# ReCONNECT podcast transcript: Episode 1 – Introduction to ReCONNECT

## 1 August 2018

**Josh:** Hi there and welcome to our ReturnToWorkSA podcast. My name is Joshua Penley-Churchill and I'm the program coordinator for Scheme Support at ReturnToWorkSA. In today's episode I'm learning all about ReCONNECT. What is the ReCONNECT service? How does it work? And most importantly what do I need to do if I want to access ReCONNECT services? So who better to help me understand all that than our very own ReturnToWorkSA ReCONNECT Advisor, Darren Smith, who is joining us today. Thanks for coming in Darren.

**Darren:** Hi Josh. How are you going? Pleasure to be here.

**Josh:** So Darren you're going to help us learn all about ReCONNECT and what it's all about so give me a bit of a high level understanding of this product. What's Reconnect and what does it do?

**Darren:** So Josh ReCONNECT is a free and voluntary service that helps people who've had some contact with the work injury insurance scheme link up with other community support services. So typically we might help people make contact with the Centrelink scheme and initiate a claim for a payment through Centrelink. We can also help them link in with financial counselling services in the community, potentially accommodation as well if that's something that they need to address at that point in time. And equally too we can help out with career services as well whether that might be putting together a resume or viewing existing one and equally talking to them about what sort of job search strategies they could consider using and potentially what the current trends are there in the labour market. So there's a variety of services that we offer people and certainly not limited to those who we've just spoken about and it's very much tailored to the client's needs themselves. So we have a chat to people about what they think the steps might be for them given their journey through the claim or potentially that it’s coming to a close and what they think the next steps might be for them.

**Josh:** Cool. So we had those four main areas, we had Centrelink, financial counselling, we had accommodation services and career services. So who is ReCONNECT for? Where are people at when they access and want to connect with ReCONNECT?

**Darren:** ReCONNECT’s pretty much for – most people have had some contact with the work injury insurance scheme. So that could be for people whose income support's about to stop, those who have lodged a claim and are waiting for it to be accepted. Even people have actually lodged the claim but then had it rejected are still entitled to access to ReCONNECT services.

**Josh:** Cool. So I can have it on a rejected claim I don't have to have an accepted claim?

**Darren:** Absolutely yeah. If you’ve had that contact with the scheme and it's been rejected you're still entitled to access our services so that once again we can actually help you link in with those community supports you might need to think about making contact with to help you move on given your current circumstances.

**Josh:** Cool. So I know that under the new scheme we have two years of income support and then I can also go on to receive another twelve months of medical expenses only. If I'm receiving medical expenses only can I also access ReCONNECT?

**Darren:** Sure, absolutely. So even within that that period there you can still access ReCONNECT and we can help you in terms of having a chat about what your priorities are at that point in your life and help you to make contact with those relevant services.

**Josh:** What if I'm self-insured?

**Darren:** That's fine. If you work for a self-insured employer those employees and claimants are still entitled to use ReCONNECT services.

**Josh:** So in terms of the services that are available to me through ReCONNECT are they intended for me as an individual or can these extend beyond me and help my family out as well?

**Darren:** Good question Josh, a bit of both actually. So certainly the person who's lodged the claim or been involved directly with the work injury insurance scheme, but equally too the services can extend to immediate family members as well. So if you consider the ones we spoke about previously say, Centrelink and financial counselling, accommodation and that, you could quite easily imagine that a lot of those core social issues can touch on a family as well. So the services absolutely are for the person who's had the primary contact with the scheme. But equally too can extend to helping out immediate family members.

**Josh:** Have you got any examples of what that might look like?

**Darren:** Sure. Recently the team was involved with helping a family as such, it was actually the husband or the father that had had the direct contact with the scheme, but naturally had some young kids in the family and they were I guess facing some issues with being able to start the school year with some textbooks and uniforms and just the fundamentals really for kids going to school. So one of the ReCONNECT Advisors were actually able to help the family make contact with a community organisation that helps families with some of those basics in terms of getting the kids ready to start school.

**Josh:** So we talked about those four areas. Centrelink, financial counselling, accommodation services and career services. Can we unpack that a bit more? So what type of services do you help a participant engage with through ReCONNECT services.

**Darren:** Sure. So if we if we look at Centrelink for argument's sake Josh, we typically help people just start their Centrelink application process. So some of our clients may have never been into Centrelink or even a large government organisation before so they perhaps find the whole process a little bit intimidating. So we can act as a support person to go along with them and just initiate that claim. And understandably, Centrelink will want to speak to the person themselves. So we're not there to speak on behalf of the person or act as an advocate but more or less just to help guide them through that process and sort of just provide a support essentially and help them get started with their Centrelink applications so that they can engage with that with that that process if you like which is obviously completely different to work injury insurance scheme and get started.

**Josh:** Because those things can be pretty complicated and confusing. If you've never had anything to do with something like Centrelink in the past.

**Darren:** It can be a little bit overwhelming. Often people have got a lot of things on their mind at that point of time and they need to start with obviously financial concerns are a big thing and it's good to have some source of income coming through. So there's usually a lot going on their mind when they're attempting to access Centrelink. So some people will need that support. Other clients are fine with it, they're quite okay with going into Centrelink and initiating that and that's fine. They don't have to have us to go into Centrelink but if people feel as though they just one that additional bit of support we can go along with them with a visit to Centrelink and help them with their process.

**Josh:** So it sounds a bit... It's very case by case basis that's what I'm picking up. It's something that's tailored to the individual and your approach, would I guess, is it fair to say you adjust that approach depending on what that individual needs?

**Darren:** Absolutely, you've hit the nail on the head. It's very much client driven so people are under no obligation to accept any of the suggestions that a ReCONNECT Advisor might make, and equally too we have a chat to the clients about what the next steps might be for them what they want to do and not do. And we very much take the lead from the clients themselves. And you're quite right, it's very much different depending on who you're talking to.

**Josh:** So what would a typical day look like for you as a ReCONNECT Advisor? I'm guessing it's probably not completely desk based. You get the opportunity to go out on the road, meet with people. Can you talk me through what a typical day might look like?

**Darren:** Absolutely. So I guess leading on from that whole client centred approach. Typically we usually receive most of our referrals or speak to people in the first instance over the phone and that's where we introduce the service and give them an idea of what it's about, sort of similar to what we're doing right now. And then we'll have a discussion with the client around whether they want to meet up face to face. Typically that's in a public place, say a public library, and then we can have further conversations with them about whatever they've identified, the support that they want to be able to pursue. So it's a mix of both. You know you can do both obviously a bit of telephone based support mixed in with face to face. It's very much something that's decided upon between the client and the ReCONNECT Advisor themselves.

**Josh:** Do I need to prepare anything? I know for example if I was to try and get when I'm lodging a work injury claim there's lots of information that I need to submit and you know forms I need to fill out etcetera. With ReCONNECT do I need to pre-prepare anything prior to contacting you guys, or how does that work?

**Darren:** Not necessarily Josh. It's helpful if people can have a bit of a think about what the next steps might be for them given their current situation in life. But it's not something they absolutely have to do before they make contact with ReCONNECT. And in fact some of the challenges, and our clients have mentioned this in the past, some of the challenges are just being aware of what some of those support services are in the community.

**Josh:** Yeah definitely.

**Darren:** And that that's certainly where we can help we can sort of say look have you thought of X, Y and Z. Look, it's great if they have and I'd encourage people to have a little bit of a think about what sort of support they might need. But equally it's not a barrier to contacting ReCONNECT if you haven't done so.

**Josh:** So what don't you do, what isn't ReCONNECT, If I can frame it that way? Is there stuff that is there areas or services that you don't engage with? What would be an example of something where ReCONNECT, I suppose, draws the line and says that's not quite us it's not quite what we do.

**Darren:** So it's definitely not an advocacy service. So if we just touch back on that example at Centrelink we can't speak on behalf of the client. We can't be a signatory or representative on behalf of the client. And it's very much a support service. And equally we're not a job placement service as well. So to use that previous example Josh around the career support services, we can help out with the resume preparation and suggest jobs, job search strategies, etc. but we're not job placement as such. So the expectation Josh is that people... we're a guide if you like, but clients really still need to do the legwork themselves.

**Josh:** Fantastic. So how do people get started? If this was a service that I think, you know what, absolutely. It's something that I think I need to connect in with. It sounds like there are some potential services that ReCONNECT can help me connect with and get in touch with. If I was interested how does one get involved with ReCONNECT?

**Darren:** There's several ways of getting in contact with us Josh. If clients want to they can certainly contact us directly. They can talk to their case manager about us and perhaps ask for a referral through their case manager to ReCONNECT. Equally too, if they want to talk to their doctor or physio or some other health provider or even a return to work service provider. They can have a chat to them and ask for them to make a referral to ReCONNECT. But as I said at the end of the day if they just want to ring us and have a chat to us about their situation and what they're interested in linking up within the community we can certainly have a chat to them over phone there.

**Josh:** What was the phone number?

**Darren:** The direct phone number for the ReCONNECT team is 8238 5959. Or alternatively if people would like to email us they can email us at reconnect@rtwsa.com.

**Josh:** Look that all sounds great Darren. Thanks for coming in today. I know I for one certainly didn't realise the breadth of services that were offered with ReCONNECT. I think it's great to know that there are options out there for individuals who may be looking for that additional support after their claim and income support has come to a close. So if you are interested in learning more out there you can call that number. That number again is 8238 5959 or that email address was reconnect@rtwsa.com. Thanks for listening. This has been Josh and Darren for ReturnToWorkSA. Till next time. Thank you very much.