



The number of Certified Disability Management Professionals (CDMPs) in Australia is growing and, in tandem, many CDMPs are also training to become certified auditors qualified to administer the Consensus Based Disability Management Audit (CBDMA), a tool fast gaining professional ground “down under.” According to NIDMAR Executive Director Wolfgang Zimmermann the two are inherently linked. “Professional certification and program standards are on the same side of the coin. Both are grounded in common values, goals and outcomes.”

Photo taken at the PIEF conference, October 2008, Sydney. Back row L to R: Nathan Clarke, PIEF; Susan Yates, Suncorp Risk Services; Kylie Barrs, Mutual Solutions; Margaret Karlsen, Mutual Solutions. Front row L to R: R.R. Officer, Chair of the Board of PIEF; Robynne Dashwood, WorkSafe Victoria; Siobhan Boyd-Squires, WorkSafe Victoria; Jill Charters, Suncorp Risk Services; Ian Napthali, Mutual Solutions; Wolfgang Zimmermann, NIDMAR. Missing from photo: Michael Thompson, Mutual Solutions and Amanda Ward, Integral Energy.

Australians Gain Professional Certification and Expand IDMSC Program Standards



WORKSAFE VICTORIA, MELBOURNE

At WorkSafe Victoria (incorporating the Victorian WorkCover Authority), Siobhan Boyd-Squires, a manager in the Return to Work area, is involved in improving outcomes – health wise and rehabilitation wise for injured workers – helping them get back to work, ultimately benefiting them, their employers and the community as a whole in the process.

A significant part of her work has entailed developing projects that focus on training and support for return to work coordinators and improving resources and information for workers, employers and the community that promote the value and importance of early, safe and sustainable return to work.

She brings impressive credentials to the task. A trained physiotherapist, she worked clinically for about 12 years and then completed a Master’s degree in Public Health, emphasizing the importance of a public policy approach. She says she “fell by chance” into the workers’ compensation field where she has continued to hold policy and project roles in return to work.

In the past, while treating patients as a physiotherapist, she was often frustrated by the poor outcomes she saw. Today, she has seen major changes in community awareness and attitudes toward injury management and the benefits of promoting early and safe return to work. As an example, she recalls, “In the mid to late ‘80s, the approach to back pain was lie down and rest. It was a fairly passive approach to workers’ compensation. That has fortunately changed.”

Along the way she has added to her CV. In 2007, she travelled to British Columbia to visit NIDMAR under WorkSafe Victoria’s Ambassador Program, where employees are encouraged to research and network internationally, and explore new ideas in countries around the world. She quickly became interested in the CBDMA tool.



“I did the auditor training and one thing led to another. I was in the field and wanted to be involved internationally in what was happening.” Since then, her involvement with NIDMAR has been extensive and inter-linked. After completing the auditor training, she passed the CDMP exam in 2008 and is now encouraging other team members to sit the examinations in May this year.

What Boyd-Squires likes best about the concepts behind the CDMP designation is “the emphasis on equal partnerships and a sense of ownership to drive outcomes.”

SUNCORP RISK SERVICES, SYDNEY

Jill Charters is well-versed in seeing the big picture. With a Masters in Education Administration, she was a principal in charge of a school and also previously managed Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Strategy at the Department of Education and Training in New South Wales (NSW). With over 95,000 employees, it is one of the largest departments of its kind in the world. In this role, which included responsibility for health, safety and injury management, she witnessed firsthand “the costs of disability from all perspectives.”

Now in her current position as an OHS and injury management consultant on the Risk Services team at Suncorp, she is contracted to work with the NSW State Treasury on better managing enterprise-wide risks for the Treasury Managed Fund, comprised of 140 government agencies. She and the Suncorp Risk Services team advise on wide-ranging risk from liability and reputation to health and safety and injury management (the more prevalent term in Australia for disability management) and to address risks most common to all agencies.

“With the Treasury Managed Fund, we focus on large and medium-size risk, pulling learning from general areas and specific projects with agencies to help all agencies in the Fund. We look at the whole process from prevention to response.”

She and the team focus on prevention and how to identify, manage and minimize risks and issues, as well as what programs are in place to assist when injuries or illnesses do occur.

While Suncorp was using a health and safety self-assessment tool, with an injury and claims management component, the team was looking for more. “The missing link was an audit tool that focused on all aspects of injury management. We took a look around at systems in place and found the NIDMAR tool was a way to assess how you manage injuries and develop a program to do that. Suncorp took out the license for the CBDMA.”

Charters soon gained two-fold accreditation, i.e., as a Certified CBDMA Auditor and as a Certified Disability Management Professional. “The CDMP ensures that I have the background and professional standards and am recognized. And as a certified auditor, it gives me the profile, confidence and expertise. The networking and continuing education aspects of certification are important.”

She believes that maintaining professional standing as a CDMP means focusing on keeping up to date. The OHS&IM consultants on the Suncorp team are encouraged to tap into the NIDMAR educational modules to stay that way, while she promotes CDMP training within the government sector. “There’s no resting on your laurels,” she adds.

While disability management concepts remain relatively new in Australia, Charters has seen promising signs of change. “The CDMP is growing in recognition among state regulators who are aware of it and the CBDMA. Strategies for the government sector include both occupational health and safety and injury management targets and actions to meet.” She confirms Suncorp is providing both training and tools to meet these state requirements.

Significantly, the CBDMA is helping make in-roads. “The CBDMA provides 16 elements and really good guidance to help agencies with their programs. It provides information for better decision-making and helps direct where to put your energies when your budget is limited.”



MUTUAL SOLUTIONS, SYDNEY

Mutual Solutions Australia Pty Ltd is a national workers' compensation specialist offering a range of services to assist and support employers to manage their workplace risks and minimize workers' compensation costs.

As a consultant claims specialist for Mutual Solutions, a division of Employers Mutual, Ian Naphali works with employers in several jurisdictions on ways to improve their injury management.

He has 24 years of workers' compensation experience to his credit and last year added the CDMP and Certified CBDMA Auditor to his credentials. He has noticed a greater awareness of the NIDMAR audit tool – and the consensus-based approach behind it – among employers and return to work coordinators in New South Wales. He has conducted several successful audits recently where employers have achieved scores as high as 87 percent on the audit and have achieved IDMSC Certified status.

For him personally, gaining the CDMP and auditor certification has changed his perspective. "It's a whole different avenue to what I've done previously in claims. It's quite an eye-opener. I get to see and talk to different people in different industry types to help find solutions to manage injuries, illnesses and disability in their workplaces and it helps provide better insight into avenues to explore."

Margaret Karlsen has worked at Mutual Solutions for the past two years providing specialized solutions in workers' compensation for several key industry sectors in New South Wales including mining, hospitals and correctional services.

She holds a degree in Exercise and Sport Science with honours in adapted physical education/rehabilitation from the University of Oslo, Norway; earned a Master's degree in Business Management in Australia in 2000; achieved the CDMP designation in 2008 and is a Certified CBDMA Auditor. When it came time to study for the CDMP examination last year she says "it motivated me to resume an ongoing education plan and to keep up to date with research online."



"It is a benefit to be part of the CDMP and to do research in my field. It's an opportunity for increased knowledge in helping people return to work, and as an add-on to my previous education."

She sees the plus side of staying at the forefront in her field. "When we go out to talk to people, current or potential clients, they know we are accredited with an international designation. It gives us more credibility in the marketplace."

Of her own already international career, she says, "It is a real benefit for me to be part of an international group of accredited professionals, whether I go to America or Europe or any other continent, I'll be recognized on an international basis. That's a great benefit for all parties."

Photo: Sydney Opera House