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\$5 million dollars to help injured workers in NSW get back to work

Eight organisations that support injured workers to overcome complex personal and social barriers to return to work have been awarded a share in \$5 million WorkUp funding from icare Foundation.

icare Foundation General Manager Barney Smith said while three-quarters of injured workers return to work within the first 13 weeks, for those that remain off work longer, their chances of returning are much reduced.

“Social isolation and psychosocial issues can develop when people are away from their workplace for long periods of time,” said Mr Smith.

“More than 8,000 people were off work for longer than three months in 2018, according to our workers insurance claims. We have seen a steady increase in the proportion of workers insurance claims requiring 90 days or more off work over the past five years,” said Mr Smith.

“We’ve recognised that there is a need to explore improved support for the complex personal and social barriers these injured workers must overcome in order to return to work.

“We know that prolonged unemployment during a person’s productive years can seriously impact on the quality of life of injured individuals and their families. By improving the support for recovering workers in NSW, we can make a profound difference to their lives,” he said.

“The ideas are out there. We received more than 90 applications from non-for-profit, business, academic and government organisations for the WorkUp investment call.”

“We selected these eight organisations because they came to us with strong business cases with evidence-based, innovative approaches that could be adapted for workers insurance to deliver real benefits for injured workers, employers and the people of NSW,” he added.

The eight fundees took part in an extensive co-design process with icare staff, along with best-in-class social impact specialists to refine and develop their idea, accessing icare data and insights to better understand and test against real challenges faced by NSW injured workers.

“icare Foundation provides 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 said Mr Smith.

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Recipients of a share in \$5 million WorkUp funding:

- **CoAct** – provides holistic, intensive, motivational support to injured workers who have become unintentionally long-term unemployed so that they can return to work.
- **Happy Paws Happy Hearts** – connects socially isolated injured workers with animals through training programs at animal rescue shelters. Participants meet like-minded people and learn about both the animals and themselves, giving a ‘sense of purpose’
- **Primary and Community Care** – Plus Inclusion delivers tools, resources, and methods for engagement to improve the post-injury experience and outcomes for injured workers with significant language barriers
- **Rumpus** – assists injured workers to explore, develop and cultivate creative routines and habits for Return-to-Life recovery. Participants learn how and why these activities support positive mental health, reduce symptoms and foster social connections, self-efficacy and positive self-identity.
- **Settlement Services International** – prepares participants for returning to the workforce following a workplace injury through transitional employment in social enterprise. Job seekers gain work experience and skills in warehousing, packing, marketing and retail.
- **University of Newcastle** – an online, compassion-focused program designed for prevention and early intervention of mental health difficulties during recovery from a workplace injury.
- **Uprise** – with weekly calls from a dedicated coach, the 6-week Workable program teaches workers a step-by-step process for overcoming the barriers to getting back to work and health.
- **WithYouWithMe** – building on a successful matching, training and redeployment program used for military veterans, WithYouWithMe supports retraining and placement of injured workers in meaningful, in-demand careers.