

FACT SHEET

Recover at work financial incentives and support programs for employers

There are financial incentives and support programs for employers who take an active role in their worker's recovery at work following a workplace injury or illness.

Under NSW workers compensation legislation, employers have an obligation to support their worker to return to and where possible, to recover at work.

Premium based incentives

WorkCover NSW provides premium based incentives to improve workplace health and safety and return to work outcomes for the 95 percent of NSW employers who fall into the small employer category (basic tariff premium \$30,000).

Employer safety incentive discount

A 10 percent discount on a small employer's basic tariff premium applies at the start of the policy period to encourage the employer to use the discount to invest in workplace safety. If a claim is made during the year and the injured worker has not returned to suitable work within four weeks of the injury date, the Employer safety incentive (ESI) discount amount will be lost and may have to be repaid at the end of the policy period. The employer may still be eligible for the Return to work incentive (RTWI) discount.

Return to work incentive discount

If an employer loses the ESI discount, the employer may be eligible for a 10 percent RTWI discount at the end of their policy period.

To be eligible, the injured worker must return to suitable employment within 13 weeks (with no further weekly compensation payments being made).

Support programs

WorkCover provides and funds a number of vocational rehabilitation programs to help:

- employers support their worker to return to and recover at work
- workers return to and recover at work.

See overpage for more details.

Return to work assist program for micro employers

Micro employers (five or less staff with a premium tariff of \$30,000 or less) unable financially to offer suitable work in the first 13 weeks after the injury, may be eligible for the Return to work assist program.

An approved workplace rehabilitation provider will help the employer and worker to identify suitable work and a recover at work plan, and the insurer will continue to pay the worker while they return to work on this program. This enables the employer to pay overtime or employ a casual worker to keep their business going while their worker recovers at work. This program can assist a micro employer to retain the ESI or attain the RTWI.

In practice

Blake, a 19 year old carpentry apprentice, injured his knee while working. He and his boss are the only employees in the business. In the two weeks Blake was off work, his employer had to hire someone else to complete Blake's work. After two weeks, the doctor said Blake could return to work, but was not fit for all his normal duties. The employer could not support 'light duties' without needing the extra help. And as a small business, he could not afford two sets of wages.

Blake's insurer case manager advised his boss that he would be eligible for the *Return to work assist program for micro employers* while Blake recovered at work. The insurer continued to make Blake's weekly payment and his employer was able to pay the extra person for up to six weeks. A workplace rehabilitation provider completed an assessment and developed a graduated plan.

Blake was able to initially work four hours, five days a week, doing a range of tasks like tidying up, arranging waste removal, and assisting with quotes for jobs. Over the next six weeks, his work capacity improved and he was back to his pre-injury job.

Equipment and workplace modification program

A worker may need a particular piece of equipment, or some other workplace modification to assist them to do their old job or a new job.

See workcover.nsw.gov.au for information on Retraining, equipment and workplace modification program.

In practice

Tim, a 39 year old brick layer, injured his lower back while working. His boss supported him to return to work and do some of his usual work part time over four weeks, while he did physio. His injury improved but the doctor said there were some tasks that would aggravate his injury, heavy lifting in particular.

Tim's employer discussed this issue with the insurer case manager and the doctor. Under the *Retraining, equipment and workplace modification program*, WorkCover paid for a hydraulic hoist to be fitted to Tim's ute at a cost of \$1850 and an electric wheelbarrow at a cost of \$2200.

Work trials

When an employer is unable to identify suitable work options, a work trial can help overcome the problem. The worker is placed with a suitable host employer for a short period of time. This enables the worker to recover at work, performing duties suited to their capacity and upgraded over time (no longer than 12 weeks) until they reach the required capacity to return to their original employer. Workplace rehabilitation providers assist in finding a work trial host and submit a proposal. Costs are funded by WorkCover and are not a claims cost and do not affect premiums.

For further information see the Work trial guidelines on workcover.nsw.gov.au.

In practice

John, a 42 year old painter, was working for a small company painting houses in a new estate, when he injured his shoulder and needed surgery. He was keen to get back to work, but his employer could not find any duties for John while his arm was in a sling.

His insurer case manager engaged a workplace rehabilitation provider who organised a work trial at a local hardware store. Travelling by taxi to and from work, he initially worked three days a week in the paint section providing advice and information to customers. As his shoulder healed, his duties increased and he was able to stock shelves with light items such as paint brushes.

The cost of the work trial, including travel expenses, were paid for by WorkCover. John was able to resume his normal duties with his pre-injury employer within three months of his surgery.

Retraining

Retraining can assist a worker with an injury to develop new skills and qualifications to get a new job with their pre-injury employer or with a new employer. Retraining may involve formal study with TAFE, a university or registered training organisation. Course fees and associated expenses such as stationery, textbooks, travel and accommodation may be covered under this program.

See workcover.nsw.gov.au for information on [Retraining, equipment and workplace modification program](#).

JobCover placement program

If a worker is unable to return to work with their pre-injury employer, they may need support to find work with a new employer. The JobCover placement program provides three main benefits to a new employer who takes on a worker with an injury.

- An incentive payment of up to \$27,400 for the first year of employment. Payments are made in three parts to encourage longer-term employment.
- Exemption of the injured worker's wages from the employer's workers compensation premium calculation for up to two years.
- Protection against further costs associated with the existing injury for up to two years.

See workcover.nsw.gov.au for information on the [JobCover placement program](#).

For more information including eligibility requirements for these incentives and support programs, go to workcover.nsw.gov.au, or talk to your workplace rehabilitation provider, return to work co-ordinator or insurer case manager. You can also call WorkCover on **13 10 50**.

Disclaimer

This publication may contain work health and safety and workers compensation information. It may include some of your obligations under the various legislations that WorkCover NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website legislation.nsw.gov.au

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

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