

# A guide to using the new recovery and return to work plan

## Recovery and return to work plan redesign

The idea behind redesigning the recovery and return to work plan was to promote better engagement in the recovery and return to work conversation between workers, employers and their treatment providers, and to create a document that is simple and easy to use.

### What's changed?

- Less formalities and tick boxes.
- A reduced focus on compliance.
- Removal of the signatures\* boxes.
- More free text fields for personalised discussion and planning.
- A focus on visual descriptions and less wording.

The plan takes its cue from Behavioural Economics (BE), which is a field of study devoted to understanding how human behaviours impact on decision-making and business.

### How to use the new recovery and return to work plan

This guide breaks down the plan and explains how each section is intended to be used.

\_\_\_\_\_ 's recovery and  
(worker's name)  
 return to work plan

## 1. The introduction

Date completed:  Plan #:  Plan review:

Date completed - this is the date that you completed the plan.

Plan # - this is the number that reflects what plan you are up to. *It should go in sequential order.*

Plan review - this is where you will enter the agreed date that you will next review the plan. It is important that you review the plan regularly to ensure the goals and actions agreed are still relevant and are achieving a positive recovery and return to work.

## 2. My goal

### My goal

- Same employment with my pre-injury employer
- Different employment with my pre-injury employer
- Same employment with a different employer
- Different employment with a different employer
- Return to independence within the community

My goal: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

How confident am I in achieving my goal? (Rate from 1-10) \_\_\_\_\_

The first part of this section is very similar to the previous plan, but note the change in language for the employment goals to make them easier to understand and more personalised for the injured worker.

What you need to do is ask the worker to select one of the five recovery and return to work goals which best reflects their overall return to work objective. It is important to take into consideration both the worker's physical capacity and the employer's ability to accommodate the duties.

'My goal' is a new addition and the intent of this is to personalise the overall goal for the worker in their own words. The worker needs to choose the most appropriate return to work goal based on their individual circumstances. For example:

My goal: To return to full-time duties as a mechanic at XYZ Crash Repairs  
 My goal: To find a new job as a spare parts assessor with a new employer *or*

The question following the goal, “How confident am I in achieving my goal?” is designed to encourage the worker to stop and think about how confident they are in achieving their goal out of a rating of 10. This can be used as a point of discussion and may identify other barriers.

For example if the worker scores a 5 or below, it is important to discuss why they aren’t feeling confident in achieving their goal. This could indicate that something is not on track and may result in changes to the way the recovery is being managed. If they are reporting a high number, acknowledge this positive result.

### 3. Free text fields

Now we are getting to the bulk of the plan which is designed to capture the worker’s treatment, services, employment, support, a general update and agreed actions.

The free text fields are in an order which is designed to flow with the discussion, however you can complete them in any order as you or the worker feels comfortable.

Let’s break down each field.

**My treatment:** This is designed to capture details of the worker’s current treatment, as well as treatment the worker has had or discussed and may be beneficial exploring.



#### My treatment

- Physio - one session each week with home exercise program to be done daily.
- Hydro - John commenced but ceased due to pain in April and will revisit hydro after his next GP review.
- Medication - John is taking paracetamol and using a heat pack as required.

John advised that he was struggling and wanted to know what mental health supports may be available to him. His return to work coordinator (RTWC) referred John to their Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and low intensity EAP, and it was agreed that John would discuss further referral to mental health services with his GP at his next review. John will contact his RTWC/Claims Manager after his review to discuss the outcome and next steps.

**My services:** This is designed to capture details of any return to work service support currently in place or discussed during the review of the plan. Medical and other expenses as covered by section 33, for example approved recovery/return to work services, should be discussed and documented here. *Note:* All services that are agreed under the Return to Work Act are only able to be paid for during the income and medical entitlement period.



#### My services

A referral to Dean at Rehab for Work Adelaide has been made to complete a worksite assessment and graduated return to work plan, which will both be presented to GP Dr Lee for approval on 20/5/19.

**My employment:** This is designed to capture details of any return to work arrangements in place, which might be a return to work service, a list of suitable duties, or a work placement. A Graduated Return to Work Schedule (GRTWS) (attachment) can be completed.

This section should help parties understand their role in the process and is also an opportunity to promote the health benefits of work. It is an opportune time to engage the employer in the discussion as the recovery and return to work of their employee is beneficial to them too. The employer can support their worker with suggestions of suitable employment they may be able to offer. If they are unable to identify any suitable duties, a return to work service provider may need to be engaged to help source suitable duties with the employer or a host employer.

Depending on the circumstances and discussion, this section may trigger a review of the current return to work goal and whether it remains suitable.



## My employment

John is completing a work placement at ABC Services and is due to finish up in three weeks. The plan is for John to then commence light duties back at his pre-injury employer, XYZ Crash Repairs, in the office with Susan as his supporting supervisor but this is to be discussed with GP Dr Lee first.

Proposed GRTWS to be approved by GP Dr Lee following the three week placement completion. RTWC/employer has confirmed the ability to accommodate return to work once capacity has increased and return to work has been approved by GP Dr Lee.

**My support:** This is designed to capture a worker's support network outside of their work life. It is recognised that having a workplace injury not only impacts the worker's work life, but also their personal life. Remaining connected to friends and family is really important and this section prompts discussion about the worker's support network.



## My support

John is married and has three children, Billy, Bobby and Betty, two living at home and one living interstate. John's wife, Jane, is very supportive of John and his goal to return to work, and John finds that his children have been able to help out with some of the things he is unable to do while he recovers.

John has stopped attending his weekly lawn bowls game as he isn't able to play at the moment. John has stated that he misses his bowls club and has decided to go every fortnight to pop in and see how everyone is, even though he isn't quite ready to play the game yet.

**Update and other relevant information:** This section allows you to summarise the conversation that may not fit elsewhere.



## Update and other relevant information

Present were John, Jane, return to work coordinator, Jo, and GP Dr Lee.  
Medical review held today 6/5/19 at Dr Lee's rooms.

Discussed:

- ...
- ... (and so on)

**Agreed actions:** Bringing this all together is the agreed actions section, which is designed to capture any agreed actions in the one place. This helps with:

- Everyone agreeing on the next steps needed to achieve or progress towards the return to work goal.
- Being clear on who is doing what and when.
- Keeping track of actions to ensure they are progressing and to reaffirm responsibilities should things get off track.



## Agreed actions

- John advised he would arrange an appointment with GP Dr Lee to discuss his mental health and a possible referral to a mental health service - by Friday 8/5/19.
- John will contact his RTWC/Claims Manager after this discussion to discuss the outcome and next steps.
- Dean the provider will complete a worksite assessment and graduated return to work plan to be presented to GP Dr Lee for approval on 20/5/19. This will include commencing light duties back at John's employer, XYZ Crash Repairs. John to also discuss resuming hydro and whether he still requires access to a taxi service at this medical review.
- Jo to arrange a worksite visit for two weeks time with John's employer, XYZ Crash Repairs to discuss outcomes of the worksite assessment and plan for John's return to work - by Monday 3/6/19.

#### 4. The back page

### About me

Full name\*

Date of birth\*      My claim number\*

Employer's name\*      Date of injury\*

A description of my injury\*

Claim details have been moved to the back of the plan and this section is now bigger and easier to read. It gives the worker easy access to their claim number if they need it and can be placed in a handy spot like on the fridge.

Any details marked with an \* are mandatory (as per the old plan).

Underneath this section you will find the 'Important notice' for workers and employers, which is required under the Return to Work Act 2014 and is there if you need to refer to it.

# Supporting information

The below is some additional information to support you when completing the plan.



## Updating the plan

The recovery and return to work plan should be updated in line with the circumstances of the injured worker. A complex claim with evident barriers and changing treatment requirements would need to be updated more frequently and in line with the support that the stakeholders would need. On the other hand, an injured worker whose recovery is progressing well and has less need for support won't require the plan to be updated as frequently.

To get the most out of the plan, you will need to track progress over time. It is recommended that a new plan is completed each time there is a change in circumstances. Use the same plan number with a different version each time a new plan is implemented.

We recommend you let claim events be your guide, for example; a change in employment goal, significant treatment changes, a medical review or case conference are all good opportunities to update the plan.

This new plan is designed to be simpler and easier to use so it can be updated more efficiently and in line with the needs of stakeholders.



## Signatures\*

Whilst on the topic of signatures, or lack thereof to be accurate, thought has been given to how we demonstrate that key stakeholders (worker, employer and treating medical team) have been consulted with and are happy with the contents. It is therefore suggested that there is confirmation of the discussion and agreed actions at the conclusion of the meeting and that when sending the completed or updated plan to stakeholders by email or hard copy that a note similar to the below accompanies the plan:

“Hi Jane, please find attached a copy of the updated recovery and return to work plan as discussed today. If you have any concerns or if the plan does not accurately reflect our discussion, please let me know by Friday so I can make these changes.

If I don't hear from you, we take this as your agreement of the plan.”

Please note however that you can still use signatures if you would like to do so.