



Australian Government

Comcare

RETURN TO WORK BROKERAGE SERVICE



Maximising success: a coordinated approach to returning injured employees to work

Following the success of a recent pilot program, Comcare now offers the Return to Work (RTW) Brokerage service which has been designed to improve return to work outcomes for injured employees with primary or secondary psychological injury and longer-term injured employees.

Research indicates that if an employee is still off work 13 weeks after sustaining their injury, there is a 25% chance the employee will still be off work after two years. This increases to a 44% chance of still being off work if the worker has not returned to work after six months¹.

Supporting employees to achieve a durable return to work after a work-related injury/illness is not always straight-forward, and we are committed to supporting commonwealth agencies in this effort. RTW outcomes are improved with a coordinated approach and increased collaboration when supporting an employee to navigate the complex journey of rehabilitation and re-entry to the workforce.

Return to Work Pilot overview

The RTW pilot was undertaken between November 2021 – October 2022 involving 34 employees participating in a tailored job-readiness, career coaching service that enabled them to obtain suitable employment and re-enter the workforce. Participants said the program helped them prepare for re-entry into work (either a new role within the public service or in a new field entirely). The evaluation of this pilot showed 37.9% of participants achieved a return to work outcome, compared to 11.7% of non-participants, providing statistically significant evidence that participants had better return to work outcomes than non-participants.

Return to work outcome rates among participants



¹ [A guide for General Practitioners to manage work related injury \(comcare.gov.au\)](https://www.comcare.gov.au)

Key findings and recommendations

When employees are supported to achieve timely and sustainable return to health and work outcomes, this supports employers to ensure injured employees, as valued business resources can re-engage with work quickly and meaningfully. The program is now titled the RTW Brokerage Service and will run until mid-2024 after a successful pilot program.

Return to Work Brokerage overview

The RTW Brokerage service supports employees in the scheme and involves them participating in job-readiness, career coaching services tailored to their circumstances to assist them to gain suitable employment either within the APS or outside the Commonwealth.

The service is suitable for employees who have:

- > an accepted and open Comcare claim/s
- > a primary or secondary psychological condition
- > a long-term physical condition or disease
- > a work capacity but who have not yet returned to work
- > no capacity for work but discussions have been had to confirm this is imminent
- > been out of the workplace for a number of years.

This type of program would not be suitable for employees who have:

- > been through a recent invalidity retirement process and/or reached retirement age of 67
- > a closed or inactive compensation claim
- > a newly accepted claim with no apparent rehabilitation support afforded to them by their agency.

Program Option One – Full Program

A full program is a 26-week program that allows the employee to choose various coaching modules relevant to them following structured coaching through the Birkman methodology instrument. This program is suitable for employees who require support to address significant barriers preventing them from returning to work and need assistance to navigate the employment market. The program typically involves approximately one hour per week of individualised coaching and time with the Career Coach, run virtually, and includes:

- > orientation session to discuss expectations and timeframes
- > cover letter and resume review and update
- > assistance in developing selection criteria templates
- > structured coaching by way of the Birkman methodology instrument and debrief report
- > identifying perceived barriers, scoping background and skills
- > tailored coaching aligned to career plan and delivering on the program modules (module titles include 'shift your perspective', 'personal branding', 'best practice job applications', 'skills and strengths', 'modern interview techniques', and 'interview simulations' among others)
- > establishing a networking and job seeking strategy
- > assistance to identify job opportunities and partner for applications and interview preparation
- > support participant through transition (if an employment outcome is achieved)
- > close out call and case summary to Comcare.

Program Option Two – Fast-track Program

The fast-track program is generally a 6-8 week program that allows the employee to choose three coaching modules relevant to them following structured coaching using the Birkman methodology instrument. This program is suitable for employees who already have a level of job-readiness and work capacity but need assistance to navigate the employment market. The program typically involves approximately one hour per week of individualised coaching and time with the Career Coach, run virtually, and includes:

- > fast track orientation sessions and structured coaching through the Birkman methodology instrument and debrief report
- > a choice of three program modules based on needs
- > cover letter and resume review and update
- > close out call and case summary to Comcare.

Program Option Three – Extension of Services Program

A 6-8 week extension of servicing for selected employees who require additional support before being deemed as a competitive candidate/job ready, who completed a program during the RTW pilot. This service would occur on an as needed basis approved by Comcare. The program typically involves approximately one hour per week of individualised coaching and time with the Career Coach, run virtually, and includes:

- > extension of services brief orientation session
- > structured coaching by way of the Birkman methodology instrument and debrief report
- > a choice of three program modules based on needs
- > cover letter and resume review and update
- > close out call and case summary to Comcare.

To access the program, please contact the RTW Support Team at returntowork@comcare.gov.au