (WPI) without the worker's condition reaching maximum medical improvement (MMI)? These evaluations are called "special evaluations".

Special evaluations differ from normal evaluations, where an Approved Medical Specialist (AMS) believes that MMI has been reached. A special evaluation is conducted when MMI has not been reached, but the AMS determines the degree of MMI as if the worker's condition has reached MMI.

There are two circumstances where special evaluations are permitted:

- For access to common law
- Exceptional circumstances medical payments.

Common law access [Section 93N of the *Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981*]

For common law purposes, a special evaluation may be conducted in cases where

- a worker's termination day has been extended in accordance with section 93M(4) of the Act; and
- at least 18 months has passed since the day the worker's claim for compensation by way of weekly payments was made; and
- the worker's medical condition is still yet to stabilise to the extent required for a normal evaluation of the worker's degree of WPI; that is, MMI has not been reached.

Special evaluations are to be made in accordance with the *WorkCover WA Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment 2nd Edition*.

To report that the worker's condition has not reached MMI, you need to complete a *Form AMS 7 Report on Worker's Condition Not Stabilised* and *Form AMS 8 (Certificate Where Worker's Condition Not Stabilised)*.

Once the special evaluation is complete, you need to prepare a *Form AMS 5 Report on Evaluation of the Degree of Permanent Impairment* and a *Form AMS 6 Certificate of Degree of Permanent Impairment* noting that they relate to a special evaluation.

Exceptional Circumstances Medical Payments

[Clause 18A(2aa)(a) of the *Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981*]

If the worker is applying for a further additional sum for medical and other expenses (exceptional circumstances), a special evaluation can be completed.

The documentation required for these purposes is a *Form AMS 6 Certificate of Degree of Permanent Impairment* noting that it relates to a special evaluation.

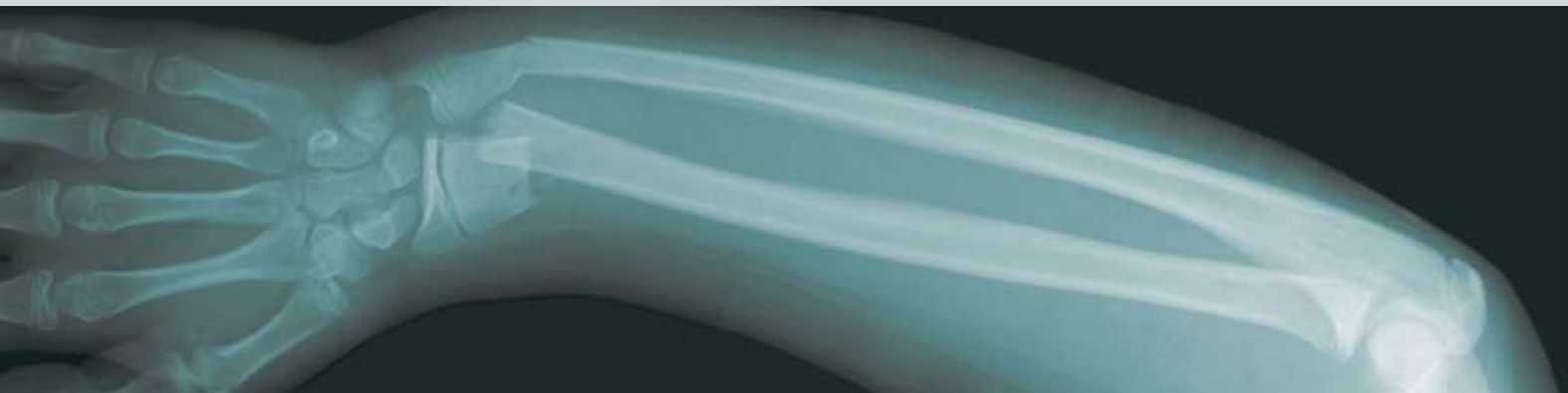
Information regarding the process for special evaluations can be found in the *WorkCover WA Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment 2nd Edition* on pages 9 – 10 and in the *Procedures for the Permanent Impairment Assessment Process* on pages 26 – 27.

You can contact advisory services for further assistance regarding special evaluations on 1300 794 744. Please note that the above information is intended as a guide only and is not definitive.

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Evaluating Permanent Impairment Cases



EPIC Case Study

Case Study 2 APPLYING CONVERSION FORMULAS FOR SCHEDULE TWO ASSESSMENTS

When asked to complete an AMS Schedule 2 impairment assessment, it is necessary to provide the result in a format that is acceptable to the WorkCover WA Dispute Resolution Directorate.

Having completed an assessment of regional or whole person impairment using the American Medical Association *Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment 5th edition* and the WorkCover WA *Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment 2th edition*, it is necessary to apply a relevant conversion formula to provide the impairment rating of Schedule 2 Impairment.

For example, if asked to provide an impairment rating for a worker who has undergone surgery for lumbar spine radiculopathy, with resolution of the radiculopathy, assessed as a diagnosis-related estimate Category III Lumbar Spine Impairment, the AMS may determine a whole person impairment (WPI) of 12%.

When asked for a Schedule 2 Impairment rating, it is insufficient to simply report the WPI rating.

The relevant Schedule 2 item number is item 76 impairment of the back (including thoracic and lumbar spine). The item is selected from the WorkCover WA *Guides* pages 79-81.

The conversion formula for each item number is found in the last column of the table. For item 76 this reads as follows:

$$= 100 \times \text{WPI} / 60$$

In the case above, the conversion formula is applied such that the rating of item 76 impairment equals $100 \times 12 / 60$, which equals 20%.

This should be expressed in the AMS 6 certificate as:

20% of item 76 impairment of the back (including lumbar spine).

Where the conversion formula leads to a rating that is not a whole number it is reasonable to express the resulting impairment rating at two decimal places.

Should you have queries about the correct method for completion of AMS forms, contact WorkCover WA's Standards and Monitoring Branch on 08 9388 5555.

AMS Peer Support

The Medical Committee often reviews the assessments of AMS to ensure consistent application of the WorkCover WA Guides. This process is to support AMS in undertaking impairment assessments and facilitate future improvements in the WorkCover WA Guides.

Upcoming Events

31 July 2008
5.30pm – 8.30pm
WorkCover WA

Psychiatric Impairment Assessment Workshop

30 and 31 August 2008
Royal North Shore Hospital,
Sydney

AMA 5 Guides and WorkCover NSW Guides to Evaluating Permanent Impairment

(required training to apply for AMS designation)

TBA
5.30pm – 8.30pm
WorkCover WA

WorkCover WA Guide to Evaluating Permanent Impairment

(required training to apply for AMS designation)

WorkCover WA Contacts for AMS

There are a number of WorkCover WA staff that are available to provide information and support to AMS.

The **Standards and Monitoring** branch provides general information and assistance on matters such as

- Designation application process for AMS
- Use of AMS forms
- Scale of maximum fees for AMS

Phone: 08 9489 4727

Email: judy.mcdonnell@workcover.wa.gov.au

The **Corporate Relations** branch coordinates information services and networking opportunities for AMS, including

- Publications and forms
- Scheme update seminars

Phone: 08 9388 5535

Email: corporaterelations@workcover.wa.gov.au

The **Advisory Services** branch provides information and guidance regarding

- Workers' compensation claim processes and entitlements
- Obligations of key parties under the Act
- Impairment assessment process
- Resolving disputes within the workers' compensation and injury management system

Phone: 1300 794 744

The WorkCover WA **website** provides information for AMS about

- Training and registration
- AMS forms and publications

A search facility to locate an AMS by name, specialisation or location can be found at

<http://www.workcover.wa.gov.au/Health+Providers/Approved+medical+specialists/Default.htm>

Rural Or Regional Assessments

WorkCover WA is interested in hearing from you if you currently or are willing to undertake impairment assessments in rural or regional areas.

You can forward your details via email on judy.mcdonnell@workcover.wa.gov.au or advise by phone on 08 9489 4727

Update Contact Details

Have you informed WorkCover WA of a change in your contact details? Please forward us your new contact details to postmaster@workcover.wa.gov.au or return the attached form via fax to 08 9388 5550.



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