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LGIS is the mutual indemnity Scheme, which provides a dedicated suite of risk financing and management services for WA local governments, established by the WA Local Government Association in conjunction with JLT Public Sector (part of the Marsh group of companies).

Risk Matters is an LGIS journal to keep members, their staff and elected members informed on topical risk management and insurance issues and LGIS programs and services.





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At LGIS we are committed to bringing you relevant information on local, national and global risk-related matters and issues impacting local governments in Western Australia.

CEO's Message



JAMES SHERIDAN CEO LGIS james.sheridan@lgiswa.com.au

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Welcome to the Winter edition of 2023! As the financial year ends, we're pleased to have completed renewal with 100% retention of membership.

With the backdrop of a hard commercial market and inflationary impacts, we were pleased to be able to contain contributions, insulating members against substantial increases in the wider insurance market. We were also pleased to maintain the breadth of cover with minimal changes in the protection provided.

Currently and looking forward the sector's workers' compensation performance is concerning. Although the Scheme has seen a decline in the number of workers' compensation claims, there is a notable increase in terms of severity and the cost of claims.

Among several challenges present within the sector, local governments are managing an ageing workforce and their ever-increasing issues of workplace injuries and chronic ailments such as obesity, cardiovascular disease and mental illness. This is contributing to a rise in workers' compensation claim costs.

That is why LGIS has piloted a new program called 'Early Notification' starting 1 July 2023. The pilot program will provide support to our members and their workforce with access to early intervention treatment and return to work support for employees who may have injuries inside or outside of work.

In this edition, our feature talks about the role of fitness for work in reducing workplace injuries and workers' compensation claims. Conceptually employers understand the importance of fitness for work and their responsibilities, however it can be a challenging area to put into practice.

It's vital that fitness for work is part of the organisational culture and is regularly discussed from different angles.

Following the fitness for work theme, the news section looks at topics including 'a step by step guide on how to return to work' and the LGIS Ageing Workforce Program.

Have a look at our news article on the newly created LGIS Waste Management Guide. The LGIS team has assessed asset and liability risks at multiple local government waste facilities. What we've seen has informed the new guide which is designed for facilities that receive, handle, store or dispose of waste material.

We also mention the emerging global, national and state risk trends for 2023 that impact the local government sector. Although cost of living, financial sustainability, climate change and cyber risks have appeared in the top 10 concerns, WA perspective is more focused on human resources. People risks are among the top priorities for WA recognising the issues currently faced by the sector in recruiting and retaining quality staff.

Finally, our 'Ask an Expert' columns explores the recent trend of desk treadmills and whether they're of benefit. LGIS has received a number of questions about walking desks and other arrangements that combine working and exercising simultaneously at the desk. Take a read to know what are experts think of it.

I do hope you enjoy our Winter edition, and if you have a question for our Ask an Expert column please send it through to me or our editorial team at pia.duxbury@lgiswa.com.au or patrika@lgiswa.com.au

If you have any questions about the magazine, or if you'd like to discuss any matter regarding your membership, cover, claims, or risk management services with LGIS, please contact me directly on 9483 8886.

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Fitness for work, its role in reducing workplace injuries and workers' compensation claims

Local governments face a range of challenges when managing their people, avoiding injury and reducing workers' compensation claims. Like many industries, the sector is managing an ageing workforce and an increase in chronic issues such as obesity, heart disease, and mental illness.

The past few years have seen a steep increase in the cost of workers' compensation claims for the local government sector. Claims are becoming more severe and complex and it's taking an average of 36 days for injured workers to return. Ultimately, on average, outcomes are worsening for both employees and local government employers.

Proactive management of employee's fitness for work is more important than ever at all stages of the lifecycle – right from the stage of interview to the end of employment. Individuals and employers both need a clear understanding of the psychological and physical demands of a role to make sure that injuries (and claims) are avoided.

We know that the longer a worker is away from work, the more likely their claim will develop complications or they may leave entirely.

What is fitness for work?

According to WorkSafe, the concept of fitness for work is broad and deals with the relationship between a worker and their ability to do their role in the job safely and competently.



Fitness for work goes beyond qualifications and experience."

It deals with individual factors such as the effect of fatigue, alcohol and other drug use, medical fitness (if required for a specific role), and mental health and wellbeing.

Organisations should assess if individuals are able to safely complete their specific work-related activities. This means taking into consideration the person's functional capacity, potential impact of any medical conditions they may have, and external factors such as nature of work, and working environment.

In order to meet their duty of care and protect workers from hazards, employers need to be aware of the physical and psychological requirements associated with each of the tasks that workers are required to perform. Understanding the physical and psychological requirements of each job allows an employer to:

- Identify and manage risks associated with the role.
- Employ individuals who are likely to be able to meet the physical and psychological requirements of the job without injuring themselves.
- Develop return to work programs for individuals returning to work after an injury or illness.

Employer's WHS responsibilities and fitness to work

Under the *Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act (WA) 2020*, all 'Person conducting a business or undertaking' (PCBUs) have a primary duty of care to ensure the health and safety of their workers while they are at work. In this context, 'workers' are those engaged, or caused to be engaged by the person and those whose activities in carrying out the work are influenced or directed by the person.

It's important to remember that from a WHS perspective, volunteers are included in the definition of 'workers'. This means that local governments also need to ensure that volunteers are 'fit for work'.

This primary duty of care requires PCBUs to ensure health and safety, so far as is reasonably practicable, by eliminating risks to health and safety. If this is not reasonably practicable, risks must be minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.

'Fit for work' culture – getting everyone on the same page

Conceptually employers understand the importance of fitness for work and their responsibilities, however it can be a challenging area to put into practice. Many people managers feel uncomfortable making these enquiries and asking about potentially sensitive issues.

It's vital that fitness for work is part of the organisational culture and is regularly discussed from different angles. Key elements that can shape a culture, which values and encourages fitness for work, can include:

- Drug and alcohol, and fatigue policies
- Health and wellbeing programs
- Employee assistance program
- Regular one-on-ones between managers and staff
- Development of people leaders
- Work, health and safety training

A key part of leading is building relationships with your staff and people leaders must be developed so that they feel comfortable to have regular one-on-one catch ups. A pattern of behaviour to 'touch base' allows fitness for work to be captured in the general management of people – looking at tasks and workload, performance, and professional and personal development. This provides a safe environment to discuss the issues impacting individuals and allows for conversations that naturally ease into fitness for work before the situation becomes critical.

Leaders must also ensure that they lead from the front demonstrating a commitment to organisational values and initiatives, for example if your local government is running a fitness challenge, there needs to be strong participation from the CEO and other leaders.

Consideration should also be given to support managers in having fitness for work conversations. This could include additional coaching or training for managers and supervisors on how to have difficult conversations, including how to prepare and practical tips for in the moment.

Avoiding the management of fitness for work can have serious implications for both the employer and employee; a proactive approach benefits all parties and ensures a safe workplace.

It's important to recognise that when a fitness for work issue has been identified that it needs to be managed on a case-bycase basis. All parties in the organisation including human resources, safety officers, managers and the employee should understand their roles and responsibilities once a fitness for work issue is identified.

For advice in managing fitness for work issues, contact the WALGA Employee Relations team on 1300 366 956 or employeerelations@walga.asn.au.

Injury prevention is better than rehab – tools for members

You need to have a proper plan in place to ensure that employees within your workplace are healthy and fit to do their job. Early intervention and prevention strategies are key to reducing workplace injuries. LGIS specialises in these strategies and can help your local government achieve desired results.

Pre-employment stage: Job dictionaries give clear instructions of how a job role should be performed. LGIS has over 35 job dictionaries for the most common roles in local government. For an employer, these help in determining whether a candidate is fit for the role of not. Medical assessment is another important tool that can help assess the fitness of a candidate.

Post-employment stage: Our injury prevention team organises several workshops for both employers and workers on crucial topics like manual tasks awareness, and ergonomics of your workstation and equipment. Our PEforM program educates and encourages local government staff to actively identify task risks and implement controls to reduce them.

Mental health equally plays a part in staying fit and our People Risk team offers a range of workshops to deal with issues within the workplace including managing psychological hazards, coping with workplace challenges and more.

Injury management with LGIS

Even after all these prevention strategies, injuries happen. In such a scenario employers need to be proactive and treat their workers with utmost care and respect.

The LGIS injury management team can provide a variety of proactive injury management solutions to ensure you are meeting your legislative responsibilities and providing the highest standard of injury management support for injured workers within the sector.

The LGIS Injury Management Guide is an essential tool designed to aid our local government members in the effective application of injury management strategies and processes. Injury management is essentially about effective communication and coordination between claims and rehabilitation practitioners, employers, workers and medical practitioners, to ensure that injured workers are provided all reasonable support and assistance to return to the workplace as safely and quickly as possible.

LGIS has a new pilot program called 'Early Notification' starting 1 July 2023. The program will support our members and their workforce with access to early intervention treatment and return to work support for employees who may have injuries inside or outside of work. This is a Scheme funded program to enable our members support their employees as best possible and improve their health and wellbeing outcomes.

Considerations for an employer – transition to work post injury

More than half a million Australians sustain work-related injury or disease annually at an estimated economic cost of \$61.8 billion.

Local government employers play a vital role in the return to work and injury management process. An engaged employer supports a worker's return, affirming the individual's value and the contribution they make.

As a manager or supervisor, focus on creating a communication channel with the worker, right from the time when they are off work due to an injury to the time they return to work and are trying to settle in.

Getting back to work post an injury can be overwhelming for a worker, therefore, you need to be sensitive and considerate of their requirements. This may include:

- > Assisting them in their fitness for work assessment process.
- Reducing their workload (especially where a lot of physical activity is involved).
- Make arrangements for flexible working options.
- Accommodating them into a lighter or different role as per their abilities.

Read **Employers play a vital role in injured workers getting back to work** on page 7 to know more about the process.

For more information on our programs to ensure fitness within your workplace, please get in touch with LGIS WorkCare team at heath@ligiswa.com.au. ▼



Returning to work – removing barriers and reducing anxiety

Work is a large part of our identities, and being away from work for a long time can deeply impact an individual.

A major return to work barrier, following a long absence due to an injury or health concern, is a worker's ability to keep up with the physical demands of the role. Every job role has a unique footprint that requires different physical and cognitive capabilities.

To make sure that they're 'fit for work' after a sustained period away, many employees are required to do a fitness for work assessment. This includes several medical assessments that help the employer and worker determine they will be able to complete the role safely.

But how can the worker be sure that they will pass the assessment?

Medical requirements are often expensive for the worker to complete, and can cause anxiety. Workers may have concerns about their future employment if they don't pass the required tests.

Case study: Effective medical intervention to help a worker pass their fitness for work assessment.

A situation where a worker is suffering from an injury that happened outside of their workplace.

A worker suffers an injury outside of work, at a weekend adventure that went horribly wrong. Imagine the worker is a parks and gardens general hand working in a physically demanding role, and one of the major requirements of their job role is to use a chain saw.

In addition to breaking their arm they develop long-term conditions – the first being adhesive capsulitis (frozen shoulder), a condition that restricts the movement of the shoulder, and the other being complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS). This condition elevates pain as your body tries to regulate the source of the pain almost like a protective mechanism. How can the worker be sure that they will be ready to go back to work and use a chain saw when required?

Medical help before assessment

An accredited exercise physiologist (AEP) can help prepare for medical assessment. In this case, an exercise programme was designed that includes a range of movements for the upper limb and neck. There's a focus on the stability of the upper limb specifically looking at the muscular recruitment patterns of the upper body. Desensitisation through mirror box therapy was also introduced to help calm down the nervous system. Lastly, usage of biomechanical analysis helped provide education on correct movement patterns. Through a six-week supervised exercise program, the worker progressed towards the requirements of the medical assessment.

Medical assessment against requirements of the job role

At the initial assessment of the worker, some standard measurements were taken. However, for the purpose of the pending medical assessment, some key functional measures were taken. Lift floor to waist – a task that was undertaken up to 4kg at the time of the assessment, with the requirements of the medical set at 15kg.



- Lifting above shoulder height a task that could not be completed to full range of movement due to the frozen shoulder, and a reduced load of just 4kg, with the medical requirements being 10kg.
- Sustained outreached postures with vibration (i.e using a chain saw).
- Horizontal pushing at 5kg with the final requirement to return to work being 15kg.
- Final measure of pulling starting at 5kg, with the final requirement being 15kg.

Working towards the problem with AEP

The worker built towards these final medical requirements week by week attending one supervised session per week with their AEP, and two independent sessions in a gym-based environment weekly, combined with some at-home activation and stretching exercises.

It became clear in the first couple of weeks of the programme that the sticking point would be using a chain saw. Not only is there a repetitive loading element, but also a vibration component with the required sustained posture and upper limb movements.

The AEP began to target this movement with gym-based equipment including a vibration plate, through which the patient could start to practice. This continued to increase with volume and speed. The AEP filmed the weekly attempts of the chain saw task with the worker's consent. This allowed the patient to see their weekly progress along with the increasing load and vibration frequency seen on the vibration plate.

A win-win situation for both worker and employer

In addition to developing safer working biomechanics, confidence began to grow, and with each session the likelihood of passing the medical increased. The result was a confident worker who would not only pass their medical, but also in their first attempt. Although the worker did not injure themselves in the course of their work, they were confident they would not aggravate their injury by returning to work. The programme gave them the confidence that they were fully recovered, and also strategies to better manage their physical conditioning for their job role.

Whether a job role is highly active or sitting down for prolonged period, everyone needs the confidence that they will be able to perform their role when returning from a period of absences. An AEP can provide a targeted programme to improve function and confidence for both worker and employer to seamlessly fit into their previous job role.

By Ingrid Hand (AEP ESSAM), Clinical Director for Absolute Balance. Ingrid specialises in exercise rehabilitation for workers' compensation and motor vehicle accidents, she supports injured workers by understanding their unique needs to deliver a favourable outcome.

Avoid inflationary impacts on your claims – make sure assets are valued accurately

Businesses worldwide are experiencing the effects of the highest inflation rate in a generation. WA local governments need to consider inflationary pressures when valuing both their property and motor assets so that they can be confident that if disaster strikes, your protection will be adequate to appropriately respond.

Case study: Shire realises the importance of asset re-evaluation after major financial loss

The Shire was undertaking clearing and loading of trees and general foliage clean up on 6 July 2022 with a 2016 Caterpillar 432F 4X4 backhoe. During operation, the protected machine's engine suddenly stopped working and did not start.

The incident

A large tree branch had struck the front and undercarriage engine bay of the machine. It fractured and broke the engine oil lubricant pressure switch/sender that is fastened to the engine oil filter housing. This led to an oil leak resulting in the complete emptying of oil lubricant from the engine; resulting in catastrophic engine failure.

The machine was in a good condition prior to the incident. At the time of assessment, there appeared to be no significant evidence of pre-existing damage.

Declared value

The damage sustained to the machine included the front grille panel, front surround panelling, air condenser, cooling pack and complete engine assembly.

The Shire had declared the machine for \$90,000 and it was expected that the actual repair costs would be significantly higher due to higher costs of parts, freight and additional damage being discovered. This meant that the expected repair costs would exceed the declared value, making the machine uneconomical to repair and an economic total loss for claim purposes.



The current market value of the machine was around \$110,000-\$120,000, \$30,000 more than declared by the member.

The issue of undervaluation is affecting many members at the moment as the second hand market for vehicles has skyrocketed and combined with supply chain issues worldwide, vehicles and machinery are more valuable than they were in pre-COVID, 2020, times.

Outcome – Settlement breakdown

Declared value	\$90,000
Member Retained Risk Payment (subtracted)	\$600
Salvage (value of wreck) (subtracted)	\$32,155
Total Settlement	\$57,245

The member decided to retain the damaged equipment; members are entitled to do this if they wish however it means that we must deduct the salvage value from the settlement. Generally the member will do this if the asset has parts that can be utilised as part of their maintenance arrangement.

Lessons from this case

From a claims perspective, we were able to settle on the declared value the member had elected on their asset register.

The issue is that inflation and economic conditions continue to deteriorate and local governments should carefully consider if leaving contingency is valuable vs potential impact of a loss.

This is a great example to remind members to review their declared asset values across the board. In this instance, the impact was only \$30,000 but if this was a major building asset, the impact could have been in the millions. V



Employers play vital role in injured workers getting back to work

Managers and supervisors are key influencers when it comes to successfully getting an injured worker back to work.



Returning to work after a period of absence can be challenging for some people. These absences can be due to illness, psychosocial issues, injury at home, or a recreational injury. Some individuals will return to the workplace without any need for additional support; however for some, making the transition back to work can be very challenging.

At the moment it takes about 36 days for injured workers to return. We know that the longer a worker is away from work the less likely they are to return at all.

As a manager or supervisor, there are some key things you can do to influence the transition back to work. The biggest area of influence is communication; make sure you keep in contact with the worker when they're away. Connecting on a personal level is important; so don't make the communication only about getting a certificate or confirming how long they will be away from work.

- Make time to listen and talk with the worker; don't forget to ask how they are, and be prepared to listen to the same story a few times, particularly if they aren't coping well.
- Offer them support such as get well gifts (if applicable), make them aware of the employee assistance program (EAP) or any other support that might be available. Let them know the options you have for them when they can come back to work.
- It's also important to set some simple boundaries in your communication. Remember you are supporting them, not harassing them.

What is 'Good Work'?

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine launched a position statement in 2013, outlining the fundamental premise behind the question, 'What is Good Work?'. They identified four domains of good work by design:

Good work by design:

- Engages workers and where necessary partners with workers and suppliers;
- Engages with the community culture that reflects the local, regional and operational contexts in which the work is performed;

- Respects procedural justice and relational fairness promotes civility and is intolerant of incivility, discrimination and bullving:
- 4. Appropriately balances job demands, job control and job security and requires:
 - a. Aware managers, but not necessarily aware employees, who manage change effectively, focusing on mental and psychological wellbeing, security and life balance;
 - b. Clear and realistic performance indicators to guide and acknowledge the efforts of the worker;
 - c. Use of hard and transparent 'people productivity metrics'; and
 - d. Matching 'the work' to the 'individual'.

Top 10 tips to making 'suitable duties' easy

Identifying suitable work options once the worker can start returning to work can be a challenge, but before you 'call in help' from an external expert, you should consider the following:

- Confirm the preferred communication method Set expectations on method of contact (for example a text message, email or phone call) and frequency of check-ins.
- 2. Involve the member in identifying things they can do They know their job and are a great resource in identifying the parts of the job they can do. This helps gain their buy-in and support for the selected tasks. If the worker believes they can do tasks, the treating medical parties will almost always endorse the duties presented to them.
- 3. Think broadly as to what can be 'suitable' work 'Suitable' duties don't have to be based in an office. If the normal duties aren't office based, don't automatically look at this. Work to the worker's strengths and what they can contribute to the workplace. Can the worker perform productive work from home? Look at duties that aren't time sensitive, so it reduces any unwanted pressure, particularly with the first few days of returning to work. It's important to not have 'busy jobs'; ensure the worker feels they're contributing to the workplace. The health benefits of Good Work have significant evidence that people's early participation in meaningful work reduces longer term work disability and unemployment risk.
- 4. Consider modifying the start time Would a different start or finish time make it easier for the member? For example, it may give more time to get ready in the morning, avoid traffic and attend rehabilitation exercises.
- Organise regular breaks Schedule breaks into the allocated work day every 15 or 30 minutes and check they're taking their break.
- 6. Organise how they will get to and from work If they can't drive, can someone pick them up or drop them off? Do you have a company rideshare account to organise transport to and from work? Do they need different parking arrangements?
- 7. Set up a buddy or helping hand If the work has a very small element that is physical or outside their restrictions, assign a specific support person. Meet with the support person and the member on the first day to manage the expectations on when to use help and check-in to make sure this arrangement is working.

- 8. Keep your relationship with the worker and team as normal as possible – so they don't feel excluded. Invite them to social events, meetings or morning tea. When they start back at work, make it a point to drop in and check how they're doing. Avoid giving out personal medical information. Keep things simple and factual around the duties the person is undertaking and that this is under medical instructions.
- 9. Educate the supervisor Ensure the supervisor is aware of the time and date the member is due to work, a basic understanding of the injury. Keep it simple and factual; for example let them know whether it's a leg or shoulder injury, the type of duties they can and can't do, and who to contact if things don't go as per plan.
- 10. Set clear expectations Confirm who is involved in the return-to-work communication. Identify who (for example onsite manager, supervisor, injury management or work, health and safety contact, team leader and roster coordinator):
 - is contacting the worker;
 - is preparing the return to work plan and liaising with the medical team;
 - approves or endorses the arrangements outlined in the plan;
 - needs to be updated if problems arise with the plan or if something changes (i.e. the member is sick).

Let the member know who needs to be updated after a review with their doctor or needs an updated medical certificates. Appointments should be scheduled outside work hours. Keep the relevant people updated on return-to-work arrangements.

If you've doing all this, and feel like things are still not working, talk to a workplace rehabilitation provider. They are experts in assisting people back to work and overcoming barriers to work participation.

Naomi Goods, an occupational therapist by profession, shared her insights about the step by step process on how to return to work. Naomi is the WA manager for Star Injury Management, a Workplace Rehabilitation Provider. She has over 13 years' experience working in workplace health, injury management and injury prevention.

To know more about the return to work process, please get in touch with the LGIS injury management team at health@lgiswa.com.au. \checkmark





Reducing injuries in local government's ageing workforce

LGIS launches worker wellbeing pilot project.

Among several challenges present within the sector, local governments are managing an ageing workforce and their everincreasing issues of workplace injuries and chronic ailments such as obesity, cardiovascular disease and mental illness. This has led to a rise in workers' compensation claim costs.

Managing an ageing workforce isn't going to go away anytime soon with over 40% of the Australian population aged over 50 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare). An ageing workforce has serious implications for employers and people managers as they seek to provide a safe workplace for all workers.

In addition many people are choosing to work for longer with the average retirement age being between 62 and 65. Workforce participation rates for those over 65 has more than doubled since the start of 2000 from 6.1% to 15.5% in December 2022 (Superguide.com.au).

To support members in managing this issue LGIS has launched our worker wellbeing pilot with a group of 15 members. Pilot participants are a cross sample of the sector with metro, regional and rural shires, towns and cities taking part in the project.

The pilot aims to reduce the risk of injury/claims by proactively engaging expertise from different areas within LGIS over a period of six to 12 months. These areas include health and wellbeing, people risk, injury management and injury prevention.

The pilot has been in development for the last six months and commenced in May 2023.

Prevention benefits members and the Scheme

LGIS prevention services have shown significant benefits to the Scheme since their commencement in 2014, including reducing claims by 2.5% in the first year (2014), and a 30% overall reduction in total musculoskeletal (MSD) claims between 2013 and 2022. Although these statistics positively reflect the overall success of the Scheme's prevention and wellbeing services, LGIS has seen increases in the number of claims in the ageing workforce (above 50 years). With this increasing trend, it now accounts for 40% of Scheme claim costs (Figure 1).

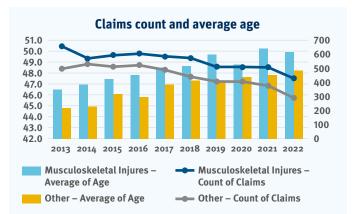


Figure 1: The figure above shows the total claims and musculoskeletal claims decreasing between 2013 and 2022, and the average age of claimants increasing.

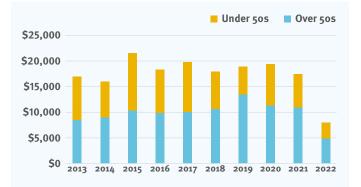


Figure 2: The figure above shows the total claim costs divided into under 50 years and over 50 years of age. The larger blue percentage of each graph indicates higher claim costs associated with over 50-year-old claimants.

Worker wellbeing pilot and sector benefits

The Worker Wellbeing Pilot is divided into three phases, with phase 1 starting in May this year.

Phase 1 – Information gathering and leader education

In phase one, LGIS works with the member to understand the specific issues facing the organisation. We use an ageing workforce questionnaire and a health and wellbeing survey to capture a 'point in time' picture. We will also work with leaders to clarify workforce objectives and make sure that all managers and supervisors understand the injury management process, the role they play, and the resources available to support them.

Phase 2 – Worker targeted services for highest risk job role

Once LGIS has worked closely with leaders, phase two then delivers targeted services to individuals in high risk roles. Services will include individual health coaching and goal setting consults, plus educating teams to proactively manage manual task risks through the PErforM program (Participatory ergonomics for manual tasks).

Phase 3 – Post project evaluation

Following implementation of the program, LGIS will review outcomes and provide guidance. Participating members will be provided with a close out report which includes targeted recommendations to ensure that momentum is maintained, and work, health and safety processes, and workplace health and wellbeing continues to improve.

Selecting pilot group members

Our pilot group members have been selected based on analysis of the sector's musculoskeletal (MSD) claims data.

- We reviewed the amount of total MSD claims vs FTEs narrowed down to age groups (specifically over 50 years), and to FTE size
- Identified highest risk occupation groups specific to each members
- Lost time injuries (LTI) average looking at specific age groups
 under 50 years and over 50 years

It is important to note that although the pilot members were selected based on their age related claims data, the project's services will aim to improve worker wellbeing for all workers within the highest risk job roles.

Benefits for all members

Through this project, LGIS aims to work with members to improve the health and wellbeing of their people. What we learn from the program will allow us to respond to the sector's needs and continue to deliver effective risk management services.

We know that healthy employees are less likely to get injured at work, and more likely to have positive return to work outcomes, particularly as they age. By gathering information about our pilot member's current policies and procedures, and providing evidence based intervention strategies, LGIS is confident this project has the potential to make a significant impact on the workers' compensation landscape within the WA local government sector.

For more information on the program and LGIS health and wellbeing services, please contact the WorkCare team.▼





New resource: Waste facility risk management guide

The waste management sector is an essential part of society, however it has higher inherent risks than many other industries.



The waste management sector is an essential part of society, however it has higher inherent risks than many other industries.

In recent years there have been major incidents and losses associated with the operation of waste facilities. In response LGIS' new waste management guide helps members to identify, assess and control property and liability risks. Fires, property damage and personal injury can occur at any point in the waste process, including collection, transportation, transfer, recycling and disposal. These incidents risk people's safety and can have wider detrimental impacts on the local community and the waste industry itself. They also negatively impact the handling and processing of waste, causing financial costs to owners and operators.

Costs associated with waste facility incidents, notably fires and third party injuries:

Direct costs	Indirect costs
Disruption to waste management activities	Traffic disruption
Property damage	Public transport delays
Facility downtime	Lower real estate values
Environmental clean-up	Disruption to site operations / daily work schedules
Fire fighters personnel time	Disruption to site operations / daily work schedules
Firefighting consumables and equipment	Adverse media / damage to local government's reputation
Contaminated water supplies	Loss of biodiversity
Long term health effects	Grief and suffering of community
Personal Injury, with potential of fatalities	Diversion of resources and budget from improvement projects
Legal fees, claims and cost of legal defence	

Since inception waste facility claims have cost LGIS over \$38M; the bulk of these claims fall into property and workers' compensation losses.

2009 saw one of the Scheme's most significant claims with a \$20M waste facility property loss. Furthermore a tip fire in the late 90's caused widespread damage; at the time the claim cost \$2M, but in today's environment would be valued closer to \$20-\$35M. In general when incidents occur at waste facilities, they're expensive. In most cases the cost of risk mitigation is less expensive than the actual tangible and intangible costs of an event. It benefits members and the Scheme, to make sure that property and liability risks are proactively assessed and managed at waste facilities.

Top 10 causes of damage at waste facilities

	Liability	Property	Motor	WorkCare
1	Fire/explosion	Fire	Fire /explosion	Muscular stress while handling objects other than lifting, carrying or putting down
2	Contact between people and plant	Theft	Incorrect/inadequate operation	Muscular stress while lifting, carrying, or putting down objects
3	Barriers/signs	Storm and tempest	Lost control	Repetitive movement, low muscle loading
4	Reckless/criminal third party	Burglary	Mechanical defects	Falls on the same level (including trips & slips)
5	On-site road conditions	Accidental damage	Struck stationary object	Fall from a height
6	Flooding/storm/water	Vandalism/malicious damage	Changing lanes	Hitting stationary objects
7	Other	Impact damage	Collided with stationary vehicle	Being hit by moving objects
8	Breach of statute	Machinery breakdown	Other	Work related harassment and/or workplace bullying
9	Maintenance/repairs	Electrical fault/power surge	Failed to give way	Being trapped between stationary and moving objects
10	Fittings and furniture	Lightning strike	Reversing	Stepping, kneeling or sitting on objects

Site safety at waste facilities

Site safety is paramount at waste facilities – they're inherently high risk. Site safety happens with assessment, risk identification, and mitigation through implementation of appropriate controls – including processes, procedures, provision and use of appropriate equipment, and worker training. Accidents can be minimised by effective site management, implementation of safety processes and training programs.

These programs should include the following:

- Identification of potential sources of risk
- Assessment of the degree of risk from these sources
- Determination of procedures for addressing the risks
- Development of procedures to minimise accident/risks when they occur
- Ongoing monitoring to ensure effective implementation of safe working procedures
- Site plant and all structures should be equipped with adequate onsite firefighting and training provided to personnel.
- A well-stocked first aid kit should be available on-site and first aid training should be considered essential for one or more of the operating personnel who spends the majority of the working day on the site.



3 steps to asset and liability risk management

The LGIS team has assessed asset and liability risks at multiple local government waste facilities. What we've seen has informed the new guide which is designed for facilities that receive, handle, store or dispose of waste material.

It has a particular focus on three types of risk: fire, members of the public, and third parties.

The advice and technical information provided does not supersede the requirements of Australian Standards, National Construction Codes or local legislation and regulations. The guide aligns with these requirements and provides advice on additional controls and considerations identified through our knowledge of local government facilities.

There are three key elements to the guide:

1. Identifying, assessing and controlling risk

The better you understand the risks the better you can manage them. The first step is based on the ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management process, which involves the systematic application of policies, procedures and practices to the activities of communicating and consulting, establishing the context and assessing, treating, monitoring, reviewing, recording and reporting risk.

2. Fire protection systems

Fire is one of the greatest risks to a waste facility and can have catastrophic impacts on the facility and surrounding community. In recognition of this risk the guide focuses on development and implementation of a fire risk management strategy and the key elements to be considered, including what may cause a waste fire, managing the elements of fire ignition, fire protection requirements and the importance of design, such as waste separation, in reducing fire risk.

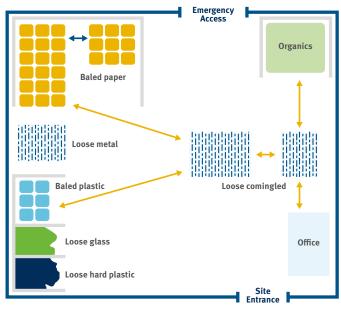
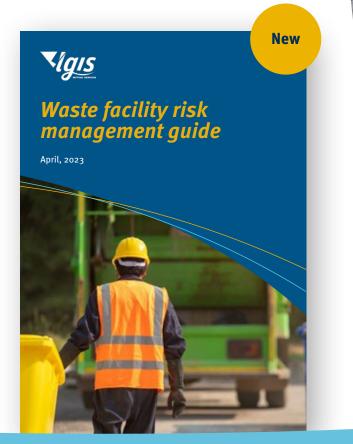


Figure: Example of materials separation (Source: Victoria EPA, 2018)

3. Emergency planning

The final component of the guide recognises the importance of emergency planning to reduce the risk to life and property in the event of a facility incident. It provides a step-by-step guide on how to develop an Emergency Response Plan (ERP), the roles and responsibilities of every party, identification of hazards, and specific responses to different incidents eg: fire versus a chemical spill.

For more information on how to manage your waste facilities, please get in touch with your account manager. Log in to the LGIS website to access the waste management guide at lgiswa.com.au. \checkmark





Global trends go local for LGIS members in 2023



Financial sustainability and natural disasters are the top risks for local government leaders.

Cost of living, financial sustainability, climate change and cyber risks have appeared in the top 10 concerns for local government CEOs and global leaders. Reports confirm the experiences of Western Australian local government leaders who, when assessing their organisations' risks and planning for the future, grapple with the same issues. From a WA perspective, people risks are also a top priority, recognising the issues currently faced by the sector in recruiting and retaining quality staff.

The World Economic Forum's (WEF) 18th annual Global Risks Report released early this year highlighted cost of living crisis and extreme weather events as the top global risks. Meanwhile, the 2022 JLT Public Sector Risk Report, highlighted financial sustainability, cybersecurity, asset and infrastructure, business continuity, and disaster/catastrophic events as the top five risks affecting local governments across Australia.

The connection between natural catastrophes and financial sustainability in both reports illustrates the complexity and interconnectedness of risk identification and management for local governments as they endeavour to support and serve their community.

Global risks ranked by severity over the short and long term

Global risks	Severity over next 2 years	Severity over next 10 years
Cost of living crisis	1	-
Natural disasters and extreme weather events	2	3
Geoeconomic confrontation	3	9
Failure to mitigate climate change	4	1
Erosion of social cohesion and societal polarization	5	7
Large-scale environmental damage incidents	6	10
Failure of climate change adaptation	7	2
Widespread cybercrime and cyber insecurity	8	8
Natural resource crises	9	6
Large-scale involuntary migration	10	5
Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse	-	4



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Local government risks in focus

197 local government CEOs and general managers contributed to the 2022 JLT Public Sector Risk Report, providing their perspective on the greatest risks for the sector at this time.

Through 2019 to 2021, Australia experienced disruption and impacts from bushfires, cyclones and the pandemic. During 2022 the impact of La Nina brought new challenges for local governments, with flood events impacting across four different states. These disasters demonstrated how risks, such as financial sustainability, assets and infrastructure, and business continuity are interconnected.

Top 5 risks identified by local governments across Australia

- 1. Financial sustainability The perennial 'number one risk' for the sector. Financial constraints to invest in the future and manage community expectations has been a common theme.
- 2. Cyber security With two major attacks on organisations gaining personal client data, the focus is now on how to protect constituent data.
- 3. Assets and infrastructure With several major disasters and catastrophic events in 2022, the impact on aged infrastructure is a serious concern.
- 4. Business continuity The events of the past three years have impacted business continuity. Well-crafted and implemented business continuity plans can help members efficiently restore normal service.
- 5. Disaster and catastrophe Continuing floods in some regions have showcased disasters and catastrophes never seen in Australia. Communities have not been able to recover before a major event has occurred again.

Risk outlook in WA

In Western Australia, the picture was a bit different. WA was the only state to see human resources in the top three risks, echoing the unique challenges in our state and the reduced impact of recent natural disasters in comparison to the east coast.

The 2022/23 Risk Survey had 197 respondents, of which 19% were from Western Australia.

The top five risks for WA include:

- Financial sustainability
- Asset and infrastructure
- Cyber security
- **Business continuity**
- Human resources

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) reported in September 2022 that around nine in 10 Australian local governments are now experiencing skill shortages – an increase of 30% in four years and two thirds of councils have had local projects impacted or delayed as a result. This will be a major issue to keep a watch on in the near future.

What can you do?

The global research outlines four principles of preparedness that are important for government and business entities to implement for better handling of future risks.

- 1. Improving risk identification and foresight The first task of foresight is to identify future developments, risks and opportunities. Another step to enhance risk foresight is to explore dynamics of change, to map interconnections between risks, including dependencies between critical systems.
- 2. Rethinking future risks For better planning and preparedness, local governments must de-anchor risk prioritisation from shorter-term incentives. Leaders and councils need to embrace complexity and adopt a dual vision that more effectively balances current crisis management with a longer-term lens.
- 3. Investing in multi-domain, cross-sector risk preparedness Actions taken to address current challenges should, at a minimum, avoid exacerbating future risks. As risks become more intertwined, preparedness also needs to become more of shared responsibility between sectors, with local and national governments, business and civil society each playing to their strengths.
- 4. Re-building and strengthening risk preparedness cooperation - Greater collaboration across governments and between states, in terms of coordinated funding, research and data sharing, is critical to help identify weak signals of emerging threats at both a state and level. In a complex risks outlook, there must be a better balance between local preparedness and state and national cooperation. We need to act together, to shape a pathway out of cascading crisis and build collective preparedness to the next global shock, whatever form it might take.

For more information on building strategies to mitigate your risks, please talk to the LGIS risk team or get in touch with your account manager.▼

SHAUNA

LGIS Senior HR Risk Consultant

Shauna is a Senior HR Risk Consultant at LGIS, she delivers a range of services to support mitigation and prevention of psychological injury. Her role includes facilitating workshops targeting bullying/harassment, supporting community facing roles in managing challenging behaviour and navigating psychosocial risk management.

How to have a fitness for work conversation with your worker?



Having fitness for work conversations can be confronting and challenging for both leaders and workers as they may involve questions of personal health (mental or physical), uncertain outcomes, sensitive topics and strong emotions. As challenging as they are, they are a vital tool for effective people management.

Fitness for work (FFW) is the process of understanding if a worker is able to complete their job tasks safely, without presenting a risk to themselves, colleagues or the organisation.

When we talk about fitness for work, we aren't talking about if they have the necessary qualifications or experience to perform a role. We're looking to understand if there are any individual factors that influence their ability to perform the inherent requirements of the role, for example – fatigue, substance use, medical fitness requirement (if applicable to role), mental health and wellbeing.

People managers have a duty of care to ensure they support and provide a safe working environment including fitness for work for their workers.

To enable successful conversations with workers, there are several ways in which local governments can support their leaders:

- Review pre-employment medicals in line with the inherent requirements of the role (use job dictionaries).
- Ensure any associated procedures or policies outline any specific requirements so that workers can understand and be assessed.
- Help workers understand their own obligations to report any restrictions on their ability to perform their role safely.
- Support leaders to address any concerns they may have by facilitating any fitness for work assessments.

Don't know the requirements of a role? Use a job dictionary!

LGIS has created over 35 job dictionaries for the most common roles in local government. The dictionaries outline the physical, psychological and cognitive load of a role, identifying key risks and demands on the individual. These are available to download on the LGIS website or talk to our Injury Prevention team at health@lgiswa.com.au Avoiding such conversations can lead to issues like prolonged or exacerbation of the problem, risk to their own safety and that of others, sends a message to the wider organisation that this standard is acceptable, reduced productivity, and increased absenteeism.

Local government leaders should assess the situation and then request a worker do a fitness for work (FFW) assessment. The process of these assessments must be lawful and reasonable.

The following questions can assist you in understanding the situation in detail before you strike a conversation with your worker:

- Do you actually see a need for the examination? Look for signs like prolonged absences from work, absences without explanation or evidence of an illness which relates to the capacity to perform the inherent requirements of the job.
- Has the worker provided adequate medical information which explains the absences and demonstrates fitness to perform duties?
- Are the activities being performed deemed high risk?
- Are there legitimate concerns that the worker's illness will impact others?
- Has the worker agreed to the assessment by the practitioner selected by the local government?
- Has the worker been advised of the details which led to the concerns that they are not fit for duty?
- Is the medical assessment truly aimed at determining whether the employee is fit for work now or in the future?



How to navigate FFW conversations?

1. Preparing for the conversation

Consult your relevant policies, procedures and guidelines such as work, health and safety, FFW, discrimination and human resources, and employee relations.

Before you have the conversation, have a clear understanding of the situation you would like to resolve. Collect the necessary evidence or facts to support your concern around the worker's ability to perform the inherent requirements of their role.

Consult with your internal HR Team or WALGA to support you with the process as required. Think from your worker's perspective. Enter the conversation with a desire to genuinely understand their situation.

2. Give the worker time to prepare

Make an appointment with the worker with context to allow them enough time to prepare. Use your understanding of the worker to guide when to schedule the conversation. This could sound like -'Do you have some time this week? I would like to discuss...'

Steps for a successful conversation

Step 1 – Describe the problem

- Remember, don't rush and take your time.
- Describe to the worker what you would like to discuss, and the purpose of the meeting.
- Communicate the concern you have identified, and link it back to duty of care and how it might be impacting their ability to perform their role.
- Focus on your observations and behaviours you would like to discuss.

Step 2 – Listen and engage

- Allow the worker time to respond to your concerns.
- Focus on listening more and talking less.
- Remember that active listening is all about being present. Give your full and undivided attention and maintain eye contact.
- Avoid any sort of distractions and paraphrasing.

Step 3 – Acknowledge

- Acknowledge the worker's point of view and openness to share.
- Identify when there are differences between views.
- Acknowledge any sort of emotion expressed.
- Remember to not be judgemental.

Step 4 – Reassess your position

- Based on the commentary provided by the worker, you may adjust your approach moving forward.
- Offer any support you can provide or referral to EAP (employee assistance program).

Step 5 – Look for solutions / identify next steps

- At this stage you will need to prioritise how you will communicate your next steps.
- This may look like working with the worker on adjustments that need to be made or communicate business needs like FFW assessment.
- Close the conversation with a summary of elements discussed and next steps (this may include a timeline).

3. After the conversation

Document every conversation and capture any agreements that were reached. As a leader, take the opportunity to reflect on the conversation. This will support you in learning from the experience and identify areas for improvement. Consider doing this with an HR representative or a senior leader.

Follow-up with the worker so both parties are clear about the process moving forward. You might like to do this in writing.

Most importantly, whilst fitness for work is being established, it is critical that you **treat** the employee the same way as you did prior to the conversation – in other words, business as usual (unless there are critical safety concerns).

More Information

Get in touch with WALGA Employee Relations Service, which provides comprehensive human resource management and industrial relations support to local government members. The WALGA team regularly provides advice on fitness for work matters to local governments.



ASK AN EXPERT



MICHAEL SCOTT

LGIS Injury Prevention Consultant

Michael has an extensive experience in assessing workers capacity for employment and ergonomic assessments. Michael provides support and advice including ergonomic assessments, manual task awareness workshops and manual task risk assessments.

SIMON O'CONNOR

LGIS Injury Prevention Consultant

Simon has a background in clinical rehabilitation, occupational health and vocational rehabilitation. He provides professional injury prevention advice, support and education to LGIS members.

Desk treadmills are a trend right now, should I get one?



The short answer to this question is, 'No, don't use a desk treadmill.'

Treadmill desks have become a topic of increased curiosity; they're all over social media with millions of views, especially after the work from home culture kicked in.

We know that a wealth of research has linked sedentary lifestyles to major health concerns like obesity, high blood pressure, excess body fat around the waist, and high cholesterol. Walking can help, just 8,000 to 9,000 steps a day can deliver real health benefits. Ironically, with our busy (mainly sedentary) work life, we don't always have the time to get those steps in. It's understandable why walking desks are appealing.

Recently, LGIS has received a number of questions about walking desks and other arrangements that combine working and exercising simultaneously at the desk.

Our advice takes a risk management approach and we caution members against bringing walking desks into an office setting.

There are a few factors at play here, and although it may be unlikely that the person would have any issues when using this equipment, there is a potential risk to the person and others in a workplace setting.

Australian physical activity guidelines

Adults should be active most days, preferably every day. Each week, adults should do either:

- 2.5 to 5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity such as brisk walk, golf, mowing the lawn or swimming.
- It is important to note that intensity is key to improve cardiovascular risk factors.

Using treadmill at your office desk can pose several types of hazards for both worker and employer. These include:

Physical hazards	Trip hazards while getting on and off the device.
	Balance and coordination issues while walking on a treadmill and typing, reading or using the mouse.
	Manual handling of the treadmill to move it away from workstation to allow seated postures/break periods.
	 Overuse musculoskeletal injuries when transitioning from minimal physical activity to 6 – 8 hours of slow walking per day.
Psychological hazards	Losing concentration and focus during administration tasks.
	Psychological impact on surrounding colleagues due to repetitive noise when walking on the treadmill.
	Potential risk within job role, if staff feel like they are unable to fit exercise into their daily schedule.
	Can affect peer communication due to noise.
Environmental hazards	The noise of a treadmill may impact other workers in the vicinity. There is also going to be an increase in noise coming from the device when it is in use, either noise from the motor/belt or from the footfall of the worker.

How can employers help?

- What is the actual reason for a desk treadmill? Often it's because workers struggle to get adequate daily physical activity, due to predominately sedentary roles. Managers should review their staff's workload and manage this accordingly.
- Encourage workers to take regular breaks from their workstation to allow postural changes, and aim to include injury prevention strategies such as stretching.
- It's preferable for a worker to be able to go for a walk around the block a few times per day, or walk somewhere for tea or lunch. This encourages regular postural changes and movement throughout the day, and provides a mental break from the work environment and works tasks.
- Introduce walking meetings if their workers have concerns, or allocate an area for movement/games room for workers to perform low impact stretching.
- Introduce health and wellbeing initiatives to promote physical activity and healthy behaviours such as the Great West Aussie Adventure initiative.

Let just say, exercise equipment belongs in the gym, and not at the desk.

Walking desks appear to be the next office fad (like fit balls as chairs) which don't provide significant improvements to health benefits and end up not being as utilised as initially thought. Workers are far better off going for a shorter brisk walk, preferably outside when weather is permitting, to simulate different parts of the brain, and improve overall mental/ psychological wellbeing as well as physical health.

There is also an argument from a productivity perspective, as some studies show reduced ability to complete fine motor skills and problem solving tasks, making completing some work tasks more difficult.

According to a study published in the Journal of NeuroEngineering and Rehabilitation, people who were walking on treadmills had significantly slower reaction times on cognitive tasks when compared to people performing the cognitive tasks while seated.

Another study by Kodak's Ergonomic Design for People at Work states that any employee walking greater than 3.5 miles (5.6km) a day while performing job tasks may be at risk for developing a musculoskeletal disorder.

In short, LGIS does not recommend using exercise equipment within an office setting. This applies to walking desks (treadmills), fitball/exercise ball as a chair, and under desk cycle ergometers. Although they can be useful for improving physical fitness, they are only recommended to be used for short period of time (when you are not working in the office).

For more information on LGIS health and wellbeing strategies, please get in touch with our injury prevention team at health@lgiswa.com.au. V

Upcoming event

Getting back to work – Injury management workshop 2023

LGIS receives over 800 workers' compensation claims every year from our local government members. On average it takes 36 days for an injured worker to return following an injury. We know that the longer a worker is away from work, the more likely their claim will develop complications or they may leave entirely.

Local government employers play a vital role in the return to work and injury management process. An engaged employer supports a worker's return (including returning on partial duties), affirming the individual's value and the contribution they make.

Who is the workshop for?

Local government employers play a vital role in the return to work and injury management process. An engaged employer supports a worker's return (including returning on partial duties), affirming the individual's value and the contribution they make.

- Wed 16 Aug Perth (9 am 4 pm)
- Wed 13 Sept Bunbury (9 am 4 pm)
- Wed 18 Oct Albany (9 am 4 pm)

Book online on the LGIS website under Resources>events at **www.lgiswa.com.au** or visit our LinkedIn page.▼′





Fit for work and workers' compensation

South West WorkCare Forum | Wednesday 30 August, 2023.

Tackling complex and sensitive issues in local government workforces



Local governments face a range of challenges when managing their people, avoiding injury and reducing workers' compensation claims. Like many industries, the sector is managing an ageing population and an increase in chronic issues such as obesity, heart disease, and mental illness.

Proactive management of employee's fitness for work is more important than ever at all stages of the lifecycle – from interview to end of employment. Individuals and employers both need a clear understanding of the psychological and physical demands of a role to make sure that injuries (and claims) are avoided.

The past few years has seen a steep increase in the cost of workers' compensation claims for the local government sector. Claims are becoming more severe and complex and it's taking an average of 36 days for injured workers to return. Ultimately, on average, outcomes are worsening for both employees and local government employers.

Making a change for better

The South West WorkCare Forum has been developed using LGIS' unique perspective to build capacity to proactively manage fitness for work issues.

Packed with speakers across a range of disciplines the forum will give you an understanding of:

- What changes to the Workers' Compensation Act mean for local government
- Fit for work keeping your people healthy and happy
- People and culture, managing fitness for work
- Leaning into difficult conversations, practical tips for people leaders
- Case studies managing return to work
- > The importance of preventative health programs

Event details

This event is a must for all local government leaders, HR, injury management and risk professionals and anyone wanting to improve their understanding of workers' compensation.

Date:	Wednesday 30 August, 2023
Time:	9:15 am to 5:00pm (morning tea, lunch and networking function)
Venue:	Dolphin Discovery Centre, Koombana Drive Bunbury
Cost:	Full Day (presentations and workshops) – \$190 (+GST and booking fee) per person
Bookings:	Book online at the LGIS website under Resources>events at www.lgiswa.com.au For any queries please contact Francesca Murolo at Francesca.Murolo@lgiswa.com.au

This event is proudly supported by



