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icare FOUNDATION ‘WORKUP’ INITIATIVE DRIVES NEW IDEAS FOR RETURN TO WORK

The icare Foundation today launched its new initiative WORKUP – a \$5 million investment call to support and empower workers to overcome complex personal and social barriers to return to work.

Amanda Keogh, icare Foundation General Manager said prolonged unemployment during the productive years of life impacts harshly on the quality of life of affected individuals and their families. By improving the system for recovering workers in NSW a profound difference to people’s lives can be made.

“With this call, we are inviting different ideas from innovative organisations who can offer initiatives not used before in the workers compensation system – from start-ups and social ventures to community development organisations. The problem we hope to solve is persistent and complex, so bringing fresh thinking to bear is key,” Ms Keogh said.

“Our goal is to address the ongoing challenge of supporting workers to return to work after a workplace injury. We know that the longer a worker does not return to work the higher the risk of them never returning.

“Around 77 per cent of injured workers return to work within three months, but for workers who remain off work longer, their chances of returning are much reduced.

“We also know that the longer people are away from their workplace, the greater their risk of social isolation and psychosocial issues, which can further delay their recovery.

“Long-term injured workers often face a range of complex barriers that can make returning to work difficult. These barriers can be a direct result of their injury, or personal circumstances with accompanying social isolation exacerbated by being unable to work.

“We are looking for fresh and new ideas, as well as proven models from other jurisdictions, to assist workers to overcome these barriers, and importantly, to support employers who are committed to helping their employees return to work.

“The commitment from icare is incredibly high which is why we are providing \$5 million in funding, as well as taking the time to co-design potential programs to give our partners every possible opportunity to be successful in their pitch.

“We don’t just provide funding – we work with our partners to ensure that the problem we are solving for is well understood, with a high degree of empathy for the people we’re helping.

“The Foundation also provides partners with measurement capability so that we can learn whether and how the intervention is creating outcomes, pivot if we need to, and make sure that we can report real impact when our support has come to a close.

“If you are capable of executing innovative health and wellbeing programs in NSW that are not just ‘business as usual’, then we want to hear from you. This is a genuinely open call. We are open to applications from both for-profit businesses and NGOs with a compelling idea,” Ms Keogh said.

For more information on the icare Foundation’s WORKUP investment call, please visit www.icare.nsw.gov.au/WorkUp

Media contact: Phyllis Sakinofsky | media@icare.nsw.gov.au | (02) 8297 7570

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