

Accredited Employers Programme – where to next?

My last post was an update on the temporarily named “Product A”, under development by ACC. It will be the default for all employers who are not in “Product B”. “Product B” will be a scrubbed up Accredited Employers Programme. This leaflet summarises what ACC is proposing for it.

Entry criteria

First, let’s compare entry criteria between the Accredited Employers Programme and the proposed “Product B”:

Accredited Employers Programme	“Product B”	Comment or observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate experience in workplace health and safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated <u>sustained</u> health and safety performance <u>before</u> applying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Don’t even ask until you’ve done the hard yards”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated commitment to injury prevention & rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment from the business and all subsidiaries, including workers • Support from workers and their representatives, including their views on the level of worker engagement in improvement initiatives and the quality of injury management services provided by the employer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACC probably based on the experience through the Accredited Employers Programme audits that not all divisions/regions/outposts of an employer fall into line behind Corporate • Nice intent but it will be interesting to see how ACC might gauge support from workers on such abstract topics. AEP Focus Group interviews with workers tend to be a little hard-going when these sorts of questions are asked

Accredited Employers Programme	“Product B”	Comment or observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated commitment to injury prevention & rehabilitation (continued) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A single point of contact for implementation, management and monitoring (all the business units) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Again, tying down a commitment for the entire business represented by a single person. They would need to be a senior person
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies, procedures and resources for injury prevention, claims management and rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of <u>best practice</u> in health and safety systems, processes and policies A 3-year Improvement Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACC are saying they will accept equivalent audit standards, OR will require an “independent assessment”, which implies an ACC audit or assessment tool. And does “independent” mean the Assessor cannot be an ACC employee? Which you will no doubt be assessed on
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The financial strength and stability to meet costs of cover and rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration of <u>ongoing</u> financial strength 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The definition seems to be a little tighter. Expect a deeper level of evidence to be required annually

Accredited Employers Programme	“Product B”	Comment or observation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For approval: Send signed checklist to ACC with information • Initial audit and annual audits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance assessment by independent assessor to identify areas for investment: Areas are leadership, worker engagement, risk management • Ongoing approval: Annual certification to deliver injury rehabilitation. a) by ACC if you self-manage claims, b) by you if you use a TPA. • Certification to include worker satisfaction, delivery of rehabilitation outcomes, identification of training and learning objectives for improvement and customer satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is solely for your approval to manage work injuries. For your ability to manage health and safety (injury prevention), see the Monitoring and Benchmarking section below • b) (at left) appears to depart from ACC’s traditional stance where performance of TPAs is part of their audit. But it will remain an area of sensitivity and great interest to ACC, since it’s their appointed territory

Tailoring your cover

ACC says: “We’ll connect your policy renewal to your performance. This is measured against your improvement plan and the outcomes we set. How long your renewal period is and your ability to tailor the cover policy depends on your performance”. This appears to be saying: “We will let you tailor your policy, but only as much as we feel comfortable with”. Example given: (Condensed) “A high performing business, delivering great outcomes, driving improvements across your wider business, (will have) a suite of options”.

This includes assimilating more risk or reducing the risk profile while the business grows and changes. Expect a tighter rein on options if you’re not performing too well.

Monitoring & Benchmarking

ACC acknowledge that monitoring performance and sharing information and achievements is valuable. There will be an online portal where you will monitor your performance and may share your results with workers, suppliers, contractors and customers.

What you'll need to do:

- Provide regular updates regarding your 3-year Improvement Plan
- Enable ACC to assess your key milestones and projects
- Show ACC how you manage complaints and fraud (claims & rehabilitation management)
- Manage performance/issues with another relevant provider
- Run and share with ACC a satisfaction survey for workers having injuries in the last 12 months
- Continue to demonstrate financial strength and manage your liability options
- Run targeted monitoring where there are concerns about your performance e.g. audits, one-on-one meetings, assessments

Service options from ACC

- *Online portal:* Performance dashboard, knowledge bank, levy projection calculator, industry performance (benchmarking), alerts & notifications, injury logging tool. (E.g. input of injury information, contributing to return to work (RTW) efforts, quantifying RTW savings).

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Summary

ACC appear to be raising the bar for this Accredited Employers Programme replacement. It builds directly onto the existing AEP, so although levy discounts aren't mentioned in recent announcements, we can assume they will be similar. There is perhaps a possibility that claims management periods may have lengthier options to support the stated intentions above. There's probably not much to attract new applicants. So it seems likely that the existing mature group of AEP employers will use their credibility to roll over into it.

There is an emphasis on sustainability (e.g. history of OHS performance, financial strength, 3-year Improvement Plans). It's more inclusive on worker views and levels of satisfaction and tries to get employers to fully involve their far-flung branches and subsidiaries. (Audits historically trigger reinforcements being moved around the country in support of chosen locations).

Finally, it's of interest that ACC are willing to accept "equivalent" standards for assessing employers. Goodbye to duplication of effort?

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Email simon@safetypro.co.nz to be informed about new posts.

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