



WIRO 2019-20 Annual Report tabled – WIRO's busiest year on record

During 2019-20 the Workers Compensation Independent Review Office (WIRO) resolved more complaints from injured workers and provided more grants of legal funding than ever before.

"There has never been a clearer need for WIRO services than in the past year, our busiest on record," said Simon Cohen, the Independent Review Officer.

"More injured workers or their representatives are approaching us, and most received the information, solutions or representation they needed to achieve fair compensation and assist in their recovery."

The 2019-20 WIRO Annual Report, tabled in Parliament last week, shows:

- a 65% increase in complaints from injured workers

The most common complaints concerned insurer delays in deciding claims and making compensation payments. 87% of finalised complaints were solved, including more than 2400 where the worker received an additional benefit and over 1300 where actions were taken by the insurer to solve a complaint.

- a 50% increase in applications for grants of legal funding from Approved Lawyers engaged by injured workers

Most finalised grants were resolved without proceeding to the Workers Compensation Commission, and 76% of matters finalised with an outcome resulted in the worker improving their position.

Support during COVID-19

WIRO adapted quickly to ensure continued services during COVID-19. Over 230 COVID-19 related complaints, enquiries and applications were handled between 1 March and 30 June 2020.

"WIRO, like every NSW workplace, has been profoundly affected by COVID-19. All WIRO staff worked remotely from March 2020. We took steps to support Approved Lawyers where their businesses were impacted by public health restrictions. We also reported regularly to all system participants about common complaints and enquiries and participated in forums to inform legislative and other responses to support injured workers" said Mr Cohen.

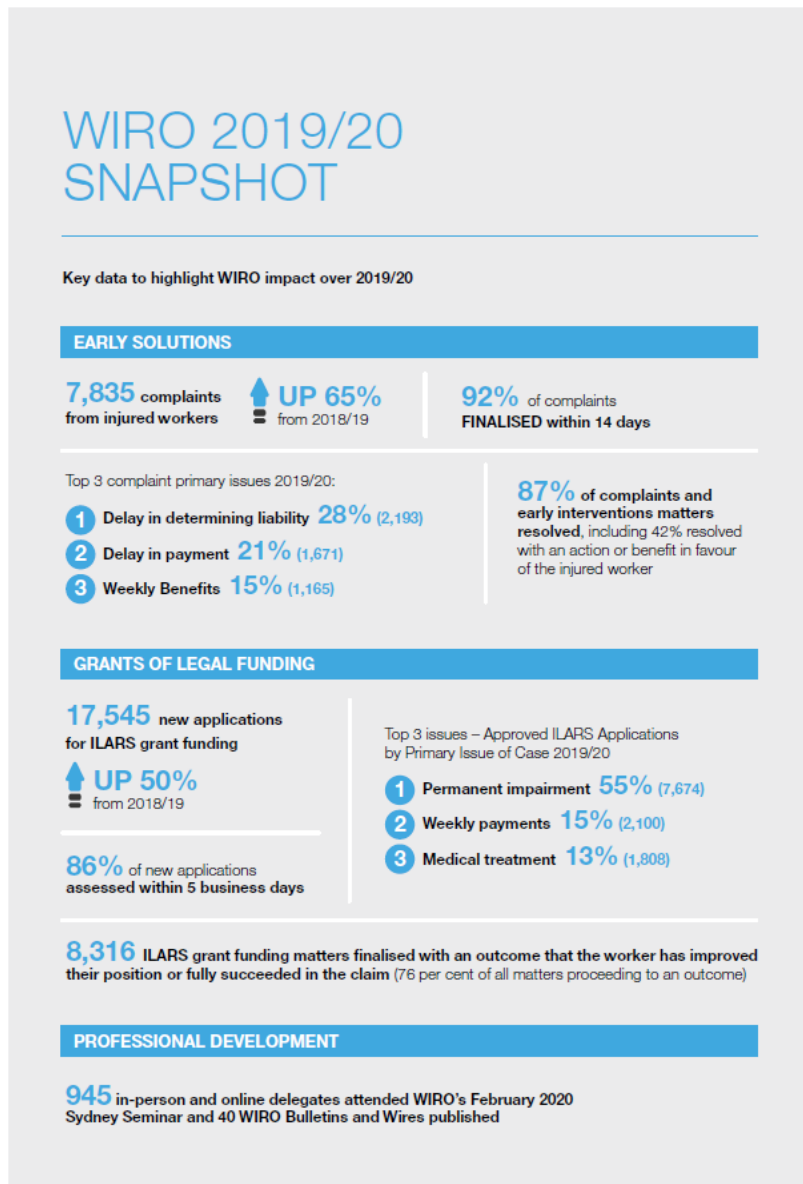
System improvements

WIRO's role includes recommending improvements to the operation of NSW workers compensation system. An important area identified for improvement in 2019-20 is inadequate notice to workers from insurers. WIRO continues to work with insurers to improve the quality and legal compliance of notices.

"Clear and legally correct notices ensure injured workers understand insurer decisions and can exercise their rights, and conversely deficient notices result in complaints, dissatisfaction and needless expense and anxiety. We have made it a priority to work with insurers to improve the quality of notices," said Mr Cohen.



Figure 1: WIRO 2019/20 Snapshot



The Annual Report is published on the WIRO Website:

<https://wiro.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/WIRO%20Annual%20Report%201920%20FINAL%20Dated%20%20Signed.pdf>

Simon Cohen

Independent Review Officer