

Draft Administrative Report

Australian Clinical Guidelines for
Health Professionals Managing
People with Whiplash-Associated
Disorders, Fourth Edition

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1. Background

The *Australian Clinical Guidelines for Health Professionals Managing People with Whiplash-Associated Disorders, Fourth Edition* (referred to thereafter as ‘guidelines’) was registered on the Australian Clinical Practice Register on 27 April 2021. The guidelines have been developed in accordance with the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC’s) Standard for Clinical Practice Guidelines, Guidelines for identifying and managing conflicts of interest and Section 14A of the National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992. The final guidelines will be submitted to the NHMRC for consideration of approval following the public consultation period on the draft guidelines.

This report is a public consultation draft. It outlines non-technical information about the guideline development process and will be available with the draft guidelines on the New South Wales (NSW) State Insurance Regulatory Authority’s (SIRA’s) public consultation webpage: <https://www.sira.nsw.gov.au/consultations>.

2. Governance and stakeholder involvement

2.1. Organisations and funding

The guidelines have been developed and published by SIRA in partnership with the John Walsh Centre for Rehabilitation Research (JWCRR), University of Sydney. The development and publication of the guidelines have been partially funded by SIRA.

2.2. Guideline development working group/guideline panel

SIRA and JWCRR convened a multidisciplinary guideline development working group (also known as guideline panel) of relevant stakeholders including subject matter experts and representatives from clinical health professions, insurers, other state and territory motor accident regulatory bodies and people with lived experience of a whiplash injury (section 2.2.4, Table 1).

2.2.1. Process for selecting members

Subject matter experts who were Scientific Advisory group members for the “Guidelines for the management of acute whiplash-associated disorders – for health professionals. Sydney: third edition 2014” (SIRA, 2014) were identified and invited via email to contribute to the guidelines by either joining the guideline development working group or independently reviewing the guidelines. An independent Chair who had previous guideline development experience in a related area, and no conflict of interests related to the whiplash guidelines, was appointed by SIRA to convene the working group meetings.

Peak medical and allied health associations, insurance and legal organisations and motor accident regulatory bodies from each Australian jurisdiction were invited to nominate professional representatives from their organisation to contribute to guideline development in one of three ways: (i) join the guideline development working group; (ii) review the draft guidelines; or (iii) elect to receive the draft guidelines when distributed for public consultation. The peak medical and allied health associations were invited on the basis that primary healthcare professionals (HCPs) from those associations play a key role in the management and treatment of people with whiplash-associated disorders (WAD). The Australian Physiotherapy Association (NSW) (APA), Australian Psychological Society (NSW) (APS), Chiropractic Australia, Exercise and Sports Science Australia (ESSA), Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) and the Australian Centre for Justice Innovation each nominated professional representatives to join the working group. These representatives were authorised to represent the views of their agency and make decisions on its behalf regarding identified evidence and proposed recommendations.

Email invitations outlined the roles and responsibilities of the guideline development working group and the role of independent reviewers.

2.2.2. Roles and responsibilities

The guideline development working group were responsible for:

- identifying any gaps or additional areas not covered by the systematic review of evidence conducted by JWCRR;
- considering the recommendations of the systematic review performed by JWCRR and providing recommendations for updating the existing guidelines;
- providing advice and support for the implementation and dissemination of the guidelines.

2.2.3. Declaration and management of competing interests

SIRA developed a conflict-of-interest policy in accordance with the NHMRC Guidelines for identifying and managing conflicts of interest. The policy requires all guideline development working group members to declare any interests and establishes a process for determining if a declared interest represents a conflict of interest and how that will be managed.

At the commencement of the guideline development process and prior to any involvement in decision-making associated with guideline development, all working group members were asked to declare any potential or perceived conflicts of interest and sign a declaration of interest form. Members were also required to declare any new interests as they arose during the development of the guidelines to the Chair of the guideline development working group.

As the guideline development working group comprised of clinical health professionals who were nominated by their professional organisation or who were involved in the development of the previous iterations of whiplash guidelines, these individuals had organisational interests to declare. There were no declared interests that represented a conflict of interest that would have a material impact on guideline development.

Conflicts of interest was a standing item on the agenda for each guideline development working group meeting. Members disclosed any conflicts of interest in relation to items on the agenda and informed the Chair if a new conflict arose. Members deemed to have a conflict of interest abstained from discussions and decisions in relation to the relevant agenda item and took any other such measures to effectively manage that conflict as directed by the Chair of the working group.

2.2.4. Guideline development working group members

The table below sets out a complete list of individuals on the guideline development working group (Table 1).

Table 1: Guideline development working group members and discipline/expertise

Representative	Discipline / Expertise	Organisation	Role
Professor Maria Crotty	Professor of Rehabilitation, Aged and Extended Care	Flinders University	Chairperson
Technical Members			
Dr Katherine Brown	Postdoctoral Research Fellow	JWCRR, University of Sydney	Researcher
Professor Ian Cameron*	Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Sydney, and Senior Staff Specialist	JWCRR, Northern Sydney Local Health District and University of Sydney	Researcher, clinician, author
Dr Lionel Chia	Postdoctoral Researcher, Physiotherapist	Cleveland Guardians Baseball Co., USA, University of Sydney	Researcher, author
Dr Peter Edwards*	Accredited Exercise Physiologist, Senior Lecturer	Exercise and Sports Science Australia and Curtin University	Professional representative
Associate Professor Genevieve Grant*	Associate Professor and Director, Australian Centre for Justice Innovation	Australian Centre for Justice Innovation, Monash University	Professional representative
Professor Lisa Harvey*	Physiotherapist, Professor, University of Sydney	JWCRR, University of Sydney	Researcher

Representative	Discipline / Expertise	Organisation	Role
Dr Katie de Luca*	Senior Lecturer, Research Fellow CQUniversity	Chiropractic Australia	Professional representative, clinician
Dr Anthony McHugh*	Senior Policy Officer, Clinical Psychologist	Australian Psychological Society and University of Melbourne	Professional representative, clinician
Professor Zachary Munn	Director of Evidence-based Healthcare Research and Director JBI Adelaide GRADE Centre	JBI Adelaide and University of Adelaide	GRADE methodologist
Dr Christopher Paptic*	Lecturer Clinical Exercise Physiology and Honorary Postdoctoral Research Fellow	JWCRR, University of Sydney, and University of New England	Lead author, researcher, clinician
Professor Trudy Rebeck*	Physiotherapist, Professor, University of Sydney	JWCRR, University of Sydney and Australian Physiotherapy Association	Researcher, professional representative, clinician, author
Dr Ana Paula Carvalhoe-Silva	Postdoctoral Research Fellow	JWCRR, University of Sydney	Researcher, author
Professor Michele Sterling*	Professor, RECOVER Injury Research Centre	University of Queensland	Researcher, subject matter expert
Professor Simon Willcock*	General Practitioner, Program Director of Primary Care and Wellbeing	Macquarie University Health and Sydney North Health Network	Professional representative, clinician

Industry Members

Ms Kate Hopman*	Principal Road Safety and Regulatory Policy, Insurance Australia Group (IAG)	Insurance Council of Australia	Industry representative
Ms Purnima Kant*	Healthcare Manager, QBE Insurance	Insurance Council of Australia	Industry representative

Regulator Members

Dr Anne Daly*	Clinical Lead – Allied Health	Transport Accident Commission, Victoria	Regulator representative, clinician
Ms Renee Hebson*	Principal Research Officer	Queensland Motor Accident Insurance Commission	Regulator representative

SIRA Members

Mr Edward Jenkins	Manager, CTP Strategic Policy	NSW SIRA	Project manager, regulator representative
Ms Isabelle Lai	Senior Policy Officer, CTP Strategic Policy	NSW SIRA	Project manager, secretariat, regulator representative
Ms Bronwyn Martin*	Director, CTP Scheme Design, Policy and Performance	NSW SIRA	Project sponsor, regulator representative

Representative	Discipline / Expertise	Organisation	Role
Consumer Members			
Ms Elyse Barber*	Consumer	N/A	Consumer representative
Ms Sara Clark*	Consumer	N/A	Consumer representative

*Members of the guideline panel who were eligible to vote on recommendations.

2.3. Guideline steering committee

A project steering committee comprising of members from SIRA and researchers from JWCR, University of Sydney was established to ensure the delivery of the project, including the development and publication of the guidelines in accordance with the procedures and requirements for meeting the NHMRC Standards for clinical practice guidelines. Guideline steering committee members (section 2.3.2, Table 2) are also part of the guideline development working group.

The steering committee met on a fortnightly basis during the initial project planning phase to determine project timelines, assign project roles and responsibilities, establish the guideline development working group and determine processes for working group meetings. Following the formation of the guideline development working group, the steering committee met monthly, or more frequently if the need arose.

2.3.1. Roles and responsibilities

The guideline steering committee were responsible for:

- developing, reviewing and endorsing documents related to the project;
- monitoring progress through regularly tracking the project management plan and list of NHMRC requirements;
- identifying and mitigating project risks;
- making decisions regarding working group membership and management of conflicts of interest;
- addressing roadblocks that may cause major implications for the project's success; and
- supporting accurate timeline and project reporting to SIRA, the NHMRC and other interested parties.

2.3.2. Guideline steering committee members

Table 2: Guideline steering committee members

Role	Name
Project sponsor (Chair)	Ms Bronwyn Martin
Project manager	Mr Edward Jenkins
Project manager, secretariat	Ms Isabelle Lai
Member	Dr Katherine Brown
Member	Professor Ian Cameron
Member	Dr Christopher Papic
Member	Professor Trudy Rebbeck
Member	Dr Ana Paula Carvalho-e-Silva

2.4. Consumer involvement

Consumer perspectives are considered in the development of the guidelines through the engagement and participation of two consumer representatives on the guideline development working group.

Painaustralia and the Consumer Health Forum of Australia (CHF) were contacted to identify consumer representatives with lived experience of a whiplash injury in an Australian context. The recruitment process included internal (consumer advisory groups) and online (Painaustralia's Twitter site and website) advertisement communications detailing the purpose of the guidelines, a description of the consumer representative role, and remuneration. No appropriate consumer representatives were identified through this process nor following additional consultation with both organisations. The consumer representative role was then advertised via email to a database of people who had attended the Sydney Specialist Physiotherapy Centre for management of whiplash associated disorders. Interested participants contacted a member of the guideline research team, who was not affiliated with the clinic, to discuss the project and determine suitability. Two consumer representatives were recruited using this method. Painaustralia agreed to independently support consumer representatives through the guideline development process. Consumer perspectives will also be considered in focus groups that will be conducted by JWCRR (see section 2.5).

2.5. Focus groups

Following the development of the draft guidelines, JWCRR will conduct focus groups with three key target audiences: consumers (people with lived experience of a whiplash injury), healthcare professionals and insurers to fine tune key messages for implementation of the guidelines, seek views on the preferred look and feel of the materials and to prioritise the preferred implementation strategies for each target audience.

SIRA will assist with identifying potential consumer participants for the focus groups. The intention is that the sample of participants includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background.

2.6. Collaboration

Painaustralia worked alongside the two consumer representatives on the guideline development working group to support them, if required, in interpreting evidence and communicating their experiences when developing recommendations. Representatives on the working group liaised with their professional organisation throughout the guidelines development process to provide recommendation updates and ensure that they are accurately representing the broad views of their organisation. The guidelines have been developed with ongoing methodological consultation from Professor Zachary Munn, Director, JBI Adelaide GRADE Centre.

2.7. Endorsement

The following organisations will be approached to formally endorse the guidelines. Among these are organisations who endorsed the "Guidelines for the management of acute whiplash-associated disorders – for health professionals. Sydney: third edition 2014" (SIRA, 2014) and organisations with representative members on the guideline development working group.

- Australian Chiropractors Association
- Australian Pain Management Association
- Australian Physiotherapy Association
- Australian Psychological Society
- Chiropractic Australia
- Exercise and Sport Science Australia
- Occupational Therapy Australia
- Osteopathy Australia
- Painaustralia
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

3. Guideline recommendations

3.1. Consensus-based recommendations

Decisions regarding the development of recommendations were made by a consensus vote. A transparent voting system was facilitated by the working group Secretariat through an online platform (Menti). Working group members were asked to vote on a recommendation classification on a five category Likert scale (strong for, conditional for, neither for nor against, conditional against, strong against) following a review and discussion of each evidence-to-decision framework. Throughout the voting process, votes remained anonymous, and the outcome was only revealed after all voting members of the working group voted.

More than 50% of votes were required to reach consensus. However, 50% was not considered sufficient to be a consensus if there was strong working group opposition. If there was no clear consensus after the first vote, the working group would critically discuss the outcome and rationale before proceeding to a second vote.

3.2. Independent review

Two reviewers who are independent of the guideline development process will be engaged to assess the draft guidelines using the Appraisal of Guidelines for Research and Evaluation (AGREE) II instrument. Reviews will take place prior to submission of the final guidelines to the NHMRC for consideration for approval.

4. Public consultation

Public consultation on the draft guidelines will be held between 5 June 2023 and 5 July 2023. Stakeholder groups and individuals will be invited to make submissions and provide feedback on the draft guidelines. In addition to providing general feedback, stakeholders will be asked to consider the following questions when reviewing the recommended care pathways:

- 1) Is the recommended care pathway feasible to implement?
- 2) Is the recommended care pathway acceptable to key stakeholders?
- 3) What would be the impact on health equity?
- 4) What would help you apply these recommendations in practice?

A comprehensive public consultation communications plan outlining how SIRA will conduct and communicate public stakeholder consultation has been developed. The key activities outlined in the plan comply with Section 14A of the *National Health and Medical Research Council Act 1992* and accompanying regulations. These include:

- Publication and distribution of notices inviting submissions, containing a link to the NSW Government consultation page (<https://www.nsw.gov.au/have-your-say>) and SIRA public consultation portal (<https://www.sira.nsw.gov.au/consultations>) where the draft guidelines, guideline summary and NHMRC documents will be made available on 5 June 2023. These notices will be in the form of:
 - (i) Direct notification via email to key professional organisations (including health and medical bodies, insurers and other state and territory regulatory bodies) that will be involved in or affected by the implementation of the guidelines. This includes SMEs and stakeholders who elected to review or receive the public consultation draft of the guidelines when invited by SIRA to participate in the development of the guidelines.
 - (ii) Direct notification via email to the guideline development working group.
 - (iii) Publication on SIRA communication channels including the Compulsory Third Party (CTP) Insurer Alert, SIRA Bulletin and LinkedIn.
- Circulation of the public consultation draft guidelines to the Director General, Chief Executive or Secretary of each Australian health department.

- Publication of the Summary of Recommendations, Technical Report, draft Administrative Report, draft Dissemination Plan with the draft guidelines on the SIRA public consultation webpage on 5 June 2023: <https://www.sira.nsw.gov.au/consultations>.

Following the public consultation period, a public consultation submission summary documenting the details of all submissions received and the response of the guideline development working group to the submissions will be developed and provided to the NHMRC. A de-identified version of this summary may also be made publicly available on the SIRA public consultation webpage.

Disclaimer

This publication may contain information that relates to the regulation of workers compensation insurance, motor accident compulsory third party (CTP) insurance and home building compensation in NSW. 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.

SIRA, Level 14-15, 231 Elizabeth Street, Sydney NSW 2000

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