WORKERS COMPENSATION, MUSCULO-SKELETAL ABNORMALITY ASSESSMENTS

685.   Dr CONSTABLE to the Minister for Labour Relations:

(1)   Is the Minister aware that there are two different systems being used in the workers' compensation jurisdiction to determine the values of injured workers' musculo-skeletal abnormalities in the forms of -

(a)   schedule 2 of the AMA (WA) Guide; and

(b)   the American 4th edition guide to the evaluation of permanent impairment?

(2)   Is the Minister aware that the wide differences between professional assessments result in hardship for the injured worker and increased administrative costs in the preparation of settlement claims?

(3)   Does the Government have any plans to enshrine one system for the determination of musculo-skeletal abnormality assessments in legislation?

Mrs EDWARDES replied:

(1)   I am aware of two different guides being utilised, however, I advise the Member that the first is Schedule 2 of the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 1981, and the second is the Australian Medical Association (WA) Inc Assessment of Disability Guide under the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act of Western Australia, which was based on the American Medical Association's Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment (4th Edition).

(2)   I am aware there are concerns with differences in assessments and believe that the implementation of the recommendations of the Review of Medical and Associated Costs may assist in overcoming this.

(3)   The Government will utilise medical advice in consultation with the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Commission in the development of an appropriate guide that will facilitate objective and replicable assessments, as it did in the development of the Australian Medical Association (WA) Inc Assessment of Disability Guide under the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act of Western Australia in 1994.