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### IMPORTANCE OF TIMELY RETURN FOR INJURED WORKERS

Industrial Relations Minister, Paul Caica, says improving return to work rates for injured workers is a key Government goal in seeking to improve their lives.

Launching this year's nominations for WorkCover's third annual *Recovery and Return to Work Awards*, Minister Caica says a timely and successful return to work is the best possible outcome for the injured worker.

"Figures show that the longer an injured worker is away from work, the lower the probability that they will return to work at all," he said.

After three months on the Scheme, there is a 25% chance of an injured worker recovering and returning to work within another month. After six months that likelihood reduces to 12%, and after a year, it's 5%.

"A long-term absence from the workplace often results in an injured worker feeling isolated and disconnected, exposing them to an increased risk of health complications," Minister Caica said.

"The Government's new legislation has been introduced to improve return to work rates of injured workers. However, legislation is only part of the process and it's thanks to the sustained and dedicated effort of many people; the injured worker, the employer, health and rehabilitation providers, case managers and WorkCover that we can achieve this aim."

"A successful return to work takes determination, commitment and discipline by an injured worker; it takes reasonableness and flexibility by an employer; and it takes professionalism, understanding and quality service from case managers and rehabilitation service providers."

Minister Caica said the *Recovery and Return to Work Awards* recognise these exceptional efforts of participants in the Scheme who have successfully returned to work or helped others to return.

"Past winners of these awards have been an inspiration to us all. These are ordinary people fighting against the odds to recover, who seize the opportunities available to them, and return to a happy and healthy life at home and at work."

Nominations for the awards open today and close on 3 July 2009. The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony on 14 September 2009, which will be followed the next day (15 September) by WorkCover's annual conference, *A Brighter Future in Return to Work*.

WorkCover CEO Julia Davison said, “The Awards provide us with an opportunity to reward excellence in injury management and return to work services, promote best practise and applaud individuals’ efforts to inspire Scheme participants to strive for better outcomes in return to work.”

“We encourage individuals, employers, claims managers and health providers to nominate themselves or someone else if they believe they had excelled in aspects of recovery and return to work.

“The stories of past winners underline the importance of the relationship between the worker, employer and provider in successfully working together to return injured workers to the workplace.

The *2009 Recovery and Return to Work Awards* are sponsored by Employers Mutual, Minter Ellison, Business SA, and Self-Insurers South Australia. Nomination forms are available on the WorkCover website: [www.workcover.com](http://www.workcover.com).