

Return to Work Policy

SAMPLE

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Purpose

This Return to Work (Rehabilitation) Policy sets out [Company Name]'s commitment and systematic approach to supporting workers to recover at work following a work-related injury or illness. It outlines how rehabilitation and return to work (RTW) will be managed in accordance with applicable Australian workers' compensation and work health and safety (WHS) legislation.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Facilitate safe, timely and durable return to work for injured workers.
- Minimise the impact of work-related injury and illness on workers, their families, and the workplace.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and processes for rehabilitation and RTW.
- Integrate rehabilitation and RTW with [Company Name]'s WHS management system and risk management processes.

This policy applies to all workers, including employees, labour hire workers, contractors, apprentices, trainees and volunteers engaged by [Company Name].

Policy Statement

[Company Name] is committed to:

- Preventing work-related injury and illness through effective WHS risk management.
- Providing early intervention, treatment and rehabilitation support to injured workers.
- Supporting injured workers to remain at work or return to safe work as soon as medically appropriate.
- Consulting with workers and their representatives on RTW arrangements.
- Ensuring that no worker is disadvantaged or discriminated against because they have suffered a work-related injury or illness or are participating in rehabilitation.
- Complying with all relevant workers' compensation and WHS legislation, codes of practice and guidance material.

Rehabilitation and RTW will be managed in a manner that respects confidentiality, dignity and the individual circumstances of each worker, while balancing operational requirements and WHS risks.

Scope

This policy covers:

- All work-related injuries and illnesses, whether physical or psychological.
- On-the-job rehabilitation and RTW planning.
- Suitable duties programs and graduated return to work.

- Coordination with treating health practitioners and the workers' compensation insurer.
- Monitoring, review and continuous improvement of RTW processes.

Non work-related injuries or illnesses may also be supported through modified duties or flexible work arrangements where reasonably practicable, consistent with WHS obligations and operational needs, although workers' compensation entitlements may not apply.

Definitions

Term	Definition

Key Terms

- **Worker:** Any person who carries out work in any capacity for [Company Name], including employees, contractors, labour hire workers, apprentices, trainees and volunteers.
- **Injury / Illness:** Any physical or psychological condition arising out of, or in the course of employment that may be compensable under the relevant workers' compensation legislation.
- **Return to Work (RTW):** A structured process that supports an injured worker to remain at work or resume safe work (pre-injury or suitable alternative duties) as soon as medically appropriate.
- **Rehabilitation:** A coordinated process of medical, psychological, social and vocational interventions aimed at restoring a worker's functional capacity and ability to work.
- **Suitable Duties:** Temporary or permanent duties that are consistent with the worker's current functional capacity, medical restrictions and skills, and that do not expose the worker or others to unacceptable WHS risk.
- **RTW Coordinator:** The person appointed by [Company Name] to coordinate rehabilitation and RTW activities, liaise with stakeholders and monitor progress.
- **Treating Health Practitioner:** A registered health professional responsible for treating the injured worker (e.g. GP, specialist, physiotherapist, psychologist).

Legislative Framework

[Company Name] will manage rehabilitation and RTW in alignment with relevant Australian legislation and guidance, which may include (as applicable to the jurisdiction):

- Work health and safety legislation (e.g. Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations).
- Workers' compensation legislation and scheme guidelines.
- Disability discrimination and equal opportunity legislation.
- Applicable codes of practice and regulator guidance on managing the risk of psychological injury, workers' compensation and RTW.

Where there is any inconsistency between this policy and legislation, the legislative requirements will prevail.

Principles of Rehabilitation and Return to Work

[Company Name] will apply the following principles to all rehabilitation and RTW activities:

- 1. Early Reporting and Early Intervention**
Prompt reporting of injuries and early intervention improves health outcomes and reduces the likelihood of long-term incapacity. Workers are encouraged to report all incidents, hazards and early signs of discomfort or psychological distress.
 - 2. Recovery at Work**
Remaining at work or returning to work in suitable duties is generally beneficial for physical and psychological recovery, provided the work is safe and consistent with medical advice.
 - 3. Safety First**
RTW activities will not compromise the health and safety of the injured worker or others. Duties will be risk assessed and aligned with the worker's functional capacity and medical restrictions.
- Consultation and Cooperation**
Effective rehabilitation relies on cooperation between the worker, management, RTW Coordinator, treating health practitioners, the insurer and (where applicable) health and safety representatives (HSRs) and union representatives.
- 5. Individualised Planning**
RTW plans will be tailored to the worker's specific injury, capabilities, job role and personal circumstances.
 - 6. Confidentiality and Respect**
Personal and health information will be handled confidentially and only shared on a need-to-know basis, in line with privacy obligations.
 - 7. Continuous Improvement**
RTW outcomes and processes will be monitored and reviewed to identify opportunities for improvement in WHS risk management and rehabilitation practices.