



Unions NSW Submission to:

**SIRA frameworks for non-treating
health practitioners**

**Submission by: Unions NSW
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Unions NSW is the peak body for NSW Unions. Unions NSW represents approximately 60 affiliated unions comprising over 600 000 members. These unions represent a diverse range of workers from both blue and white-collar industries.

Unions NSW supports all submissions made by its affiliate unions.

Unions NSW thanks SIRA for the opportunity to submit feedback for its proposed frameworks for non-treating health practitioners.

SIRA is developing frameworks for the approval of injury management consultants (IMCs) in the NSW workers compensation system and the appointment of authorised health practitioners (AHPs) in the NSW CTP scheme.

In this submission Unions NSW will focus on the development of the framework for the approval of injury management consultants (IMCs) in the NSW workers compensation scheme.

Unions NSW will refer to two of the documents released for consultation:

- Proposed injury management consultant approval and regulatory framework
- Injury management consultant approval framework – summary of changes.

The submission will work through the summary of changes and provide feedback on these.

Approval Process

Currently the applicant must have references supporting their approval from employers, insurers and/or unions & SIRA contacts these referees in the application process.

SIRA suggests this changes to may contact.

Unions NSW believes there is value in obtaining some feedback from referees and would suggest this remain.

Period of Approval

The initial term of approval is 12 months. Once this has passed subsequent terms are for a maximum of three years.

The proposal by SIRA is to set a period of approval, which will commence on a date specified by SIRA, with a nominal expiry date of three years from this date.

Unions NSW is unsure whether this means the initial 12-month 'probationary' period will still exist. Given probationary periods are common practice we would suggest this remains.

Re-approval process

Provision of information to SIRA

IMC currently provides the last three injury management consultations they have undertaken, provides three referees and a copy of their latest referral and associated report.

The suggested change requires applicants to submit an 'application for re-approval as an injury management consultant', including a signed agreement to conditions of approval. SIRA will review this application to ensure applicant meets all eligibility requirements and has adhered to all conditions of approval as an injury management consultant.

Unions NSW is unable to comment on as we have not seen the application form.

The paper notes SIRA may seek clarification or collect further information as necessary to confirm applicant meets eligibility conditions.

Unions NSW would ask what information might be asked for to confirm the eligibility conditions are met.

SIRA states that the removal of the requirement to provide three referees and provide three reports will increase the objectivity of the application process.

Unions NSW agrees that the process is not a perfect one and can be flawed. Referees do often provide subjective information and reports can be chosen to reflect a more positive position.

Unions NSW is concerned that we do not have enough information regarding the proposed changes around the application process to provide appropriate feedback.

Unions NSW supports the conditions of approval noted on page 5 of the document but would like to view the application form to see how the application form ensures the conditions of approval are met and be involved in further discussions if the application process is still being undertaken.

Mediation/negotiation

The change from undertaking training in mediation/negotiation skills arranged by SIRA to complete any training to the standard required by SIRA is vague and does not provide enough information for Unions NSW to comment.

Unions NSW would like further information on this. What training would be required? Union members have found the process hostile, aggressive and adversarial and this has time and again led to our members developing secondary psychological injuries. Injured workers who develop these secondary injuries are often unable to be placed back in the workplace and often fail to find work post injury.

Given the aim of the system is to return injured workers to work, the capacity of all involved in the system to work with the injured worker without causing further harm is crucial.

Registration as medical practitioner with AHPRA

Unions NSW agrees with this change.

Qualifications/clinical experience

Unions NSW agrees with changes requiring more relevant clinical experience.

Knowledge of NSW workers compensation system

Unions NSW agrees that IMC's must have an extensive working knowledge of the NSW workers compensation system. How would SIRA determine this?

Communication/negotiation skills

Unions NSW agrees a high level of communication and negotiation skills in this role is crucial. The change requires the applicant have demonstrated this in a challenging injury management/return to work environment. How does SIRA intend to determine this?

Complaint history

Unions NSW agrees with the implementation of checks and balances regarding complaints relating to applicants.

Re-approval criteria regarding performance and behaviour

Unions NSW would like further information on how SIRA intends to monitor the adherence to all conditions of approval.

Activity in the IMC role

Unions NSW agrees with the changes to increase the number of consultations over a twelve-month period.

Reasons for revocation

Unions NSW agrees with the reasons for revocation.

Performance monitoring and quality assurance

Unions NSW would suggest some greater transparency in the monitoring process particularly in serious cases of misconduct.

Summary of key points

- Unions NSW believes there is value in obtaining some feedback from referees and would suggest this remain.
- Unions NSW is unsure whether this means the initial 12-month 'probationary' period will still exist. Given probationary periods are common practice we would suggest this remains.
- Unions NSW supports the conditions of approval noted on page 5 of the document but would like to view the application form to see how the application form ensures the conditions of approval are met and be involved in further discussions if the application process is still being undertaken.
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