

REMOTE HEALTH ATLAS

ISSUING MEDICAL CERTIFICATES

1. General Information

The Federal Government's [Workplace Relations Amendment \(Work Choices\) Act 2005](#) allows medical certification for sick leave, once the domain of Medical Practitioners, to be issued by a [Registered Health Practitioner](#) in their respective State or Territory.

A medical certificate states, in the Registered Health Practitioner's opinion, the period the person was / is / will be unfit for work because of personal illness or injury. In the course of professional responsibilities, a Registered Health Practitioner may be asked to issue a medical certificate certifying an illness or injury for a person to provide documentary evidence to the employer. This does not provide licence to allow individual staff to issue medical certificates outside their scope of practice. Any issue of medical certificates should be based on the skills, expertise and knowledge expected of a Registered Health Practitioner.

Information in this document relates to:

- [Medical Certificate Guidelines](#)
- [Issuing a Medical Certificate](#)
- [Record of Issuing a Medical Certificate](#)
- [Medical Certificates for Clients with a Work Related Injury](#)
- [Centrelink Medical Certificates](#)

2. Definitions

Documentary Evidence¹: documentation for the period of sick leave taken by an employee, and may comprise, if it is reasonably practicable to provide, a medical certificate.

Electronic health Record Systems:

- **EACS:** East Arnhem Communicare System
- **PCIS:** Primary Care Information System.

Registered Health Practitioner: a person registered with the relevant National Health Board.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Registered Health Practitioner

- Be aware of the Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Act 2005 Part VA The Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard, Division 5 – Personal Leave
- Provide medical certificates as appropriate
- Document in the client's Electronic Health Record (EHR) that a medical certificate has been issued

¹ Workplace Relations Amendment (Work Choices) Act 2005 provides that if it is not reasonably practicable for the employee to provide a medical certificate as documentary evidence, the employee can provide a statutory declaration.

4. Procedure

4.1 Medical Certificate Guidelines

Registered Health Practitioners should consider the following when a client requests a medical certificate:

- The certificate should be based on the Registered Health Practitioners observations or factual knowledge of the client's illness or injury, and documented in the client's EHR
- The certificate should be legible, not contain medical jargon and preferably provided on an approved medical certificate form and include:
 - the location and date of examination
 - indicate the date the client is anticipated fit to return to work
 - indicate the degree of incapacity of the client as appropriate
 - name, signature and qualification of the consulting Registered Health Practitioner
- Maintenance of client confidentiality. The nature of illness or injury should only be included with the clients consent. If the client requests information regarding their diagnosis to be withheld, the client should be made aware that an employer has the right to accept or reject a medical certificate if insufficient information is provided.
- A medical certificate can only be issued retrospectively if the medical certificate clearly indicates:
 - the date of consultation
 - whether the certificate is based upon observations of symptoms during the examination, or upon information provided by the client which the Registered Health Practitioner deems to be true
 - the period of time the Registered Health Practitioner believes the illness would have incapacitated the client.
- When determining return to work date, the Registered Health Practitioner should consider, and arrange with the client, whether to return on full or altered duties for a designated time, and this should be noted on the Medical Certificate. Arrangements regarding alternate duties are matters for negotiation between the client and employer.
- The original medical certificate generated via PCIS / EACS or from a Medical Certificate book, is given to the client to provide the documentary evidence for the employer.
- The issuing of deliberately false, incorrect or misleading certificate may be lead to a complaint of unsatisfactory professional conduct or professional misconduct under the [Health Practitioner Regulation \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act](#)
- Registered Health Practitioners are legally responsible for their statement/s, and signing a false certificate may result in a Registered Health Practitioner facing a charge of negligence or fraud.

4.2 Issuing a Medical Certificate

Primary Health Care (PHC) Remote recommends that registered Health Practitioners should only provide a medical certificate certifying illness or injury as detailed in the table below.

Health Practitioner	Issuing Medical Certificates
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner (ATSIHP) / Nurse / Midwife	For a maximum of 3 days
Medical Practitioner	For a maximum of 14 days

If the illness persists beyond this period, ATSIHPs, nurses and midwives are encouraged to refer the client to a Medical Practitioner or undertake a Duty RMP Telephone Consultation for assessment and ongoing management.

4.3 Record of Issuing a Medical Certificate

There is no requirement to file copies of medical certificates in a client's EHR, provided appropriate documentation in the client's progress notes is maintained. Documentation should include:

- that a medical certificate has been issued
- the date / time range covered by the medical certificate
- the level of incapacity (ie unfit for work, light duties, etc within scope of practice)

Where an official numbered certificate has been utilised, the triplicate copy / certificate butts are to be retained at the health centre for seven (7) years.

4.5 Medical Certificates for Clients with a Work Related Injury (Workers' Compensation)

Until a Workers Compensation claim is accepted, leave is initially counted as sick leave and will be credited back to the employee once the claim is accepted. However the [Workers' Rehabilitation and Compensation Regulations](#) provide further guidelines for the issue of Medical Certificates accompanying a claim. For further details see [Workers' Rehabilitation & Compensation](#).

4.6 Centrelink Medical Certificates

The issue of Medical Certificates for Centrelink differs from the general issue of Medical Certificates. The Centrelink Medical Certificate must be completed by a [registered](#) Medical Practitioner and along with other medical information is used to help Centrelink make decisions about support requirements.

Supplies of Centrelink Medical Certificates are only provided to registered medical practitioners and forms may be obtained from the 'Medical Certificate Ordering Service' (# 1800 801 667). Also see [Medical Certificate form \(SU415\)](#).

5. Forms

Medical Certificate template, available via EHR

Medical Certificate (OOHR 127), available from Regional Stores

Centrelink [Medical Certificate form \(SU415\)](#)

6. References and Supporting Documents

Related Atlas Items:

Health Professional Registration	Staff Access to Health Services
Health Records - Documentation	Workers' Rehabilitation & Compensation
Personal Leave - Sick Leave	

[Workplace Relations Amendment \(Work Choices\) Act 2005](#)

Northern Territory: [Health Practitioner Regulation \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act](#)
[Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency](#)

Australian Medical Association Position Statement:

[Guidelines for Medical Practitioners on Certificates Certifying Illness - 2011](#)

[Centrelink](#) website:

[Medical Certificate form \(SU415\)](#)

[Verification of medical condition\(s\) form \(SU684\)](#)