



# Approved Permanent Impairment Assessor Standards of Practice

*A workers compensation and injury management scheme that works for all*





# Contents

Foreword	3
Who does the product apply to?	4
What we do	4
Introduction	5
Approval criteria	6
Conditions of approval	7
Priorities	8
Standards of practice	9
Priority 1: Assessing permanent impairment	10
Priority 2: APIA approval and registration status	12
Priority 3: Stakeholder experience	13
Priority 4: Accountable performance	15
Performance indicators	16
Monitoring	16
Acknowledgements	17

## Disclaimer

No part of this document limits, or is intended to limit, rights and obligations under the law.

To ensure compliance with legal obligations, refer to the *Workers Compensation and Injury Management Act 2023* (WA) (the Act) and associated legislation.

**Version 1. May 2026**

## Acknowledgement of Country

*We acknowledge the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders both past and present.*



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*“Accurate assessment of permanent impairment by Approved Permanent Impairment Assessors is a key component of a successful workers compensation scheme.”*

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## Foreword

The *Approved Permanent Impairment Assessor Standards of Practice* (the Standards) provide clear service expectations to ensure approved permanent impairment assessors (APIA) deliver high quality services when assessing a worker’s degree of permanent impairment.

The Standards, contained in four Priority areas, highlight the accurate assessment of permanent impairment as the core expectation of APIA, along with a commitment to the highest level of service by APIA across the remaining priority areas.

The Standards articulate Western Australian regulatory expectations, drawing together APIA obligations across relevant legislation, regulations, approval criteria, and operational conditions in one document. Together with the *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment* they set out the core obligations of APIA.

By focusing on the Standards, APIA will make a real difference to workers and employers across Western Australia. My expectation is APIA will introduce, improve, and implement controls to ensure the Standards are achieved. Accurate assessment of permanent impairment by APIA is a key component of a successful workers compensation scheme and APIA play an integral role in the continued smooth operation of the scheme.

I am confident our valued APIA will embrace the Standards and continue to provide the high level of expertise and service delivery expected of medical professionals.

A robust education and review program will support APIA and measure success in meeting expectations articulated in the Standards.

**Chris White**  
Chief Executive Officer  
WorkCover WA

## Who does this product apply to?

These Standards apply to APIA, whose function in the scheme is to assess an injured worker's degree of permanent impairment resulting from workplace injury. These assessments support worker access to various workers compensation entitlements.

Whilst this Standards document is aimed at APIA, it is also an important tool for workers, employers, and insurers, in setting out expectations, obligations, and various rights and responsibilities when a permanent impairment assessment is requested.

## What we do

WorkCover WA is a statutory authority, accountable to the Minister for Industrial Relations, and is responsible for ensuring the operation of an efficient and effective workers compensation and injury management scheme in Western Australia (the scheme).

WorkCover WA's role includes:

- monitoring regulatory compliance of employers, insurers and others participating in or affected by the scheme
- educating WA scheme participants about workers compensation and injury management
- providing an independent dispute resolution service
- providing strategic policy advice to government regarding workers compensation.

WorkCover WA's primary objective is to balance the interests of workers and employers and to ensure a workers compensation and injury management scheme that works for all.



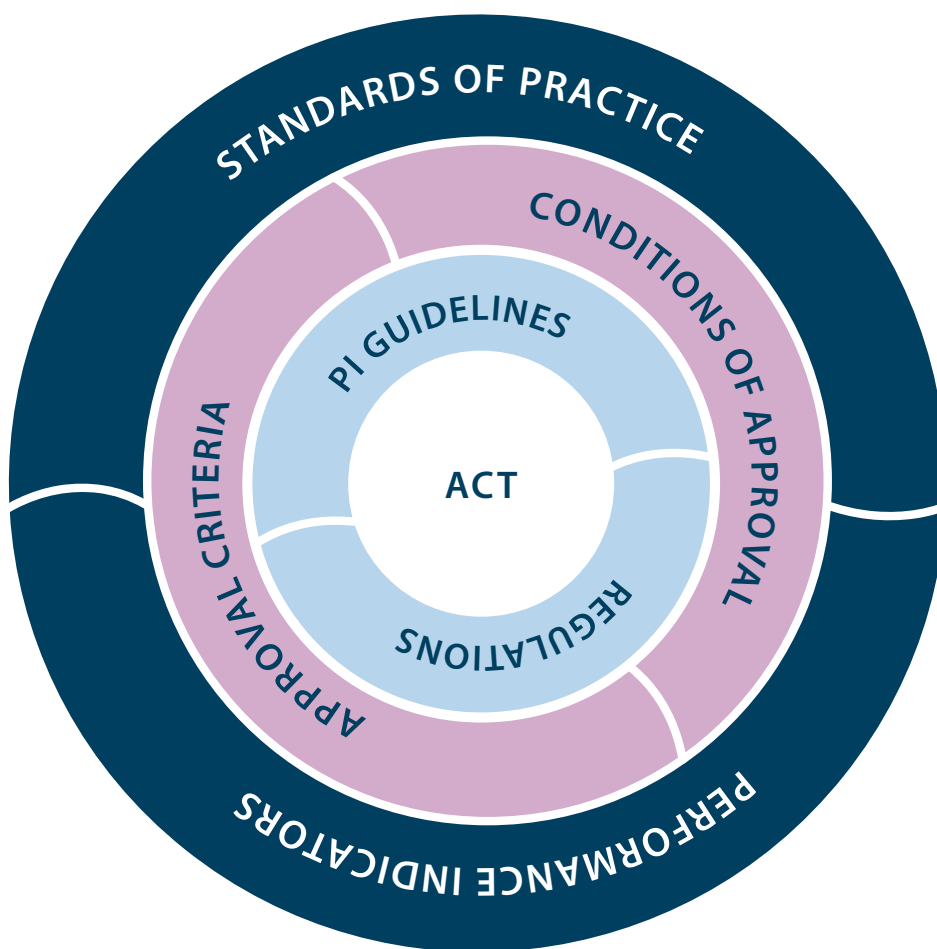
# Introduction

WorkCover WA regulates APIA in accordance with the *Workers Compensation and Injury Management Act 2023* (the Act) and *Workers Compensation and Injury Management Regulations 2024* (the regulations).

To be designated as an APIA under the Act, a person must satisfy approval criteria set by WorkCover WA.

In performing their role, APIA must assess permanent impairment as provided for in the *WorkCover WA Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment* as well as meet requirements set by the Act and WorkCover WA in conditions of approval, which must be adhered to once approved as an APIA.

The Standards set out key obligations of an APIA and together with the *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*, provide clear guidance for APIA when carrying out their role in the scheme.



## Approval Criteria

Section 193(3) of the Act provides for WorkCover WA to issue, and amend or revoke, criteria that must be satisfied for the approval of a medical practitioner as a permanent impairment assessor.

The criteria set out below apply from 1 July 2026 (unchanged from 1 July 2024).

To be designated as an APIA under section 193 of the Act, a person must satisfy all of the following criteria:

1. Be registered as a medical practitioner<sup>1</sup> with no current notations, conditions or reprimands for disciplinary purposes recorded against their registration for medical practice.
2. Have at least five (5) years post-graduate experience as a medical practitioner.
3. Provide evidence of current clinical practice and/or expertise in assessment.
4. Have undertaken and completed training in the WorkCover WA APIA Education Module, which includes training in the *WorkCover WA Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*.
5. Meet one of the following requirements:
  - a) Have undertaken and completed training in the use of the *American Medical Association Guidelines to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment* upon which the current edition of the *WorkCover WA Guidelines for the Evaluation* are based; **or**
  - b) Have current accreditation as a “Certified Independent Medical Examiner” with the American Board of Independent Medical Examiners (ABIME); **or**
  - c) Have undertaken other training in impairment assessment approved by WorkCover WA.
6. Have qualifications as an Australian medical specialist.

### Other (non-specialist) medical practitioners

Despite eligibility criteria 6, a non-specialist medical practitioner may be approved as an APIA and the criteria requirement to be a medical specialist waived. Upon application, WorkCover WA will consider the applicant’s relevant skills, experience and qualifications to determine if the applicant’s competency levels meet WorkCover WA’s requirements.

As a guide, WorkCover WA will review the extent to which a medical practitioner can demonstrate:

- a) Significant work in a medical practice with consistent management and assessment of injured workers.
- b) Experience in undertaking medical assessments of injured workers.
- c) Relevant qualifications, for example ABIME exam certification or other similar qualifications.

Applications in this category will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and decisions will be at the sole discretion of WorkCover WA.

#### <sup>1</sup> Medical practitioner under the Act means:

- (a) a person registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Western Australia) in the medical profession; or
- (b) a person who is not resident in a State, but who is recognised as a medical practitioner for the purposes of the Act by WorkCover WA.

## Conditions of approval

An APIA is subject to the following conditions as provided for in section 194(1) of the Act:

1. A condition that the fees and charges of the approved permanent impairment assessor will not exceed the fees and charges fixed by an order under section 195 of the Act.
2. A condition that the approved permanent impairment assessor will comply with the requirements of the *Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*.
3. Any conditions prescribed by the regulations.
4. Any conditions imposed by WorkCover WA when the approval is granted or at any time during the currency of the approval.

## Conditions imposed by WorkCover WA

Section 194(2) of the Act provides for WorkCover WA to impose conditions to which the APIA's approval is subject.

The condition set out below applies from 1 July 2026:

1. APIA must comply with the Standards across the following four priority areas:

### **Priority 1: Assessing permanent impairment**

Standards 1.1 to 1.4

### **Priority 2: APIA approval and registration status**

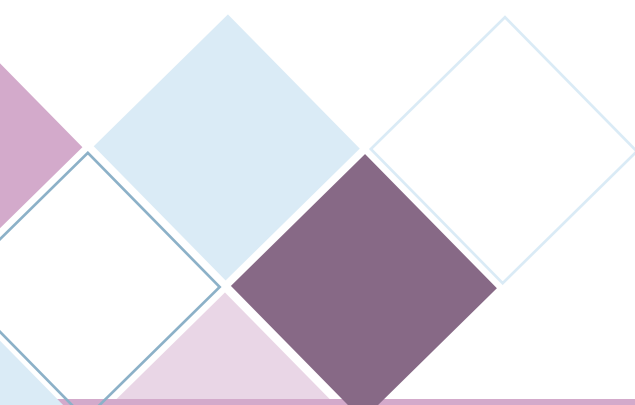
Standards 2.1 to 2.3

### **Priority 3: Stakeholder experience**

Standards 3.1 to 3.7

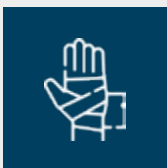
### **Priority 4: Accountable performance**

Standards 4.1 to 4.4



# Priorities

The Priorities guide APIA in assessing permanent impairment and interacting with scheme stakeholders, and are aimed at ensuring a fair and equitable workers compensation experience for workers and employers. Each Priority has a set of standards.



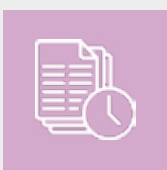
## Priority 1: Assessing permanent impairment

Approved permanent impairment assessors will conduct permanent impairment assessments accurately, comprehensively and professionally in accordance with the *WorkCover WA Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment* and other requirements set by WorkCover WA.



## Priority 2: APIA approval and registration status

Approved permanent impairment assessors will maintain their approval and registration status by complying with WorkCover WA's approval criteria and operational conditions.



## Priority 3: Stakeholder experience

Approved permanent impairment assessor processes, systems and practices will contribute to a fair and impartial impairment assessment experience for stakeholders.



## Priority 4: Accountable performance

Approved permanent impairment assessors will be accountable for their performance by meeting compliance obligations, completing training and development, and other requirements.

# Standards of practice (Standards)

The Standards prescribe the minimum level of service workers and employers are to expect from APIA. APIA are expected to meet these standards.



## **Priority 1: Assessing permanent impairment**

- 1.1 Assessing permanent impairment
- 1.2 Scheduling assessments
- 1.3 Conducting assessments
- 1.4 Completing impairment assessment reports and using correct forms



## **Priority 2: APIA approval and registration status**

- 2.1 APIA approval criteria and registration status
- 2.2 Operational conditions
- 2.3 Information collection, disclosure and records management



## **Priority 3: Stakeholder experience**

- 3.1 Communication
- 3.2 Accessibility
- 3.3 Conduct and impartiality
- 3.4 Appropriate charging of fees
- 3.5 Conducting independent medical examinations
- 3.6 Stakeholder engagement
- 3.7 Complaint handling



## **Priority 4: Accountable performance**

- 4.1 Training and professional development
- 4.2 Appropriate systems
- 4.3 Minimising errors
- 4.4 Compliance and audits



## Priority 1: Assessing permanent impairment

Approved permanent impairment assessors will conduct permanent impairment assessments accurately, comprehensively and professionally in accordance with the *WorkCover WA Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment* and other requirements set by WorkCover WA.

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### Standards

#### 1.1 Assessing permanent impairment

- APIA will assess impairment in accordance with the *WorkCover WA Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*.
- APIA will ensure they are fully aware of, and compliant with, Part 2 – Principles of Assessment contained in the *WorkCover WA Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*.

#### 1.2 Scheduling assessments

- APIA will ensure assessments are arranged within a reasonable timeframe, and scheduled by agreement, following a request for assessment.
- A requirement for a worker to attend a permanent impairment assessment must be in the approved form (APIA3) and sent to the worker.

#### 1.3 Conducting assessments

- APIA have a duty to act in an ethical, professional and considerate manner when conducting assessments of workers.
- When conducting an assessment APIA must:
  - ensure the worker understands the APIA's role in the assessment
  - ensure the worker understands how the assessment will proceed
  - take reasonable steps to preserve the privacy and modesty of the worker during the assessment
  - not provide any opinion to the worker about their claim.
- APIA will ensure impartiality in all dealings with workers and other stakeholders including when assessing a worker's degree of permanent impairment.
- An impairment assessment must be conducted by the APIA. Whilst an APIA may make referrals, order investigations and obtain reports and assessments from medical specialists under the *WorkCover WA Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*, it is the APIA's statutory role to personally conduct the assessment and produce the APIA report of the assessment.

## 1.4 Completing impairment assessment reports and using correct forms

- APIA will ensure impairment assessment reports are in the correct form and completed accurately and comprehensively, including clinical reasoning and justifications (see Chapter 1 of the *WorkCover WA Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment*).
- APIA will provide impairment assessment reports to workers, employers and employer's insurers within 14 days following an assessment being conducted.
- If an APIA is unable to provide an assessment report within 14 days, reasons and a projected time for completion must be provided to relevant stakeholders.
- APIA must ensure assessments reflect the absence of actual bias and any apprehension of bias.
- APIA will ensure errors in impairment assessment reports and certificates are kept to a minimum and rectified in a timely manner.
- APIA will provide the allocated APIA approval number on all reports, and on any other forms or notices as required.
- APIA will complete assessment reports personally and not delegate completion, or partial completion, to non-APIA staff.



### Key Fact

An APIA is empowered to refer a worker to a medical specialist for specific tests or assessments to assist in the APIA making their impairment assessment. However, the APIA is responsible for ensuring the referred tests or assessments comply with the *WorkCover WA Guidelines for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment* and must complete and issue the impairment assessment report themselves.





## Priority 2: APIA approval and registration status

APIA will maintain their approval and registration status by complying with WorkCover WA's approval criteria and operational conditions.

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### Standards

#### 2.1 APIA approval criteria and registration status

- APIA will continue to meet WorkCover WA's approval criteria to maintain approval as an APIA.
- At a minimum, APIA must be registered as a medical practitioner with no current notations, conditions or reprimands for disciplinary purposes recorded against their registration for medical practice.
- APIA will keep all contact details up to date and notify WorkCover WA of any changes in a timely manner.
- APIA will comply with all applicable professional standards and any codes of conduct relevant to the APIA's profession.
- APIA must notify WorkCover WA if found guilty or convicted of a criminal offence which involves dishonesty, misconduct with regards to patients or their profession, or any conviction which results in a prison sentence (including a wholly suspended prison sentence).
- APIA must disclose real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest to WorkCover WA as soon as practicable.

#### 2.2 Operational conditions

- APIA will comply with conditions under the Act, regulations and operational conditions imposed by WorkCover WA (including these Standards).

#### 2.3 Information collection, disclosure and records management

- APIA will provide a complete unredacted permanent impairment assessment report to the worker, worker's employer and employer's insurer in accordance with their statutory obligations.
- APIA will document and record all relevant contact with stakeholders.
- APIA will use appropriate systems for accessing, managing and disclosing records and will collect, disclose, retain and dispose of documents in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements.



## Priority 3: Stakeholder experience

Approved permanent impairment assessor processes, systems and practices will contribute to a fair and impartial impairment assessment experience for stakeholders.

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### Standards

#### 3.1 Communication

- APIA will ensure clear and effective communication and use plain, accessible language in all dealings with scheme participants to enable the fair, efficient and timely undertaking of assessments.
- APIA will be timely when communicating with workers and insurers, and will be respectful and sensitive in all communication.

#### 3.2 Accessibility

- When conducting assessments APIA will consider the accessibility needs of workers.
- Workers will be informed of the availability of support services, including interpreter services which will be made available on request.
- When conducting assessments, APIA will consider the worker's cultural, religious, and personal values.
- Prior to the assessment workers should be informed of their right to request reasonable accommodations based on cultural, religious or personal beliefs.

#### 3.3 Conduct and impartiality

- APIA will act in an ethical, professional and considerate manner when interacting with workers and other stakeholders.
- APIA will avoid conflicts of interest, or the apprehension of a conflict of interest, in all dealings with stakeholders.

#### 3.4 Appropriate charging of fees

- APIA will comply with the Approved Permanent Impairment Assessor Fees Order (as amended from time to time), made by the Minister under the Act.
- APIA may only charge fees as provided for in the Fees Order.
- APIA will ensure no fee is charged for the correction of errors made in an assessment report.

### **3.5 Conducting independent medical examinations**

- APIA must not make informal permanent impairment assessments outside the legislative pathway, for example, as part of an independent medical examination (IME) of a worker under section 180 of the Act. This includes not making an assessment of permanent impairment where a worker has not reached maximum medical improvement unless conducting a special assessment in accordance with the Act.
- Where appropriate, APIA may schedule an IME and permanent impairment assessment to occur concurrently. However, the legislative process for conducting a permanent impairment assessment must be maintained (i.e. APIA2 must be received by the APIA and an APIA3 must be used to schedule the assessment).
- When conducted together, APIA will ensure workers are aware of the distinction between, and the purposes of, an IME and a permanent impairment assessment. In these circumstances an APIA will produce separate reports for the IME and permanent impairment assessment. The permanent impairment assessment report and certificate must be in the approved form (APIA1).
- Where an insurer initiated IME and permanent impairment assessment are conducted at the same time, the relevant fee is to be billed as an insurer expense.

### **3.6 Stakeholder engagement**

- Where appropriate, APIA will seek feedback from workers and insurers and use that feedback to improve service delivery.

### **3.7 Complaint handling**

- APIA will respond constructively to complaints made to the APIA directly by a stakeholder and reply to such complaints in a reasonable timeframe.
- APIA will document complaints, resolutions, and any corrective actions taken.



## Priority 4: Accountable performance

Approved permanent impairment assessors will be accountable for their performance by meeting compliance obligations, completing training and development, and other requirements.

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### Standards

#### 4.1 Training, and professional development

- APIA will participate in training, peer review and professional development as required by WorkCover WA in order to maintain competency and awareness of important issues and changes impacting on APIA approval and impairment assessment generally.

#### 4.2 Appropriate systems

- APIA will ensure appropriate systems are in place in order to comply with all obligations (privacy law, AHPRA, etc.) and conduct permanent impairment assessments in compliance with the Act.

#### 4.3 Minimising errors

- APIA will ensure administrative errors and errors in impairment assessment reports are kept to a minimum and are rectified in a timely manner when discovered.

#### 4.4 Compliance and audits

- APIA will actively participate in any audits and investigations as required by WorkCover WA.
- APIA will respond to compliance audit and investigation requests made by WorkCover WA and provide information or produce documents to WorkCover WA in a timely manner.
- APIA will implement corrective actions arising from compliance audits and investigations as required by WorkCover WA.

## Performance indicators

Performance indicators enable WorkCover WA to assess and monitor the extent to which APIA achieve outcomes and comply with the Standards.

WorkCover WA aims to ensure every worker and employer who engages with the scheme is treated fairly and equitably, irrespective of their location and circumstance. The performance indicators are used across all priority areas and standards, to measure how well APIA achieve this aim.

WorkCover WA notes, as medical professionals, APIA already have robust and tailored regulatory obligations via the Medical Board of Australia and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. WorkCover WA's regulatory approach is not intended to replace existing obligations but rather compliments those obligations in the context of the role APIA perform in the workers compensation scheme.

Performance indicators may inform education activities, targeted audits, the imposition of additional operational conditions, or other regulatory responses under the Act.

01

### **Performance Indicator 1: Attendance at training, peer review and professional development**

Identifies the number of training sessions an APIA has attended. There is an expectation APIA will attend and participate in peer review and training sessions held by WorkCover WA.



02

### **Performance Indicator 2: Number of complaints**

Identifies the number, nature, severity and outcome of complaints received by APIA and WorkCover WA.



03

### **Performance Indicator 3: Outcome of compliance audits and investigations**

Measures outcomes arising from audits, investigations and any other regulatory activities undertaken by WorkCover WA.



## Monitoring

APIA must comply with the Standards and are responsible for developing and implementing policies, procedures and practices consistent with them.

WorkCover WA will monitor APIA compliance against the performance indicators through compliance audits, investigations, and/or reviews.

# Acknowledgements

WorkCover WA sincerely thanks the members of the reference group who generously shared their knowledge, understanding and experience.

**Rebecca Harris**

Chairperson, WorkCover WA

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Area Manager, Work Focus

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**A/Prof Euan Thompson**

APIA, Senior Consultant Occupational and Environmental Physician

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## Assistance

For further information about the Standards or their application, contact WorkCover WA's Advice and Assistance Service on **1300 794 744**.





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