



Very good timing:

Wolfgang Zimmermann, executive director, NIDMAR, and Dr. Jan White, Chief Executive Officer, ACC.

NIDMAR comes to New Zealand:

Standing (L to R): Alan Clayton, IDMSC representative for Australasia, and Gerard McGreevy, Chief Operating Officer, ACC. Sitting (L to R): Wolfgang Zimmermann, executive director, NIDMAR, and Dr. Jan White, Chief Executive Officer, ACC.

NIDMAR protocol comes to New Zealand



IT'S A FACT

- ACC assists about 1.7 million injured people each year.
- About 180,000 people assisted are moderately or seriously injured.
- About 13,400 people assisted receive long-term or life-time assistance.
- New Zealand is the ninth country to adopt the NIDMAR protocol under the auspices of the International Disability Management Standards Council (IDMSC).

Since 1974, New Zealanders have been enjoying the most unique and comprehensive insurance coverage in the world.

After a Royal Commission looked into the impact of accidents on community members, the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) was established at that time as a Crown corporation to run New Zealand's accident compensation program — one that provides 24-hour, 7-days-a-week, no-fault personal injury insurance coverage.

Now ACC has new tools to better deliver its exceptional coverage. It has adopted the full NIDMAR disability management protocol: the audit tool, professional certifications and the educational curriculum.

HOW ACC'S UNIQUE PROGRAM WORKS

ACC's program, with a budget of \$3.3 billion for 2007-08, covers compensation and rehabilitation costs for all residents for all kinds of injuries. These include injuries suffered in motor vehicle accidents, at work (even if people are self-employed), at home or while recreating. It covers the very young and the elderly and it even covers people visiting New Zealand.

The benefits of such coverage are enormous.

"This is totally a no-fault scheme that's forward-looking," says ACC's CEO, Dr. Jan White. "The fact that there isn't any debate or fight about whether it occurred at work or whether it was due to a motor vehicle accident means that it concentrates on the impact of injury, not on the causation.

"In countries where there are more limited schemes, you actually run the risk of people not being assisted appropriately because they don't quite fit into the scheme as it's defined, so they may fall between the cracks."



"I had the privilege of meeting with Minister Dyson and was most impressed, not only by her commitment toward improving outcomes for people with disabilities, but by her thorough grasp of the many complex issues," says Mr. Zimmermann. Her support for people with disabilities is perhaps best exemplified through the leadership which New Zealand, under Minister Dyson's direction, displayed in advancing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities."



The 24-hour, no-fault coverage also removes any litigation and the incumbent time, cost and stress. As well, ACC emphasizes trying to return people to their pre-injury workplace or to the community at their previous level of functioning. If that isn't possible, then people are supported for the rest of their lives.

"It's a fair scheme that ensures people who are injured do have a good quality of life," adds Dr. White.

MAKING GOOD THINGS BETTER ACROSS NEW ZEALAND

The NIDMAR tools will help ACC achieve its mandate in a number of ways. First, while ACC is not a government department per se, it has a legislative framework and must respond to the Minister for ACC, Ruth Dyson.

"The whole NIDMAR approach offers us several things," says Dr. White. "One, it is very consistent with the government's goal of promoting collaboration between government agencies and stakeholders to achieve a greater consistency of approach across New Zealand.

"While ACC has picked this up, it is really only as a proxy to try to pick it up for the whole of New Zealand."

Prior to adopting the NIDMAR protocol, ACC had already been discussing with a number of agencies the need for consistency across all sectors involved with disability management. Increasingly, there is recognition that sustainable employment requires a partnership with the employer, the injured person and their union representative, as it may require interventions over time.

As well, the training and certification tools have their own specific applications.

"Right now, New Zealand's labour market is extraordinarily tight. We have a very low unemployment rate — the fifth lowest in the OECD at 3.8%. So we must improve our labour market participation, and we need to refocus our whole social support system to do this," says Dr. White.

"That's why all government departments are interested in this."

NIDMAR's training and certification tools will also help ACC provide an effective environment for disability-confident employers, and fill another big gap — New Zealand currently has no professional qualifications for disability management professionals with a return to work focus.

As for the audit tool, it will add the return to work element to ACC's existing audit tool, which is used by some large employers who manage their own work-related employee injuries. Discussions are already underway between the CEOs of ACC, the unions and Business New Zealand regarding the partnership program, including the audit tool.

"So the NIDMAR tool has come at a very good time," says Dr. White. While no decisions have been made, it is possible the NIDMAR audit tool will replace the existing one.

Benefiting all New Zealanders: (L to R): Alan Clayton, IDMSC representative for Australasia; the Hon. Ruth Dyson, the Minister for ACC for New Zealand; and Wolfgang Zimmermann, executive director, NIDMAR.



“What encouraged us during presentations on the disability management protocol earlier this year in New Zealand,” says Wolfgang Zimmermann, executive director of NIDMAR, “was the interest, support and commitment of the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions toward consensus-based return to work initiatives.”



For now, three large employers along with ACC are piloting the NIDMAR protocol, including the audit tool, which ACC may use as an additional incentive program for employers, possibly adjusting levies or premiums for those who use it. This should be determined by the end of 2007.

In the meantime, the application of the professional certification and education programs has been solidified, at least in intent.

“In ACC, we are still working with the broader New Zealand society on how to get the use across to everybody, as is Business New Zealand,” she says.

Labour’s participation: (L to R): Alan Clayton, IDMSC representative for Australasia; Ross Wilson, president, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions; and Wolfgang Zimmermann, executive director, NIDMAR.