

A 12-month transition support pilot tested the delivery of an evidence-based service to support individuals exiting their current income support system.

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- We are aware that case management takes a ‘whole of person’ perspective and is the only common service provided across all systems.
- The effective management of complex claims is driving demand for individually based, person centric services.
- Research suggests that income support systems do not adequately support participants to develop the skills and social connections that enable a successful transition to health, life and employment following their exit, experiencing what we have labelled as a ‘hard landing’.
- We know that once a person is no longer eligible in one system, a significant percentage will move to another system and often ‘fall through the cracks’ during the transition process.
- People are drawing on personal financial and social assets while awaiting support.
- The lack of support a person receives as they exit a system increases the likelihood of extending the time the individual remains off work.
- People feel they need to be “twice as sick to get half the help”.

The 12-month transition support pilot was provided to 50 injured workers with long-duration workers' compensation claims exiting the Victorian Workers' Compensation system. The pilot involved a Transition Specialist identifying and providing relevant support services to build participants **confidence, independence, and job readiness**.

The research was commissioned by the Collaborative Partnership to Improve Work Participation, led by EML and independently evaluated by Monash University.

The independent evaluation by Monash University measured the effectiveness of the transition support service compared with results from the National RTW survey. The evaluation highlighted the potential impact of a short-term tailored service at the conclusion of workers' compensation benefits to support individuals to achieve health and employment outcomes.

The program highlights that receiving transition support as a person prepares to exit a system is critical. With the right support a person who has experienced long term unemployment has the potential to return to work. For participants who did not experience positive changes this highlights the requirement to continue to tailor the services provided under a transition support program.

For more information and the full report visit the [Collaborative Partnership website](#).

After completing the transition support program:

- **(48%)** reported a positive change to their general physical health.
- **(48%)** reported a positive change to their general mental health.
- **(58%)** reported a positive change to general self-efficacy.
- **(29%)** reported a positive change to psychological distress.



KEY FINDINGS:

Up to half of participants reported a positive impact to their physical health, mental health and self-efficacy as a result of the transition support pilot, however some participants experienced a decline across these measures.

The high levels of return-to-work outcomes achieved through the transition support pilot are supported by positive increases in health outcomes.

When commencing the program, **more than 90%** of participants were experiencing moderate or severe psychological distress.

It was identified that some people may benefit from a transition support program, with participants reporting that having an understanding person offer help at the time of transition as beneficial. For participants who have been in the workers' compensation system for a long time, any positive influence on their physical health, mental health or self-efficacy is likely to assist as they transition out of the system.

- Participants identified the timing of the service as the most important component.
- Participants consistently described the Transition Specialist's manner and willingness to listen and understand their situation as a strong positive aspect of the service.

Financial difficulties:

All participants described significant financial difficulties when workers compensation benefits came to an end. For some this presented as difficult choices between paying rent, buying food and paying for medical care.

After completing the transition support program 42% of participants reported a positive change to financial distress, increasing to 61% 3-months post pilot completion.

Desire to work:

Almost all participants wanted to be working, however at **least 50%** described being unable to work due to their condition. Several participants had made multiple attempts to return to work and either faced significant flare ups of their condition or were 'let go' not long afterwards.

39% of participants reported no change to their **work ability** from the time the transition support program commenced to its completion. 32% reported a negative change and 28% reported a positive change.

15% of participants transitioned to wages and salaries from the time-of-service completion to 3 months post service.

“Findings highlighted the desire by almost all participants to be working, not just for financial benefits but for the purpose that employment brings.”



Access to Community and Health services:

The Transition Specialist identified, coordinated and delivered relevant support services to help maintain the participants basic needs whilst building their confidence to drive self-management and work-readiness. Approximately 43 different types of services were used by the participants during the Transition Support Pilot.

94% of participants required support to access health and community services.

Services included:

	Emergency Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ambulance
	Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beyond Blue• Headspace• GP- Mental Health Care Plan
	Physical Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Domestic Violence Services• Healthy eating guide• Healthy Cooking Classes• Yoga and Pilates
	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matchworks• Back to work course• Jobs hub• TAFE
	Financial Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centrelink• Legal Aid• Financial Counselling Australia
	Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing Services• Food Bank• St Vincent de Paul

Opportunity for income support systems to better support claimants

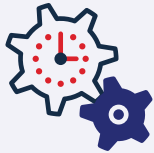
Experience shows that without adequate support and guidance, injured workers may not be able to identify the most suitable career choices available to them and navigate a pathway to achieve their desired outcome. This poses a risk and cost to other income support systems such as Centrelink.

There is a long-term opportunity to incorporate the skill set and/or function of the Transition Support Specialist within current insurance income support claims model or benefit structures. This could improve participant outcomes and reduce 'downstream' system impacts of people moving between different income support systems.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been identified for consideration in the development of future transition support programs.



Be flexible with timing

Participants indicated the best timing for the service was in the final stages of workers' compensation wage replacement. As part of service delivery, it should be identified if the proposed timing of the service suits the individual's circumstances.



Listen to the participant's story

Transition Specialists should have the opportunity to listen to the participants' story. All participants reported that they appreciated having someone to talk to, who would listen and follow them up to check in on progress.



Provide practical support

Participants described a desire for practical help, such as assistance with Centrelink applications and help to find suitable employment.



Support for the Transition Specialist

Transition Specialists should receive support and opportunities to debrief to ensure they can conduct the role without elevated risk to their own health. Transition Specific communication training should be provided.



Financial counselling

Participants identified financial counselling as a service that would be helpful in the lead up to transition.



Local knowledge

Transition Specialists should be equipped with local knowledge where possible.



Tailor the service

Participants described a wide variety of challenges they were dealing with in the lead up to transition. Providing services tailored to participants' needs rather than offering all participants the same services maximises benefits for participants.



Data

Future programs should involve routine data collection to effectively monitor participant outcomes. For evaluation purposes an appropriate comparison group should be recruited to maximize the confidence in the demonstrated effects of the service.

