

RETURN TO WORK GUIDELINES:

South Australia

A Return to Work (RTW) program is the framework that supports an individual to return to work after a work-related injury. Each state has different legislation and regulations to guide employers, workers and other stakeholders through this process.

In South Australia, [ReturnToWork SA](#) (or RTWSA) is the statutory body that regulates the Return to Work scheme for this state and provides work injury insurance to businesses. The [Return to Work Act 2014](#) is the legislation that establishes the Return to Work scheme.

Returning to work as early as is safe and practicable following an injury is an important part of a worker's recovery and provides better outcomes for all parties. Find out more [here](#).

When an injury occurs

When an injury occurs, the employee must inform the employer as soon as possible, or ask someone to do this on their behalf. The next step is to contact RTWSA. When RTWSA is contacted, they will assign a claims manager to the injured worker. This claims manager is their main contact person and will work with the worker, their employer, their medical practitioners and allied health professionals as well as any other return to work service providers to facilitate the worker's safe return to work. Whenever possible, an early return to work has been shown to engender better outcomes for all stakeholders.

Following an injury, a doctor will need to assess the condition of the worker to determine if, when and how they can return to work. This may involve gradually building up work hours or performing different duties. The doctor will provide a [Work Capacity Certificate](#) that sets out a recommended treatment plan and outlines the tasks that the worker is still able to do. The employer or Return to Work Coordinator is responsible for discussing what these tasks may be. These are referred to as suitable duties (see below).

If the worker is likely to be off work for more than four weeks, a return to work plan will be developed. The employee, employer, claims manager, doctor and any other health professionals will collaborate on

the development of this plan, with a return to work service provider if they've been enlisted. It's important that the employee takes an active role in this process and commits to getting back to work as soon as possible. Employees must also comply with the obligations set out in their return to work plan.

If a worker has a permanent impairment resulting from their work injury, an [impairment assessment](#) should be undertaken by an accredited assessor.

Return to Work plan

The [Return to Work plan](#) template can be downloaded from the ReturnToWork SA website, with an accompanying [guide](#). The plan includes:

- The worker's treatment plan
- A capacity tracking tool
- A return to work schedule
- The details of support infrastructure and personnel
- An outline of the duties/tasks the worker can perform
- Information about an alternative work placement if applicable
- A goal for the returning employee to work towards.

Suitable duties

The employee, employer or Return to Work Coordinator, claims manager and medical professionals can work together to decide what tasks the worker is still able to perform as they transition back into work. These are called [suitable duties](#). A medical expert can also complete a worksite assessment to help ascertain what type of work could be appropriate. If a worker is unable to return to their pre-injury work, the employer must provide the injured worker with [suitable employment](#).

If suitable duties are not identified, a return to work

service provider may be engaged to assist, possibly with sourcing an alternative host employer. Host employers are a viable option when a worker cannot perform their pre-injury duties but still has some capacity to work. This is called work placement, and is a temporary arrangement that can help the worker acquire new skills, training or experience.

Fit for work or job placement services may also be engaged to help an injured worker find new employment. [ReCONNECT](#) is a free service available to workers who have come to the end of their income support and need to transition into another phase. [ReSkilling](#) is another service available to workers who are not able to resume pre-injury duties or return to their former workplace.

Return to Work Coordinators

If a business in South Australia **employs 30 or more workers for three or more months**, they must have a trained and certified [Return to Work Coordinator](#) to provide support to injured workers. The Return to Work Coordinator has a pivotal role to play, liaising between the employer, employees, medical professionals and claims agent to monitor the progress of a worker, help them recover and help them return to work. As well as their involvement in ascertaining suitable duties for the worker and implementing the return to work plan, a Return to Work Coordinator can take steps to prevent the occurrence of further injuries in a workplace.

Return to Work Coordinators can be staff members or an external worker who is engaged specifically to fulfil this function. In either case, Return to Work Coordinators must have [certain training](#), acquired through a training course that has been approved by ReturnToWork SA. Employers must inform RTWSA of the details of their appointed Return to Work Coordinator. A coordinator's name and contact details must be displayed in the workplace. An employer who has two or more workplaces must appoint a contact person to provide assistance to the coordinator.

Further employer responsibilities

Employers also have further responsibilities when a worker is returning to work after an injury. These include:

- **Maintaining confidentiality**

Employers are obligated to maintain the confidentiality of the individual's personal and medical information to protect it against unauthorised use or misuse.

- **Communicating to other staff**

Employers must ensure that other people in

the workplace are aware of the return to work plan and how they are expected to support or contribute to it.

- **Implement policies and procedures**

Employers may be tasked with implementing policies and/or procedures that outline the return to work obligations and expectations of all stakeholders.

- **Dispute resolution**

Employers must communicate to staff about the dispute resolution avenues that are available to them.

For more information about return to work compliance guidelines, click the link on [this page](#). The compliance document linked to on this page also contains information about how non-compliance issues are investigated and dealt with by RTWSA.

Notifiable incidents and noticeboard requirements

Employers must report certain incidents to [SafeWork SA](#) on 1800 777 209. Find out more [here](#).

Employers must display the Return to Work Coordinator's name and contact details in workplaces.

Information in this article is correct at the time of publication. While comprehensive, this is not an exhaustive guide to the RTW requirements in South Australia and ReturnToWork SA is the best source of information for this. If you'd like to know more about implementing an effective RTW program in your workplace, get in touch with Recovery Partners by calling 1300 OHS RTW (647 789) or emailing admin@rrp.com.au.