

SPEAK UP

A message from Glen Marks

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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Making a workers' compensation claim involves you in a system which has been set up to support you medically and financially while you recover and return to your usual job (or other suitable employment). Unfortunately, that same system can leave you feeling discouraged and powerless.

You may:

- Be worried about your injury / illness.
- Be afraid of getting sicker or hurting yourself again.
- Be experiencing other aspects of your life causing stress.
- Not understand the instructions you have been given.
- Feeling like you are not getting any better.
- Feel stuck on modified duties which aren't quite right.
- Feel as though you are 'a number' rather than a person.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

The best way of dealing with this situation is to:

1. Speak up.
2. Make sure that everyone involved in your return to work planning has a good understanding of both what you can do, and how much effort your workplace responsibilities involve.
3. Ask your allocated Toll Senior Case Manager, Toll Regional Injury Management Advisor and / or your doctor about what support is available before you feel like you are at the end of your tether.

HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

Speak Up ...

There are lots of reasons you might think it's better to stay quiet, for example:

- You don't think your concerns are relevant to your health problem, or to Toll.
- You are worried about rocking the boat, for example by expressing concerns about your modified duties.
- Someone within your Toll Business Unit is making things difficult, and you don't want to make the situation worse.
- You don't trust your Toll Supervisor / Manager.

However, staying quiet can cause more problems:

- Toll and other people involved in your claim / return to work planning might notice that you have concerns but misinterpret them, thinking that you don't want to be part of the process.
- You might hurt yourself again, or delay recovery.
- You might be worrying unnecessarily, and if you spoke up a doctor, they may be able to reassure you that you are not, for example, in danger of re-injury.
- You might be missing out on help that could make your life a whole lot easier.

Remember: it is completely normal for your recovery to be impacted by things that don't have anything to do with work, or your injury / illness.

Experts in the field of workers' compensation and return to work believe that medical issues are just one of many factors which influence how quickly and successfully people recover from injury and get back to work. If troubles at home, conflict / stigma at work or fears about the future are weighing on your mind, chances are they are affecting your recovery also.

Talk to someone you trust about your concerns, such as your GP, your Toll Supervisor / Manager or your Toll Senior Case Manager / Regional Injury Management Advisor. There is a lot of support out there – but, if you don't speak up, you may never hear about it.

Explain your job in detail and tell people what you CAN do ...

Modified duties play an important role in getting you back to work quickly and safely. Your doctor has probably never been to Toll, and your Toll supervisor probably isn't a medical expert, so it can be hard to strike a balance between keeping you safe and keeping you active.

All requirements of the job need to be listed and clearly examined in the context of your injury, not just the main day to day tasks. If an injured worker is cleared to lift 10kg for example, what impact would pushing a trolley have?

Problems can also occur when medical restrictions are too restrictive. When recovering workers are spending their days feeling bored, frustrated and unproductive, it can delay recovery. In most instances, staying active promotes rehabilitation.

Problems like these are likely to go unsolved unless you draw them to someone's attention.

Ask about support before you reach the end of your tether ...

I implore Injured Toll workers to seek help as soon as needed, to prevent problems from spiralling out of control. Talk to your doctor and Toll, and if you need more assistance, ask what is available. Don't be afraid to ask for support and if you don't feel comfortable talking to someone, please email tollworkcover@tollgroup.com and an appropriate support person from my team will be in touch with you as a matter of priority.