



## **Australian Meat Industry Council**

### **SUBMISSION**

**Victorian Workers Compensation System: Independent Review  
into the Agents Model and the Management of Complex  
Claims**

**September 2020**

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## The Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC)

AMIC is the Peak Industry body representing some 2,000 post-farm red meat industry enterprises. AMIC members include firms processing for domestic and export consumption, smallgoods manufacturers, boning rooms, wholesalers and distributors through to independent retail butchers. The Australian meat supply chain makes a substantial contribution to the national economy each year by accounting for over \$16.2 billion in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or 1.5% of total GDP and \$8.7 billion in Australian household income.

The meat industry chain of enterprises underpins more than 1.6% of total FTE (full-time equivalent) employed positions in Australia and about 15% of employment in agriculture, around 134,000 FTE jobs\*. Through full-time and part-time employment, as well as local plant purchasing of supplies and services, red meat processing is vital to many regional areas across Australia.

The Australian meat industry is international, with around 70% of beef exported and 60% of lamb and mutton exported.

### Key Points:

Australian Meat Industry, inadequate communication, inconsistent case managers.

### PURPOSE OF THIS SUBMISSION

In 2020 the Victorian State Government commissioned an independent review into the Victorian Workers Compensation system with a particular focus on the Agencies that manage injured workers claims.

This submission is in response to the August 2020 discussion paper entitled “*Victorian Workers Compensation System: Independent review into the Agent Model and the Management of Complex Claims*”

### SUBMISSION

To provide an accurate response to the questions posited in the discussion paper AMIC distributed a questionnaire to our membership including members in meat processing (abattoirs), retail (butcher shops), smallgoods manufacturing and meat wholesale.

In particular, AMIC was seeking information from its members on complex cases that they had experienced. Moreover, AMIC was seeking general information on how agencies managed their injured workers compensation claim.

### Responses

Only two (2) of the respondents had experienced complex workers compensation cases. A few reported cases in excess of nine (9) months however, three (3) months or less was the reported average.

The responses did outline two particular areas for concern:

1. Case manager turnover,
2. Communication.

### Case manager turnover.

Approximately 80% of respondents reported they frequently experienced a change in the case manager assigned to supervise their employees claim. This resulted in considerable frustration for the employer and worker as:

- The “story needed re-telling multiple times”
- The new case manager needed to become familiar with the case and parties involved,
- The change added unnecessary time to managing the claim including the recovery, the return to work and clearance for pre-injury duties.

### **Communication**

Respondants reported that communication was an issue not only when there was a change of case manager, but also in general. Mainly the communication was ad hoc, irregular and at times the case managers were difficult to contact particularly when a claim was difficult.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the outcome of the Independent Review and subsequent report include recommendations that the Victorian Government mandate:

1. Strict adherence that once assigned, the case manager should remain with the claim until resolution,
2. That communication between an agency and the employer and employee should be scheduled to ensure all parties are kept informed of the latest developments in the claim.
3. That a short “state of the nation” type review be distributed to parties who have utilised the services of the agencies to ensure they reach and maintain an acceptable level of service as judged by the users of the service.

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\*Australian Meat Processor Corporate Report – Evaluating the Socio-economic benefit of the red meat industry in regional Australia