

Case Study

Transforming injury management through early intervention in a large Australian meat processing organisation

A large Australian meat processing organisation operates in a high-output food manufacturing environment. The workforce consists primarily of manual, shift-based roles across processing lines, boning rooms, packing, dispatch and maintenance.

Employees perform repetitive, physically demanding tasks including knife work, trimming, lifting, pushing, pulling and sustained static postures. Production targets, cold environments and continuous processing lines increase both physical and operational pressure. Within this context, musculoskeletal injuries represent a significant risk to workforce continuity and cost control.

Challenges

Prior to partnering with Work Healthy Australia, the organisation was managing injuries through external providers without a structured internal framework. Their challenges included:

- Inconsistent communication with external treatment providers
- No formal structure for suitable duties programs
- Increasing WorkCover premiums
- Workers presenting Certificates of Capacity (COCs) without prior injury notification
- Difficulty distinguishing work-related from non-work-related injuries
- Limited visibility over injury trends and risk drivers

Injuries were managed reactively through external providers, creating delays in communication, inconsistent return-to-work planning and unnecessary claim escalation.

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Solutions

Work Healthy Australia partnered with the organisation to implement a structured onsite early intervention model designed to improve injury visibility, accelerate treatment and prevent injuries progressing to claims.

Our Approach

We embedded experts directly within the workplace to shift injury management from a reactive external model to a proactive, onsite system focused on prevention and early intervention. Key elements of the program included:

- 1 Pre-Employment Screens (PES) to establish baseline functional capacity and support safer hiring decisions
- 2 Task Analysis to document the physical demands of roles across processing areas

- 3 Permanent onsite clinicians providing early treatment and injury support
- 4 Work hardening programs to support safe and sustainable return to work
- 5 Structured injury reporting and benchmarking to improve visibility of trends and risk areas

Task analysis data ensured return-to-work decisions were evidence-based and aligned with the physical demands of each role, allowing suitable duties to be matched more effectively.

The impact

Since implementing onsite early intervention services, the organisation has achieved:

- ✓ Significant reduction in injuries progressing to claims
- ✓ No new physical injuries progressing to claim since implementation
- ✓ Increased early reporting and intervention
- ✓ Improved employee trust in the injury management process
- ✓ More effective suitable duties matching
- ✓ Lower injury management and claim costs
- ✓ Improved identification and management of pre-existing conditions

“*Our injury rates are down, our claims are under control, and our workforce is healthier, more engaged and better supported than ever before.*”

HR & OHS Manager, Large Australian Meat Processing Organisation