Cameron Hall
COMPENSATION LAWYERS



Workers’ compensation NT – medical examination rights and obligations

Date: Sunday November 16, 2025

If you have been injured at work in the Northern Territory, you may need to attend medical examinations as part of your workers’ compensation claim. These medical appointments are a normal part of the claim process and help to assess your injury, treatment needs and fitness for work. It is important to understand what your rights and obligations are when asked to attend a medical assessment.

This guide explains how medical examinations work under the Northern Territory workers’ compensation system, what to expect, when you must attend, and the steps to take if concerns arise.

What is workers’ compensation in the Northern Territory?

Workers’ compensation in the Northern Territory is designed to support employees who are injured at work or develop a work-related illness. Benefits can include weekly payments, medical treatment and rehabilitation support. To access these benefits, injured workers must meet certain legal requirements, which can include participating in reasonable medical assessments requested by the insurer or employer.

These appointments help determine:

- the nature and extent of the injury;
- recommended medical treatment and recovery plans;

work capacity and fitness to return to work;

whether the injury is related to work.

Why medical examinations are required

Independent medical examinations (IME) play an important role in ensuring the compensation system is fair and accurate. They help confirm that workers receive appropriate medical care and support, while also giving insurers clarity about liability and ongoing payments.

An examination may be requested to:

clarify medical evidence;

resolve conflicting opinions between treating doctors;

assess work capacity or treatment progress;

evaluate permanent impairment.

While these examinations may sometimes feel stressful or intrusive, they are a standard requirement in most claims and do not mean your employer thinks you have been dishonest.

Your obligation to attend medical examinations as part of your workers' compensation claim

In the Northern Territory, workers must attend medical examinations that are **reasonably requested** by the insurer or employer. If you refuse to attend an appointment without a reasonable excuse, your weekly payments or medical benefits may be suspended.

You may not refuse based on inconvenience alone, so it is important to respond promptly to any appointment notice received from the insurer/employer.

Common examples of reasonable excuses may include:

the location is unreasonably far or creates genuine access issues;

you are medically unfit to travel to the appointment and have medical evidence to prove it;

you did not receive reasonable notice and are unable to attend at the proposed time;

the appointment clashes with urgent medical treatment or specialist appointments.

If you cannot attend, communicate early and provide supporting information so the appointment can be rescheduled.

Injured workers' rights at a medical examination

While you must attend reasonable examinations, you also have clear rights. You are entitled to be treated fairly and respectfully, and to ensure the process is transparent.

You have the right to:

reasonable notice of the appointment;

receive details of the doctor and purpose of the exam;

request that travel arrangements or costs be covered;

bring a support person to the appointment if medically required;

ask for a female or male doctor if you have well-founded reasons;

receive a copy of the examination report once it is provided to the insurer.

You can also request clarification if the appointment location or doctor appears unreasonable, or if the particular request seems excessive (for example, multiple exams with the same specialist for no apparent reason, such as seeking clarification of some aspect of the doctor's previous report).

What to expect during the assessment

During the appointment, the doctor will review your medical history, assess your symptoms and ask questions about your injury and work duties. They may perform a physical examination and request to view any relevant scans or previous reports.

You should:

- answer questions as completely and truthfully as you can;
- describe your symptoms clearly and accurately;
- bring copies of medical records, imaging and prescriptions where possible;
- avoid either exaggerating or minimising your symptoms.

Giving truthful, consistent information is important. The assessor's role is not to provide treatment but to give an independent medical opinion.

Travel and cost considerations

In most cases, the insurer must cover reasonable travel costs associated with attending the appointment. This may include fuel, public transport, taxi fares, or accommodation if you live in a remote area and need to travel a long distance.

Confirm reimbursement arrangements with the claims officer handling your claim before travelling, so there is no confusion about reimbursement afterwards, and keep receipts for any expenses.

If you disagree with the medical opinion

It is not uncommon for independent medical examiners to hold different views from treating doctors.

If you believe the assessment is inaccurate or unfair, you should immediately either contact a lawyer to get some advice about your options, or at very least, contact your claims officer at the insurer to note your concerns. If necessary, confirm your concerns in an email to the claims officer.

CALL US FOR FREE ADVICE: 07 3310 8729

Depending on what response you get from the claims officer, you might also want to consider other steps to take, including:

- seeking advice from your treating doctor about what happened with the IME;
- contacting NT WorkSafe with details of your concerns;

if your concerns are serious (for example, the manner in which the IME doctor treated you physically), then you can complain to the Health and Community Services Complaints Commission (phone: 08 8999 1969).

Practical tips regarding IMEs

Read appointment letters carefully (make sure you get the date, time and address right - if you miss your IME simply because you got the date/time or address wrong, then it may complicate your claim unnecessarily);

Keep copies of all medical documents you receive/obtain during the course of your workers' compensation claim (you should be retaining copies of all documents, medical or otherwise, regarding your claim);

Prepare a list of symptoms and limitations before the exam - don't rely on recalling all important matters from memory, but rather, have a list and tick them off during the exam;

Do not ignore appointments or requests for information, as to do so can result in the insurer suspending/cancelling your entitlements;

Speak to a lawyer if appointments seem unreasonable or too frequent, or the insurer seems to be 'doctor shopping' (sending you to different doctors with the same specialty - for example, you are being asked to go see more than one orthopaedic surgeon for no apparent good reason).

Frequently asked questions

Do I have to attend every medical examination requested?

Not necessarily. You might have legitimate concerns about attending a particular doctor's appointment. But, as long as the request is reasonable, you need to attend.

Can I bring someone with me?

The answer to this question actually depends on the doctors themselves. Some will allow you to have a 'support person' with you, some won't. As noted above, if you have a medical reason for having someone accompany you to an appointment, then it's best to advise your claims officer before the appointment takes place, and ask them to confirm with the particular doctor that they will allow you to bring a support person with you to the examination.

What if the doctor's assessment affects my weekly payments?

You can challenge any decision which adversely impacts your entitlement to compensation. Indeed, many decisions which result in the insurer cancelling your entitlements are based on medical opinion obtained from IMEs.

Seek legal advice as soon as you receive any decision you are not happy with, to understand your legal options. But don't delay in doing so, as strict time limits apply to most decisions about compensation claims.

If you don't take steps to formally dispute a decision within the relevant time limit, then you will lose your right to seek to dispute the decision.

You can read more about challenging a decision in our earlier blog, "Disputing a worker's compensation claim decision in the Northern Territory"

Can I record the appointment?

Recording without permission is generally discouraged. Always ask first

When to get legal advice

If you feel pressured, confused or unfairly treated during the workers' compensation process, then get some legal advice. A lawyer experienced in Northern Territory workers' compensation claims can help you understand your rights, challenge unreasonable assessments and take necessary steps to ensure you protect your rights and entitlements while you focus on recovery.

Get help from a workers' compensation lawyer

Medical examinations are a normal part of the workers' compensation system in the Northern Territory. Understanding your obligations helps you cooperate with the process while protecting your rights and entitlements.

If you are unsure about a medical appointment you've asked to attend, or you disagree with a medical opinion or feel a request is unreasonable, speak with a workers' compensation lawyer to get some advice about your situation.

This article is of a general nature and should not be relied upon as legal advice. If you require further information, advice or assistance for your specific circumstances, please contact us.