

POLICY NO LG39 WORKERS REHABILITATION POLICY

DEPARTMENT:	Governance
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Human Resources Manager
LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN:	Maintain workforce standards and procedures that ensure that the occupational health safety and welfare of employees, contractors and public is protected and enhanced.
STATUTORY AUTHORITY:	Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988
OBJECTIVE:	Council believes that occupational rehabilitation is of benefit to everyone and should commence as soon as possible following injury or illness. Furthermore, no person being rehabilitated will suffer financial loss or be prejudiced in any way. Early reporting of injury and illness is encouraged. Ensure access to good first-aid and high quality medical care.
POLICY INFORMATION:	Adopted 19 March 2012 – Minute No 03/12.15.4.069 Amended 20 July 2015 – Minute No 07/15.11.5.190

POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Break O'Day Council is committed to preventing illness and injuries at the workplace by providing a safe and healthy working environment for all our people. It is recognised that injury or illness may still occur and therefore all incidents will be reviewed and steps will be taken to prevent recurrence.

2. INJURY AT WORK

Where there has been a work-related injury or illness, the policy aims to manage the process of rehabilitation to ensure the early and safe return to meaningful and productive work by:

- Ensuring that a return to work as soon as possible is a normal expectation
- Ensuring early access to rehabilitation services for all who need them
- Consulting with employees and, where applicable, an employee's representative, to ensure that the rehabilitation program operates smoothly and effectively
- Informing employees of their rights in relation to a workers' compensation claim, including the choice of doctor

3. REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The objectives of Break O'Day Council's Rehabilitation Program are to:

- To assist with an early and safe return to meaningful and productive work following illness or injury
- To establish that rehabilitation is the usual course of action and should begin at the time when treatment first started
- To integrate the injured or ill employee successfully back into the workplace, and will include these essential components:

- a. All employees will be encouraged to return to full employment as soon as practicable following injury or illness
 - b. Where possible, employees will be returned to their usual work or some alternate work within their capacity, if suitable duties can be accommodated
 - c. Restricted hours of work may be available for those employees who are unable to perform a full day's duties
- Where no suitable work can be found, Council will provide for the early referral to a rehabilitation unit
 - The injured or ill employee always retains the right to receive treatment from their primary treating medical practitioner. No person will be returned to a job which will potentially aggravate the work-related injury or condition
 - Adequate training for such alternative duties will be given and safe working practices followed

4. PROCEDURES FOR OCCUPATIONAL REHABILITATION

Notification

Work related injury or illness shall be reported through completion of the appropriate forms. (Incident/Accident report forms and Workers Compensation Claim forms)

Recovery and Return to Work

Where appropriate, Council will arrange for a suitable person (eg occupational physician, medical officer of health, rehabilitation coordinator, physiotherapist) to assist the worker in the return to work process, following consultation with the primary treating medical practitioner.

Consultation

Consultation will take place between the employer, the injured worker and the treating doctor when developing a return to work plan.

Disputes

Rehabilitation disputes which cannot be resolved by mediation in the workplace may be referred to the Rehabilitation and Compensation Tribunal.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the rehabilitation records shall be maintained.

5. REHABILITATION PROCEDURES

Return to Work

Council will hold the same job open for the injured worker for a period of 12 months, except if the job no longer exists or where it is not reasonably practicable to make that employment available.

Council will prepare a return to work plan for any employee who is incapacitated for more than 14 days. This plan will be completed in consultation with the injured worker and within five days of the 14 day limit being reached.

A program for graduated return to work will be established to meet the individual needs of the injured employee.

Council's rehabilitation provider will liaise with the primary treating medical practitioner and therapists to establish a suitable rehabilitation program with short and long term goals.

It will be ensured that employees and their supervisors understand any work restrictions and physical limitations and to whom problems should be reported.

Appropriate training will be provided for any alternative duties that are unfamiliar to the employee.

Alternative Duties

Council will provide suitable alternative duties for a period of up to 12 months where there is reasonable expectation that the injured employee will thereafter be able to return to their former or equivalent occupation, except where it is not reasonably practical to provide such work, or no such meaningful work exists. Specific tasks will be allocated on a short term basis and duties will incorporate regular upgrading of activities together with a timetable for monitoring progress.

The duties will be meaningful and contribute to production and task variety. Alternative duties will take into consideration the workers skills, experience, age and status. The primary treating medical practitioner, injured staff member and other relevant persons will be part of the decision making process for identifying alternative duties. If alternative duties do not result in the expected goal, then other options will be explored including redeployment or re-training

Counselling

All injured employees will be counselled on their return to work. This counselling will include a review of causes of the accident or injury and the preventative actions that are necessary to prevent a re-occurrence.

The employee's supervisor or team leader will undertake the counselling in the first instance. Depending on the nature and severity of the accident or illness, or where a return to work plan has been implemented, the counselling may be undertaken with the assistance of the rehabilitation provider or the Human Resource Manager, or their delegate.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed every three (3) years in line with the Council's Policy Framework or earlier in the event of major changes to legislation or related policies, procedures or if deemed necessary by the General Manager.