

ESTABLISHING THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW OFFICE | UPDATE 5

23 February 2021

The Independent Review Office (IRO) will replace the Workers Compensation Independent Review Officer (WIRO) **from Monday 1st March 2021**. This update:

- advises about our final Independent Legal Assistance and Review Service (ILARS) Guidelines
- includes information about IRO contact details
- notes some reduced service hours during the transition period.

NEW ILARS GUIDELINES

The IRO will publish Guidelines for approval of lawyers to be granted funding under ILARS, and for the allocation and amount of funding for legal and associated costs under ILARS, on the NSW legislation website on 26th February 2021.

The Guidelines have been under development since the passage of the *Personal Injury Commission Act 2020* in August 2020, and in large part reflect the current WIRO Funding Policy (Policy), Grant Amount Guide (Guide) and Approval Requirements for WIRO Approved Lawyers.

The Guidelines have been the subject of consultation on a number of occasions, including seeking comments on the Policy and Guide as part of a technical review of the 2019 reforms, testing the revised Guidelines with a group of highly experienced Approved Lawyers, and a two week period of public consultation on the changes.

The Guidelines apply to applications for a grant of funding (including for an extension of a grant of funding) made or approved on or after 1 March 2021, and grants of funding made or approved before the commencement of the Guidelines where the final outcome of the matter is achieved on or after 1 March 2021.

The current Policy continues to have effect in relation to grants of funding made before 1 March 2021 where a final outcome of the matter the subject of the grant is achieved before 1 March 2021.

The Guidelines are now also available on the WIRO website as follows:

- Guidelines for approval as an IRO Approved Lawyer –
<https://wiro.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/Guidelines%20for%20approval%20as%20an%20IRO%20Approved%20Lawyer.pdf>
- ILARS Funding Guidelines -
<https://wiro.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/ILARS%20Funding%20Guidelines.pdf>

NEW CONTACT DETAILS FOR IRO

There will be changes to some contact details for the IRO from 1st March 2021.

Our phone number (139 476, which is 139 IRO) will not change.

Our email addresses will change, with the new address being @iro.nsw.gov.au. Importantly, however, emails sent to @wiro.nsw.gov.au will be re-diverted to our new email addresses.

From Monday 1st March 2021, the IRO website will also be live: www.iro.nsw.gov.au. Website traffic to our current website will **be re-directed to the new website address**.

REDUCED SERVICES DURING TRANSITION

On **Friday, 26th February 2021**, our Solutions Group will be undergoing training and having their computers updated for the new Office. As a result, our phone queues will not be open. We will reopen at **8:30 AM on Monday, 1st March 2021**.

Our ILARS Group will be unavailable on **Monday, 1st March 2021** for the same reason.

HOW TO RAISE CONCERNS DURING OUR TRANSITION

While we are confident that the transition from WIRO to IRO will be smooth, we know that things can go wrong, and questions may arise that require an immediate response. If you have any concerns during the changeover period, please don't hesitate to contact us using the following channels:

- Contact the IRO team by telephone (139 476/139 IRO); if we cannot immediately answer your concern or question, someone will get back to you who can assist
- Email us (contact@iro.nsw.gov.au) and briefly outline the nature of your concern, and we will respond within one working day. Please note the @iro email address will function on and from **Monday 1st March 2021**, and any contact prior to that date can be forwarded to contact@wiro.nsw.gov.au.

Regards,

Simon Cohen

Independent Review Officer