

# Work-related hearing loss in the NSW Workers Compensation System

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Consultation paper

**State Insurance  
Regulatory  
Authority**

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# Purpose

The State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) is conducting a review into services to support people with hearing loss arising out of employment (work-related hearing loss) in the NSW workers compensation system. The purpose of this consultation is to invite feedback. There are consultation questions posed to guide stakeholders' submissions, however all feedback is welcome. The findings from this public consultation will inform SIRA's review of service delivery for people who have a claim or potential claim for workers compensation because the hearing loss is due to their employment and any subsequent recommendations.

## Introduction

SIRA is the NSW government organisation responsible for regulating workers compensation insurance and related activities, motor accidents compulsory third party (CTP) insurance, and home building compensation in NSW.

In stewarding these schemes, it is our mission to ensure they are:

- equitable and fair
- efficiently delivered
- affordable for the community
- sustainable and viable for generations to come
- delivering scheme outcomes effectively
- providing positive experiences.

The workers of NSW must have confidence they will receive fair treatment from the workers compensation system. We aim to ensure policy holders and people who experience injury and loss are provided with fair, timely, respectful, inclusive and appropriate services.

## Why is SIRA doing this?

A review of research evidence indicates that hearing aids are effective for improving listening ability and quality of life for people with work-related hearing loss. Best results are achieved when an individual assessment of the worker's hearing loss and their needs is performed, and a hearing aid is prescribed based on these factors.

Significantly, uptake and compliance with hearing aids improves when the hearing aid is delivered to the worker together with support, training, counselling and auditory rehabilitation, resulting in better communication outcomes and improved participation in social activities.

Stakeholders have raised concerns with SIRA about the process of claiming for work-related hearing loss. The issues stakeholders have been discussing with SIRA relate to the following areas:

- current pathways for a worker to receive a hearing aid
- access to legal funding to make a work-related hearing loss claim
- the methodology used to assess work-related hearing loss and to determine if hearing loss is not caused by work
- the provision of appropriate hearing aids and supports to meet an individual worker's needs
- cost-effective support for people with work-related hearing loss.

The review will allow for a systematic approach to understand concerns from across the sector including the experience of injured workers. The overall objective of this review is to simplify the process for making a claim for work-related hearing loss, and have a system that delivers good claimant experience, operates efficiently and effectively.

As part of this review SIRA will also be conducting research to understand the claims experience and outcomes for people making a hearing loss claim in the workers compensation system.

## How you can get involved

SIRA has opened this consultation to assist individuals and organisations to prepare submissions.

Consultation stages	Key dates
Consultation opens	28 August 2019
Consultation closes	9 October 2019
Summary of submissions	25 October 2019

## Next steps

SIRA will review all submissions and prepare a summary of the feedback received. The feedback summary will be published on the SIRA website. Information provided through this consultation process will be used to form recommendations for SIRA regarding work-related hearing loss.

Any questions or enquiries regarding this consultation should be emailed to [consultation@sira.nsw.gov.au](mailto:consultation@sira.nsw.gov.au).

# Consultation questions

SIRA is specifically interested in your feedback to the consultation questions below, but please do not restrict your feedback to those questions. As part of your submission, SIRA requests that you complete the demographic questions, which will allow us to ensure the public consultation has reached all interested stakeholders. Submissions will be received in writing or via email, as well as through the consultation page on the SIRA website.

## Submission details

Can we publish your submission?

- Yes, with these details  
Name of organisation or individual making this submission (this will appear with your submission on our website)  
Name:
- Yes, but prefer to remain anonymous  
Your submission will appear on our website with the name 'Anonymous'.  
The name and/or organisation you provide below will not appear anywhere on the website.
- No, do not publish my submission  
Your submission (and any documents) will not be displayed or made publicly available on the website.

Authorised delegate/contact person:

Position (if applicable):

Organisation (if applicable):

Postal address:

Email:

Your email address will be used to send you a confirmation that your submission has been received.

Phone number:

In what capacity are you making your submission?

- a worker with work-related hearing loss
- a service provider
- a legal representative
- an insurer representative
- an employer
- a union representing workers
- other (please specify):

Is this a personal submission or on behalf of a professional body or organisation (please specify)?

Do you currently have, or have you previously had, a work-related hearing loss claim?

- Yes, I currently have or previously had, a work-related hearing loss claim
- No, I've never had a work-related hearing loss claim

What would you rate the current system for workers with work-related hearing loss?  
Please rate from 1 to 5, where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent.

## Claimant experience: accessing benefits for work-related hearing loss

1. Are there barriers to workers with work-related hearing loss accessing their entitlements?
2. Can improvements be made in the following areas?
  - access to benefits
  - worker outcomes and experience
  - service provision
  - insurer claims management
  - employer support and information
  - dispute pathway

For any options you selected above, what changes can be made?

## Treatment and support for workers

3. What would help to improve workers' use and benefit of hearing aids?
4. How can the use of hearing aids for work-related hearing loss be evaluated?

## Efficiency and effectiveness

5. How can the process for servicing devices and the provision of batteries and replacement aids be improved?
6. Hearing aids are constantly evolving with new technology and improvement. How can hearing aid quality and function best be balanced with overall device cost?

## General comments

Please include any other general comments not addressed above.

#### Disclaimer

This publication may contain information that relates to the regulation of workers compensation insurance, motor accident third party (CTP) insurance and home building compensation in NSW. It may include details of some of your obligations under the various schemes that the State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) administers.

However, to ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation as currently in force. Up to date legislation can be found at the NSW Legislation website [legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://legislation.nsw.gov.au)

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