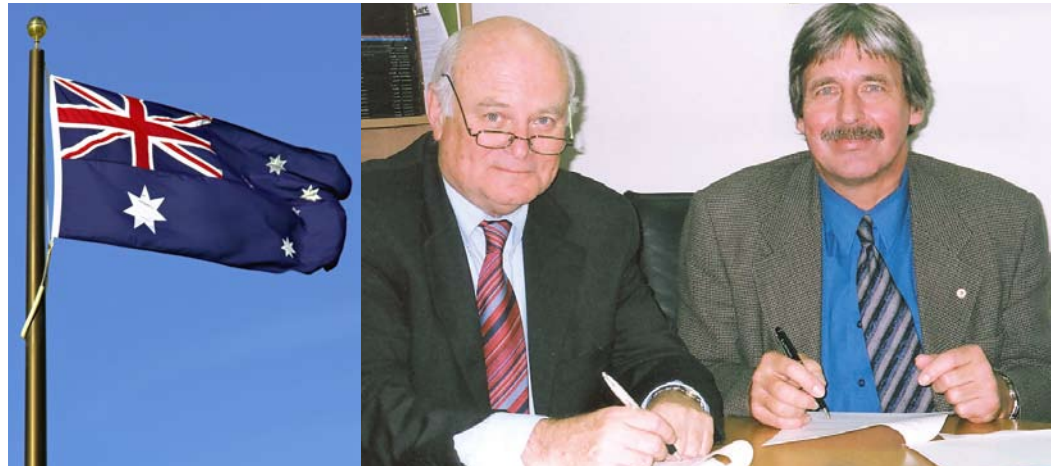




| Update from Australia



PIEF sets professional standards

The Personal Injury Education Foundation (PIEF) was established in 2006 by a consortium of Australian and New Zealand accident compensation regulators, insurers and claims management organizations that shared the vision of creating leading educational programs, initiatives and events designed to enrich and enhance the range and depth of personal injury management skills, while ensuring career pathways for people working in the personal injury industry are recognized and further developed.

Shortly after the Foundation was established, its Board agreed to send a delegation to North America to establish research and collaborative links with a number of organizations with similar missions and aims. PIEF Manager Nathan Clarke, was a member of the delegation that paid a visit to NIDMAR's headquarters in Victoria, BC. "Although I had a rough idea of what NIDMAR was all about, I was incredibly impressed with their passion and the incredible achievements that they had made up to that point. The rest as they say is history."

The agreement between NIDMAR and PIEF was finalized in 2008 when the Foundation was officially granted the license to offer the curriculum and the professional designations of Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP) and Certified Return to Work Coordinator (CRTWC) across Australia.

Clarke sees long-term potential for the professional program to make an impact. "I think Australia still has a long way to go in the disability / injury management field as it is very early days and unfortunately we are a bit behind Canada in that respect. However, I believe that there is significant momentum building and everyone I speak to about the NIDMAR programs is incredibly supportive and willing to get behind our push to increase the profile of disability / injury management in Australia."

Photo L to R: Professor R.R. Officer, Chair, PIEF and Wolfgang Zimmermann



"I don't think the challenges are that much different from those faced in other western nations, however being a large country with a relatively small population with six states and two territories all with different OHS, workers' compensation and return to work legislation is one very big challenge indeed. But I am happy to say that over the last few years many jurisdictions have agreed to work together more co-operatively to improve consistency in approach to return to work, particularly the training of Return to Work Coordinators."

In 2008, PIEF had only a short time to promote the May 2008 examinations. Despite that, nine individuals successfully passed the CDMP examination in Australia. The PIEF has since engaged a full time national coordinator for the promotion of the professional certifications across Australia. With more time to prepare, Clarke looks forward to the interest that next year's examinations are likely to generate and with the PIEF's first major national conference scheduled for October 2008, Clarke says, "I expect 2009 to be a bumper year!"

VWA takes audit tool

An agreement for transferring the Consensus Based Disability Management Audit® (CBDMA®) and the Workplace Disability Management Assessment® (WDMA®) to the Victorian WorkCover Authority in Melbourne was finalized in early 2008.

After a lengthy period of evaluation and pilot testing, it was determined that the application of both the CBDMA® and WDMA® could add significant value in achieving the objectives within the VWA's five-year strategic plan and in the context of significantly improving return to work outcomes for injured workers in the State of Victoria.

After having trained a number of external providers in the use of the CBDMA® the VWA is currently in the process of training a number of its own internal staff.



VWA achieves "IDMSC Certified"

The Victorian WorkCover Authority, after signing a license for the CBDMA® and WDMA®, to ensure it was representative of the highest standards in the field, started off on a strong footing by hiring an independent auditor to examine its own internal practices first. They passed with flying colours, i.e. achieving over 80 percent on the CBDMA.

With a workforce of just over 1,000, including a large OHS inspectorate entering high risk environments daily, WorkSafe Victoria is committed to continually improving the working environment for its employees.

By way of background, WorkSafe Victoria is the "trading name" of the Victorian WorkCover Authority, the government agency responsible for regulating occupational health and safety and workers' compensation within the State of Victoria.

Injury prevention, health promotion and injury management are the fundamental components of WorkSafe's employee support programs. The CBDMA was a great opportunity for WorkSafe to assess its existing programs against international best practice, while also gaining valuable insights into new ideas and improvement opportunities.

Consistent with WorkSafe's position as the state regulator, prevention, through collaborative risk management and health promotion activities, is a cornerstone of its employee programs. These areas scored particularly well in the CBDMA and align strongly with international best practice.

Chief Executive of the VWA Greg Tweedly said, "Disability management is an emerging discipline within Australia and for the Victorian workers' compensation scheme. While many of the concepts are well known within Australia and are applied by skilled practitioners, disability management as an integrated

L to R: Alan Clayton, IDMSC Representative; Greg Tweedly, Chief Executive, Victorian WorkCover Authority; Wolfgang Zimmermann



program is not common. This is particularly true in relation to non-work related injury and disability. As a result, it is fair to suggest that Australia is really at the start of its journey towards an integrated disability management framework. The first step is to establish the framework through application to work-related injury."

As an employer, WorkSafe Victoria's immediate objectives are about increasing collaboration and consultation around return to work policies within the protection of state and federal privacy legislation.

As the regulator of return to work and injury management (in relation to work-related injury), WorkSafe Victoria's current challenges are not dissimilar to those found in most jurisdictions including setting expectations for injured workers, treatment providers and the broader community that safe and sustainable return to work is an integral part of recovery after an injury and not just the optimal end result.

WorkSafe Victoria's long-term strategy relates to better understanding the needs and performance drivers of the different types and sizes of employer organizations. This includes identifying how WorkSafe Victoria can tailor its services and interactions to be more specific to the needs of each group.

After having gone through a CBDMA, WorkSafe Victoria suggests that organizations interested in undergoing this assessment is to focus on the recommendations coming out of it, not just on the scores, and to see this as an opportunity to develop a clear strategy for improvement.

The Children's Hospital, Westmead becomes "IDMSC Certified"

The Children's Hospital, Westmead became the first organization in Australia to receive the "IDMSC Certified" certificate, which is awarded by the International Disability Management Standards Council when an organization achieves a score of over 80 percent on the Consensus Based Disability Management Audit (CBDMA).

The 340-bed hospital is a paediatric specialty hospital and a tertiary referral hospital that sees around 26,000 admissions each year from New South Wales, Noumea, New Caledonia and other Pacific islands in the region. As Tony Middlebrook,



Executive Director NSW Claims for Employers Mutual, the organization that undertook the audit explains, the hospital runs on its own statutory arrangements in dealing with the "very sensitive issues of children's health."

Middlebrook believes the hospital excelled in the audit, because its disability management program was set up right from the beginning to embrace a collaborative approach. He adds that management and workers were open to the audit, and wanted the assessment mostly from the standpoint of "what can we do next?" "They have a very continuous improvement attitude," he notes.

The staff at the hospital experience injuries typical of many hospitals including musculoskeletal, psychological, slips and falls, ergonomic, and contagious illnesses. However, the hospital's approach to dealing with injuries and illnesses sets it apart. While Middlebrook concedes there were areas that weren't as strong, he says the program is "right up there." He cites, in particular, the good relationship-building, quick information exchanges and monthly reporting that are part of the hospital's program.

Overall, Middlebrook said the process went smoothly because the hospital looked at it as an opportunity to improve. With this first organization achieving over 80 percent, Middlebrook has a few useful tips for other organizations undergoing the CBDMA, "Don't try to hide anything. Provide a 360-degree view. And be absolutely open to the feedback."

Photo L to R: David Wilkinson, Risk Manager, NSW Dept of Health; Steve Hunt, Director, NSW Self Insurance Corporation; Ian Palmer, Executive Manager, Corporate Governance & Risk Manager, Childrens' Hospital Westmead; Frank Horn, Executive Director Workforce Development, Childrens' Hospital Westmead; Alan Clayton, IDMSC representative; Tony Middlebrook, Executive Director NSW Claims, Employers Mutual.