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WORKERS' COMPENSATION AND INJURY MANAGEMENT
ACT 1981

WORKCOVER
GUIDES

WORKCOVER
Western Australia
GUIDES
FOR THE EVALUATION OF
PERMANENT IMPAIRMENT

Disclaimer

This publication contains information regarding workers' compensation. It includes some of your obligations under the workers' compensation legislation that WorkCover WA administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate Acts.

This publication may refer to WorkCover WA administered legislation that has been amended or repealed. When reading this publication you should always refer to the latest laws. Information on the latest laws can be checked at www.workcover.wa.gov.au or www.slp.wa.gov.au or contact (08) 9388 5555 or 1300 794 744 (WA country only).

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Contents

	PAGE
1. FOREWORD.....	1
2. DEFINITIONS	2
3. INTRODUCTION	4
4. UPPER EXTREMITY	17
5. LOWER EXTREMITY	19
6. THE SPINE (EXCLUDING SPINAL CORD INJURY)	29
7. NERVOUS SYSTEM	37
8. EAR, NOSE, THROAT AND RELATED STRUCTURES.....	40
9. URINARY AND REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS	44
10. RESPIRATORY SYSTEM	49
11. HEARING	52
12. THE VISUAL SYSTEM.....	56
13. PSYCHIATRIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL	57
14. HAEMATOPOIETIC SYSTEM.....	66
15. THE ENDOCRINE SYSTEM	69
16. THE SKIN	81
17. CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM	85
18. DIGESTIVE SYSTEM.....	87
APPENDIX 1: EVALUATION OF PERMANENT IMPAIRMENT FOR PART 2 OF SCHEDULE 2 OF THE ACT	88
APPENDIX 2: NEW SOUTH WALES WORKCOVER GUIDES FOR THE EVALUATION OF PERMANENT IMPAIRMENT	
NSW WORKING GROUPS ON PERMANENT IMPAIRMENT	98
APPENDIX 3: EVALUATION OF PERMANENT IMPAIRMENT ARISING FROM CHRONIC PAIN	100

The WorkCover WA Authority wishes to acknowledge the WorkCover Authority of New South Wales for their assistance in providing approval to WorkCover WA to use the NSW WorkCover Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment as a basis for the development of the WorkCover WA Guides.

1. Foreword

The “WorkCover WA Guides”, are issued under section 146R of the *Workers’ Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981* for the purpose of evaluating the degree of permanent impairment that arises from an injury, as defined in section 5 (1) of the Act.

The Act requires that assessments of permanent impairment be made in accordance with the WorkCover WA Guides by medical practitioners designated by WorkCover WA as approved medical specialists.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the medical committees, which reviewed Australian methodologies relating to the assessment of impairment. The NSW WorkCover Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment form the basis of the WorkCover WA Guides as they incorporate modifications of the American Medical Association Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment fifth edition to reflect Australian clinical practice.

The workers’ compensation and injury management system in Western Australian places high priority on interventions that assist injured workers medically recover and return to work. When a worker sustains a permanent impairment the WorkCover WA Guides are intended to provide a transparent, consistent and objective method of assessment providing certainty for workers and other parties as to the level of permanent impairment.

Other medical practitioners who may be involved treating injured workers and other stakeholders such as employers, insurers and allied health professionals are encouraged to become familiar with the WorkCover WA Guides and the impairment assessment process.

ADRIAN WARNER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
WORKCOVER WA

2. Definitions

AMA5

Means the fifth edition of the American Medical Association's (AMA) Guide to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment and any published errata.

AMA4

Means the fourth edition of the American Medical Association's (AMA) Guide to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment.

Approved medical specialist

Means a person currently designated under section 146F of the Act as an approved medical specialist.

Approved medical specialist panel

Means an approved medical specialist panel constituted under Part VII Division 3 of the Act.

Assessor

Means a specialist to whom an approved medical specialist has referred a worker for an assessment. For example an otorhinolaryngologist for a hearing assessment.

Degree of impairment

In relation to a worker, means –

- (a) a worker's degree of permanent impairment for the purposes of Part III Division 2A;
- (b) a worker's degree of permanent whole of person impairment for the purposes of Part IV Division 2 Subdivision 3;
- (c) a worker's degree of permanent whole of person impairment for the purposes of Part IXA;
- (d) a worker's degree of permanent whole of person impairment for the purposes of clause 18A (2aa)(a).

Injury, means —

- (a) a personal injury by accident arising out of or in the course of the employment, or whilst the worker is acting under the employer's instructions;
- (b) a disease because of which an injury occurs under section 32 or 33;
- (c) a disease contracted by a worker in the course of his employment at or away from his place of employment and to which the employment was a contributing factor and contributed to a significant degree;

- (d) the recurrence, aggravation, or acceleration of any pre-existing disease where the employment was a contributing factor to that recurrence, aggravation, or acceleration and contributed to a significant degree; or
- (e) a loss of function that occurs in the circumstances mentioned in section 49, but does not include a disease caused by stress if the stress wholly or predominantly arises from a matter mentioned in subsection (4) unless the matter is mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b) of that subsection and is unreasonable and harsh on the part of the employer.

Maximum medical improvement

An assessment of a worker's degree of permanent impairment is only to be conducted when the approved medical specialist considers that the worker's condition has stabilised to the extent required for an evaluation of permanent impairment. This is considered to occur when the worker's condition is unlikely to change substantially in the ensuing 12 months with or without further medical treatment (i.e., further recovery or deterioration is not anticipated). At this stage the worker is considered to have reached maximum medical improvement. The only exception to the principle that the condition must be stable for an evaluation to be done is in the limited circumstances outlined in the Act and the WorkCover WA Guides, which provide for a special evaluation to be done.

NSW Guides

The WorkCover Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment, published by the WorkCover Authority of New South Wales.

Secondary condition

Means a condition, whether psychological, psychiatric, or sexual, that, although it may result from the injury or injuries concerned, arises as a secondary or less direct, consequence of that injury or those injuries.

The Act

The *Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981*.

WorkCover WA Guides

Means the directions published by WorkCover WA under section 146R in the form of the WorkCover WA Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment.

3. Introduction

WorkCover WA has introduced guides for the evaluation of permanent impairment based on the American Medical Association's Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment, fifth edition (AMA5).

These directions, to be known as the WorkCover WA Guides, are issued under section 146R of the *Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981* (the Act). This is the first edition.

The WorkCover WA Guides adopt the methodology of AMA5 in most cases. Where there is any deviation, the difference is defined in the WorkCover WA Guides. Where differences exist, the WorkCover WA Guides are to be used as the modifying document. The procedures contained in the WorkCover WA Guides are to prevail if there is any inconsistency with AMA5.

The WorkCover WA Guides are to be used wherever there is a need to establish the degree of permanent impairment that results from a work-related injury. The WorkCover WA Guides are to be used for the following purposes:

- I. assessing whole of person impairment for the purpose of meeting the thresholds to enable a worker to elect to pursue damages at common law (Part IV Division 2 Subdivision 3 of the Act);
- II. determining the degree of impairment for a Schedule 2 lump sum payment (Part III Division 2A of the Act);
- III. establishing the degree of whole of person impairment which is required for workers seeking an entitlement for a specialised retraining program (Part IXA of the Act); and
- IV. establishing the degree of whole of person impairment as part of the requirements for entitlement under clause 18A(2aa)(a) of Schedule 1 (exceptional circumstances) for a further additional sum for medical and other expenses.

Approved medical specialists are expected to be familiar with Part VII Division 2 of the Act (assessing degree of impairment) and the impairment thresholds required for each of the purposes for which an impairment evaluation may be obtained. Approved medical specialists should also be familiar with the timeframes in regulations for an approved medical specialist to arrange an assessment and to provide the documents that an approved medical specialist is required by section 146H to give the worker and employer.

Assessing permanent impairment involves determining:

- I. whether a worker's condition has resulted in impairment;
- II. whether a worker's condition has stabilised to the extent required for an evaluation of the degree of impairment (has reached Maximum Medical Improvement (MMI));
- III. whether a special evaluation is required;
- IV. the degree of permanent impairment that results from the injury; and
- V. whether there should be a deduction in the % degree of impairment for any pre-existing symptomatic disease.

An evaluation of permanent impairment does not determine the question of liability for a claim. In certain cases an evaluation of impairment may be requested even though aspects of a worker's claim may be in dispute. In evaluating permanent impairment an approved medical specialist may be required in accordance with the WorkCover WA Guides to make certain clinical judgements. Where it is not possible to determine whether a deduction should apply then no deduction should be made.

It is a requirement under the Act that the approved medical specialist report and impairment certificate not be given for any purpose other than the purpose for which the request is made (either common law, Schedule 2, clause 18A (2aa)(a) of Schedule 1, or the specialised retraining program), and has no effect for the other purposes. If a worker seeks to request an assessment for different purposes (for example, Schedule 2 and common law) then separate certificates will be required.

Approved medical specialists are expected to be familiar with Chapters 1 and 2 of AMA5 and the information contained in the introduction of the WorkCover WA Guides as this provides guidance as to how assessment of permanent impairment should be undertaken.

3.1 Development of WorkCover WA Guides

The WorkCover WA Guides were developed through consultation with a committee of medical experts.

Australian methodologies relating to assessment of impairment were reviewed. The NSW WorkCover Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment, which are largely based on the American Medical Association Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment, fifth edition, was recommended as the most up-to-date basis for assessing whole person impairment. The NSW Guides incorporate modifications of the AMA5 to reflect Australian clinical practices.

The Committee noted that an extensive process of consultation with the medical profession occurred in the development of the NSW Guides. In addition to a coordinating group, specific working groups of medical specialists were established to review each of the chapters of the AMA5. These groups are identified in Appendix 2.

The NSW Guides exclude Chapter 18 of the AMA5 regarding the assessment of pain. There is currently no validated measurement tool for pain, although there are some selected conditions in the AMA5 where pain is part of the assessment, such as reflex sympathetic dystrophy and primary neurological pain for which assessments can be made.

WorkCover NSW has given approval for the NSW Guides to be adopted in Western Australia and modified to reflect this system. There are variations to the NSW Guides which reflect different legislative provisions and assessment processes between the two workers' compensation jurisdictions.

The WorkCover WA Guides are to be reviewed and updated as subsequent editions of the AMA Guides becomes available. The WorkCover WA Guides will also be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure currency.

3.2 Body systems covered by the WorkCover WA Guides

Most body systems, structures and disorders included in AMA5 are included in the WorkCover WA Guides. However, WorkCover WA has adopted its own criteria for assessment of certain body systems as discussed below:

- As per the NSW Guides, pain (Chapter 18 of the AMA5) is excluded (see Appendix 3: Evaluation of permanent impairment arising from chronic pain, for a full explanation). Accordingly, pain related impairment ratings in AMA5 (pp 573-591) are excluded at the present time. New developments in the evaluation of pain will be monitored and considered as part of further development of the WorkCover WA Guides.
- The Chapter on Mental and Behavioural Disorders (Chapter 14 in AMA5) is omitted and replaced with the Chapter in the WorkCover WA Guides on psychiatric and psychological disorders. This is based on a Psychiatric Impairment Rating Scale (PIRS).
- Vision. This is based on AMA4. The approved medical specialist will require the worker to submit to examination for assessment and tests by an ophthalmologist and ensure the ophthalmologist examines the worker in accordance with AMA4. Note that conversion to Schedule 2 must also be in accordance with AMA4 (see Appendix 1).
- Hearing loss. For the purposes of sections 24A and 31E and Schedule 7 of the Act, noise induced hearing loss will continue to be assessed and calculated in accordance with the above provisions and will not need to be evaluated by an approved medical specialist in accordance with the WorkCover WA Guides. Chapter 9 provides for the evaluation of other types of hearing impairment.

3.3 Assessment of impairment – generally

A worker's degree of impairment is to be evaluated, as a percentage, in accordance with the WorkCover WA Guides.

A request for assessment by an approved medical specialist is to be made in accordance with the regulations.

Approved medical specialists must be trained in the use of the WorkCover WA Guides and satisfy criteria for designation as an approved medical specialist. However, for certain body systems identified in the WorkCover WA Guides it will be necessary for the approved medical specialists to require a worker to submit to examination by another medical practitioner or specialist or dentist for specific tests or assessment (for example, an ophthalmologist for visual impairments, a psychiatrist for psychological and psychiatric disorders, or an otorhinolaryngologist for hearing impairments).

In these cases the specialist or dentist is referred to as an assessor as per the definitions in the WorkCover WA Guides. Where it is necessary for the approved medical specialist to require a worker to submit to examination by an assessor the approved medical specialist is responsible for ensuring the tests or assessments are made in accordance with the WorkCover WA Guides and will still be required by section 146H to issue a report and certificate of the worker's

degree of impairment (also see sections in this Chapter on “relevant information” and “ordering additional investigations”).

3.4 Disputes about the degree of permanent impairment - approved medical specialist panels

If an employer disputes the level of impairment after a worker has obtained an assessment for the purposes of Part IXA (specialised retraining programs), clause 18A (2aa)(a) of Schedule 1 (additional medical expenses), or Schedule 2 (lump sum payments) of the Act, a worker may apply to have the question determined by an arbitrator. An arbitrator may determine the worker's degree of permanent impairment, or refer the question for assessment to an approved medical specialist panel. A determination by an approved medical specialist panel is final and binding on any court or tribunal but only in relation to the purpose for which the question was referred.

Where a question is referred to an approved medical specialist panel, a worker's degree of impairment is to be assessed in accordance with section 146A, and section 146B, 146D or 146E, as the case requires. Approved medical specialist panel members are expected to be familiar with Part VII Division 3 of the Act dealing with approved medical specialist panel assessments.

For common law purposes (Part IV, Division 2, Subdivision 3), an employer may not dispute a worker's impairment assessment until the matter is dealt with in the District Court. These disputes are determined in the District Court not by an approved medical specialist panel.

3.5 Assessment for Schedule 2 purposes

Appendix 1 of the WorkCover WA Guides contains specific directions regarding the assessment of impairment for Schedule 2.

3.6 Permanent impairment — maximum medical improvement

An assessment of a worker's degree of permanent impairment is only to be conducted when the approved medical specialist considers that the worker's condition has stabilised to the extent required for an evaluation of permanent impairment. This is considered to occur when the worker's condition is unlikely to change substantially in the ensuing 12 months with or without further medical treatment (i.e., further recovery or deterioration is not anticipated). At this date the worker has reached maximal medical improvement. An evaluation of permanent impairment can only be undertaken if the worker has reached maximum medical improvement, except if a special evaluation is required (see Special Evaluation below).

If the approved medical specialist considers that maximum medical improvement has not been achieved, the approved medical specialist will be required to certify that a worker's condition has not stabilised to the extent required for an evaluation of permanent impairment and must indicate when they believe the worker's condition will stabilise.

If a worker has been offered, but refused, additional or alternative medical treatment that the approved medical specialist considers is likely to improve a worker's condition, the approved medical specialist should evaluate the current condition, without consideration for potential changes associated with the proposed treatment. The approved medical specialist may note the potential for improvement in a worker's condition in the evaluation report, and the reasons for refusal by the worker, but should not adjust the degree of impairment on the basis of the worker's decision.

Similarly, if an approved medical specialist forms the opinion that although a worker's condition is stable in the foreseeable future, it is expected to deteriorate in the long term, the approved medical specialist should make no allowance for deterioration but note its likelihood in the evaluation report. If the worker's condition deteriorates at a later time, the worker may request a further evaluation of impairment, subject to any relevant provision in the Act that affects the ability of a worker to request or obtain a further evaluation.

3.7 Special evaluation

It is a general principle that an assessment of permanent impairment only be done when a worker's condition has stabilised (ie has reached maximum medical improvement).

However, in limited circumstances a special evaluation can be done for workers requesting an assessment of impairment in order to make an election by the termination day to pursue common law damages (section 93N), or for the further additional sum for medical and other expenses under clause 18A(2aa)(a) of Schedule 1 (exceptional circumstances) of the Act.

A special evaluation allows for an evaluation to be done even if the condition has not stabilised and overrides anything in the AMA5 or the WorkCover WA Guides that requires the condition to be stable or to have reached maximum medical improvement. These limited circumstances are outlined below:

3.7.1 Common law

In accordance with section 93N of the Act a special evaluation can be done if the following conditions are met:

- I. the worker has already obtained an extension to the termination day on the basis that his or her condition has not stabilised (in accordance with section 93M(4)(a)(i)); and
- II. the certificate is given after the expiry of the period of 6 months after the day that would have been the termination day had there been no extension under section 93M(4) of the Act.

This can be verified by checking the date of the termination day against the date of the extension approved by the Director Dispute Resolution Directorate.

3.7.2 Clause 18A (2aa)(a): further additional sum for medical and related expenses (exceptional circumstances)

A special evaluation must also be done if a worker is applying for a further additional sum for medical and other expenses under clause 18A(2aa)(a) of Schedule 1 of the Act, (exceptional circumstances). An evaluation will be necessary for this purpose as one of the eligibility criteria will be that the worker has at least 15% whole of person impairment. In these circumstances an approved medical specialist is to assess the degree of impairment as if the worker's condition has reached maximum medical improvement.

3.8 Secondary Conditions

In evaluating the degree of permanent impairment of a worker for the purposes of common law (section 146C (6)) the specialised retraining program (section 146D (3), and clause 18A(2aa)(a) of Schedule 1 (section 146E (3)), any secondary psychological, psychiatric or sexual condition is to be disregarded. In accordance with section 146 of the Act a secondary condition means a condition, whether psychological, psychiatric, or sexual, that, although it may result from the injury or injuries concerned, arises as a secondary, or less direct, consequence of that injury or injuries.

Permanent impairment assessments for psychological, psychiatric or sexual conditions are only required where the condition is a primary result of the injury (i.e. does not arise as a secondary, or less direct, consequence of that injury). The following examples provide guidance on assessing secondary conditions:

Example 1- exclusion of secondary psychological condition

A worker suffers an injury to the shoulder and neck in a work related accident. Several months later the worker develops depression associated with the inability to perform normal work. In this case the psychological condition would not be taken into account in the evaluation of impairment.

Example 2 – exclusion of secondary sexual condition

A worker suffers a shoulder injury and has some limitation of movement, and subsequently experiences loss of libido. In this example there is no direct impact upon the sexual organs and the loss of libido should not be taken into account in the evaluation of impairment.

The evaluation will not preclude psychological, psychiatric and sexual conditions where these conditions are a direct consequence of an injury, an example of which would be psychiatric condition experienced by a bank teller as a result of a hold up.

Example 3- inclusion of psychological condition

An armed robbery at a bank results in a leg injury to a worker and a psychological condition that is a direct result of the trauma associated with the event. In this case the conditions – the injury to the leg, and the

psychological condition - would both contribute to the evaluation of impairment, as each is a direct result of the injury.

Example 4 – inclusion of sexual condition (loss of genitals)

A workplace injury caused by farm machinery results in the loss of the primary sex organs. In this case the sexual condition would contribute to the evaluation of impairment.

Example 5 - inclusion of sexual condition (impotence as a result of spinal injury)

A worker is assessed as impotent as a result of a work related spinal injury. An approved medical specialist, in accordance with the WorkCover WA Guides, finds objective evidence of spinal cord, cauda equina or bilateral nerve root dysfunction. Accordingly, the impairment rating for impotence will contribute to the worker's degree of impairment.

N.B- Impotence should only be assessed as an impairment related to spinal injury where there is other objective evidence of spinal cord, cauda equina or bilateral nerve root dysfunction. The ratings described in Table 13-21 on p 342 of AMA5 are used in this instance. There is no additional impairment rating system for impotence in the absence of objective clinical findings (refer Chapter 6 of the WorkCover WA Guides).

In terms of assessment of sexual functioning (AMA5, Chapter 7, pp 143-171): Impotence is assessed as an impairment only if there is an associated neurological impairment (see Chapter 7 of the WorkCover WA Guides).

The basis for determining that a psychological, psychiatric or sexual condition arises as a secondary, or less direct, consequence of the injury or injuries (and should not be included in the assessment of impairment), or the basis for determining that the psychological, psychiatric or sexual condition is a direct consequence of the injury or injuries (and should be included in the assessment of impairment) should be explained in the Report.

3.9 Multiple impairments

Multiple impairments resulting from an injury or injuries arising out of a single event may be combined to determine the degree of permanent impairment of an injured worker.

The Combined Values Chart (pp 604-606, AMA5) is used to derive a % WPI that arises from multiple impairments. An explanation of its use is found on pp 9-10 of AMA5.

In accordance with sections 93H(2), 158(2) and clause 18C(4) of Schedule 1, "event" means anything that results, whether immediately or not and whether suddenly or not, in an injury or injuries of a worker and the term includes continuous or repeated exposure to conditions that results in an injury or injuries of a worker.

Example 6 - Multiple impairments

A worker suffers an injury to the back, neck and leg after falling from scaffolding. Each of the body areas affected in the fall would be assessed and the impairment values for each would be combined and converted to a WPI rating by reference to the Combined Values Chart in the AMA5 (p 604).

If there is more than one “event” separate evaluations of the degree of impairment must be made for each event.

Example 7 – Distinct injuries arising out of separate events

In June, a worker received a fracture to the ankle and calcaneal tuberosity in a fall from a height. Because of the mild degree of reduced ankle movements, the percent WPI was assessed at 3%. Three months later, in a separate event, the worker tripped heavily and inverted the ankle, resulting in a further injury to the previously injured ankle. On clinical review, there was evidence of a moderate level of ankle ligamentous instability, which resulted in a WPI rating of 4%. The earlier appropriate clinical impairment assessments would need to be available to ensure that the assessor had clear evidence of what was the first injury and its WPI assessment to be able to clearly report on the second injury and its assessment.

In determining whether any injury or injuries arise out of a single event consideration needs to be given to whether there is continuous or repeated exposure to conditions from that event resulting in the injury. If it is established that the injuries arise out of a single event then each of the body areas affected would be assessed and the impairment values for each would be combined and converted to a WPI rating by reference to the Combined Values Chart in the AMA5 (p 604).

Where it is not possible to determine whether an injury arises out of a single event then all impairments should be combined in the assessment.

In each case the basis for determining:

- (a) whether separate evaluations should be undertaken where there is more than one event;
- (b) combining impairments; or
- (c) a finding that it is not possible to determine whether the impairments result from an injury or injuries arising out of a single event;

should be clearly explained in the approved medical specialist report.

3.10 Pre-existing diseases

In this section “disease”, includes any physical or mental ailment, disorder, defect, or morbid condition whether of sudden or gradual development (as defined in section 5 of the Act).

In accordance with section 146A(4) of the Act, for a case in which the evaluation of the degree of impairment of the worker involves taking into account a recurrence, aggravation, or acceleration of any pre-existing disease that was to

any extent asymptomatic before the event from which the injury or injuries arose, there is not to be any deduction to reflect the pre-existing nature of that disease to the extent that it was asymptomatic before that event.

For any disease that was symptomatic before the event from which the injury or injuries arose there may be a “deductible proportion” in the degree of impairment. Where it is not possible to determine whether a deduction should apply then no deduction should be made in each case the basis for the judgement and deduction, if any, should be clearly explained in the approved medical specialist report.

Example 8 - No Deduction for pre-existing asymptomatic disease

A worker suffers an injury to the low back and when assessed for impairment results in a WPI assessment of 5%. Clinical assessment identifies evidence of pre-existing degenerative changes to the lumbar spine. But on critical questioning, the patient indicates that they did not suffer any previous symptoms in relation to the back. In this example, there would not be any deduction from the WPI assessment, even if it were possible to determine the proportion of impairment attributable to the pre-existing asymptomatic condition.

Example 9 - Deduction for pre-existing symptomatic disease

A worker obtains an evaluation of the degree of impairment from an approved medical specialist for an injury to the lumbar spine, which is assessed at 10%. A few months later the worker suffers another injury to the lumbar spine, which is affected by the previous injury. The whole person impairment is assessed as 26%. In this case, the degree of WPI attributable to the current injury is determined by way of subtraction, i.e. $26\% - 10\% = 16\%$.

3.11 Special provisions relating to AIDS and specified industrial diseases

3.11.1 AIDS

A worker who has contracted AIDS in the course of employment is deemed to have 100% impairment under Item 82 of Part 2 of Schedule 2. If the worker is obtaining an assessment for common law the worker will be deemed to have at least 25% whole of person impairment under section 93Q(3) of the Act for the purposes of making an election to seek damages at common law. An approved medical specialist is not required to assess a worker's degree of impairment, however the worker will require certification from a medical practitioner to the effect that the worker has contracted AIDS.

The regulations may make provision for methods of deciding whether a worker has contracted AIDS. In the absence of regulations the method of deciding whether a worker has contracted AIDS is based on the advice of the medical practitioner who provides certification to the worker.

3.11.2 Specified Industrial Diseases

If common law damages are being sought in respect of a disease referred to in section 33 or 34 of the Act, any assessment to evaluate the worker's degree of permanent whole of person impairment resulting from the disease is to be made, not by an approved medical specialist but by a medical panel constituted under section 36 (Industrial Diseases Medical Panel).

Even though the worker's condition is not required to have stabilised, the evaluation is not a special evaluation as referred to in section 146C and the WorkCover WA Guides.

The panel assessing the worker is expected to be familiar with section 93R and Part III Division 3 of the Act, and Chapter 10 of the WorkCover WA Guides.

3.12 Adjustment for the effects of orthoses and prostheses

Assessments of permanent impairment are to be conducted without assisting devices, except where these cannot be removed. The approved medical specialist will need to make an estimate as to what is the level of impairment, without such a device, if it cannot be removed for examination purposes.

Further details may be obtained in the relevant chapters in the WorkCover WA Guides.

Impairment of vision should be measured with an injured worker wearing their prescribed corrective spectacles and/or contact lenses, if this was usual for the injured worker before the workplace injury. If, as a result of the workplace injury, the injured worker has been prescribed corrective spectacles and/or contact lenses for the first time, or different spectacles and/or contact lenses than those prescribed pre-injury, the difference should be accounted for in the assessment of permanent impairment.

3.13 Adjustment for the effects of treatment

In circumstances where the treatment of a condition leads to a secondary impairment, the approved medical specialist should use the appropriate parts of the WorkCover WA Guides to evaluate the effects of treatment, and use the Combined Values Chart (pp 604-606 AMA5) to arrive at a final whole person impairment. This does not apply to a psychological, psychiatric, or sexual condition that, although it may result from the injury or injuries concerned, arises as a secondary, or less direct, consequence of that injury or injuries.

3.14 Relevant information

Under section 146A(3) of the Act a request for assessment by an approved medical specialist is to be made in accordance with the regulations. All parties are expected to be familiar with this requirement.

In accordance with the requirements in section 146G(1) of the Act, on being requested to assess a worker's degree of impairment, an approved medical specialist may:

- a) in accordance with the regulations, require a worker to attend at a professionally appropriate place specified by the approved medical specialist;
- b) require a worker to answer any question about the injury;
- c) in accordance with the regulations, require a worker, an employer, or an employer's insurer to –
 - I. produce to the approved medical specialist any relevant document or information; or
 - II. consent to another person who has any relevant document or information producing it to the approved medical specialist; and
- d) require a worker to submit to examination by, or as requested by, the approved medical specialist.

A person who contravenes one of the above requirements commits an offence and is liable to a fine of \$2 000 under the Act.

The approved medical specialist should be provided with all relevant medical and allied health information, including results of all investigations related to the condition that is being assessed. Regulations require a worker who requests an assessment of the worker's degree of impairment to produce any information described in the regulations for use in dealing with the request.

The AMA5 and the WorkCover WA Guides also indicate the information and investigations that are required to arrive at a diagnosis and to measure permanent impairment. The approved medical specialist must apply the approach outlined in the WorkCover WA Guides. Approved medical specialists must consult these documents to gain an understanding of the information that should be provided to the approved medical specialist in order to conduct a comprehensive evaluation.

If an approved medical specialist has been requested to assess a worker's degree of impairment, WorkCover WA with the consent of the worker may disclose to the approved medical specialist any information that it has that may be relevant to the assessment (section 146I of the Act).

3.15 Ordering of additional investigations

As a general principle, an approved medical specialist is expected to make an assessment of permanent impairment without additional radiographic or other investigations.

If, however, the investigations previously undertaken are inadequate for a proper assessment to be made, the approved medical specialist should consider the value of proceeding with the evaluation of permanent impairment without adequate investigations.

In special circumstances where the approved medical specialist considers that further investigation is essential for a comprehensive evaluation to be undertaken and deferral of the evaluation would considerably inconvenience a worker (eg, when a worker has travelled from a country region specifically for the assessment), the approved medical specialist may proceed to order the appropriate investigations, provided that an appropriate risk/benefit evaluation has been undertaken.

The person requesting the assessment from the approved medical specialist will be required to bear the cost of any further investigation unless the assessment is for the purposes of section 93M of the Act (election to retain right to seek damages), in which case the cost of the assessment including an assessment that resulted in a finding that the worker's condition has not stabilised (to the extent required for a normal evaluation) is paid out of the workers entitlement under clause 17(1aa) of Schedule 1 of the Act.

3.16 Approved medical specialist reports & certificates

The approved medical specialist is expected to be familiar with the requirements in section 146H of the Act and associated regulations in relation to the provision of reports and certificates of the worker's degree of impairment, and timeframes associated with provision of these documents.

Approved medical specialist reports and certificates, required under the Act to be given to the worker and employer, will be used in determining the outcome of a worker's claim for certain statutory benefits and ability to pursue damages at common law. The report and certificate become legal documents and, where an assessment is made to enable a worker to elect to pursue damages at common law, will be used as evidence in court.

A certificate for the purposes of:

- (a) Part III Division 2A (Schedule 2);
- (b) Part IV Division 2 Subdivision 3 (common law);
- (c) Part IXA (specialised retraining program); or
- (d) clause 18A(2aa)(a) of Schedule 1 of the Act (further additional sum, medical and related expenses);

is to specify the provisions for the purposes of which it is made.

It is a requirement under the Act that a certificate given for the purposes in paragraph (a), (b), (c) or (d) above is not to be given for the purposes of the provisions referred to any of the other paragraphs, and has no effect for the provisions referred to in any of the other paragraphs.

A report of the evaluation of permanent impairment should be accurate, comprehensive and fair. It should clearly address the question being asked of the approved medical specialist.

In general, the approved medical specialist will be requested to address issues of:

- current clinical status, including the basis for determining whether the condition has stabilised to the extent required for an evaluation (reached maximum medical improvement);
- the degree of permanent impairment that results from the injury; and
- the proportion of permanent impairment due to any previous symptomatic disease, if any.

The report should contain factual information based on the approved medical specialist's own history taking and clinical examination. If other reports or investigations are relied upon in arriving at an opinion, these should be appropriately referenced in the report.

The report of the evaluation should provide a rationale consistent with the methodology and content of the WorkCover WA Guides. It should include a comparison of the key findings of the evaluation with the impairment criteria in the WorkCover WA Guides. If the evaluation was conducted in the absence of any pertinent data or information, the approved medical specialist should indicate how the impairment rating was determined with limited data. The format for reports and certificates is prescribed in regulations.

Approved medical specialists are strongly advised to refer to the "Medical Board of Western Australia Board Policies - Medico-Legal and other Independent Medical Examinations", however, if there is any inconsistency between that publication and the Act, regulations or the WorkCover WA Guides, then the Act, regulations or the WorkCover WA Guides are to prevail.

3.17 Code of conduct

Approved medical specialists are reminded that they have a duty to act in an ethical, professional and considerate manner when examining workers for the purpose of assessing the degree of permanent impairment.

Effective communication is vital to ensure that a worker is well-informed and able to maximally cooperate in the process. Approved medical specialists should:

- ensure that the worker understands who the approved medical specialist is and his/her role in the evaluation;
- ensure that the worker understands how the evaluation will proceed;
- take reasonable steps to preserve the privacy and modesty of the worker during the evaluation; and
- not provide any opinion to the worker about their claim.

Complaints in relation to the behaviour of an approved medical specialist during an evaluation will initially be reviewed by WorkCover WA. If complaints recur or the initial review reveals a problem potentially exists, the complaint will be referred to the WA Medical Board for investigation and appropriate action.

4. Upper extremity

AMA5 Chapter 16 applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of the upper extremities, subject to the modifications set out below.

4.1 Introduction

The upper extremities are discussed in AMA5 Chapter 16 (pp 433–521). This chapter provides guidelines on methods of assessing permanent impairment involving these structures. It is a complex chapter that requires an organised approach with careful documentation of findings. Diagnosis-related estimates (DREs) are not used to the same extent as in the lower extremity section of AMA5.

Evaluation of anatomical impairment forms the basis for upper extremity impairment assessment. The ratings reflect the degree of impairment and its impact on the ability of the person to perform activities of daily living. The most practical and useful approach to evaluating impairment of part of the upper extremity is to compare the current loss of function with the loss resulting from amputation. There can be clinical conditions where evaluation of impairment may be difficult, for example lateral epicondylitis of the elbow. Such conditions are evaluated by their effect on function of the upper extremity, or, if all else fails, by analogy with other impairments that have similar effect(s) on upper limb function.

4.2 The approach to assessment of the upper extremity and hand

Assessment of the upper extremity mainly involves clinical evaluation. Cosmetic and functional evaluations are performed in some situations. The impairment must be permanent and stable. The worker will have a defined diagnosis that can be confirmed by examination.

The assessed impairment of a part or region can never exceed the impairment due to amputation of that part or region. For an upper limb, therefore, the maximum evaluation is 60% whole person impairment.

Active range of motion should be measured with several repetitions to establish reliable results. Only active motion is measured, not passive motion.

To achieve an accurate and comprehensive assessment of the upper extremity findings should be documented on a standard form. AMA5 Figures 16–1a and 16–1b (pp 436–437) are extremely useful, both to document findings and to guide the assessment process. Note, however, that the final summary parts of Figures 16–1a and 16–1b do not make it clear that identifiable impairments which are the result of a peripheral nerve injury (eg, digital nerve sensory loss, decreased range of motion of joints, etc) are not to be separately assessed, evaluated and combined with the impairment evaluation for the peripheral nerve injury. (See also 4.3.1 below).

The hand and upper extremity are divided into regions: thumb, fingers, wrist, elbow, and shoulder. Close attention needs to be paid to the instructions in Figures 16–1a and 16–1b (pp 436–437, AMA5) regarding adding or combining impairments.

Table 16–3 (p 439, AMA5) is used to convert upper extremity impairment to whole person impairment. Note that 100% upper extremity impairment is equivalent to 60% whole person impairment.

4.3 Specific interpretation of AMA5 — the hand and upper extremity

4.3.1 Impairment of the upper extremity due to peripheral nerve disorders

If an upper extremity impairment results solely from a peripheral nerve injury, the approved medical specialist should not also evaluate impairment(s) from Sections 16.2 to 16.4 (pp 441–479, AMA5) for that upper extremity. Section 16.5 should be used for evaluation of such impairment. For peripheral nerve lesions use Table 16–15 (p 492, AMA5) together with Tables 16–10a and 16–11a (pp 482 and 484, AMA5) for evaluation.

When applying Tables 16–10a (p 482, AMA5) and Table 16–11a (p 484, AMA5) the maximum value for each grade should be used.

4.3.2 Impairment due to other disorders of the upper extremity

The section “Impairment of the Upper Extremity Due to Other Disorders” (AMA5 Section 16.7 pp 498–507) should be used only when other criteria (as presented in Sections 16.2–16.6 [pp 441–498 of AMA5]) have not adequately encompassed the extent of the impairments. Impairments from the disorders considered in Section 16.7 are usually estimated using other criteria. The approved medical specialist must take care to avoid duplication of impairments.

Radiographs for carpal instability (AMA5 Table 16–25, p 503) should only be considered, if available, along with the clinical signs. X-ray examination should not be performed solely for this evaluation.

If strength evaluation is chosen as a method of assessing upper extremity impairment, the caveats detailed on AMA5 p 508, under the heading “16.8a Principles”, need to be observed.

5. Lower extremity

AMA5 Chapter 17 applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of the lower extremities, subject to the modifications set out below.

5.1 Introduction

The lower extremities are discussed in AMA5 Chapter 17 (pp 523–564). This section is complex and provides a number of alternative methods of assessing permanent impairment involving the lower extremity. An organised approach is essential and findings should be carefully documented on a worksheet.

5.2 The approach to assessment of the lower extremity

Assessment of the lower extremity involves physical evaluation, which can use a variety of methods. In general, the method should be used that most specifically addresses the impairment present. For example, impairment due to a peripheral nerve injury in the lower extremity should be assessed with reference to that nerve rather than by its effect on gait.

There are several different forms of evaluation that can be used, as indicated in Sections 17.2b to 17.2n (pp 528–554 AMA5). Table 17–2 (p 526 AMA5) indicates which evaluation methods can be combined and which cannot. It may be possible to perform several different evaluations as long as they are reproducible and meet the conditions specified below and in AMA5. The most specific method of impairment assessment should be used.

It is possible to use an algorithm to aid in the assessment of lower extremity impairment. Use of worksheets is essential. Tables 5.2 and 5.3 of these WorkCover WA Guides (pp 26–28) are such worksheets and may be used in assessment of permanent impairment of the lower extremity.

In the assessment process, the evaluation giving the highest impairment rating is selected. That may be a combined impairment in some cases, in accordance with the Guide to the Appropriate Combination of Evaluation Methods Table (Table 17–2, p 526 AMA5), using the Combined Values Chart (pp 604–606, AMA5).

When the Combined Values Chart is used, the approved medical specialist must ensure that all values combined are in the same category of impairment rating (i.e. %WPI, Lower extremity impairment %, Foot impairment %, and so on). The final lower extremity impairment percentage has to be converted to %WPI and then it may be combined with the %WPI assessed for other impairments.

Table 17–2 (p 526, AMA5) needs to be referred to frequently to determine which impairments can be combined and which cannot.

5.3 Specific interpretation of AMA5 — the lower extremity

5.3.1 Leg length discrepancy

When true leg length discrepancy is determined clinically (AMA5 Section 17.2b, p 528), the method used must be indicated (for example, tape measure from anterior superior iliac spine to the medial malleolus). Clinical assessment of leg length discrepancy is an acceptable method but if computerised tomography films are available they should be used in preference. Such an examination should not be ordered solely for determining leg lengths.

When applying Table 17–4 (p 528, AMA5), the element of choice should be removed and impairments for leg length discrepancy should be read as the higher figure of the range quoted (i.e. 0, 3, 5, 7, or 8 for whole person impairment, or 0, 9, 14, 19, or 20 for lower limb impairment).

5.3.2 Gait derangement

If gait derangement (AMA5 Section 17.2c, p 529) is used as the method of impairment assessment for the lower extremity it cannot be combined with any other evaluation in the lower extremity section of AMA5. It should rarely be used (see below).

Any walking aid used by the subject must be permanent and not temporary.

In the application of Table 17–5 (p 529, AMA5), delete item b, as the Trendelenburg sign is not sufficiently reliable.

Assessment of gait derangement should be used as the method of last resort. Methods of impairment assessment most fitting the nature of the disorder should always be used in preference.

5.3.3 Muscle atrophy (unilateral)

This section (AMA5 Section 17.2d, p 530) should be used infrequently. It is not applicable if the limb other than that being assessed is abnormal (for example, if varicose veins cause swelling, or if there is other injury).

In the use of Table 17–6 (p 530, AMA5) the element of choice should be removed in the impairment rating and only the higher figure used. Therefore, for the thigh, the whole person impairment should be assessed as 0, 2, 4, or 5 %, or lower limb impairment as 0, 8, 13, or 13 % respectively. For the calf the equivalent figures have the same numerical values.

5.3.4 Manual muscle strength testing

The Medical Research Council (MRC) gradings for muscle strength are universally accepted. They are not linear in their application, but ordinal. Only the six grades (0–5) should be used, as they are reproducible among experienced approved medical specialists. The descriptions in Table 17–7 (p 531, AMA5) are correct. The results of electrodiagnostic methods and tests are not to be considered in the evaluation of muscle testing which can be performed manually. Table 17–8 (p 532, AMA5) is to be used for this method of evaluation.

5.3.5 Range of motion

Although range of motion (ROM) (AMA5 Section 17.2f, pp 533–538) appears to be a suitable method for evaluating impairment, it is subject to variation because of pain during motion at different times of examination, possible lack of cooperation by the worker being assessed and inconsistency. If there is such inconsistency then ROM cannot be used as a valid parameter of impairment evaluation.

If range of motion is used as an assessment measure, then Tables 17–9 to 17–14 (p537, AMA5) are selected for the joint or joints being tested. If a joint has more than one plane of motion, the impairment assessments for the different planes should be added. For example, any impairments of the six principal directions of motion of the hip joint are added (p 533, AMA5).

5.3.6 Ankylosis

For the assessment of impairment when a joint is ankylosed (AMA5 Section 17.2g, pp 538–543) the calculation to be applied is to select the impairment if the joint is ankylosed in optimum position (See Table 5.1 below), and then if not ankylosed in the optimum position by adding (not combining) the values of %WPI using Tables 17–15 to 17–30 (pp 538–543, AMA5).

Table 5.1 Impairment for ankylosis in the optimum position

Joint	Whole person	Lower extremity	Ankle or foot
Hip	20%	50%	–
Knee	27%	67%	–
Ankle	4%	10%	14%
Foot	4%	10%	14%

Note that the whole person impairment from ankylosis of a joint, or joints, in a lower limb cannot exceed 40% whole person impairment or 100% lower limb impairment. If this figure is exceeded when the combination of a lower limb impairment is made then only 40% can be accepted as the maximum whole person impairment for a lower limb.

5.3.7 Arthritis

Impairment due to arthritis (AMA5 section 17.2h, pp 544–545) following a work-related injury is uncommon, but may occur in isolated cases. The presence of arthritis may indicate a pre-existing condition and this should be assessed and an appropriate deduction made (see Chapter 3, WorkCover WA Guides).

The presence of osteoarthritis is defined as cartilage loss. Cartilage loss can be assessed by plain radiography, computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or by direct vision (arthroscopy). MRI using cartilage sensitive sequences is superior to plain radiology in demonstrating cartilage deficiency, but is not required if the diagnosis of osteoarthritis is obvious on plain radiography.

Detecting the subtle changes of cartilage loss on plain radiography requires comparison with the normal side. All joints should be imaged directly through the joint space, with no overlapping of bones. If the optimal views are not available, they should be obtained. If comparison views are not available, AMA5 Table 17–31 (p 544) is used as a guide to assess joint space narrowing.

One should be cautious in making a diagnosis of cartilage loss on plain radiography if secondary features of osteoarthritis, such as osteophytes, subarticular cysts or subchondral sclerosis are lacking, unless the other side is available for comparison. The presence of an intra-articular fracture with a step in the articular margin in the weight bearing area implies cartilage loss.

The accurate radiographic assessment of joints always requires at least two views. In some cases, further supplementary views will optimise the detection of joint space narrowing or the secondary signs of osteoarthritis.

Sacro-iliac joints: Being a complex joint, modest alterations are not detected on radiographs, and cross-sectional imaging may be required. Radiographic manifestations accompany pathological alterations. The joint space measures between 2 mm and 5 mm. Osteophyte formation is a prominent characteristic of osteoarthritis of the sacro-iliac joint.

Hip: An anteroposterior view of the pelvis and a lateral view of the affected hip are ideal. If the affected hip joint space is narrower than the asymptomatic side, cartilage loss is regarded as being present. If the anteroposterior view of pelvis has been obtained with the worker supine, it is important to compare the medial joint space of each hip as well as superior joint space, as this may be the only site of apparent change. If both sides are symmetrical, then other features, such as osteophytes, subarticular cyst formation, and calcar thickening should be taken into account to make a diagnosis of osteoarthritis.

Knee:

Tibio-femoral joint: The best view for assessment of cartilage loss in the knee is usually the erect intercondylar projection, as this profiles and stresses the major weight bearing area of the joint which lies posterior to the centre of the long axis. The ideal x-ray is a posteroanterior view with the patient standing, knees slightly flexed, and the x-ray beam angled parallel to the tibial plateau. Both knees can readily be assessed with the one exposure. In the knee it should be recognised that joint space narrowing does not necessarily equate with articular cartilage loss, as deficiency or displacement of the menisci can also have this effect. Secondary features, such as subchondral bone change and the past surgical history, must also be taken into account.

Patello-femoral joint: Should be assessed in the “skyline” view, again preferably with the other side for comparison. The x-ray should be taken with 30 degrees of knee flexion to ensure that the patella is load-bearing and has engaged the articular surface femoral groove.

Ankle: The ankle should be assessed in the mortice view, (preferably weight-bearing) with comparison views of the other side, although this is not as necessary as with the hip and knee.

Subtalar: This joint is better assessed by CT (in the coronal plane) than by plain radiography. The complex nature of the joint does not lend itself to accurate and easy plain x-ray assessment of osteoarthritis.

Talonavicular and calcaneocuboid: Anteroposterior and lateral views are necessary. Osteophytes may assist in making the diagnosis.

Intercuneiform and other intertarsal joints: Joint space narrowing may be difficult to assess on plain radiography. CT (in the axial plane) may be required. Associated osteophytes and subarticular cysts are useful adjuncts to making the diagnosis of osteoarthritis in these small joints.

Great toe metatarsophalangeal: Anteroposterior and lateral views are required. Comparison with the other side may be necessary. Secondary signs may be useful.

Interphalangeal: It is difficult to assess small joints without taking secondary signs into account. The plantar–dorsal view may be required to get through the joints, in a foot with flexed toes.

If arthritis is used as the basis for assessing impairment assessment, then the rating cannot be combined with gait disturbance, muscle atrophy, muscle strength or range of movement assessments. It can be combined with a diagnosis-based estimate. (Table 17–2, AMA5, p 526.)

5.3.8 Amputation

Where there has been amputation of part of a lower extremity Table 17-32 (p 545, AMA5) applies. In that table the references to 3 inches for below-the-knee amputation should be converted to 7.5 cm.

5.3.9 Diagnosis-based estimates (lower extremity)

Section 17.2j (pp 545–549, AMA5) lists a number of conditions that fit a category of Diagnosis-Based Estimates. They are listed in Tables 17–33, 17–34 and 17–35 (pp 546–549, AMA5). When using this table it is essential to read the footnotes carefully.

It is possible to combine impairments from Tables 17–33, 17–34 and 17–35 for diagnosis-related estimates with other components (eg, nerve injury) using the Combined Values Chart (pp 604–606, AMA5) after first referring to the Guide to the Appropriate Combination of Evaluation Methods (see 5.2 above).

In the interpretation of Table 17–33 (p 547, AMA5), reference to the hindfoot, intra-articular fractures, the words subtalar bone, talonavicular bone, and calcaneocuboid bone imply that the bone is displaced on one or both sides of the joint mentioned. To avoid the risk of double assessment, if avascular necrosis with collapse is used as the basis of impairment assessment, it cannot be combined with the relevant intra-articular fracture in Table 17–33 column 2. In Table 17–33 column 2, metatarsal fracture with loss of weight transfer means dorsal displacement of the metatarsal head.

Table 17–34 and Table 17–35 (pp 548–549, AMA5) use a different concept of evaluation. A point score system is applied, and then the total of points calculated for the hip (or knee) joint is converted to an impairment rating from Table 17–33. Tables 17–34 and 17–35 refer to the hip and knee joint replacement respectively. Note that, while all the points are added in Table 17–34, some points are deducted when Table 17–35 is used.

In respect of “distance walked” under “b. Function” in Table 17–34 (p 548, AMA5), the distance of six blocks should be construed as 600 m, and three blocks as 300 m.

5.3.10 Skin loss (lower extremity)

Skin loss (p 550, AMA5) can only be included in the calculation of impairment if it is in certain sites and meets the criteria listed in Table 17–36 (p 550, AMA5).

5.3.11 Peripheral nerve injuries (lower extremity)

When assessing the impairment due to peripheral nerve injury (pp 550-552, AMA5) approved medical specialists should read the text in this section. Note that the separate impairments for the motor, sensory and dysaesthetic components of nerve dysfunction in Table 17-37 (p 552, AMA5) are to be combined.

Note that the (posterior) tibial nerve is not included in Table 17–37, but its contribution can be calculated by subtracting ratings of common peroneal nerves from sciatic nerve ratings.

Peripheral nerve injury impairments can be combined with other impairments, but not those for gait derangement, muscle atrophy, muscle strength or complex regional pain syndrome, as shown in Table 17–2 (p 526, AMA5).

5.3.12 Complex regional pain syndrome (lower extremity)

The Section 17.2m, "Causalgia and Complex Regional Pain Syndrome (Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy)" (p 553, AMA5) should not be used. Complex Regional Pain Syndrome involving the lower extremity should be evaluated in the same way as the upper limb using the method described in Section 16.5e (pp 495–497, AMA5). This section provides a detailed method that is in keeping with current terminology and understanding of the condition. Use of the same methods of impairment assessment for Complex Regional Pain Syndrome involving either the upper or lower extremity also will improve the consistency of these WorkCover WA Guidelines.

5.3.13 Peripheral vascular disease (lower extremity)

Lower extremity impairment due to vascular disorders (pp 553–554, AMA5) is evaluated using Table 17–38 (p 554, AMA5). Note that Table 17–38 gives values for lower extremity not whole person impairment. In that table there is a range of lower extremity impairments within each of the classes 1 to 5. As there is a clinical description of which conditions place a person's lower extremity in a particular class, the approved medical specialist has a choice of impairment rating within a class, the value of which is left to the clinical judgement of the approved medical specialist.

Table 5.2: Lower extremity worksheet

Item	Impairment	AMA5 Table	AMA5 page	Potential impairment	Selected impairment
1	Limb Length discrepancy	17-4	528		
2	Gait derangement	17-5	529		
3	Unilateral Muscle atrophy	17-6	530		
4	Muscle weakness	17-8	532		
5	Range of motion	17-9 to 17-14	537		
6	Joint ankylosis	17-15 to 17-30	538-543		
7	Arthritis	17-31	544		
8	Amputation	17-32	545		
9	Diagnosis-based estimates	17-33 to 17-35	546-549		
10	Skin loss	17-36	550		
11	Peripheral nerve deficit	17-37	552		
12	Complex regional pain syndrome	Section 16.5e	495-497		
13	Vascular disorders	17-38	554		
Combined impairment rating (refer to Table 17-2, p 526, AMA5 for permissible combinations)					

Potential impairment is the impairment percentage for that method of assessment. Selected impairment is the impairment, or impairments, selected that can be legitimately combined with other lower extremity impairments to give a final lower extremity impairment rating.

Table 5.3: Lower extremity impairment flow chart

(1) Question	(2) Answer	(3) Go to			(4) Enter impairment			(5) Can be combined with another parameter: See Table 17-2, AMA5 p526
		Section	Table	Page	Joint	Lower extremity	Whole person	
Is there gait derangement? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2c	17-5	529				No
Is there Unilateral muscle atrophy? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2d	17-6	530				Line 1,9,12
Is there true muscle weakness? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2e	17-8	532				Lines 1, 9, 12
Is joint movement restricted but not absent? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2f	17-9 to 17-14	537				Lines 1, 7, 9, 10, 12
Is joint ankylosed? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2g	17-15 to 17-30	538-543				Lines 1, 7, 9, 10, 12
Is there arthritis? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2h	17-31*	544				Lines 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Is a part amputated? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2i	17-32	545				Lines 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Can a diagnosis-based estimate be applied? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2j	17-33 to 17-35	546-549				Lines 1, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12
Is there limb length discrepancy? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2b	17-4	528				Lines 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12
Is there skin loss? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2k	17-36	550				Lines 1, 3,4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12

*Provided radiography performed in defined positions. see paragraph 5.3.7 (p 22).

continued...

Table 5.3: Lower extremity impairment flow chart continued

(1) Question	(2) Answer	(3) Go to			(4) Enter impairment			(5) Can be combined with another parameter: See Table 17-2 AMA5 p526
		Section	Table	Page	Joint	Lower extremity	Whole person	
Is there any peripheral nerve injury? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2l	17–37	552				Lines 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12
Is there complex regional pain syndrome? ↓ No	→ YES	16.5e	16–16	496				Lines 1, 6, 7, 8, 9
Is there peripheral vascular disease? ↓ No	→ YES	17.2n	17–38	554				Lines 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Can any of the above be combined?	→ YES	Check AMA5 Table 17–2, p 526. Ensure all are lower limb impairments or whole person impairments. Combine using Combined Values Chart (AMA5 pp 604–606). Convert to WPI.						
Combined total Lower extremity whole person impairment								
If other body regions are impaired, combine them using Combined Values Chart (AMA5 pp 604–606) to arrive at final WPI.					Specify which other impairment			

6. The spine (excluding spinal cord injury)

AMA5 Chapter 15 applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of the spine, subject to the modifications set out below.

6.1 Introduction

The spine is discussed in AMA5 Chapter 15 (pp 373–431). That Chapter presents two methods of assessment, the diagnosis-related estimates method and the range of motion method. Evaluation of impairment of the spine is to be done using diagnosis-related estimates (DREs).

The method relies especially on evidence of neurological deficits and less common, adverse structural changes, such as fractures and dislocations. Using this method, DREs are differentiated according to clinical findings that can be verified by standard medical procedures.

The assessment of spinal impairment is made when the worker's condition has stabilised and has reached maximal medical improvement (MMI), as defined in AMA5. If surgery has been performed, the outcome of the surgery as well as structural inclusions must be taken into consideration when making the assessment.

6.2 Assessment of the spine

The DRE model for assessment of spinal impairment should be used. The Range of Motion model (Section 15.1b, AMA5 pp 378–379) should not be used.

If a person has spinal cord damage, he or she is assessed according to the method described in Chapter 7 of the WorkCover WA Guides. AMA5 Sections 15.2 (pp 379–381), and 15.7–15.12 (pp 395–426) are not used for assessing impairments of the spinal cord.

Table 6.1 (see over) is a summary table that refers to all areas of the spine. It is to be used in conjunction with the specific criteria for rating impairment categories of DREs in Tables 15–3, 15–4 and 15–5 (AMA5 pp 384, 389 and 392).

If an approved medical specialist is unable to distinguish between two DRE categories, then the higher of those two categories should apply. The inability to differentiate should be noted in the approved medical specialist's report.

Possible influence of future treatment should not form part of the impairment assessment. The assessment should be made on the basis of the worker's status at the time of interview and examination, if the approved medical specialist is convinced that the condition is stable and permanent. Likewise, the possibility of subsequent deterioration, as a consequence of the underlying condition, should not be factored in to the impairment evaluation. Commentary can be made regarding the possible influence, potential or requirements for further treatment, but this does not affect the assessment of the worker at the time of impairment evaluation.

All spinal impairments are to be expressed as a percentage whole person impairment (%WPI).

Table 6.1: Assessing spinal impairment

Patient's Condition	Diagnosis-related estimate category				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Low back pain, neck pain [back pain (lumbago), WAD* I] Complaints or symptoms	I				
Vertebral body compression, < 25%	II				
Low back pain, neck pain, guarding, non-verifiable radicular complaints [Somatic leg pain, WAD II]		II			
Posterior element fracture, healed, stable, no dislocation or radiculopathy		II			
Transverse or spinous process fracture with displacement of fragment, healed, stable		II			
Low back or neck pain with radiculopathy [Sciatica, WAD III]			III		
Vertebral body compression fracture 25–50%			III		
Posterior element fracture with spinal canal deformity or radiculopathy, stable, healed			III		
Radiculopathy			III		
Vertebral body compression > 50%				IV	V
Multilevel structural compromise				IV	V
Spondylolysis with radiculopathy			III	IV	V
Spondylolisthesis without radiculopathy	I	II			
Spondylolisthesis with radiculopathy			III	IV	V
Vertebral body fracture without radiculopathy		II	III	IV	
Vertebral body fracture with radiculopathy			III	IV	V
Vertebral body dislocation without radiculopathy		II	III	IV	
Vertebral body dislocation with radiculopathy			III	IV	V
Previous spine operation without radiculopathy		II	III	IV	
Previous spine operation with radiculopathy			III	IV	V
Stenosis, facet arthrosis or disease, or disc arthrosis	I	II	III		

*Whiplash associated disorder. WAD 1: Neck complaint of pain, stiffness or tenderness only. No physical sign(s). WAD II: Neck complaint AND musculoskeletal sign(s). Musculoskeletal signs include decreased range of motion and point tenderness. WAD III: Neck complaint AND neurological sign(s). Neurological signs include decreased or absent deep tendon reflexes, weakness and sensory deficits. WAD IV: Neck complaint AND fracture or dislocation. (Motor Accidents Authority. *Update of Quebec Task Force Guidelines for the Management of Whiplash-associated Disorders*. January 2001: p 5.)

The assessment should include a comprehensive, accurate history; a review of all pertinent records available at the assessment; a comprehensive description of the worker's current symptoms and their relationship to daily activities; a careful and thorough physical examination; and all findings of relevant laboratory, imaging, diagnostic and ancillary tests available at the assessment. Imaging findings that are used to support the impairment rating should be concordant with symptoms and findings on examination. The approved medical specialist should record whether diagnostic test and radiographs were seen or whether they relied on reports.

Section 15.1a (AMA5 pp 374–377) is a valuable summary of history and physical examination, and should be thoroughly familiar to all approved medical specialists.

Table 6.2 below (adapted from Figure 61, AMA4 pp 96–97) may be used for a summary of the spinal history.

The approved medical specialist should include in the report a description of how the impairment rating was calculated, with reference to the relevant tables and/or figures used.

Table 6.2: History of spinal complaint

1. History of impairment or injury

Describe all symptoms, location, frequency of occurrence, duration, quality with particular attention to time and circumstances of onset, course of condition, treatment, treatment response; note presence of pain, numbness, weakness, stiffness.

2. Condition limits the patient or interferes with which daily activities?

List the activities. What activities has the patient reduced or given up? Describe them.

3. Patient's perceptions

- a How long at one time and over an 8-hour period can the patient do the following without serious discomfort? (Express in terms of half-hours or hours and note the unit used)

Sit..... Walk..... Stand

- b How many kgs can the patient lift at frequent intervals?

Occasionally?.....

4. Present symptoms

- a. Starting date of present symptoms:

- b. How long have symptoms been the same? If changing, Describe how.

.....
.....

- c. Previous back or neck problems or surgeries (Dates)

1

2

3

4

- d. Special tests or procedures

Type	Date	Results

- e. What exercises does the patient do to stay physically fit or "in shape?"

Type	Duration	Frequency per week?

- f. Usual daily activities and postures (tick those that apply):

Sit..... Walk..... Stand

Lift..... Maximum number of kilograms

Other (describe):

.....
.....

5. Patient's understanding of reason for this impairment evaluation:

.....
.....

History taken by:

6.3 Specific interpretation of AMA5

The range-of-motion (ROM) method is not used, hence any reference to this is omitted. Specifically, omit AMA5 Section 15.2.

Motion segment integrity alteration can be either increased translational or angular motion, or decreased motion resulting from developmental changes, fusion, fracture healing, healed infection or surgical arthrodesis. Motion of the individual spine segments cannot be determined by a physical examination, but is evaluated with flexion and extension radiography.

The assessment of altered motion segment integrity is to be based upon a report of the result of an injury, and not on developmental or degenerative changes.

When routine imaging is normal and severe trauma is absent, motion segment disturbance is rare. Thus, flexion and extension imaging is indicated only when a history of trauma or other imaging leads the physician to suspect alteration of motion segment integrity. Generally, further studies are not to be ordered by the approved medical specialist.

6.4 DRE definitions of clinical findings

The clinical findings used to place an individual in a DRE category are described in Box 15–1 (AMA5, pp 382–383).

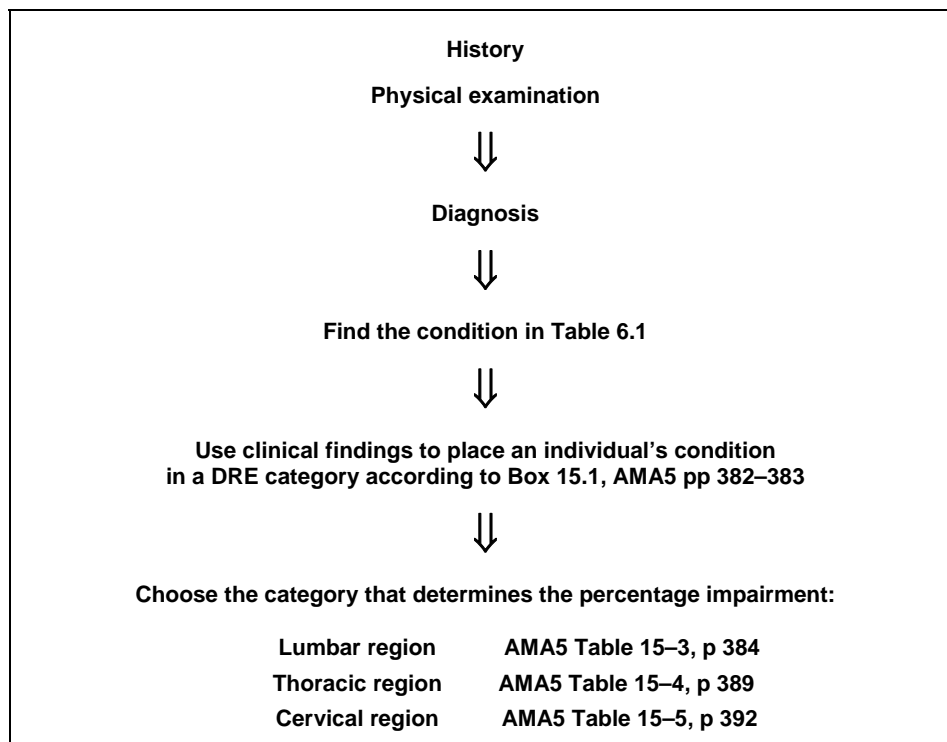
If there is doubt about which of two DRE categories should be used, the higher should be chosen.)

Cauda equina syndrome and neurogenic bladder disorder are to be assessed by the method prescribed in the nervous system Chapter of AMA5 (pp 305–356).

6.5 Applying the DRE method

The specific procedures and directions section of AMA5 (Section 15.2a, pp 380-381) indicates the steps that should be followed to evaluate impairment of the spine. Table 6.3 is a simplified version of that section, incorporating the amendments listed above.

Table 6.3: Procedures in evaluating impairment of the spine



Common developmental findings, spondylolysis, spondylolisthesis and disc protrusions without radiculopathy occur in 7%, 3 %, and up to 30% respectively in individuals up to the age of 40 (AMA5, p 383). Their presence does not of itself mean that the individual has an impairment due to injury.

Impotence should only be assessed as an impairment related to spinal injury where there is other objective evidence of spinal cord, cauda equina or bilateral nerve root dysfunction. The ratings described in Table 13–21 on p 342 of AMA5 are used in this instance. There is no additional impairment rating system for impotence in the absence of objective clinical findings.

Radiculopathy is the impairment caused by malfunction of a spinal nerve root or nerve roots. Assigning of a DRE for spinal injury includes the presence or absence of radiculopathy (Category III in the lumbo-sacral region). In general, in order to conclude that a radiculopathy is present two or more of the following signs should be found:

- dermatomal distribution of pain or numbness or paraesthesia;
- positive root tension sign;
- concordant finding on an imaging study (Box 15–1, AMA5 p 382);
- loss or asymmetry of reflexes;
- muscle weakness that is anatomically localised to an appropriate spinal nerve root distribution; and
- reproducible sensory loss that is anatomically localised to an appropriate spinal nerve root distribution.

Note that radicular complaints of pain or sensory features that follow anatomical pathways but cannot be verified by neurological findings (somatic pain, non-verifiable radicular pain) do not alone constitute radiculopathy.

Global weakness of a limb related to pain or inhibition or other factors does not constitute weakness due to spinal nerve malfunction.

If imaging is to be used to support a diagnosis, the anatomical features that are reported to be abnormal on the imaging studies must be concordant with the distribution of the radicular malfunction.

Multilevel structural compromise implies spinal fractures and/or dislocations at more than one spinal level, without spinal cord compromise. If there is no radiculopathy, the individual is assigned to DRE category IV; if radiculopathy is present, then the person is assigned to category DRE category V.

(Multilevel structural compromise is to be interpreted as fractures of more than one vertebra. Such fractures are defined as any fracture of the vertebral body, or of the posterior elements forming the ring of the spinal canal. It does not include fractures of transverse processes or spinous processes, even at multiple levels.)

Fractures of transverse or spinous processes are assessed as DRE Category II because the fracture does not disrupt the spinal canal (AMA5, p 385) and they do not cause multilevel structural compromise.

Effect of surgery: Tables 15–3, 15–4 and 15–5 (AMA5, pp 384, 389 and 392), do not adequately account for the effect of surgery upon the impairment rating for certain disorders of the spine.

- Operations where the radiculopathy has resolved are considered under the DRE category III (AMA5, Tables 15–3, 15–4, 15–5);
- Operations with surgical ankylosis (fusion) are considered under DRE category IV (AMA5, Tables 15–3, 15–4, 15–5).

Table 6.4 indicates the additional ratings which should be combined with the rating determined using the DRE method where an operation for an intervertebral disc prolapse or spinal stenosis has been performed and where there is a residual radiculopathy following surgery.

Table 6.4: Modifiers for DRE categories where radiculopathy persists after surgery

Procedures	Cervical	Thoracic	Lumbar
Discectomy, or single-level decompression with residual signs and symptoms	3%	2%	3%
Multiple levels, operated on, with medically documented pain and rigidity	1% each level	1% each level	1% each level
Second operation	2%	2%	2%
Third and subsequent operations	1%	1%	1%

Impairment due to pelvic fractures should be evaluated with reference to AMA5 Section 15.14 (pp 427–428). Specific ratings for pelvic fractures are provided in Table 15–19 (AMA5, p 428). Impairment due to disorders of the pelvis, other than those due to specific pelvic fractures, should be estimated using the criteria and categories indicated in Table 17–33 (AMA5, p 546).

Arthritis: See section 5.3.7 of Chapter 5 of these WorkCover WA Guides (p 22-23).

Note:

If residual symptoms or objective findings impact on the ability to perform ADL despite treatment, the higher percentage in each range should be assigned.

7. Nervous system

AMA5 Chapter 13 applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of the nervous system, subject to the modifications set out below.

7.1 Introduction

AMA5 Chapter 13, The Central and Peripheral Nervous System (pp 305–356), provides guidelines on methods of assessing permanent impairment involving the central nervous system. It is logically structured and consistent with the usual sequence of examination of the nervous system. Cerebral functions are discussed first, followed by the cranial nerves, station, gait and movement disorders, the upper extremities related to central impairment, the brain stem, the spinal cord and the peripheral nervous system, including neuromuscular junction and muscular system. A summary concludes the Chapter.

Spinal cord injuries are to be assessed using AMA5 Chapter 13.

The relevant parts of the upper extremity, lower extremity and spine sections of AMA5 Chapter 13 should be used to evaluate impairments of the peripheral nervous system.

7.2 The approach to assessment of permanent neurological impairment

AMA5 Chapter 13 disallows combination of cerebral impairments. However, for the purpose of the WorkCover WA Guides, cerebral impairments should be evaluated and combined as follows:

- consciousness and awareness;
- mental status, cognition and highest integrative function;
- aphasia and communication disorders; and
- emotional and behavioural impairments.

The approved medical specialist should take care to be as specific as possible and not to double-rate the same impairment, particularly in the mental status and behavioural categories.

These impairments are to be combined using the Combined Values Chart (AMA5, pp 604–606). These impairments should then be combined with other neurological impairments indicated in AMA5 Table 13–1 (p 308).

Impairments due to spinal cord pathology (AMA5, pp 340–342) are to be combined using the Combined Values Chart (AMA5, pp 604–606). It should be noted that AMA5 Sections 13.5 and 13.6 (pp 336–340) should be used for all motor or sensory impairments caused by a central nervous system lesion. Thus this section covers hemiplegia due to cortical injury as well as spinal cord injury.

Complex regional pain syndrome is to be assessed using the method indicated in AMA5 Chapter 16, The Upper Extremities (pp 495–497).

The nervous system Chapter of AMA5 (Chapter 13) lists many impairments where the range for the associated whole person impairment is 0–9% or 0–14%. Where there is a range of impairment percentages listed, the approved medical specialist should nominate an impairment percentage based on the complete clinical circumstances revealed during the consultation and in relation to all other available information.

7.3 Specific interpretation of AMA5

In assessing **disturbances of mental status and integrative functioning, and emotional or behavioural disturbances** (Sections 13.3d and 13.3f, AMA5 pp 319–322, 325– 327), the approved medical specialist should make ratings of mental status impairments and emotional and behavioural impairments based on clinical assessment and the results of neuropsychometric testing. Clinical assessment should indicate at least one of the following:

- significant medically verified abnormalities in initial post injury Glasgow Coma Scale score, or
- significant duration of post traumatic amnesia, or
- significant intracranial pathology on CT scan or MRI.

Neuropsychological testing should be conducted by a registered clinical neuropsychologist or clinical psychologist who is a member, or is eligible for membership, of the Australian Psychological Society's College of Neuropsychology.

Assessment of **arousal and sleep disorders** (AMA5 Section 13.3c, pp 317-319): refers to assessment of primary sleep disorders following neurological injury. The approved medical specialist should make ratings of arousal and sleep disorders based on the clinical assessment that would normally have been done for clinically significant disorders of this type (ie, sleep studies or similar tests).

Olfaction and taste: the approved medical specialist should use AMA5 Chapter 11, Section 11.4c (p 262) and Table 11–10 (pp 274–275) to assess olfaction and taste, for which a maximum of 5% whole person impairment is allowable for total loss of either sense.

Visual impairment assessment (AMA4 Chapter 8, pp 209–222): An ophthalmologist should assess all impairments of visual acuity, visual fields, extra-ocular movements or diplopia.

Trigeminal nerve assessment (AMA5, p 331): Sensory impairments of the trigeminal nerve should be assessed with reference to AMA5 Table 13–11 (p 331). The words “sensory loss or dysaesthesia” should be added to the table after the words “neuralgic pain” in each instance. Impairment percentages for the three divisions of the trigeminal nerve should be apportioned with extra weighting for the first division. If present, motor loss for the trigeminal nerve should be assessed in terms of its impact on mastication and deglutition (AMA5, p 262).

Spinal accessory nerve: AMA5 provide insufficient reference to the spinal accessory nerve (cranial nerve XI). This nerve supplies the trapezius and sternomastoid muscles. For loss of use of the nerve to trapezius, the approved medical specialist should refer to AMA5 Chapter 16 on upper limb assessment, and a maximum of 10% impairment of the upper limb may be assigned. For additional loss of use of sternomastoid, a maximum of 3% upper limb impairment may be added.

Assessment of **sexual functioning** (AMA5, Chapter 7, pp 143–171): Impotence is assessed as an impairment only if there is an associated neurological impairment.

8. Ear, nose, throat and related structures

AMA5 Chapter 11 applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of the ear (with the exception of hearing impairment), nose, throat and related structures, subject to the modifications set out below.

8.1 Introduction

AMA5 Chapter 11 (pp 245–275) details the assessment of the ear, nose, throat and related structures. **With the exception of hearing impairment, which is dealt with in Chapter 11 of the WorkCover WA Guides**, AMA5 Chapter 11 should be followed in assessing permanent impairment, with the variations included below.

The level of impairment arising from conditions that are not work related needs to be assessed by the approved medical specialist and taken into consideration in determining the level of permanent impairment. The level at which pre-existing conditions and lifestyle activities such as smoking contribute to the level of permanent impairment requires judgement on the part of the clinician undertaking the impairment assessment. The manner in which any deduction for these is applied needs to be recorded in the assessing approved medical specialist report.

8.2 The ear

Equilibrium is assessed according to AMA 5 Section 11.2b (pp 252–255), but add these words to AMA5 Table 11–4 (p 253), Class 2:

“..without limiting the generality of the above, a positive Hallpikes test is a sign and an objective finding.”

8.3 The face (AMA5, pp 255–259)

AMA5 Table 11–5 (p 256) should be replaced with Table 8.1, below, when assessing permanent impairment due to facial disorders and/or disfigurement.

Table 8.1: Criteria for rating permanent impairment due to facial disorders and/or disfigurement

Class 1 0%–5% impairment of the whole person	Class 2 6%–10% impairment of the whole person	Class 3 11%–15% impairment of the whole person	Class 4 16%–50% impairment of the whole person
Facial abnormality limited to disorder of cutaneous structures, such as visible simple scars (not hypertrophic or atrophic) or abnormal pigmentation (refer to AMA5 Chapter 8 for skin disorders) or mild, unilateral, facial paralysis affecting most branches or nasal distortion that affects physical appearance or partial loss or deformity of the outer ear	Facial abnormality involves loss of supporting structure of part of face, with or without cutaneous disorder (eg, depressed cheek, nasal, or frontal bones) or near complete loss of definition of the outer ear	Facial abnormality involves absence of normal anatomic part or area of face, such as loss of eye or loss of part of nose, with resulting cosmetic deformity, combine with any functional loss, eg, vision (AMA5 Chapter 12) or severe unilateral facial paralysis affecting most branches or mild, bilateral, facial paralysis affecting most branches	Massive or total distortion of normal facial anatomy with disfigurement so severe that it precludes social acceptance, or severe, bilateral, facial paralysis affecting most branches or loss of a major portion of or entire nose

Note: Tables used to classify the examples in AMA5 Section 11.3 (pp 256–259) should also be ignored and approved medical specialists should refer to the modified table above for classification.

AMA5 Example 11–11 (p 257): Add “Visual impairment related to enophthalmos must be assessed by an Ophthalmologist”.

8.4 The nose, throat and related structures

8.4.1 Respiration (AMA5 Section 11.4a, pp 259–261)

In regard to sleep apnea (3rd paragraph, AMA5 Section 11.4a, p 259): a sleep study conducted by an appropriate specialist, and an examination by an ear, nose and throat specialist is mandatory before assessment by an approved medical specialist.

The assessment of sleep apnea is addressed in AMA5 Section 5.6 (p 105) and approved medical specialists should refer to this chapter, as well as section 10.4 in these WorkCover WA Guides.

AMA5 Table 11–6 criteria for rating impairment due to air passage defects (AMA5, p 260): this table should be replaced with Table 8.2, below, when assessing permanent impairment due to air passage defects.

Table 8.2: Criteria for rating permanent impairment due to air passage defects

Percentage impairment of the whole person					
Class 1a 0%–5%	Class 1 0%–10%	Class 2 11%–29%	Class 3 30%–49%	Class 4 50%–89%	Class 5 90%+
There are symptoms of significant difficulty in breathing through the nose. Examination reveals significant partial obstruction of the right and/or left nasal cavity or nasopharynx or significant septal perforation.	Dyspnea does not occur at rest and dyspnea is not produced by walking freely on a level surface, climbing stairs freely, or performance of other usual activities of daily living and dyspnea is not produced by stress, prolonged exertion, hurrying, hill-climbing, or recreational or similar activities requiring intensive effort* and examination reveals partial obstruction of the oropharynx, laryngopharynx, larynx, upper trachea (to the fourth cartilaginous ring), lower trachea, bronchi, or complete (bilateral) obstruction of the nose or nasopharynx	Dyspnea does not occur at rest and dyspnea is not produced by walking freely on a level surface, climbing one flight of stairs, or performance of other usual activities of daily living but dyspnea is produced by stress, prolonged exertion, hurrying, hill-climbing, or recreational or similar activities (except sedentary forms) and examination reveals partial obstruction of the oropharynx, laryngopharynx, larynx, upper trachea (to the fourth cartilaginous ring), lower trachea, bronchi, or complete (bilateral) obstruction of the nose or nasopharynx	Dyspnea does not occur at rest and dyspnea is produced by walking freely more than one or two level blocks, climbing one flight of stairs even with periods of rest, or performance of other usual activities of daily living and dyspnea is produced by stress, prolonged exertion, hurrying, hill-climbing, or recreational or similar activities and examination reveals partial obstruction of the oropharynx, laryngopharynx, larynx, upper trachea (to the fourth cartilaginous ring), lower trachea or bronchi	Dyspnea occurs at rest, although individual is not necessarily bedridden and dyspnea is aggravated by the performance of any of the usual activities of daily living (beyond personal cleansing, dressing or grooming) and examination reveals partial obstruction of the oropharynx, laryngopharynx, larynx, upper trachea (to the fourth cartilaginous ring), lower trachea, and/or bronchi	Severe dyspnea occurs at rest and spontaneous respiration is inadequate and respiratory ventilation is required and examination reveals partial obstruction of the oropharynx, laryngopharynx, larynx, upper trachea (to the fourth cartilaginous ring), lower trachea or bronchi

*Prophylactic restriction of activity, such as strenuous competitive sport, does not exclude subject from class 1.

Note: Individuals with successful permanent tracheostomy or stoma should be rated at 25% impairment of the whole person.
AMA5 Example 11–16 (p 261): Partial obstruction of the larynx affecting only one vocal cord is better linked to voice (AMA5 Section 11.4e).

When using AMA5 Table 11–7, Relationship of Dietary Restrictions to Permanent Impairment (p 262), consider % impairment of the whole person — first category to be 0–19%, not 5%–19%.

8.5 Speech (AMA5, pp 262–264)

Regarding the first sentence of the “Examining procedure” subsection (pp 263–264): the examiner should have sufficient hearing for the purpose — disregard “normal hearing as defined in the earlier section of this Chapter on hearing”.

Examining procedure (pp 263–264), second paragraph: “The examiner should base judgements of impairment on two kinds of evidence: (1) attention to and observation of the worker’s speech in the office — for example, during conversation, during the interview, and while reading and counting aloud — and (2) reports pertaining to the worker’s performance in everyday living situations.” Disregard the next sentence: “The reports or the evidence should be supplied by reliable observers who know the person well.”

Examining procedure (pp 263–264): where the word “American” appears as a reference, substitute “Australian”, and change measurements to the metric system (eg, 8.5 inch = 22 cm).

8.6 The voice (AMA5 Section 11.4e, pp 264–267)

Substitute the word “laryngopharyngeal” for “gastroesophageal” in all examples where it appears.

Example 11.25 (Impairment Rating, p 269), second sentence: add the underlined phrase “Combine with appropriate ratings due to other impairments including respiratory impairment to determine whole person impairment.”

8.7 Ear, nose, throat and related structures impairment evaluation summary

AMA5 Table 11–10 (pp 272–275): Disregard this table, except for impairment of olfaction and/or taste, and hearing impairment as determined in the WorkCover WA Guides.

9. Urinary and reproductive systems

AMA5 Chapter 7 applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of the urinary and reproductive systems, subject to the modifications set out below.

9.1 Introduction

AMA5 Chapter 7 (pp 143–171) provides clear details for assessment of the urinary and reproductive systems. Overall the Chapter should be followed in assessing permanent impairment, with the variations included below.

For both male and female sexual dysfunction, identifiable pathology should be present for an impairment percentage to be given.

In evaluating the degree of permanent impairment of the worker for the purposes of common law (Section 146C(6)), clause 18A(2aa)(a) (Section 146E(3)), and the specialised retraining program (Section 146D(3)) any secondary sexual condition should be disregarded. A secondary sexual condition is a condition, that, although it may result from the injury or injuries concerned, arises as a secondary, or less direct, consequence of that injury or injuries.

The evaluation will not preclude sexual conditions where these conditions are a direct consequence of an injury (see Chapter 3 for specific examples).

9.2 Urinary diversion

AMA5 Table 7–2 (p 150) should be replaced with Table 9.1, below, when assessing permanent impairment due to urinary diversion disorders. This table includes ratings for neobladder and continent urinary diversion.

Continent urinary diversion is defined as a continent urinary reservoir constructed of small or large bowel with a narrow catheterisable cutaneous stoma through which it must be emptied several times a day.

Table 9.1: Criteria for rating permanent impairment due to urinary diversion disorders

Diversion type	% Impairment of the whole person
Ureterointestinal	10%
Cutaneous ureterostomy	10%
Nephrostomy	15%
Neobladder/replacement cystoplasty	15%
Continent urinary division	20%

9.3 Bladder

AMA5 Table 7–3 (p 151) should be replaced with Table 7.2, below, when assessing permanent impairment due to bladder disease. This table includes ratings involving urge and total incontinence (defined in paragraph 9.5).

Table 9.2: Criteria for rating permanent impairment due to bladder disease

Class 1 0%–15% impairment of the whole person	Class 2 16%–40% impairment of the whole person	Class 3 41%–70% impairment of the whole person
Symptoms and signs of bladder disorder and requires intermittent treatment	Symptoms and signs of bladder disorder (eg, urinary frequency (urinating more than every two hours; severe nocturia (urinating more than three times a night); urge incontinence more than once a week	Abnormal (ie under- or over-) reflex activity (eg, intermittent urine dribbling, loss of control, urinary urgency and urge incontinence once or more each day)
and		and/or
normal functioning between malfunctioning episodes	and	no voluntary control of micturition; reflex or areflexic bladder on urodynamics
	requires continuous treatment	and/or
		total incontinence eg, fistula

AMA 5 Example 7–16 (p 151) should be reclassified as an example of Class 2, as the urinary frequency is more than every two hours and continuous treatment would be expected.

9.4 Urethra

AMA5 Table 7–4 (p 153) should be replaced with Table 9.3, below, when assessing permanent impairment due to urethral disease. This table includes ratings involving stress incontinence.

Table 9.3: Criteria for rating permanent impairment due to urethral disease

Class 1 0%–10% impairment of the whole person	Class 2 11%–20% impairment of the whole person	Class 3 21%–40% impairment of the whole person
Symptoms and signs of urethral disorder and requires intermittent therapy for control	Symptoms and signs of urethral disorder; stress urinary incontinence more than three times a week and cannot effectively be controlled by treatment	Urethral dysfunction resulting in intermittent urine dribbling, or stress urinary incontinence at least daily

9.5 Urinary incontinence

Urge urinary incontinence is the involuntary loss of urine associated with a strong desire to void. Stress urinary incontinence is the involuntary loss of urine occurring with clinically demonstrable raised intra-abdominal pressure. It is expected that urinary incontinence of a regular or severe nature (necessitating the use of protective pads or appliances) will be assessed as follows:

Stress urinary incontinence: (demonstrable clinically)	11–25% according to severity
Urge urinary incontinence:	16–40% according to severity
Mixed (urge and stress) incontinence:	16–40% according to severity
Nocturnal enuresis or wet in bed:	16–40% according to severity
Total incontinence: (continuously wet, eg, from fistula)	50–70%

The highest scoring condition is to be used to assess impairment — combinations are not allowed.

9.6 Male reproductive organs

9.6.1 Penis

AMA5, p 157: the box labelled “Class 3, 21–35% ” should read “Class 3, 20% Impairment of the Whole Person” as the descriptor “No sexual function possible” does not allow a range. (The correct value is shown in AMA5 Table 7–5 p 156). Note, however, that there is a loading for age, so a rate higher than 20% is possible.

9.6.2 Testicles, epididymides and spermatic cords

AMA5 Table 7–7 (p 159) should be replaced with Table 9.4, below, when assessing permanent impairment due to testicular, epididymal and spermatic cord disease. This table includes rating for infertility and equates impairment with female infertility (see Table 9.5, in this Chapter of the WorkCover WA Guides). Infertility in either sex must be considered to be of equal impact, age for age.

Male infertility is defined as azoospermia or other cause of inability to cause impregnation even with assisted contraception techniques.

Table 9.4: Criteria for rating permanent impairment due to testicular, epididymal and spermatic cord disease

Class 1 0%–10% impairment of the whole person	Class 2 11%–15% impairment of the whole person	Class 3 16%–35% impairment of the whole person
Testicular, epididymal or spermatic cord disease symptoms and signs and anatomic alteration	Testicular, epididymal or spermatic cord disease symptoms and signs and anatomic alteration	Trauma or disease produces bilateral anatomic loss of the primary sex organs
and	and	or
no continuous treatment required	cannot effectively be controlled by treatment	no detectable seminal or hormonal function
and	and	or
no seminal or hormonal function or abnormalities	detectable seminal or hormonal abnormalities	infertility
or		
solitary testicle		

9.7 Female reproductive organs

9.7.1 Fallopian tubes and ovaries

AMA5 Table 7–11 (p 167) should be replaced with Table 9.5, (below), when assessing permanent impairment due to fallopian tube and ovarian disease. This table includes rating for infertility and equates impairment with male infertility (see Table 9.4, above). Infertility in either sex must be considered to be of equal impact, age for age.

Female infertility: a woman in the childbearing age is infertile when she is unable to conceive naturally. This may be due to anovulation, tubal blockage, cervical or vaginal blocking or an impairment of the uterus.

Table 9.5: Criteria for rating permanent impairment due to fallopian tube and ovarian disease

Class 1 0%–15% impairment of the whole person	Class 2 16%–25% impairment of the whole person	Class 3 26%–35% impairment of the whole person
Fallopian tube or ovarian disease or deformity symptoms and signs do not require continuous treatment or only one functioning fallopian tube or ovary in the premenopausal period or bilateral fallopian tube or ovarian functional loss in the postmenopausal period	Fallopian tube or ovarian disease or deformity symptoms and signs require continuous treatment, but tubal patency persists and ovulation is possible	Fallopian tube or ovarian disease or deformity symptoms and signs and total tubal patency loss or failure to produce ova in the premenopausal period or bilateral fallopian tube or bilateral ovarian loss in the premenopausal period; infertility

10. Respiratory system

AMA5 Chapter 5 applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of the respiratory system, subject to the modifications set out below.

10.1 Introduction

AMA5 Chapter 5 (pp 87 –115) provides a useful summary of the methods for assessing permanent impairment arising from respiratory disorders.

The level of impairment arising from conditions that are not work related needs to be assessed by the approved medical specialist and taken into consideration in determining the level of permanent impairment. The level at which pre-existing conditions and lifestyle activities such as smoking contribute to the level of permanent impairment requires judgement on the part of the approved medical specialist undertaking the impairment assessment. The manner in which any deduction for these is applied needs to be recorded in the assessing practitioner's report.

10.2 Examinations, clinical studies and other tests for evaluating respiratory disease (AMA5 Section 5.4 pp 95-104)

AMA5 Tables 5–2b, 5–3b, 5–4b, 5–5b, 5–6b and 5–7b give the lower limits of normal values for pulmonary function tests. These are used in Table 5–12 to determine the impairment classification for respiratory disorders.

Classes 2, 3 and 4 in AMA5 Table 5–12 (p 107) list ranges of whole person impairment. The approved medical specialist should nominate the nearest whole percentage based on the complete clinical circumstances when selecting within the range.

10.3 Asthma (AMA5 Section 5.5 pp 102-104)

In assessing permanent impairment arising from occupational asthma, the approved medical specialist will require evidence from the treating physician that:

- at least three lung function tests have been performed over a six month period and that the results were consistent and repeatable over that period; and
- the worker has received maximal treatment and is compliant with his/her medication regimen.

Bronchial challenge testing should not be performed as part of the impairment assessment, therefore in AMA5 Table 5–9 (p 104) ignore column four (PC20 mg/mL or equivalent, etc).

Permanent impairment due to asthma is rated by the score for the best post-bronchodilator forced expiratory volume in one second (FEV1) (score in column 2, AMA5 Table 5–9) plus per cent of FEV1 (score in column 3) plus minimum medication required (score in column 5). The total score derived is then used to assess the percent impairment in AMA5 Table 5–10 (p 104).

10.4 Obstructive sleep apnea (AMA5 Section 5.6 p 105)

This section needs to be read in conjunction with AMA5 Section 11.4 (p 259) and Section 13.3c (p 317).

Before permanent impairment can be assessed, the worker must have appropriate assessment and treatment by an ear, nose and throat surgeon, a respiratory physician or an appropriate specialist, who specialises in sleep disorders.

Degree of permanent impairment due to sleep apnea should be calculated with reference to AMA5 Table 13–4 (p 317).

10.5 Hypersensitivity pneumonitis (AMA5 Section 5.7 pp 105-106)

Permanent impairment arising from disorders included in this section are assessed according to the impairment classification in AMA5 Table 5–12 p 107.

10.6 Pneumoconiosis (AMA5 Section 5.8 p 106)

Pneumoconiosis is assessed in accordance with the directions in this chapter dealing with the assessment of pneumoconiosis, mesothelioma or lung cancer referred to in section 33 or 34 of the Act.

10.7 Lung cancer (AMA5 Section 5.9)

Permanent impairment due to lung cancer should be assessed at least six months after surgery. Table 5–12 p107 (not Table 5–11 p 106) should be used for assessment of permanent impairment.

Workers with residual lung cancer after treatment are classified in Respiratory Impairment Class 4 (Table 5–12 p 107).

10.8 Permanent impairment due to respiratory disorders (AMA5 Section 5.10 pp 107-111)

Table 5–12 (AMA5, p 107) should be used to assess permanent impairment for respiratory disorders. The pulmonary function tests listed in Table 5–12 must be performed under standard conditions. Exercise testing is not required on a routine basis.

An isolated abnormal diffusing capacity for carbon monoxide (Dco) in the presence of otherwise normal results of lung function testing should be interpreted with caution and its aetiology should be clarified as other important diseases i.e. pulmonary emphysema, smoking related; caused reduction Dco.

10.9 Pneumoconiosis, mesothelioma, or lung cancer

Permanent impairment due to a disease mentioned in section 33 or 34 of the Act is to be assessed in accordance with Chapter 5 of AMA5.

In accordance with section 93R of the Act, if damages are sought or to be sought in respect of a disease referred to in section 33 or 34, any assessment to evaluate the worker's degree of permanent whole of person impairment resulting from the disease as described in sections 146A and 146C is to be made, not by an approved medical specialist as stated in section 146A(2), but by a medical panel constituted as described in section 36 (the Industrial Diseases Medical Panel).

This does not however prevent the evaluation of the worker's degree of permanent whole of person impairment being settled by agreement.

A person seeking an assessment may advise the chief executive officer, in accordance with any relevant regulation, and the chief executive officer is to arrange for a medical panel to be constituted to make the assessment and refer the making of the assessment sought to the panel.

Section 36(3), section 37, and section 38(1) and (3) apply for a reference under this section as they would for a reference under section 36 except that what is to be considered and determined is the assessment referred under this section instead of the questions that arise on a reference under section 36.

Even though the worker's condition is not required to have stabilised, the evaluation is not a special evaluation as referred to in section 146C.

There is no termination day for an election to retain the right to seek damages in respect of a disease described in section 33 or 34.

A medical panel from which an assessment is sought is not bound by a previous assessment if the previous assessment has not been recorded by the Director under section 93L(2).

If the Director, records an assessment, under section 93L(2)—

- (a) any reference in this Subdivision to the worker's degree of permanent whole of person impairment is to be taken to be a reference to the worker's degree of permanent whole of person impairment as evaluated in the assessment recorded; and
- (b) section 93K(13) and section 93L do not apply.

11. Hearing

AMA5 Chapter 11 (p 245) applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of hearing, subject to the modifications as set out below.

11.1 Assessment of hearing impairment (hearing loss)

For the purposes of sections 24A and 31E and Schedule 7 to the Act, noise induced hearing loss will continue to be assessed and calculated in accordance with those provisions and will not need to be evaluated by an approved medical specialist in accordance with the WorkCover WA Guides. The directions hereunder should be applied in relation to any other type of hearing impairment that results from an “injury” (as defined in section 5 of the Act).

A worker may present for assessment of hearing loss for compensation purposes before having undergone all or any of the health investigations that generally occur before assessment of permanent impairment. For this reason and to ensure that conditions other than “occupational hearing impairment” are precluded, the approved medical specialist should require the worker to submit to examination (under section 146G(d)) and tests by an ear, nose and throat specialist or other appropriately qualified medical specialist. The medical examination/assessment needs to be undertaken in accordance with the hearing impairment section of AMA5 Table 11–10 (pp 272–275). The assessor performing the examination/assessment must examine the worker. The assessor’s assessment must be based on medical history and ear, nose and throat examination, evaluation of relevant audiological tests and evaluation of other relevant investigations available to the assessor. This information is to be provided to the approved medical specialist and will be taken into consideration with any other provision in the Act or the WorkCover WA Guides in the assessment of the worker.

Disregard AMA5 Sections 11.1b and 11.2 (pp 246–255), but retain Section 11.1a (Interpretation of Symptoms and Signs, p 246).

Some of the relevant tests are discussed in the AMA 5 Hearing Impairment Evaluation Summary Table 11–10 (pp 272–275). The relevant row for the WorkCover WA Guides is the one headed “Hearing Impairment” with the exception of the last column headed “Degree of Impairment”. The degree of impairment is determined according to this WorkCover WA Guides.

The level of hearing impairment caused by non-work-related conditions is assessed by the approved medical specialist and considered when determining the level of work-related hearing impairment. While this requires medical judgement on the part of the approved medical specialist, any non-work-related deductions should be recorded in the report.

Disregard AMA 5 Tables 11–1, 11–2, 11–3 (pp 247–250). For the purposes of the WorkCover WA Guides, National Acoustic Laboratory (NAL) Tables from the NAL Report No. 118, “Improved Procedure for Determining Percentage Loss of Hearing” (January 1988) are adopted as follows:

Tables RB 500–4000 (pp 11–16)

- Tables RM 500–4000 (pp 18–23)
- Appendix 1 and 2 (pp 8–9)
- Appendix 5 and 6 (pp 24–26)
- Tables EB 4000–8000 (pp 28–30)
- Table EM 4000–8000 (pp 32–34)

In the presence of significant conduction hearing loss, the extension tables do not apply.

AMA5 Table 11–3 is replaced by Table 11.1 at the end of this Chapter.

11.1.1 Hearing impairment

Impairment of a worker's hearing is determined according to evaluation of the individual's binaural hearing impairment.

Permanent hearing impairment should be evaluated when the condition is stable. Prosthetic devices (that is, hearing aids) must not be worn during the evaluation of hearing sensitivity.

Hearing threshold level for pure tones is defined as the number of decibels above standard audiometric zero for a given frequency at which the listener's threshold of hearing lies when tested in a suitable sound attenuated environment. It is the reading on the hearing level dial of an audiometer that is calibrated according to Australian Standard AS 2586–1983.

Evaluation of binaural hearing impairment: Binaural hearing impairment is determined by using the tables in the 1988 NAL publication with allowance for presbycusis according to the presbycusis correction table, if applicable, in the same publication.

The Binaural Tables RB 500–4000 (NAL publication, pp 11–16) are to be used, except when it is not possible or would be unreasonable to do so. For the purposes of calculating binaural hearing impairment, the better and worse ear may vary as between frequencies.

Where it is necessary to use the monaural tables, the binaural hearing impairment (BHI) is determined by the formula:

$$\text{BHI} = \frac{[4 \times (\text{better ear hearing loss})] + \text{worse ear hearing loss}}{5}$$

Presbycusis correction (NAL publication, p 24) only applies to occupational hearing loss contracted by gradual process — for example, occupational noise induced hearing loss and/or occupational solvent induced hearing loss.

Binaural hearing impairment and severe tinnitus: Up to 5% may be added to the work-related binaural hearing impairment for severe tinnitus caused by a work-related injury:

- after presbycusis correction, if applicable, and
- before determining whole person impairment.

Assessment of severe tinnitus is based on a medical practitioner's assessment.

Only hearing ear: A worker has an “only hearing ear” if he or she has suffered a non-work-related severe or profound sensorineural hearing loss in the other ear. If a worker suffers a work-related injury causing a hearing loss in the only hearing ear of x dBHL at a relevant frequency, the worker's work-related binaural hearing impairment at that frequency is calculated from the binaural tables using x dB as the hearing threshold level in both ears. Deduction for presbycusis if applicable and addition for severe tinnitus is undertaken according to the WorkCover WA Guides.

When necessary, binaural hearing impairment figures should be rounded to the nearest 0.1%. Rounding up should occur if equal to or greater than .05%, and rounding down should occur if equal to or less than .04%.

Table 11.1 is used to convert binaural hearing impairment, after deduction for presbycusis if applicable and after addition for severe tinnitus, to whole person impairment.

Table 11.1: Relationship of binaural hearing impairment to whole person impairment

% Binaural hearing impairment	% Whole person impairment	% Binaural hearing impairment	% Whole person impairment
0.0–5.9	0	51.1–53.0	26
		53.1–55.0	27
6.0–6.7	3	55.1–57.0	28
6.8–8.7	4	57.1–59.0	29
8.8–10.6	5	59.1–61.0	30
10.7–12.5	6	61.1–63.0	31
12.6–14.4	7	63.1–65.0	32
14.5–16.3	8	65.1–67.0	33
16.4–18.3	9	67.1–69.0	34
18.4–20.4	10	69.1–71.0	35
20.5–22.7	11	71.1–73.0	36
22.8–25.0	12	73.1–75.0	37
25.1–27.0	13	75.1–77.0	38
27.1–29.0	14	77.1–79.0	39
29.1–31.0	15	79.1–81.0	40
31.1–33.0	16	81.1–83.0	41
33.1–35.0	17	83.1–85.0	42
35.1–37.0	18	85.1–87.0	43
37.1–39.0	19	87.1–89.0	44
39.1–41.0	20	89.1–91.0	45
41.1–43.0	21	91.1–93.0	46
43.1–45.0	22	93.1–95.0	47
45.1–47.0	23	95.1–97.0	48
47.1–49.0	24	97.1–99.0	49
49.1–51.0	25	99.1–100	50

AMA5 Examples 11.1, 11.2, 11.3 (pp 250–251) are to be disregarded.

Example 11.1: Occupational hearing loss from head injury

A 52-year-old male worker sustained a head injury after falling from a ladder. He suffered left hearing loss and tinnitus unaccompanied by vertigo. The approved medical specialist assesses his tinnitus as severe. External auditory canals and tympanic membranes are normal. Rinne test is positive bilaterally and Weber test lateralises to the right. CT scan of the temporal bones shows a fracture on the left. Clinical assessment of hearing is consistent with pure tone audiometry, which shows a flat left sensorineural hearing loss and mild right sensorineural hearing loss.

Pure tone audiometry

Frequency (Hz)	Left (dB HL)	Right (dB HL)	Binaural hearing impairment (%BHI)
500	45	15	2.0
1000	50	15	2.8
1500	55	10	2.5
2000	50	15	1.7
3000	60	20	1.7
4000	60	25	1.5
6000	60	15	–
8000	60	20	–
Total %BHI			12.2
No correction for presbycusis applies			–
Add 4.0% for severe tinnitus			16.2
Adjusted total BHI			16.2
Resultant total BHI of 16.2% = 8% whole person impairment (Table 11.1)			

12. The visual system

AMA4 Chapter 8 (p 209) applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of the visual system, subject to the modifications set out below.

12.1 Introduction and approach to assessment

Under section 146G(1)(d) an approved medical specialist should require the worker to submit to examination and testing by an ophthalmologist and ensure the ophthalmologist examines and tests the worker in accordance with the AMA4. This information is to be provided to the approved medical specialist and will be taken into consideration with any other provision in the Act or the WorkCover WA Guides in the assessment of the worker.

Chapter 8 (pp 209–222) of the AMA4 are adopted for the WorkCover WA Guides without significant change.

AMA4 is used rather than AMA5 for the assessment of permanent impairment of the visual system because:

- the equipment recommended for use in AMA5 is expensive and not owned by most privately practising ophthalmologists (eg, the Goldman apparatus for measuring visual fields);
- the assessments recommended in AMA5 are considered too complex, raising a risk that resulting assessments may be of a lower standard than if the AMA4 method was used;
- there is little emphasis on diplopia in AMA5, yet this is a relatively frequent problem; and
- many ophthalmologists are familiar with the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists' impairment guide, which is similar to AMA4.

Impairment of vision should be measured with the worker wearing their prescribed corrective spectacles and/or contact lenses, if that was normal for the worker before the workplace injury. If, as a result of the workplace injury, the worker has been prescribed corrective spectacles and/or contact lenses for the first time, or different spectacles and/or contact lenses than those prescribed before injury, the difference should be accounted for in the assessment of permanent impairment.

The ophthalmologist should perform, or review, all tests necessary for the assessment of permanent impairment rather than relying on tests, or interpretations of tests, done by the orthoptist or optometrist.

An ophthalmologist should assess visual field impairment in all cases.

In AMA4 Section 8.5, "Other Conditions" (p 222), the "additional 10% impairment" referred to means 10% whole person impairment, not 10% impairment of the visual system.

13. Psychiatric and psychological disorders

AMA5 Chapter 14 is excluded and replaced by this chapter.

13.1 Introduction

This chapter lays out the method for assessing psychiatric impairment. The evaluation of impairment requires a medical examination.

Under section 146G(1)(d) an approved medical specialist should require the worker to submit to examination and assessment by a psychiatrist. Evaluation of psychiatric impairment is conducted by a psychiatrist who has undergone appropriate training in this assessment method.

In evaluating the degree of permanent impairment of the worker for the purposes of common law (section 146C(6)), clause 18A (section 146E(3)), and the specialised retraining program (section 146D(3)) any secondary psychological or psychiatric condition is to be disregarded. A secondary psychological or psychiatric condition is a condition, that, although it may result from the injury or injuries concerned, arises as a secondary, or less direct, consequence of that injury or injuries. The evaluation will not preclude psychological, psychiatric conditions where these conditions are a direct consequence of an injury, an example of which would be psychiatric condition experienced by a bank teller as a result of a hold up (refer to Chapter 1 for examples).

13.2 Background to the development of the scale

The psychiatric impairment rating scale (PIRS) used was originally developed, using AMA4, for the New South Wales Motor Accidents Authority. It was then further modified for Comcare. At this time the conversion table was added. Finally, to ensure relevance for the NSW workers' compensation context, the PIRS was extensively reviewed with reference to AMA5. Changes have been made to the method for assessing pre-injury impairment, and to some of the descriptors within each of the functional areas.

13.3 Diagnosis

The impairment rating must be based upon a psychiatric diagnosis (according to a recognised diagnostic system) and the report must specify the diagnostic criteria upon which the diagnosis is based. Impairment arising from any of the somatoform disorders (DSM IV, pp 445–469) are excluded from this Chapter.

If pain is present as the result of an organic impairment, it should be assessed as part of the organic condition under the relevant table. This does not constitute part of the assessment of impairment relating to the psychiatric condition. The impairment ratings in the body organ system chapters in AMA5 make allowance for any accompanying pain.

It is expected that the psychiatrist will provide a rationale for the rating based on the worker's psychiatric symptoms. The diagnosis is among the factors to be considered in assessing the severity and possible duration of the impairment, but is not the sole criterion to be used. Clinical assessment of the worker may include information from the worker's own description of his or her functioning and limitations; from family members and others who may have knowledge of the worker. Medical reports, feedback from treating professionals, results of standardised tests, including appropriate psychometric testing performed by a qualified clinical psychologist, and work evaluations may provide useful information to assist with the assessment. Evaluation of impairment will need to take into account variations in the level of functioning over time. Percentage impairment refers to "whole person impairment".

13.4 Permanent impairment

A psychiatric disorder is permanent if in the opinion of the psychiatrist, it is likely to continue indefinitely. Regard should be given to:

- the duration of impairment;
- the likelihood of improvement in the worker's condition;
- whether the worker has undertaken reasonable rehabilitative treatment;
- any other relevant matters.

13.5 Effects of treatment

Consider the effects of medication, treatment and rehabilitation to date. Is the condition stable? Is treatment likely to change? Are symptoms likely to improve? If the worker declines treatment, this should not affect the estimate of permanent impairment. The psychiatrist may make a comment in the report about the likely effect of treatment or the reasons for refusal of treatment.

13.6 Co-morbidity

Consider co-morbid features (eg, Alzheimer's disease, personality disorder, substance abuse) and determine whether they are directly linked to the work-related injury or whether they were pre-existing or unrelated conditions.

13.7 Pre-existing impairment

To measure the impairment caused by a work-related injury or incident, the psychiatrist must measure the proportion of WPI due to any pre-existing condition. Pre-existing impairment is calculated using the same method for calculating current impairment level. The assessing psychiatrist uses all available information to rate the worker's pre-injury level of functioning in each of the areas of function. The percentage impairment is calculated using the aggregate score and median class score using the conversion table below. The worker's current level of impairment is then assessed, and the pre-existing impairment level (%) is then subtracted from their current level to obtain the percentage of permanent impairment directly attributable to the work-related injury. If the percentage pre-existing impairment cannot be assessed, then no deduction is to be made.

13.8 Psychiatric impairment rating scale (PIRS)

Behavioural consequences of psychiatric disorder are assessed on six scales, each of which evaluates an area of functional impairment:

1. self care and personal hygiene (Table 13.1);

2. social and recreational activities (Table 13.2);

3. travel (Table 13.3);

4. social functioning (relationships) (Table 13.4);

5. concentration (Table 13.5); and

6. employability (Table 13.6).

}

Activities of daily living

Impairment in each area is rated using class descriptors. Classes range from 1 to 5, in accordance with severity. The standard form must be used when scoring the PIRS. The examples of activities are examples only. The assessing psychiatrist should take account of the worker's cultural background. Consider activities that are usual for the worker's age, sex and cultural norms.

**Table 13.1: Psychiatric impairment rating scale
— Self care and personal hygiene**

Class 1	No deficit, or minor deficit attributable to the normal variation in the general population
Class 2	Mild impairment: able to live independently; looks after self adequately, although may look unkempt occasionally; sometimes misses a meal or relies on take-away food.
Class 3	Moderate impairment: Can't live independently without regular support. Needs prompting to shower daily and wear clean clothes. Does not prepare own meals, frequently misses meals. Family member or community nurse visits (or should visit) 2–3 times per week to ensure minimum level of hygiene and nutrition.
Class 4	Severe impairment: Needs supervised residential care. If unsupervised, may accidentally or purposefully hurt self.
Class 5	Totally impaired: Needs assistance with basic functions, such as feeding and toileting.

**Table 13.2: Psychiatric impairment rating scale
— Social and recreational activities**

Class 1	No deficit, or minor deficit attributable to the normal variation in the general population: regularly participates in social activities that are age, sex and culturally appropriate. May belong to clubs or associations and is actively involved with these.
Class 2	Mild impairment: occasionally goes out to such events without needing a support person, but does not become actively involved (eg, dancing, cheering favourite team).
Class 3	Moderate impairment: rarely goes out to such events, and mostly when prompted by family or close friend. Will not go out without a support person. Not actively involved, remains quiet and withdrawn.
Class 4	Severe impairment: never leaves place of residence. Tolerates the company of family member or close friend, but will go to a different room or garden when others come to visit family or flat mate.
Class 5	Totally impaired. Cannot tolerate living with anybody, extremely uncomfortable when visited by close family member.

**Table 13.3: Psychiatric impairment rating scale
— Travel**

Class 1	No deficit, or minor deficit attributable to the normal variation in the general population: Can travel to new environments without supervision.
Class 2	Mild impairment: can travel without support person, but only in a familiar area such as local shops, visiting a neighbour.
Class 3	Moderate impairment: cannot travel away from own residence without support person. Problems may be due to excessive anxiety or cognitive impairment.
Class 4	Severe impairment: finds it extremely uncomfortable to leave own residence even with trusted person.
Class 5	Totally impaired: may require two or more persons to supervise when travelling.

**Table 13.4: Psychiatric impairment rating scale
— Social functioning**

Class 1	No deficit, or minor deficit attributable to the normal variation in the general population: No difficulty in forming and sustaining relationships (eg, partner, close friendships lasting years).
Class 2	Mild impairment: existing relationships strained. Tension and arguments with partner or close family member, loss of some friendships.
Class 3	Moderate impairment: previously established relationships severely strained, evidenced by periods of separation or domestic violence. Spouse, relatives or community services looking after children.
Class 4	Severe impairment: unable to form or sustain long term relationships. Pre-existing relationships ended (eg, lost partner, close friends). Unable to care for dependants (eg, own children, elderly parent).
Class 5	Totally impaired: unable to function within society. Living away from populated areas, actively avoiding social contact.

**Table 13.5: Psychiatric impairment rating scale
— Concentration, persistence and pace**

Class 1	No deficit, or minor deficit attributable to the normal variation in the general population. Able to pass a TAFE or university course within normal time frame.
Class 2	Mild impairment: can undertake a basic retraining course, or a standard course at a slower pace. Can focus on intellectually demanding tasks for periods of up to 30 minutes, then feels fatigued or develops headache.
Class 3	Moderate impairment: unable to read more than newspaper articles. Finds it difficult to follow complex instructions (eg, operating manuals, building plans), make significant repairs to motor vehicle, type long documents, follow a pattern for making clothes, tapestry or knitting.
Class 4	Severe impairment: can only read a few lines before losing concentration. Difficulties following simple instructions. Concentration deficits obvious even during brief conversation. Unable to live alone, or needs regular assistance from relatives or community services.
Class 5	Totally impaired: needs constant supervision and assistance within institutional setting.

**Table 13.6: Psychiatric impairment rating scale
— Employability**

Class 1	No deficit, or minor deficit attributable to the normal variation in the general population. Able to work full time. Duties and performance are consistent with the injured worker's education and training. The person is able to cope with the normal demands of the job.
Class 2	Mild impairment. Able to work full time but in a different environment from that of the pre-injury job. The duties require comparable skill and intellect as those of the pre-injury job. Can work in the same position, but no more than 20 hours per week (eg, no longer happy to work with specific persons, or work in a specific location due to travel required).
Class 3	Moderate impairment: cannot work at all in same position. Can perform less than 20 hours per week in a different position, which requires less skill or is qualitatively different (eg, less stressful).
Class 4	Severe impairment: cannot work more than one or two days at a time, less than 20 hours per fortnight. Pace is reduced, attendance is erratic.
Class 5	Totally impaired. Cannot work at all.

13.9 Using the PIRS to measure impairment

Rating psychiatric impairment using the PIRS is a two-step procedure:

1. determine the median class score; and
2. calculate the aggregate score.

13.9.1 Determining the median class score

Each area of function described in the PIRS is given an impairment rating which ranges from Class 1 to 5. The six scores are arranged in ascending order, using the standard form. The median is then calculated by averaging the two middle scores. Eg:

Example A: 1, 2, 3, 3, 4, 5 Median Class = 3

Example B: 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4 Median Class = 2.5 = 3*

Example C: 1, 2, 3, 5, 5, 5 Median Class = 4

*If a score falls between two classes, it is rounded up to the next class. A median class score of 2.5 thus becomes 3.

The median class score method was chosen as it is not influenced by extremes. Each area of function is assessed separately. While impairment in one area is neither equivalent nor interchangeable with impairment in other areas, the median seems the fairest way to translate different impairments onto a linear scale.

13.9.2 Median class score and percentage impairment

Each median class score represents a range of impairment, as shown below.

Class 1 = 0–3%

Class 2 = 4–10%

Class 3 = 11–30%

Class 4 = 31–60%

Class 5 = 61–100%

13.9.3 Calculation of the aggregate score

The aggregate score is used to determine an exact percentage of impairment within a particular Median Class range. The six class scores are added to give the aggregate score.

13.9.4 Use of the conversion table to arrive at percentage impairment

The aggregate score is converted to a percentage score using the conversion table.

The conversion table was developed to calculate the percentage impairment based on the aggregate and median scores.

The scores within the conversion table are spread in such a way to ensure that the final percentage rating is consistent with the measurement of permanent impairment percentages for other body systems.

Table 13.7: Conversion table

		Aggregate score																															
		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30							
% Impairment	Median Class 1	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	3	3																							
	Median Class 2				4	5	5	6	7	7	8	9	9	10																			
	Median Class 3								11	13	15	17	19	22	24	26	28	30															
	Median Class 4													31	34	37	41	44	47	50	54	57	60										
	Median Class 5																		61	65	70	74	78	83	87	91	96	100					

Conversion table — explanatory notes

A. Distribution of aggregate scores

- The lowest aggregate score that can be obtained is: $1+1+1+1+1+1=6$
- The highest aggregate score is $5+5+5+5+5+5=30$
- The table therefore has aggregate scores ranging from 6 to 30.
- Each Median Class score has an impairment range, and a range of possible aggregate scores (eg, Class 3 = 11–30%)
- The lowest aggregate score for Class 3 is 13 ($1+1+2+3+3+3=13$)
- The highest aggregate score for Class 3 is 22. ($3+3+3+3+5+5=22$)
- The conversion table distributes the impairment percentages across aggregate scores

B. Same aggregate score in different classes

- The conversion table shows that the same aggregate score leads to different percentages of impairment in different median classes.
- For example, an aggregate score of 18 is equivalent to an impairment rating of
 - 10% in Class 2,

- 22% in Class 3,
- 34% in Class 4.
- This is due to the fact that an injured worker whose impairment is in Median Class 2 is likely to have a lower score across most areas of function. They may be significantly impaired in one aspect of their life, such as travel, yet have low impairment in Social Function, Self-care or Concentration.
- Someone whose impairment reaches Median Class 4 will experience significant impairment across most aspects of his or her life.

13.10 Examples: (Using the previous cases)

Example A

PIRS scores Median class

1	2	3	3	4	5	= 3
---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

Aggregate score Total % Impairment

1 +	2 +	3 +	3 +	4 +	5 =	18	22%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	----	-----

Example B

PIRS scores Median class

1	2	2	3	3	4	= 3
---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

Aggregate score Total % Impairment

1 +	2 +	2 +	3 +	3 +	4 =	15	15%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	----	-----

Example C

PIRS scores Median class

1	2	3	5	5	5	= 4
---	---	---	---	---	---	-----

Aggregate score Total % Impairment

1 +	2 +	3 +	5 +	5 +	5 =	21	44%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	----	-----

Table 13.8: PIRs rating form

Name			Claim reference number		
D.O.B.			Age at time of injury		
Date of injury			Occupation before injury		
Date of assessment			Marital status before injury		
Psychiatric diagnoses	1.		2.		
	3.		4.		
Psychiatric treatment					
Is impairment permanent?	Yes No (Circle one)				
PIRS category	Class	Reason for decision			
Self care and personal hygiene					
Social and recreational activities					
Travel					
Social functioning					
Concentration, persistence and pace					
Employability					

Score

--	--	--	--	--	--

Median Class

=

Aggregate Score

Impairment

+	+	+	+	+	=
---	---	---	---	---	---

Total

%

--	--

14 Haematopoietic system

AMA5 Chapter 9 applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of the haematopoietic system, subject to the modifications set out below.

14.1 Introduction

AMA5 Chapter 9 (pp 191–210) provides guidelines on the method of assessing permanent impairment of the haematopoietic system. Overall, that chapter should be followed in conducting the assessment, with variations indicated below.

Impairment of end organ function due to haematopoietic disorder should be assessed separately, using the relevant chapter of the WorkCover WA Guides. The percentage whole person impairment due to end organ impairment should be combined with any percentage whole person impairment due to haematopoietic disorder, using the Combined Values Table (AMA5, pp 604–606).

14.2 Anaemia

Table 14.1 (below) replaces AMA5 Table 9–2 (p 193).

Table 14.1: Classes of anaemia and percentage whole person impairment

Class 1:0–10% WPI	Class 2:11–30% WPI	Class 3:31–70% WPI	Class 4:71–100% WPI
No symptoms and haemoglobin 100–120g/L and no transfusion required	Minimal symptoms and haemoglobin 80–100g/L and no transfusion required	Moderate to marked symptoms and haemoglobin 50–80g/L before transfusion and transfusion of 2 to 3 units required, every 4 to 6 weeks	Moderate to marked symptoms and haemoglobin 50–80g/L before transfusion and transfusion of 2 to 3 units required, every 2 weeks

The approved medical specialist should exercise clinical judgement in determining whole person impairment, using the criteria in Table 14.1. For example, if comorbidities exist which preclude transfusion, the approved medical specialist may assign Class 3 or Class 4, on the understanding that transfusion would under other circumstances be indicated. Similarly, there may be some workers with Class 2 impairment who, because of comorbidity, may undergo transfusion.

Pre-transfusion haemoglobin levels in Table 14.1 are to be used as indications only. It is acknowledged that for some workers, it would not be medically advisable to permit the worker's haemoglobin levels to be as low as indicated in the criteria of Table 14.1.

The approved medical specialist should indicate a percentage whole person impairment, as well as the Class.

14.3 Polycythaemia and myelofibrosis

The level of symptoms (as in Table 14.1) should be used a guide for the approved medical specialist in cases where non-anaemic tissue iron deficiency results from venesection.

14.4 White blood cell diseases

In cases of functional asplenia, the approved medical specialist should assign 3% whole person impairment. This should be combined with any other impairment rating, using the Combined Values Table (AMA5, pp 604–606).

AMA5 Table 9–3 (p 200) should not be used for rating impairment due to HIV infection or auto immune deficiency disease. An Impairment evaluation is not required by an approved medical specialist for these diseases. For each of the purposes for which an impairment assessment may be obtained there is no entitlement for HIV infection. A worker who has contracted AIDS in the course of employment is deemed to have 100% impairment under Item 82 of Part 2 of Schedule 2. If the worker is obtaining an assessment for common law the worker will be deemed to have at least 25% whole of person impairment under section 93Q(3) for the purposes of making an election to seek damages at common law. An approved medical specialist is not required to assess a worker's degree of impairment, however the worker will require certification from a medical practitioner to the effect that the worker has contracted AIDS.

14.5 Haemorrhagic and platelet disorders

AMA5 Table 9–4 (p 203) is to be used as the basis for assessing haemorrhagic and platelet disorders.

For the purposes of these WorkCover WA Guides, the criteria for inclusion in Class 3 of AMA5 Table 9–4 (p 203) is:

- symptoms and signs of haemorrhagic and platelet abnormality;
and/or
- requires continuous treatment;
and
- interference with daily activities; requires occasional assistance.

For the purposes of these WorkCover WA Guides, the criteria for inclusion in Class 4 of Table 9–4 (p 203, AMA5) is:

- symptoms and signs of haemorrhagic and platelet abnormality;
and/or
- requires continuous treatment;
and
- Difficulty performing daily activities; requires continuous care.

14.6 Thrombotic disorders

AMA5 Table 9–4 (p 203) is used as the basis for determining impairment due to thrombotic disorder.

15 The endocrine system

AMA5 Chapter 10 (p 211) applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of the endocrine system, subject to the modifications set out below.

15.2 Introduction

AMA5 Chapter 10 provides a useful summary of the methods for assessing permanent impairment arising from disorders of the endocrine system.

Refer to other chapters in AMA5 for related structural changes — the visual system (Chapter 12), the skin (eg, pigmentation — Chapter 8), the central and peripheral nervous system (memory, Chapter 13), the urinary and reproductive system (infertility, renal impairment, Chapter 7), the digestive system (dyspepsia, Chapter 6), the cardiovascular system (Chapters 3 and 4).

The clinical findings to support the impairment assessment are to be reported in the units recommended by the Royal College of Pathologists of Australia. (See Appendix 1 of this Chapter, p 71).

Westergren erythrocyte sedimentation rate (WSR) is equivalent to ESR.

15.3 Adrenal cortex

AMA5, p 222, first paragraph: disregard the last sentence, “They also affect inflammatory response, cell membrane permeability, and immunologic responses, and they play a role in the development and maintenance of secondary sexual characteristics.” Replace with: “Immunological and inflammatory responses are reduced by these hormones and they play a role in the development and maintenance of secondary sexual characteristics.”

AMA5 Example 10–18 (pp 224–225): see reference to ESR (15.2, above).

AMA5 Example 10–20 (p 225): History: For “hypnotic bladder” read “hypotonic bladder”.

15.4 Diabetes mellitus

AMA5, p 231: refer to the Australian Diabetes Association Guidelines with regard to levels of fasting glucose. (Position statement from the Australian Diabetes Society, reprinted in Appendix 2 to this Chapter).

AMA5, p 231: insert at the end of the second paragraph: ‘The goal of treatment is to maintain haemoglobin A1c within 1% of the normal range (4%–6.3%)’.

15.5 Mammary glands

AMA5 Example 10–45 (p 239), Current Symptoms: Disregard the last sentence, “Both bromocriptine and cabergoline cause nausea, precluding use of either drug” and replace with: “Routine use of bromocriptine and cabergoline is normal in Australia. It is rare that nausea precludes their use.”

15.6 Criteria for rating permanent impairment due to metabolic bone disease

AMA5, p 240: Impairment due to a metabolic bone disease itself is unlikely to be associated with a work injury and would usually represent a pre-existing condition.

Impairment from fracture, spinal collapse or other complications may arise as a result of a work injury associated with these underlying conditions (as noted in AMA5, Section 10.10c) and would be assessed using the other Chapters indicated, with the exception of Chapter 18 (Pain) which is excluded from the WorkCover WA Guides.

Appendix 15.1: Interpretation of pathology tests

From Manual of Use and Interpretation of Pathology Tests, 3rd edition. Reprinted with kind permission of the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia.

Reference ranges, plasma or serum, unless otherwise indicated

Alanine aminotransferase (ALT)	(adult)	< 35 U/L
Albumin	(adult)	32–45 g/L
Alkaline phosphatase (ALP)	(adult, non-pregnant)	25–100 U/L
Alpha fetoprotein	(adult, non-pregnant)	< 10 µg/L
Alpha-1-antitrypsin		1.7–3.4 g/L
Anion gap		8–16 mmol/L
Aspartate aminotransferase (AST)		< 40 U/L
Bicarbonate (total CO ₂)		22–32 mmol/L
Bilirubin (total)	(adult)	< 20 µmol/L
Calcium	(total)	2.10–2.60 mmol/L
	(ionised)	1.17–1.30 mmol/L
Chloride		95–110 mmol/L
Cholesterol (HDL)	(male)	0.9–2.0 mmol/L
	(female)	1.0–2.2 mmol/L
Cholesterol (National Heart Foundation [Australia] recommendation)	(total)	< 5.5 mmol/L
Copper		13–22 µmol/L
Creatine kinase (CK)	(male)	60–220 U/L
	(female)	30–180 U/L
Creatinine	(adult male)	0.06–0.12 mmol/L
	(adult female)	0.05–0.11 mmol/L
Gamma glutamyl transferase (GGT)	(male)	< 50 U/L
	(female)	< 30 U/L
Globulin	adult	25–35g/L
Glucose	(venous plasma) - (fasting)	3.0–5.4 mmol/L
	(venous plasma) - (random)	3.0–7.7 mmol/L
Lactate dehydrogenase (LD)	(adult)	110–230 U/L
Magnesium	(adult)	0.8–1.0 mmol/L
Osmolality	(adult)	280–300 m.osmoll/kg water
Reference ranges, plasma or serum, unless otherwise indicated (continued)		
pCO ₂	(arterial blood)	4.6–6.0 kPa (35–45 mmHg)
PH	(arterial blood)	7.36–7.44 (36–44 nmol/L)
Phosphate		0.8–1.5 mmol/L
pO ₂	(arterial blood)	11.0–13.5 kPa (80–100 mmHg)
Potassium	(plasma)	3.4–4.5 mmol/L
	(serum)	3.8–4.9 mmol/L
Prolactin	(male)	150–500 mU/L
	(female)	0–750 mU/L
Protein, total	(adult)	62–80 g/L
Sodium		135–145 mmol/L
Testosterone and related androgens	See Table A (below)	

Therapeutic intervals

Amitriptyline	150–900 nmol/L	60–250 µg/L
Carbamazepine	20–40 µmol/L	6–12 mg/L
Digoxin	0.6–2.3 nmol/L	0.5–1.8 µg/L
Lithium	0.6–1.2 mmol/L	
Nortriptyline	200–650 nmol/L	50–170 µg/L
Phenobarbitone	65–170 µmol/L	15–40 mg/L
Phenytoin	40–80 µmol/L	10–20 mg/L
Primidone	22–50 µmol/L	4.8–11.0 mg/L
Procainamide	17–42 µmol/L	4–10 mg/L
Quinidine	7–15 µmol/L	2.3–4.8 mg/L
Salicylate	1.0–2.5 mmol/L	140–350 mg/L
Theophylline	55–110 µmol/L	10–20 mg/L
Valproate	350–700 µmol/L	50–100 mg/L
Thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH)		0.4–5.0 mIU/L
Thyroxine (free)		10–25 pmol/L
Triglycerides (fasting)		< 2.0 mmol/L
Triiodothyronine (free)		4.0–8.0 pmol/L
Urate	(male)	0.20–0.45 mmol/L
	(female)	0.15–0.40 mmol/L
Urea	(adult)	3.0–8.0 mmol/L
Zinc		12–20 µmol/L

Table A: Reference intervals for testosterone and related androgens (serum)

	Male		Female	
	Pre-pubertal	Adult (age related)	Pre-pubertal	Adult (age related)
Free testosterone (pmol/L)		170–510		< 4.0
Total testosterone (nmol/L)	< 0.5	8–35	< 0.5	< 4.0
SHBG (nmol/L)	55–100	10–50	55–100	30–90 (250–500 in the 3rd trimester)
Dihydrotestosterone (nmol/L)		1–2.5		

Reference ranges, urine

Calcium		2.5–7.5 mmol/24 hours
Chloride (depends on intake, plasma levels)		100–250 mmol/24 hours
Cortisol (free)		100–300 nmol/24 hours
Creatinine	(child)	0.07–0.19 mmol/24 hours/kg
	(male)	9–18 mmol/24 hours
	(female)	5–16 mmol/24 hours
HMMA	(infant)	< 10 mmol/mol creatinine
	(adult)	< 35 µmol/24 hours
Magnesium		2.5–8.0 mmol/24 hours
Osmolality (depends on hydration)		50–1200 m.osmol/kg water
Phosphate (depends on intake, plasma levels)		10–40 mmol/24 hours
Potassium (depends on intake, plasma levels)		40–100 mmol/24 hours
Protein, total		< 150 mg/24 hours
	(pregnancy)	< 250 mg/24 hours
Sodium (depends on intake, plasma levels)		75–300 mmol/24 hours
Urate	(male)	2.2–6.6 mmol/24 hours
	(female)	1.6–5.6 mmol/24 hours
Urea (depends on protein intake)		420–720 mmol/24 hours

Reference ranges, whole blood

Haemoglobin (Hb)	(adult male)	130–180 g/L
	(adult female)	115–165 g/L
Red cell count (RCC)	(adult male)	4.5–6.5 x 10 ¹² /L
	(adult female)	3.8–5.8 x 10 ¹² /L
Packed cell volume (PCV)	(adult male)	0.40–0.54
	(adult female)	0.37–0.47
Mean cell volume (MCV)		80–100 fL
Mean cell haemoglobin (MCH)		27–32 pg
Mean cell haemoglobin concentration (MCHC)		300–350 g/L
Leucocyte (White Cell) Count (WCC)		4.0–11.0 x 10 ⁹ /L
Leucocyte differential count		
– Neutrophils		2.0–7.5 x 10 ⁹ /L
– Eosinophils		0.04–0.4 x 10 ⁹ /L
– Basophils		< 0.1 x 10 ⁹ /L
– Monocytes		0.2–0.8 x 10 ⁹ /L
– Lymphocytes		1.5–4.0 x 10 ⁹ /L
Platelet count		150–400 x 10 ⁹ /L
Erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR)	male 17–50 years	1–10 mm/hour
	male >50 years	2–14 mm/hour
	female 17–50 years	3–12 mm/hour
	female >50 years	5–20 mm/hour
Reticulocyte count		10–100 x 10 ⁹ /L (0.2–2.0%)

Reference ranges, plasma or serum, unless otherwise indicated

Iron	(adult)	10–30 µmol/L
Iron (total) binding capacity (TIBC)		45–80 µmol/L
Transferrin		1.7–3.0 g/L
Transferrin saturation		0.15–0.45 (15–45%)
Ferritin	(male)	30–300 µg/L
	(female)	15–200 µg/L
Vitamin B12		120–680 pmol/L
Folate	(red cell)	360–1400 nmol/L
	(serum)	7–45 nmol/L

Reference ranges, citrated plasma

Activated partial thromboplastin time (APTT)	25–35 seconds
– Therapeutic range for continuous infusion heparin	1.5–2.5 x baseline
Prothrombin time (PT)	11–15 seconds
International normalised ratio (INR)	
– Therapeutic range for oral anticoagulant therapy	2.0–4.5
Fibrinogen	1.5–4.0 g/L

Reference ranges, serum

Rheumatoid factor (nephelometry)	< 30 IU/L
C3	0.9–1.8 g/L
C4	0.16–0.50 g/L
C-reactive protein	< 5.0 mg/L
Immunoglobulins:	
IgG	6.5–16.0g/L
IgA	0.6–4.0g/L
IgM	0.5–3.0g/L

Reference intervals for lymphocyte subsets

	Adult
Total lymphocytes	1.5–4.0
CD3	0.6–2.4
CD4 (T4)	0.5–1.4
CD8 (T8)	0.2–0.7
CD19	0.04–0.5
CD16	0.2–0.4
CD4/CD8 ratio	1.0–3.2

Appendix 15.2: New classification and criteria for diagnosis of diabetes mellitus

Position Statement from the Australian Diabetes Society,* New Zealand Society for the Study of Diabetes,† Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia‡ and Australasian Association of Clinical Biochemists§

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Introduction

Recently, there has been major growth in knowledge about the aetiology and pathogenesis of different types of diabetes and about the predictive value of different blood glucose levels for development of complications. In response, both the American Diabetes Association (ADA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have re-examined, redefined and updated the classification of and criteria for diabetes, which have been unchanged since 1985. While the two working parties had cross-representation, they met separately, and differences have emerged between their recommendations.

The ADA published its final recommendations in 1997,¹ while the WHO group published its provisional conclusions for consultation and comment in June 1998.² The WHO process called for comments on the proposal by the end of September 1998, with the intention of finalising definitive classification and criteria by the end of December 1998 and of publishing these soon thereafter. However, WHO publications need to go through an internal approval process and it may be up to 12 months before the final WHO document appears.

A combined working party of the Australian Diabetes Society, New Zealand Society for the Study of Diabetes, Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia and Australasian Association of Clinical Biochemists was formed to formulate an Australasian position on the two sets of recommendations and, in particular, on the differences between them. This is an interim statement pending the final WHO report, which will include recommendations on diabetes classification as well as criteria for diagnosis. We see it as very important to inform Australasian health professionals treating patients with diabetes about these changes.

Key messages

Diagnosis of diabetes is not in doubt when there are classical symptoms of thirst and polyuria and a random venous plasma glucose level ≥ 11.1 mmol/L.

The Australasian Working Party on Diagnostic Criteria for Diabetes Mellitus recommends:

- Immediate adoption of the new criterion for diagnosis of diabetes as proposed by the American Diabetes Association (ADA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) – fasting venous plasma glucose level ≥ 7.0 mmol/L;
- Immediate adoption of the new classification for diabetes mellitus proposed by the ADA and WHO, which comprises four aetiological types – type 1, type 2, other specific types, and gestational diabetes – with impaired glucose tolerance and impaired fasting glycaemia as stages in the natural history of disordered carbohydrate metabolism.
- Awareness that some cases of diabetes will be missed unless an oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) is performed. If there is any suspicion or other risk factor suggesting glucose intolerance, the OGTT should continue to be used pending the final WHO recommendation.

What are the new diagnostic criteria?

The new WHO criteria for diagnosis of diabetes mellitus and hyperglycaemia are shown in Box 1. The major change from the previous WHO recommendation³ is the lowering of the diagnostic level of fasting plasma glucose to ≥ 7.0 mmol/L, from the former level of ≥ 7.8 mmol/L. For whole blood, the proposed new level is ≥ 6.1 mmol/L, from the former ≥ 6.7 mmol/L.

This change is based primarily on cross-sectional studies demonstrating the presence of microvascular⁴ and macrovascular complications⁵ at these lower glucose concentrations. In addition, the 1985 WHO diagnostic criterion for diabetes based on fasting plasma glucose level (≥ 7.8 mmol/L) represents a greater degree of hyperglycaemia than the criterion based on plasma glucose level two hours after a 75 g glucose load (≥ 11.1 mmol/L).⁶ A fasting plasma glucose level of ≥ 7 mmol/L accords more closely with this 2 h post-glucose level.

1: Values for diagnosis of diabetes mellitus and other categories of hyperglycaemia ²				
Glucose concentration (mmol/L [mg/dL])				
	Whole blood		Plasma	
	Venous	Capillary	Venous	Capillary
Diabetes mellitus				
Fasting	≥ 6.1 (≥ 110)	≥ 6.1 (≥ 110)	≥ 7.0 (≥ 126)	≥ 7.0 (≥ 126)
or 2 h post-glucose load	≥ 10.0 (≥ 180)	≥ 11.1 (≥ 200)	≥ 11.1 (≥ 200)	≥ 12.2 (≥ 220)
or both				
Impaired glucose tolerance (IGT)				
Fasting (if measured)	< 6.1 (< 110)	< 6.1 (< 110)	< 7.0 (< 126)	< 7.0 (< 126)
and 2 h post-glucose load	≥ 6.7 (≥ 120) and < 10.0 (< 180)	≥ 7.8 (≥ 140) and < 11.1 (< 200)	≥ 7.8 (≥ 140) and < 11.1 (< 200)	≥ 8.9 (≥ 160) and < 12.2 (< 220)
Impaired fasting glycaemia (IFG)				
Fasting	≥ 5.6 (≥ 100) and < 6.1 (< 110)	≥ 5.6 (≥ 100) and < 6.1 (< 110)	≥ 6.1 (≥ 110) and < 7.0 (< 126)	≥ 6.1 (≥ 110) and < 7.0 (< 126)
2 h post-glucose load (if measured)	< 6.7 (< 120)	< 7.8 (< 140)	< 7.8 (< 140)	< 8.9 (< 160)
<p>For epidemiological or population screening purposes, the fasting or 2 h value after 75 g oral glucose may be used alone. For clinical purposes, the diagnosis of diabetes should always be confirmed by repeating the test on another day, unless there is unequivocal hyperglycaemia with acute metabolic decompensation or obvious symptoms. Glucose concentrations should not be determined on serum unless red cells are immediately removed, otherwise glycolysis will result in an unpredictable underestimation of the true concentrations. It should be stressed that glucose preservatives do not totally prevent glycolysis. If whole blood is used, the sample should be kept at 0–4°C or centrifuged immediately, or assayed immediately. Table reproduced with permission from Alberti KGMM, Zimmet PZ. Definition, diagnosis and classification of diabetes mellitus and its complications. Part 1: diagnosis and classification of diabetes mellitus. Provisional Report of a WHO Consultation. <i>Diabet Med</i> 1998; 15: 539–553. Copyright John Wiley & Sons Limited.</p>				

Recommendation: The ADA and the WHO committee are unanimous in adopting the changed diagnostic level, and the Australasian Working Party on Diagnostic Criteria recommends that healthcare providers in Australia and New Zealand should adopt it immediately.

Clinicians should note that the diagnostic criteria differ between clinical and epidemiological settings. In clinical practice, when symptoms are typical of diabetes, a single fasting plasma glucose level of ≥ 7.0 mmol/L or 2 h post-glucose or casual postprandial plasma glucose level of ≥ 11.1 mmol/L suffices for diagnosis. If there are no symptoms, or symptoms are equivocal, at least one additional glucose measurement (preferably fasting) on a different day with a value in the diabetic range is necessary to confirm the diagnosis. Furthermore, severe hyperglycaemia detected under conditions of acute infective, traumatic, circulatory or other stress may be transitory and should not be regarded as diagnostic of diabetes. The situation should be reviewed when the primary condition has stabilised.

In epidemiological settings, for study of high-prevalence populations or selective screening of high-risk individuals, a single measure — the glucose-level 2 h post-glucose load — will suffice to describe prevalence of impaired glucose tolerance (IGT).

2: Aetiological classification of disorders of glycaemia*

Type 1 (β -cell destruction, usually leading to absolute insulin deficiency)

Autoimmune
Idiopathic

Type 2 (may range from predominantly insulin resistance with relative insulin deficiency to a predominantly secretory defect with or without insulin resistance)

Other specific types

Genetic defects of β -cell function
Genetic defects in insulin action
Diseases of the exocrine pancreas
Endocrinopathies
Drug or chemical induced
Infections
Uncommon forms of immune-mediated diabetes
Other genetic syndromes sometimes associated with diabetes

Gestational diabetes

* As additional subtypes are discovered, it is anticipated they will be reclassified within their own specific category. Includes the former categories of gestational impaired glucose tolerance and gestational diabetes. Table reproduced with permission from Alberti KGMM, Zimmet PZ. Definition, diagnosis and classification of diabetes mellitus and its complications. Part 1: diagnosis and classification of diabetes mellitus. Provisional Report of a WHO Consultation. Diabet Med 1998; 15: 539-553. Copyright John Wiley & Sons Limited.

What about the oral glucose tolerance test?

Previously, the oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT) was recommended in people with a fasting plasma glucose level of 5.5–7.7 mmol/L or random plasma glucose level of 7.8–11.0 mmol/L. After a 75 g glucose load, those with a 2 h plasma glucose level of < 7.8 mmol/L were classified as normoglycaemic, of 7.8–11.0 mmol/L as having IGT and of ≥ 11.1 mmol/L as having diabetes.

The new diagnostic criteria proposed by the ADA and WHO differ in their recommendations on use of the OGTT. The ADA makes a strong recommendation that fasting plasma glucose level can be used on its own and that, in general, the OGTT need not be used.¹ The WHO group² argues strongly for the retention of the OGTT and suggests using fasting plasma glucose level alone only when circumstances prevent the performance of the OGTT.

There are concerns that many people with a fasting plasma glucose level < 7.0 mmol/L will have manifestly abnormal results on the OGTT and are at risk of microvascular and macrovascular complications. This has major ramifications for the approach to diabetes screening, particularly when the Australian National Diabetes Strategy proposal,⁷ launched in June 1998 by Dr Michael Wooldridge, Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, has early detection of type 2 diabetes as a key priority.

Recommendation: The Australasian Working Party on Diagnostic Criteria has major concerns about discontinuing use of the OGTT and recommends that a formal recommendation on its use in diabetes screening be withheld until the final WHO recommendation is made. However, in the interim, the OGTT should continue to be used.

Diabetes in pregnancy

The ADA has retained its old criteria for diagnosis of gestational diabetes.¹ These differ from those recommended by both WHO² and the Australian Working Party on Diabetes in Pregnancy⁸ and are generally not recognised outside the United States. The new WHO statement retains the 1985 WHO recommendation that both IGT and diabetes should be classified as gestational diabetes. This is consistent with the recommendations of the Australasian Diabetes in Pregnancy Society, which recommended a diagnostic 2 h venous plasma glucose level on the OGTT of ≥ 8.0 mmol/L. In New Zealand, a cut-off level of ≥ 9.0 mmol/L has been applied.⁸

How has the classification of diabetes changed?

The proposed new classification encompasses both clinical stages and aetiological types of hyperglycaemia and is supported by numerous epidemiological studies. The classification by aetiological type (Box 2) results from new knowledge of the causes of hyperglycaemia, including diabetes. The terms insulin-dependent and non-insulin-dependent diabetes (IDDM and NIDDM) are eliminated and the terms type 1 and type 2 diabetes retained. Other aetiological types, such as diabetes arising from genetic defects of β -cell function or insulin action, are grouped as “other specific types”, with gestational diabetes as a fourth category.

The proposed staging (Box 3) reflects the fact that any aetiological type of diabetes can pass or progress through several clinical phases (both asymptomatic and symptomatic) during its natural history. Moreover, individuals may move in either direction between stages.

Impaired glucose tolerance and impaired fasting glycaemia

3: Disorders of glycaemia: aetiological types and clinical stages					
Types	Stages				
	Normoglycaemia		Hyperglycaemia		
	Normal glucose tolerance	Impaired glucose tolerance and/or impaired fasting glycaemia	Not insulin-requiring	Diabetes mellitus	
				Insulin-requiring	
				For control	For survival
Type 1 Autoimmune Idiopathic	←	→			
Type 2* Predominantly insulin resistance Predominantly insulin secretory defects	←	→		→	→
Other specific types*	←	→		→	→
Gestational diabetes*	←	→		→	→

* In rare instances, patients in these categories (eg, vactor toxicity, type 1 diabetes presenting in pregnancy) may require insulin for survival.
Table reproduced with permission from Alberti KGMM, Zimmet PZ. Definition, diagnosis and classification of diabetes mellitus and its complications. Part 1: diagnosis and classification of diabetes mellitus. Provisional Report of a WHO Consultation. *Diabet Med* 1998; 15: 539-553. Copyright John Wiley & Sons Limited.

Impaired glucose tolerance (IGT), a discrete class in the previous classification, is now categorised as a stage in the natural history of disordered carbohydrate metabolism. Individuals with IGT are at increased risk of cardiovascular disease, and not all will be identified by fasting glucose level.

In reducing the use of the OGTT, the ADA recommended a new category — impaired fasting glycaemia (IFG) — when fasting plasma glucose level is lower than that required to diagnose diabetes but higher than the reference range (< 7.0 mmol/L but ≥ 6.1 mmol/L). Limited data on this category show that it increases both risk of progressing to diabetes⁹ and cardiovascular risk.⁵ However, data are as yet insufficient to determine whether IFG has the same status as IGT as a risk factor for developing diabetes and cardiovascular disease and as strong an association with the metabolic syndrome (insulin resistance syndrome).

IFG can be diagnosed by fasting glucose level alone, but if 2 h glucose level is also measured some individuals with IFG will have IGT and some may have diabetes. In addition, the number of people with OGTT results indicating diabetes but fasting plasma glucose level < 7.0 mmol/L is unknown, but early data suggest there may be major variation across different populations.¹⁰ A number of studies, including the DECODE initiative of the European Diabetes Epidemiology Group, have reported that individuals classified with IFG are not the same as the IGT group.¹¹⁻¹⁵ The European Group believes that, on available European evidence, the ADA decision to rely solely on fasting glucose level would be unwise.

Recommendation: The Australasian Working Party on Diagnostic Criteria recommends immediate adoption of the new classification. However, clinicians should be aware that some cases of diabetes will be missed unless an OGTT is performed. Thus, if there is any suspicion or other risk factor suggesting glucose intolerance, the working party continues to recommend use of an OGTT pending the final WHO recommendation.

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16 The skin

AMA5 Chapter 8 applies to the assessment of permanent impairment of the skin, subject to the modifications set out below.

AMA5 Chapter 8 (pp 173–190) refers to skin diseases generally rather than work-related skin diseases alone. This Chapter has been adopted for measuring impairment of the skin system, with the following variations.

Disfigurement, scars and skin grafts may be assessed as causing significant permanent impairment when the skin condition causes limitation in the performance of activities of daily living (ADL).

For cases of facial disfigurement, refer to Table 8.1 in the WorkCover WA Guides.

AMA5 Table 8–2 (p 178) provides the method of classification of impairment due to skin disorders. Three components — signs and symptoms of skin disorder, limitations in activities of daily living and requirements for treatment — define five classes of permanent impairment. The assessing physician should derive a specific percentage impairment within the range for the class that best describes the clinical status of the worker.

The case examples provided in AMA5 Chapter 8 do not, in most cases, relate to permanent impairment that results from a work-related injury. The following New South Wales examples are provided for information.

Work-related case study examples 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.4, 16.5, 16.6 are included below, in addition to AMA5 Examples 8.1–8.22 (pp 178–187).

Example 16.1: Cumulative irritant dermatitis

Subject:	42-year-old man.
History:	Spray painter working on ships in dry dock. Not required to prepare surface but required to mix paints (including epoxy and polyurethane) with “thinners” (solvents) and spray metal ships’ surface. At end of each session, required to clean equipment with solvent. Not supplied with gloves or other personal protective equipment until after onset of symptoms. Gradual increase in severity in spite of commencing to wear gloves. Off work two months leading to clearance, but frequent recurrence, especially if the subject attempted prolonged work wearing latex or PVC gloves or wet work without gloves.
Current:	Returned to dry duties only at work. Mostly clear of dermatitis, but flares.
Physical examination:	Varies between no abnormality detected to mild dermatitis of the dorsum of hands.
Investigations:	Patch test standard + epoxy + isocyanates (polyurethanes). No reactions.
Impairment:	0%.
Comment:	No interference with activities of daily living (ADL).

Example 16.2: Allergic contact dermatitis to hair dye

Subject:	30-year-old woman.
History:	Hairdresser 15 years, with six month history of hand dermatitis, increasing despite beginning to wear latex gloves after onset. Dermatitis settled to very mild after four weeks off work, but not clear. As the condition flared whenever the subject returned to hairdressing, she ceased and is now a computer operator.
Current:	Mild continuing dermatitis of the hands which flares when doing wet work (without gloves) or when wears latex or PVC gloves. Has three young children and impossible to avoid wet work.
Investigation:	Patch test standard + hairdressing series. Possible reaction to paraphenylenediamine.
Impairment:	5%.
Comment:	Able to carry out ADL with difficulty, therefore limited performance of some ADL.

Example 16.3: “Cement dermatitis” due to chromate in cement

Subject:	43-year-old man.
History:	Concreter since age 16. Eighteen month history of increasing hand dermatitis eventually on dorsal and palmar surface of hands and fingers. Off work and treatment led to limited improvement only.
Physical examination:	Fissured skin, hyperkeratotic chronic dermatitis.
Investigation:	Patch test. Positive reaction to dichromate.
Current:	Intractable, chronic, fissured dermatitis.
Impairment:	12%.
Comment:	Unable to obtain any employment because has chronic dermatitis and on invalid pension. Difficulty gripping items including steering wheel, hammer and other tools. Unable to do any wet work, (eg, painting). Former home handyman, now calls in tradesman to do any repairs and maintenance. Limited performance in some ADL.

Example 16.4: Latex contact urticaria/angioedema with cross reactions

Subject:	Female nurse, age 40.
History:	Six month history of itchy hands minutes after applying latex gloves at work. Later swelling and redness associated with itchy hands and wrists and subsequently widespread urticaria. One week off led to immediate clearance. On return to work wearing PVC gloves, developed anaphylaxis on first day back.
Physical examination:	No abnormality detected or generalised urticaria/angioedema.
Investigation:	Latex radioallergosorbent test, strong positive response.
Current:	The subject experiences urticaria and mild anaphylaxis if she enters a hospital, some supermarkets or other stores (especially if latex items are stocked), at children's parties or in other situations where balloons are present, or on inadvertent contact with latex items including sport goods handles, some clothing, and many shoes (latex based glues). Also has restricted diet (must avoid bananas, avocados and kiwi fruit).
Impairment:	17%
Comment:	Severe limitation in some ADL in spite of intermittent activity.

Example 16.5: Non-melanoma skin cancer

Subject:	53-year-old married man.
History:	"Road worker" since 17 years of age. Has had a basal cell carcinoma on the left forehead, squamous cell carcinoma on the right forehead (graft), basal cell carcinoma on the left ear (wedge resection) and squamous cell carcinoma on the lower lip (wedge resection) excised since 45 years of age. No history of loco-regional recurrences. Multiple actinic keratoses treated with cryotherapy or Efudix over 20 years (forearms, dorsum of hands, head and neck).
Current:	New lesion right preauricular area. Concerned over appearance — "I look a mess."
Physical examination:	Multiple actinic keratoses forearms, dorsum of hands, head and neck. Five millimetre diameter nodular basal cell carcinoma right preauricular area, hypertrophic red scar 3 cm length left forehead, 2 cm diameter graft site (hypopigmented with 2 mm contour deformity) right temple, non-hypertrophic scar left lower lip (vermilion) with slight step deformity and non-hypertrophic pale wedge resection scar left pinna leading to 30% reduction in size of the pinna. Graft sites taken from right post auricular area. No regional lymphadenopathy.
Impairment:	6%

Comment: Refer to Table 6.1 (facial disfigurement), p 41.

Example 16.6: Non-melanoma skin cancer

Subject: 35-year-old single female professional surf life-saver.

History: Occupational outdoor exposure since 19 years of age. Basal cell carcinoma on tip of nose excised three years ago with full thickness graft following failed intralesional interferon treatment.

Current: Poor self esteem because of cosmetic result of surgery.

Physical examination: One centimetre diameter graft site on the tip of nose (hypopigmented with 2 mm depth contour deformity, cartilage not involved). Graft site taken from right post-auricular area.

Impairment: 10%

Comment: Refer to Table 6.1 (facial disfigurement), p 41.

17 Cardiovascular system

AMA5 Chapters 3 and 4 apply to the assessment of permanent impairment of the cardiovascular system, subject to the modifications set out below.

17.1 Introduction

The cardiovascular system is discussed in AMA5 Chapters 3 (Heart and Aorta) and 4 (Systemic and Pulmonary Arteries) (pp 25–85). These Chapters can be used to assess permanent impairment of the cardiovascular system with the following minor modifications.

It is noted that in this chapter there are wide ranges for the impairment values in each category. When conducting an assessment, approved medical specialists should use their clinical judgement to express a specific percentage within the range suggested.

17.2 Exercise stress testing

As with other investigations, it is not the role of an approved medical specialist to order exercise stress tests purely for the purpose of evaluating the extent of permanent impairment.

If exercise stress testing is available, then it is a useful piece of information in arriving at the overall percentage impairment.

If previous investigations are inadequate for a proper assessment to be made, the approved medical specialist should consider the value of proceeding with the evaluation of permanent impairment without adequate investigations and data (see Chapter 3— Ordering of additional investigations).

17.3 Permanent impairment — maximum medical improvement

As for all assessments, maximal medical improvement is considered to have occurred when the worker's condition has been medically stable for the previous three months, and is unlikely to change substantially in the next 12 months without further medical treatment (see Chapter 3 of the WorkCover WA Guides).

17.4 Vascular diseases affecting the extremities

Note that in this section, AMA5 Table 4–4 (p 74) and Table 4–5 (p 76) refer to percentage impairment of the upper or lower extremity. Therefore, an assessment of impairment concerning vascular impairment of the arm or leg requires that the percentages identified in Tables 4–4 and 4–5 be converted to whole person impairment. The table for conversion of the upper extremity is AMA5 Table 16–3 (p 439) and the table for conversion of the lower extremity is AMA5 Table 17–3 (p 527).

17.5 Thoracic outlet syndrome

Impairment due to thoracic outlet syndrome is assessed according to AMA5 Chapter 16, The Upper Extremities and WorkCover WA Guides, Chapter 4 (p 17).

17.6 Effect of medical treatment

If the worker has been offered, but refused, additional or alternative medical treatment for which the approved medical specialist considers is likely to improve the worker's condition, the approved medical specialist should evaluate the current condition, without consideration for potential changes associated with the proposed treatment. The approved medical specialist may note the potential for improvement in the worker's condition in the evaluation report, and the reason for refusal by the worker, but should not adjust the level of impairment on the basis of the worker's decision (Chapter 3 of the WorkCover WA Guides, Permanent impairment — maximum medical improvement pp 7 - 8).

17.7 Future deterioration

If an approved medical specialist forms the opinion that the worker's condition is stable in the foreseeable future, but expected to deteriorate in the longer term, the approved medical specialist should make no allowance for deterioration, but note its likelihood in the evaluation report. Where the worker's condition suffers long-term deterioration, the worker may reapply for further evaluation of the condition at a later time, subject to any relevant provision in the Act that affects the ability of a worker to request or obtain a further evaluation.

18 Digestive system

AMA5 Chapter 6 applies to the management of permanent impairment of the digestive system.

The digestive system is discussed in AMA5 Chapter 6 (pp 117–142). That Chapter can be used to assess permanent impairment of the digestive system. There are no modifications for the purposes of the WorkCover WA Guides.

Appendix 1: Evaluation of permanent impairment for Part 2 of Schedule 2 of the Act

The table set out in Part 2 of Schedule 2 of the Act was inserted by the *Workers' Compensation Reform Act 2004* and differs from the discontinued Schedule 2 regime (Part 1 of the table set out in Schedule 2, Items 1-39) in that impairments mentioned in Items 40-82 will be evaluated in accordance with the WorkCover WA Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment. Injuries that occur before 14 November 2005 will continue to be assessed as currently under Items 1-39 and do not require an impairment evaluation by an approved medical specialist. All injuries that occur after 14 November 2005 will be subject to an impairment evaluation and Part 2 of the Schedule 2 table will apply.

The exception to this is Item 82 in relation to AIDS where the worker is deemed to have 100% impairment if a medical practitioner certifies that the worker has contracted AIDS. An approved medical specialist is therefore not required to certify or assess the level of impairment for AIDS.

Evaluations for Items 80, 81 and 82 of Part 2 of Schedule 2 are made on the basis of degree of permanent whole person impairment. All other Items in Part 2 of Schedule 2 are evaluated on the basis of the degree of permanent impairment of the body part or faculty listed. For example, if a worker sustains a fractured leg and an inguinal hernia as a result of an injury, only the former is compensable under Schedule 2. As prescribed by the conversion table below, evaluations of impairment under Part 2 of the Schedule 2 table must initially be made on the basis of whole person impairment or regional impairment and then (except for Items 80, 81 and 82) converted, using the formula in the table, to a degree of impairment of the body part or faculty under the relevant Schedule 2 Item.

New Item 76 of Part 2 of Schedule 2 has changed compared to Item 36A in Part 1. The reworded Item 76 provides for the evaluation of the thoracic spine or lumbar spine, or both, in order to simplify the assessment. The percentage of the Prescribed Amount has increased by 15% for impairment of the back (75%), neck (55%) and pelvis (30%) compared to the relevant Items in the old Schedule 2 regime.

New Items 40-43 are to be assessed in accordance with the fourth edition of the AMA4 Chapter 8 (p 209). The approved medical specialist will require the worker to submit to examination by an ophthalmologist and ensure the ophthalmologist examines the worker in accordance with the AMA4.

The provisions in Chapter 3 of the WorkCover WA Guides relating to multiple impairments do not apply to assessments under Part 2 of Schedule 2.

Schedule 2 Table of Compensation Payable Part 2

Item	Nature of injury or Impairment	Maximum % of PA	Conversion Factor
EYES			
40.	Impairment of sight of both eyes	100	100 x WPI/85
41.	Impairment of sight of an only eye	100	100 x WPI/85
42.	Impairment of sight of one eye	50	100 x WPI/48
43.	Impairment of binocular vision	50	100 x WPI/85
N.B Eyes are assessed in accordance with AMA4			
HEARING			
44.	Impairment of hearing	75	100 x WPI/35
SPEECH			
45.	Impairment of power of speech	75	100 x WPI/35
BODY AND MENTAL			
46.	Impairment of mental capacity	100	WPI
47.	Impairment of spinal cord function	100	WPI
SENSORY			
48.	Impairment of sense of taste and smell	50	100 x WPI/5
49.	Impairment of sense of taste	25	100 x WPI/5
50.	Impairment of sense of smell	25	100 x WPI/5
ARM			
51.	Impairment of arm at or above elbow	90	100 x WPI/60
52.	Impairment of arm below elbow	80	100 x WPI/57

HAND

53.	Impairment of both hands	100	100 x WPI/81
54.	Impairment of hand and foot	100	100 x WPI/67
55.	Impairment of hand or thumb and 4 fingers	80	100 x WPI/54
56.	Impairment of thumb	35	Digit Impt
57.	Impairment of forefinger	17	Digit Impt
58.	Impairment of middle finger	13	Digit Impt
59.	Impairment of ring finger	9	Digit Impt
60.	Impairment of little finger	6	Digit Impt
61.	Impairment of movement of joint of thumb	17	100 x Digit Impt/50
62.	Impairment of distal phalanx of thumb	20	100 x Digit Impt/50
63.	Impairment of portion of terminal segment of thumb involving one-third of its flexor surface without loss of distal phalanx	15	100 x Digit Impt/45
64.	Impairment of distal phalanx of forefinger	10	100 x Digit Impt/45
65.	Impairment of distal phalanx of		
	middle finger	8	100 x Digit Impt/45
	ring finger	6	100 x Digit Impt/45
	little finger	4	100 x Digit Impt/45
66.	Impairment of distal phalanx of each finger of the same hand (not including the thumb) in one accident	31	100 x Digit Impt/45

LEG

67.	Impairment of leg at or above knee	70	100 x WPI/40
68.	Impairment of leg below knee	65	100 x WPI/32

FEET

69.	Impairment of both feet	100	100 x WPI/44
70.	Impairment of foot	65	100 x WPI/25
71.	Impairment of great toe	20	100 x Lower extremity Impt/12
72.	Impairment of any other toe	8	100 x Lower extremity/2

73.	Impairment of 2 phalanges of any other toe	5	100 x Lower extremity/2
74.	Impairment of phalanx of great toe	8	100 x Lower extremity /5
75.	Impairment of phalanx of any other toe	4	100 x Lower extremity/2

BACK, NECK AND PELVIS

76.	Impairment of the back (thoracic spine or lumbar spine or both)	75	100 x WPI/ 60
77.	Impairment of the neck (including cervical spine)	55	100 x WPI/ 40
78.	Impairment of the pelvis	30	100 x WPI/ 15

MISCELLANEOUS

79.	Impairment of genitals	50	100 x WPI/20
80.	Impairment from facial scarring or disfigurement	80	100 x WPI/50
81.	Impairment from bodily, other than facial, scarring or disfigurement	50	100 x WPI/95
82.	AIDS	100	N/A

Worked Examples/Case Studies

1. Back Pain:

Subject: 25-year old man, Process Operator

History:

Onset low back and left thigh pain whilst lifting at work. Initial assessment revealed left paravertebral muscle spasm, a positive SLR at 60° on left and absent left ankle reflex. Symptoms substantially resolved over six weeks after anti-inflammatory and analgesic medications and physiotherapy.

Current Symptoms:

No pain at rest, no leg symptoms. Able to perform activities of daily living. Generalised low backache after repetitive heavy lifting.

Physical Examination:

Good range of motion of lumbar spine with mild end of range discomfort and muscle guarding and asymmetrical spinal motion. SLR negative with full motor and sensory function.

Clinical Studies:

CT and MRI show a lumbar L5/S1 left posterolateral disc protrusion.

Diagnosis:

Left posterolateral disc herniation lumbar L5/S1 and a resolved left SI radiculopathy.

Impairment Rating:

AMA5, 5% WPI (use Table 15-3, p 384; Table 6.1 p 30 WorkCover WA Guides)

Using the conversion factor from WorkCover WA Guides p 91 Item 76

Impairment = $100 \times 5/60 = 8.33\%$ of Item 76

Compensation payable = 8.33% of the 75% of Schedule 2 Prescribed Amount as per Item 76 of Part 2 of Schedule 2 which would be 6.25% of the Prescribed Amount.

2. Back Pain:

Subject: 35 year old man, Brickie's Labourer

History:

Previous history severe backache a year before the new accident, requiring 3 – 4 days off. Lifting heavy load of bricks, sudden onset pain with shooting pain left buttock and into left leg and big toe. Two days later numbness left lower leg and big toe. CT identified large disc protrusion at C4/5 extending posteriorly and left lateral encroaching left L5 nerve root. MRI confirmed this and with clinical signs of radiculopathy had a decompression laminectomy removing disc material from a compressed left L5 nerve root.

Current Symptoms:

No further shooting pains left leg though numbness and weakness persisted. Ongoing low back pain and reduction in activities of daily living.

Physical Examination:

Some reduction in forward flexion due to pain. Persisting left L5 dermatome sensory loss and weakness in foot dorsiflexion. SLR to 70% with some hamstring tightening.

Clinical Studies:

No further investigations post surgery.

Diagnosis:

Decompression laminectomy for L4/5 disc herniation with persisting left L5 radiculopathy.

Impairment Rating:

WorkCover WA Guides Table 6.1 (p 30) with AMA5 Table 18-3. This involves some loss of ADL and DRE rating is III giving 13% WPI. With WorkCover WA Guides Table 6.4 (p 36), additional 3% WPI due to single level surgery and residual radiculopathy. Combined with DRE rates 13cw 3% = 16% WPI.

Using the conversion factor from WorkCover WA Guides p 91 Item 76

Impairment = $100 \times 16/60 = 26.67\%$ of Item 76

Compensation payable = 26.67% of the 75% of Schedule 2 Prescribed Amount as per Item 76 of Part 2 of Schedule 2 which would be 20% of the Prescribed Amount.

3. Neck Pain

Subject: 58-year old woman, Office Worker.

History:

Neck ache associated with computer work over several months. Then developed ache in right upper arm and forearm, which was associated with the neck ache. As her symptoms deteriorated, she saw her doctor. Treated with analgesics, anti-inflammatories, and physiotherapy. Plain x-rays identified extensive cervical spondylosis with C5/6 and C6/7 foraminal osteophytes on right. Workers' compensation accepted for aggravation of cervical spondylosis. On assessment she denied previous neck problems.

Current symptoms:

Ongoing neck ache and right arm ache requiring analgesics and anti-inflammatories. Little change over previous 12 months and caused some modifications of activities of daily living. No further radiology taken.

Physical Examination:

Diminished active range of movements of neck with extension left lateral flexion and left rotation being uncomfortable and resulting in muscle guarding and spasm. Neurological assessment was normal.

Diagnosis:

Cervical spondylosis which has become symptomatic with non-radicular upper limb pain.

Impairment rating:

Note Section 6.5 WorkCover WA Guide (p34). Consider Table 15-5 p 392 AMA5 Cervical Category II (5-8% of WPI) + Point 6, p 381 AMA5 gives an assessment of 8% WPI. Table 6.1 of the WorkCover Guide indicates she is not DRE category III as she does not have a radiculopathy or fracture.

"Apportionment" – no evidence for pre-existing symptoms despite compelling evidence to the contrary on radiology, *no* reduction for pre-existing condition.

Using the conversion factor from WorkCover WA Guides p 91 Item 77

Impairment = $100 \times 8/40 = 20\%$ of Item 77

Compensation payable = 20% of the 55% of Schedule 2 Prescribed Amount as per Item 77 of Part 2 of Schedule 2 which would be 11% of the Prescribed Amount.

4. Thoracic Pain:

Subject: 28-year old woman, Forestry Worker.

History:

Struck by falling branch in mid-thoracic region. She fell to the ground and was pinned by the branch. She was conscious, though in severe pain in her neck and thoracic regions. She complained of tingling in both her legs and inability to move them. In EO imaging revealed wedge compression fracture of T8 and T9 with a spinous process fracture of T10. Some patchy sensory loss below T8 dermatome laterally with mild weakness in both lower limbs. As a result surgical stabilisation was undertaken. Over next 8 months there was a full return of power and sensation in both lower limbs.

Current symptoms:

Pain and stiffness in the lower thoracic spine. No ongoing neurological symptoms. She was continuing with administrative duties. Undertaking normal activities of daily living. Plain radiographs revealed healed vertebral body fractures at T8 and T9 with 20% compression of each. Surgical fusion at three levels across T7 to T10. Neurological examination was normal.

Diagnosis:

Fractures T8 and T9 vertebral body compression fractures, T10 spinous process fracture. Three level spinal fusion. No permanent neurological compromise.

Impairment Rating:

Operations requiring surgical ankylosis (fusion) are considered under DRE category IV. See Box 15-1 AMA5 p 383: Alteration of motion segment integrity. Whole person impairment is assessed using AMA5, Table 15-4, p 389. This leads to an assessment of 20-23% whole person impairment. In this case the lower figure of 20% is appropriate due to the good recovery of function of activities of daily living.

Using the conversion factor from WorkCover WA Guides p 91 Item 76:

Impairment = $100 \times 20/60 = 33.3\%$ of Item 76

Compensation payable = 33% of the 75% of Schedule 2 Prescribed Amount as per Item 76 of Part 2 of Schedule 2 which would be 24.75% of the Prescribed Amount.

5. Upper Extremity:

Subject: 30-year old woman, Process Worker.

History:

Tripped and fell onto right outstretched hand, resulting in a painful and swollen right wrist. Limited movements because of pain. Light touch reduced palmar aspect of hand and fore and ring fingers. X-rays revealed fractures of scaphoid triquetrum and volar dislocation of lunate. Open reduction and internal fixation was undertaken. Rupture of scapholunate ligament and intact lunotriquetral ligament with attached fragment of triquetrum was seen at surgery. Internal fixation with k-wires and repair of volar and dorsal intracapsular ligaments undertaken. Subsequent x-rays at four months revealed united fractures with increased sclerosis of lunate and proximal pole of scaphoid. Median nerve function returned to normal.

Current Symptoms:

Pain-free but only 30° active wrist extension, 10° active radial deviation 15° active ulna deviation. Pronation and supination was normal. A return to keyboard work resulted in discomfort at 30 minutes and able to perform activities of daily living. X-rays show sclerosis of proximal pole of scaphoid and scapholunate angle of 65° and radiolunate of 15°. The scapholunate gap was 2mm.

Diagnosis:

Fracture of scaphoid, triquetrum with rupture of scapholunate and lunotriquetral ligaments resulting in surgical repair and stabilisation.

Impairment Rating:

Reduced wrist motion. AMA5 Section 16.4g Wrist motion impairment: Figure 16-28 (p 467): $I_F = 5\%$, $I_E = 4\%$

Figure 16-29 (p468): $I_{RD} = 2\%$, $I_{UD} = 3\%$

These are added $5 + 4 + 2 + 3 = 14\%$ UE Impairment

OR:

Carpal instability AMA5 Section 16.7, Table 16-25. The highest category in this case is mild, (8%) upper extremity impairment.

As the reduced motion and carpal instability reflect the consequences of the same pathology, only one method can be used (see p 499 of AMA5). The higher figure is used.

The assessment is 14% UE impairment, or 8% whole person impairment (AMA5 Table 16-3).

Using the conversion factor from WorkCover WA Guides p 89 Item 52.

Impairment = $100 \times 8/57 = 14\%$ of Item 52

Compensation payable = 14% of the 80% of the of Schedule 2 Prescribed Amount as per Item 52 of Part 2 Schedule 2 which would be 11.2% of the Prescribed Amount.

New South Wales WorkCover Guides for the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment

Appendix 2: NSW Working groups on permanent impairment

An extensive process of consultation with the medical profession occurred in the development of the NSW Guides. In addition to a coordinating group, specific working groups of medical specialists were established to review each of the chapters of the AMA5. These groups are identified below:

Permanent Impairment Co-ordinating Group (NSW)

Working Groups (NSW)

Name	Position
Dr Jim STEWART	Chair
Ms Kate McKENZIE	WorkCover
Mr John ROBERTSON	Labor Council of NSW
Ms Mary YAAGER	Labor Council of NSW
Dr Ian GARDNER	Medical Representative to Workers Compensation and Workplace Occupational Health and Safety Council of NSW
Dr Stephen BUCKLEY	Rehabilitation Physician
Prof Michael FEARNside	Professor of Neurosurgery
Dr John HARRISON	Orthopaedic Surgeon
Dr Jonathan PHILLIPS	Psychiatrist
Prof Bill MARSDEN	Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery
Dr Dwight DOWDA	Occupational Physician
Assoc Prof Ian CAMERON	Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine
Dr Robin CHASE	Australian Medical Association

Psychiatric and Psychological

Dr Julian PARMEGIANI
Dr Derek LOVELL
Dr Rod MILTON
Dr Yvonne SKINNER
Dr Jonathan PHILLIPS
Dr Chris BLACKWELL
Dr Bruce WESTMORE
Dr Susan BALLINGER
Ms Lyn SHUMACK
Dr Jack WHITE
Ms Sandra DUNN
Dr Tim HANNON

Hearing

Dr Brian WILLIAMS
Dr Joseph SCOPPA
Dr Stanley STYLIS
Dr Paul NIALL
Assoc Prof Ian CAMERON

Skin

Dr Victor ZIELINSKI
Dr Scott MENZIES
Dr Edmund LOBEL
Assoc Prof Ian CAMERON

Cardiovascular

Dr Thomas NASH
Dr John GUNNING
Dr George MICHELL
Dr Stephen BUCKLEY
Dr Melissa DOOHAN
Dr Charles FISHER

Endocrine

Dr Alfred STEINBECK
Prof Peter HALL
Dr Stephen BUCKLEY

Spine

Prof Michael FEARNside
Dr John CUMMINE
Prof Michael RYAN
Dr Dwight DOWDA
Assoc Prof Ian CAMERON
Dr Hugh DICKSON
Dr Conrad WINER
Dr Mario BENANZIO
Dr Jim ELLIS
Dr Jim BODEL
Dr William WOLFENDEN
Dr Kevin BLEASEL
Dr John HARRISON
Prof Sydney NADE

Urinary and Reproductive

Prof Richard MILLARD
Dr Kim BOO KUAH
Assoc Prof Ian CAMERON

Vision

Dr Michael DELANEY
Dr Peter DUKE
Dr Peter ANDERSON
Dr John KENNEDY
Dr Neville BANKS
Assoc Prof Ian CAMERON

Digestive

Prof Philip BARNES
Dr David De CARLE
Dr Dwight DOWDA

Nervous System

Dr Stephen BUCKLEY
Assoc Prof Ian CAMERON
Dr Dwight DOWDA
Dr Ivan LORENTZ
Dr Keith LETHLEAN
Dr Peter BLUM
Prof Michael FEARNside
Dr Tim HANNON

Upper Limb

Dr Dwight DOWDA
Assoc Prof Ian CAMERON
Prof Bill MARSDEN
Dr Bruce CONOLLY
Dr David CROCKER
Dr Richard HONNER
Dr Jim ELLIS
Dr Conrad WINER
Dr David DUCKWORTH

Respiratory and Nose and Throat

Dr Julian LEE
Prof David BRYANT
Dr Joseph SCOPPA
Dr Michael BURNS
Dr Frank MACCIONI
Dr Peter CORTE
Dr Brian WILLIAMS
Assoc Prof Ian CAMERON

Lower Limb

Dr Dwight DOWDA
Assoc Prof Ian CAMERON
Prof Bill MARSDEN
Dr Peter HOLMAN
Dr Jay GOVIND
Dr Jim BODEL
Dr Mario BENANZIO
Dr Jim ELLIS
Dr Conrad WINER
Dr Cecil CASS
Dr John HARRISON
Dr John KORBER

Haematopoietic

Prof John GIBSON
Dr Stephen FLECKNOE-
BROWN
Dr Peter SLEZAK
Assoc Prof Ian CAMERON
Prof John DWYER

Appendix 3: Evaluation of permanent impairment arising from chronic pain (exclusion of AMA5, Chapter 18)

Following consultation between WorkCover NSW and Professor Michael Cousins and Doctor Mike Nicholas of the University of Sydney Pain Management and Research Centre, the AMA5 Chapter devoted to assessment of chronic pain is to be disregarded for the purposes of the WorkCover WA Guides.

The reasons for this are:

- The Chapter does not contain validated instruments that convert the rating given by an examiner into a whole body impairment rating.
- No work has been done at this time to enable such conversion to occur.
- Measuring impairment for this condition is complex and requires a high degree of specialised knowledge and experience. This level of knowledge and experience is not widespread and it would be difficult to ensure consistency and equity in the assessment process.

It is recognised in AMA5 that chronic pain is not adequately accounted for in the other chapters. However, work on a better method is still in progress and it would be premature to specify an alternative at present.

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WORKCOVER WA

