

Work Well Awards 2023

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Example entry

Category ten – Best individual contribution to rehabilitation and return to work

1: Explain how the nominee demonstrates excellence in service delivery and improved return to work outcomes for injured workers and employers.

When planning for a worker's return to work, Stephanie tries to understand what their goal is, and then line that up with the medical information to work out a plan. If the honest desire of the worker is not to return to their employer, then that needs to be considered, whether that is due to legitimate medical reasons (say primary psychological injury), or even just a personal choice. While the primary goal is to return a worker to their employer, if the worker associates negativity or unwillingness to that, then it will impact their outcome. Stephanie believes that it is necessary to understand the worker's goals, and to transparently engage with them, to ensure the idea outcome for the worker can be achieved where possible.

This is particularly important when working with Small Business employers, where it is critical to the employer to understand whether the worker will be returning, and when so that they can make alternative arrangements if necessary. If the reason for reluctance to return to work is in relation to the attitude of the employer, then Stephanie uses this as an opportunity for education about the possibilities with suitable duties, or the impact that the employer might feel to their policy.

A worker (Steven) experienced a primary psychological injury and due to this did not feel as though he could return to the place of work. After frank and transparent conversations with the worker and employer, not only did the worker feel positive about returning, but the organisation made widespread changes to the organisation (see example below).

A worker (Wyatt) experienced a serious journey related injury soon after commencing work with an IT company. The employer was reluctant to establish suitable duties for Wyatt as there were pre-existing performance issues. Furthermore, once suitable duties were established Wyatt slept through his first day of new duties, which led to further deterioration of the relationship between Wyatt and his employer and escalated in an argument. Stephanie navigated this fraught situation by talking the employer and Wyatt through the situation, realised that Wyatt had been on significant pain medication that interfered with his ability to work. Wyatt was very grateful to Stephanie for her support through this situation.



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Stephanie is an exceptional case manager. One worker's feedback: "Stephanie ...has been superb... I would [not] have got this far without her support".

She provides extensive and exceptional technical support to her peers and leaders across many areas of claims management.

It is this in-depth technical knowledge and expertise, along with her strong people-focused approach that has enabled her to move into the Training and Onboarding role.

Stephanie demonstrates empathy, easily stepping into the customer's shoes. She establishes clear expectations around what is required by the customer to achieve their goals. She always keeps in mind the best outcome for both the worker and employer.

2: What strategies or initiatives has the nominee implemented to improve services or outcomes for injured workers, the employer or the industry?

In addition to her case management role, Stephanie inspires and leads others to achieve outcomes. Stephanie has recently transitioned to an Onboarding and Academy trainer where she shares her experience and knowledge. Before this formal appointment, she developed and delivered training sessions for our new people when she saw a gap in their knowledge.

These training sessions have now been incorporated into the Onboarding program for new Customer Advisors. Feedback from the new starters included:

- "these were the best sessions";
- "Amazing training, really well structured".

Stephanie always supports new starters by generously sharing her time and examples from her own claims. She is a well respected coach and demonstrates leadership in all that positive influencing team members to be open to change.

Stephanie overcomes challenges on individual claims daily and advises other case managers on how to do the same through her formal and informal 1 on 1 coaching roles. She provides extensive and exceptional technical support to her peers and leaders across many areas of claims management. It is this in-depth technical knowledge and expertise, along with her strong people-focused approach that has enabled her to move into the Training and Onboarding role.

To assist case managers and injured workers more broadly, Stephanie developed a fit for purpose and practical medical terminology training pack in response to the queries she was

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getting as a Medical Champ. Initially, this was developed for one team, but word spread, and it is now used across many teams. It has also been incorporated into WorkCover's formal onboarding training. Stephanie never ignores an opportunity to improve what we do; she will always put actions in place to address issues or gaps for the greater good and enhanced outcomes.

Besides claims technical support, Stephanie has been instrumental in assisting RTW by her involvement in various medical strategies. As is well known, medical practitioner issues and engagement are one of the greatest challenges with claims and RTW. Stephanie has been a significant contributor across multiple teams, supporting customer advisors to manage complex medical claims towards a RTW outcome.

Stephanie's commitment to improving RTW outcomes can be seen in her work outlined above with onboarding and technical support and as well as managing individual caseloads. Her assistance with medical strategies has also greatly assisted. It is difficult to benchmark Stephanie's outcomes with her peers as she is routinely given the most complex and challenging case loads to manage and these tend to be longer in duration. Her impact goes far beyond her successful impact on workers and cases and lifts the capability and knowledge of the entire function.

This impact can be seen in the compliments she has received (just examples of the many she regularly receives) from customers and medical providers (see attached document).

3: Provide one detailed example that demonstrates the success of the nominee's contribution to rehabilitation and return to work for injured workers and employers.

Steven is an analytical systems engineer who worked a FIFO-like model for his employer. While he enjoyed his job and was considered good at it, he received a primary psychological injury due to the way that his work was structured. Steven was expected to travel to a remote location, and fix systems and was unable to leave until the work was completed, which gave him very little certainty over his time. As a single parent managing custody issue, this was placing extreme stress on him. His supervisor was not understanding, and would not enter into discussions about changing these expectations.

Steven was not working at all for 8 months, and fully returned to work after 10 months. Many primary psychological injuries are much longer in nature than this.

Because of the nature of this injury Steven was convinced that returning to his employer was not something that was possible.

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Stephanie wanted to be able to explore all options and initiated contact with the relevant HR contact at Steven's employer.

The employer started checking in with Steven weekly, which was a great benefit to his mental health.

Through honest conversations with all parties, including Steve's direct supervisor, the employer agreed with Steven's desire to find new employment and put together a letter of introduction to support him. They also agreed for WorkCover to pay for specific licencing to assist with finding new employment. During this action, the employer realised that several their workers should have been covered by the same certification and further realised that they needed to undertake a review of the roles, requirements, and contracts for their engineers.

The eventual outcome was that Steven was offered a new, more suitable employment contract by his existing employer.

Widespread changes were made to the roles, contracts, and licencing of similar roles. Steven received an apology from his manager, and is now fully back at work with his original employer – a remarkable outcome for this type of primary psychological injury and thanks to Stephanie's focus on honest conversations, and ensuring all options are pursued, so that the worker can achieve the outcome that matches their personal goals, and continue on to be the hero of their own story



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