



## Safe Work and Return to Work Awards 2019

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### Safe Work and Return to Work Awards example entry Category nine – Best rehabilitation and return to work management system

#### 1. Explain how your organisation has demonstrated a strong commitment to rehabilitation and stay at/return to work of injured workers.

RSPCA Qld demonstrates commitment to the rehabilitation of its workers in the following ways:

- Reducing Lost Time Injuries and providing quality, education health and safety information to all workers is listed as a priority within the organisations Safety Strategic Plan. All workers, from management to volunteers are required to report injuries and work towards a 'stay at work' culture, as outlined in the 'Management Responsibilities Procedure'. RSPCA has a 'Return to Work Procedure', outlining the rehabilitation process.
- RSPCA Qld provides all managers with training on how to create a 'stay at work' culture, what workers need to know prior to an injury occurring, how to deal with an injury, how to work with an injured worker on suitable duties, how to support injured workers, especially if they are off work, and how to provide a reintegration to their pre-injury role.
- Rehabilitation is coordinated by the Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Coordinator, who works with managers to rehabilitate workers. Managers, with support from the WHS Coordinator, take ownership of the process, providing support to the injured workers.
- RSPCA Qld provides trained first aiders with CPR training across the state. Relationships have been developed with Medibank Health Solutions, ensuring that all workers have access to medical treatment, with the RSPCA being invoiced. This has greatly improved the time between injury and treatment, ensuring that workers return to pre-injury duties much quicker.
- RSPCA has engaged an occupational therapist, at its own cost, to work with injured workers in their work environments. Several appointments have been made for workers suffering non-work related injuries. RSPCA Qld believes that all workers, regardless of where they were injured, or if they are paid staff or volunteers, deserve an opportunity to perform work related duties. The occupational therapist has further provided information on the prevention of injuries, consulting on manual handling training and work flows.
- The current process for working with an injured person consists of:
  - Providing immediate first aid treatment to an injured person, a first aider assesses the need for further treatment. The worker attends a doctor. Doctors are provided with information about the workers role, a task analysis list of their duties, appropriate alternative duties for a suitable duties plan, and a request for contact to be made should no suitable duties be identified from the list. RSPCA Qld believes firmly in a 'stay at work' culture.
  - Where time off is required, the worker is contacted as often as tolerated with messages of support. Both the WHS Coordinator and the line manager provide support to the worker and offer encouragement. RSPCA Qld maintains contact with the treating doctor via WorkCover or through fax/ email correspondence with the doctor. To encourage contact with RSPCA, doctors are offered to be paid for their time.

- When a worker returns to suitable duties, duties are made in consultation with the worker, WHS Coordinator and manager, assessing operational needs, workers experience and possible training. At all times RSPCA Qld attempts to provide workers with duties that are meaningful to them. During the suitable duties process, workers are supported, including the injured workers co-workers. This ensures that the injured worker is supported by the team in their recovery.
- When a worker is ready to return to their pre-injury duties they are further supported, with the WHS Coordinator maintaining contact with the worker at all times, until the point where they are comfortable and no longer need to be supported due to their injury.
- During the recovery phase, the reason for the injury is discussed, allowing controls for identified hazards to be discussed and implemented. This allows the worker a sense of control over their safety. RSPCA Qld has a well-developed risk management program, designed by its people, in consultation with its people, for its people. This system ensures that workers who have been injured can monitor the status of their submitted hazards and provide them with a sense of accomplishment in assisting with controlling hazards.
- RSPCA Qld has noted a significant drop in the cost of injury claims, with the lowest cost per claim, and the lowest overall cost for claims being recorded in the financial year 2013/2014. Despite this, RSPCA Qld continuously looks to the future of its injury management, working on providing a preventative, rather than reactive system - thereby preventing injuries. This system further ensures that we prevent injuries from escalating through being proactive in our injury approach and encouraging early reporting and a 'no blame culture'. This has been achieved through RSPCA Qld assisting all workers with their injuries, and in some cases these injuries are not work related. This shows the commitment that RSPCA Qld has to a 'stay at work' culture, and where this is not possible, RSPCA Qld endeavours to return workers to their pre-injury role as soon as practicable.

## **2. What strategies or initiatives have you implemented to improve outcomes to injured workers and/or your business?**

RSPCA Qld strives for a stay at work culture, rather than a return to work culture. The following initiatives Jennifer has implemented to ensure that a stay at work culture is achieved:

- In addition to providing trained First Aiders, RSPCA Qld has developed professional relationships with medical practices, such as Medibank Health Solutions, for large RSPCA sites. Injured workers (staff and volunteers) receive immediate treatment, and RSPCA is invoiced, regardless. This ensures prompt diagnosis and treatment from a practitioner who understands the nature of RSPCA. Where a professional relationship has not been developed, all costs are paid for and first aiders are trained to ensure that injured workers are encouraged to seek medical attention where necessary.
- Supporting a 'stay at work' culture, RSPCA offers suitable duties to every injured worker. RSPCA Qld has introduced task analysis documents which are sent to treating doctors along with requests for assistance with suitable duties. Jennifer (WHS Coordinator and Rehabilitation for RSPCA) engages treating doctors where workers are given time off, to work out suitable duties that are available and within the worker's restrictions. Further, RSPCA prides itself on being able to find meaningful suitable duties for every worker, regardless of injury. All workers are encouraged to return to work as soon as possible, and if necessary provided with training to ensure that they can return quicker. Jennifer developed and implemented the 'Injury Pack' in conjunction with an occupational therapist.

- Where time off is required for an injured worker, Jennifer establishes a relationship with the worker, ensuring that they feel supported. She works with managers to encourage colleagues to contact the worker as often as tolerated. RSPCA Qld believes that team work is required for successful reintegration into the workplace. As such, Jennifer ensures that all workers are supported every step of the rehabilitation journey by encouraging managers and colleagues to support workers. Once the worker returns to work, they are further supported through frequent contact, encouragement and consultation.
- When a worker is injured, they are sent comprehensive Workers Compensation information, explaining the claims process, how to lodge a claim, and what to expect from WorkCover. Jennifer developed this document to ensure that at all times injured workers had access to easy-to-understand information regarding what is expected of them, what to expect from Work Cover, and what to expect from the employer. All workers understand their own rights and responsibilities. Further, all direct line managers are provided with similar information, including how to support and encourage an injured worker, and how to ensure that the rehabilitation process is as smooth as possible, with information from rostering to supporting the workers colleagues in understanding the process.
- RSPCA Qld provides all workers with access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and recommends all workers contact the EAP if they are struggling with an injury. Jennifer actively promotes the EAP to injured workers, especially when they have had time off and may need adjustment to injury counselling.
- RSPCA Qld has worked with numerous professionals, including occupational therapists over the last two years. Where a particular worker is struggling with suitable duties, or return to work, Jennifer has engaged an occupational therapist to work with the worker to ensure that the workplace and workflows contribute appropriately to their recovery.
- All workers are returned to their role, or a new role within the organisation. Although RSPCA Qld is committed to returning every worker to pre-injury duties, where this is not possible, RSPCA Qld has assisted workers in transferring to a new role where they are provided the necessary training to ensure success. This is in support of a 'stay at work' culture

### **3. How does your organisation create an environment that supports a positive rehabilitation and stay at/return to work culture?**

RSPCA Qld has created and delivered a supportive culture through the following:

- Management has been trained in the importance of supporting injured workers. Through a 'management training package' (attached), managers are provided information on how to build a supportive culture prior to an injury happening, and then how to maintain this support during a rehabilitation claim. Managers are also provided information about a 'no blame' culture, ensuring that workers are welcomed back to work and supported in their recovery.
- When a person is injured, they receive information about the WorkCover process, how to apply for a claim, what is expected from them and what they can expect from RSPCA and WorkCover. By providing this information, RSPCA Qld ensures all workers have access to the information they need to have a successful, short claim. Similar information is sent to managers of an injured person, assisting them in supporting the worker and providing information on the WorkCover process. Providing this information has ensured that all parties understand their roles and responsibilities.

- Management training for all managers, allowing them to take ownership of the injury management process. RSPCA Qld is geographically spread across Queensland, where Jennifer (WHS and Rehabilitation Coordinator) is responsible for health, safety and rehabilitation across the state. Although Jennifer contacts injured workers, and travels to meet with them to provide support and guidance, limited funds and time prevent Jennifer from spending as much time as is often necessary in rehabilitation cases. To address this, RSPCA Qld provided training to all managers across the state, including how to create a stay at work culture, what workers should know prior to an injury, how an injury should be managed and how to support the worker and their colleagues, how to monitor and maintain a suitable duties plan and how to return a worker to normal duties.
- Managers are then supported throughout every rehabilitation process. RSPCA Qld has worked to ensure that workers are rehabilitated at work in a supportive environment, rather than waiting for workers to be cleared as medically fit. The focus is placed on what workers can do, as opposed to what they cannot.
- RSPCA Qld has created and implemented an online induction program for all workers. To combat a lack of finances and the vast geographical distances, RSPCA Qld ensures that all workers receive the same training on how to work safely, and what to do when an injury occurs. This has encouraged an early reporting culture, prior to this injuries were not reported until the worker required significant time off work.
- Jennifer provides monthly updates to the RSPCA Qld Board on WorkCover claims, as well as the reason for the injury. A focus is placed on the reason for the injury, ensuring that risk management remains a priority. Jennifer also ensures that all relevant managers are kept informed of the progression of the claim.
- RSPCA Qld works closely with WorkCover, the treating doctor and the manager to ensure that suitable duties are provided to the worker, while ensuring that the worker is consulted with and is provided duties that are meaningful to them. RSPCA Qld has ensured that the average cost per claim over the financial year 2013/2014 has dropped by more than half. For an organisation that has an ever increasing number of paid staff and a growing volunteer base, this is a significant improvement and a reflection on return on investment.
- RSPCA QLD work is beginning to show significant results, with the financial year 2013/2014 having the lowest cost per claim recorded, the lowest over all claims cost and premium reduction. Further, Jennifer has created a reporting culture through workshops and consistent, honest consultation, where workers are encouraged to report all injuries, and are supported in a 'stay at work' culture. Managers are trained in how to support their workers when they are injured, and how to facilitate the creation of a 'stay at work' culture.
- RSPCA Qld has moved away from a reactive system, and to a preventative safety program. RSPCA Qld has worked to a Safety Strategic Plan, where one goal has been to reduce the number of Lost Time Injuries. RSPCA Qld has implemented a 'management responsibilities' document, where safety initiatives, reporting hazards and injuries, and providing a safe, supportive workplace are a part of managers KPI's, and workers are expected to actively look after their own safety, including participating in rehabilitation. RSPCA Qld has further ensured that rehabilitation is a key part of the RSPCA Qld's Health and Safety Management System, with a Rehabilitation Procedure Guide supporting the Workplace Health and Safety Policy. In support of a preventative system, RSPCA Qld prefers to not 'react' to injuries, having implemented systems whereby injuries are managed from the moment they happen. This is driven by an early reporting culture, supporting 'stay at work', and ensuring that injuries are managed appropriately by managers in consultation with workers.
- Rehabilitation is reported to the Board, alongside safety measurements to ensure that the focus is on returning workers to pre-injury duties, as well as preventing injuries from happening.

#### **4. Provide one detailed example that demonstrates your approach to injury management and of how your organisation contributed to the successful stay at/return to work outcome of an injured worker.**

A worker was attacked by a dog while performing their duties as an RSPCA inspector. The worker had approximately one month off due to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following the dog attack. The worker followed a suitable duties program designed by a psychologist where they were reintroduced to their workplace slowly, and with consistent assistance.

Despite the slow re-introduction to their role, this worker found it difficult to return. At the time there was an acting manager in charge of the particular shelter, with the workers direct manager being located in a separate area. As a result, the worker was mostly supported by management via email and phone, with occasional visits from management.

To assist them, Jennifer organised suitable duties in the RSPCA Qld shelter, where they could slowly include more exposure to dogs at a pace comfortable to them, with approval from the treating psychologist. Jennifer travelled to the regional area multiple times to plan the steps of the worker's rehabilitation in consultation with them, as well as discuss ways in which such incidents could be prevented in the future.

Regular catch up meetings were scheduled, including telephone conversations, text and email. This was based on the workers preferences. Jennifer aimed to contact the worker at least twice a week, with the goal of each contact to provide support and assistance.

From an individual perspective, Jennifer worked with the worker to ensure that at all times they were supported. The worker decided they would no longer like to do their role as an inspector based on nervousness of dogs. To ensure that the worker got the best outcome possible, Jennifer worked closely with them, identifying where their interests lay and what training could be provided. Further, Jennifer organised with the human resources consultant to visit the worker and provide them with resume and interview coaching. Training was provided in the form of a certificate 4, and the offer of a truck driving license (requested by the worker but not pursued).

A job opening became available in another department, away from the animal shelter (and barking dogs), which was then offered to the worker. Jennifer worked with the hiring manager to ensure that the worker received the necessary training to succeed in the role, as well as ensuring that at all times the worker was consulted with. The worker is now working full time in a management role and is receiving training to ensure their success.

As is evident in the above overview, Jennifer establishes and maintains a relationship with injured workers through:

- Consistent, supportive contact and consultation.
- Working with stakeholders to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of operational needs, and the progress of each claim.
- Where a worker needs time off due to their injury, Jennifer works closely with both the worker and the manager prior to the worker returning to work. In the above example, Jennifer ensured that there were duties available to the worker ready for her return. This ensured the worker was aware of what she would be doing, as well as the level of contact she would have with dogs. The worker was provided with a document outlining what to expect from WorkCover, the employer, and what was expected of her, while her manager was provided with information on how to best help the worker in her rehabilitation. This document included support strategies, how to assist the workers colleagues support her return to work, and what to expect from the WorkCover process as a manager.

- This example shows how Jennifer used her initiative in accepting that a worker did not wish to return to her current role, and assisted them in finding a new role within the organisation that would be better suited to them. Although Jennifer strongly believes in a stay at work culture, where a worker is not in a capacity to return to their job she investigated ways in which to ensure that the worker had a job to go to. Jennifer continuously looks for ways to work with injured workers that will assist them in their return to work.
- Jennifer has been instrumental in ensuring that a number of injured workers have access to new equipment that has not only ensured their return to work, but has improved their jobs. One example of this was facilitating the purchase of a floor scrubber to assist a cleaner with shoulder bursitis. Not only did this assist with the return to work, it has also ensured that bursitis of the shoulder relating to mopping will be prevented. RSPCA Qld goals focus on both the return to work aspect as well as preventing similar injuries in the future. RSPCA Qld also aims to ensure that every return to work is successful for all stakeholders.
- RSPCA Qld has demonstrated commitment to ensuring that all workers return to their pre-injury duties, however where this is not possible, RSPCA Qld works with workers to find suitable employment for them. This is demonstrated in both work related injuries, and non-work related injuries, with RSPCA Qld assisting staff members in developing the skills needed to find suitable employment, in another role within the organisation. RSPCA Qld prides itself on having a 100% return to work statistic, with every effort being made to ensure that people first and foremost return to their pre-injury role.