

Greetings all. Today's Bulletin is about **returning to work after an injury**.

This can be tough, not just physically but also emotionally and mentally.

How we handle this transition affects not just the person returning, but the whole team's morale.

A supportive and thoughtful approach can make the individual feel valued and help the team work well together during the reintegration process.

Mental Health Considerations

For someone coming back to work, there may be feelings of relief and joy but for others, the stigma and anxiety about their absence and return can feel really awful.

There's often an unspoken pressure to come back at full capacity, and some might worry about being seen as weak or unreliable. These feelings can create a lot of stress and anxiety, which can slow down recovery.

By having open conversations about mental health and fostering a culture of empathy and support, workplaces can really help both the individual and the teams they are returning to.

Managers and colleagues can show understanding and patience, so the returning worker doesn't feel like a burden. Simple gestures, like checking in with genuine concern, offering encouragement, and being mindful of workload, can make all the difference.

Access to mental health resources, like counselling services or an employee assistance program, further shows your company's commitment to its people.

Clear and open communication is also key.

Regular check-ins with managers or return-to-work coordinators allow for early identification of any concerns and provide an opportunity to make necessary adjustments. Ensuring that the worker feels heard and supported throughout this process contributes to a more positive and less stressful transition.

Importantly, the perception of fairness plays a role in mental health outcomes. If a returning worker feels they are treated fairly and with respect during the claims process and reintegration, they are more likely to experience positive mental health benefits.

Workers who feel valued and supported are far more likely to re-engage with their role in a meaningful way.

Morale Considerations

The impact of an injury and returning to work can be life-altering, and our first priority should be the individual.

A sense of belonging is one of the key motivators for employees. Returning to work provides structure, purpose, and social connection, all of which are crucial for our well-being.

But don't forget, the return-to-work process also affects team morale.

When done well, reintegration can boost both individual and team morale.

Team dynamics also need to be carefully managed. If colleagues are unaware of any necessary role adjustments, misunderstandings or frustrations may arise.

If someone on the team was present during the incident or if their actions contributed to the incident, it's a good idea to involve a workplace psychologist to give everyone a chance to talk through what happened and what they are concerned about.

Open and transparent communication helps set clear expectations and grows a culture of collaboration.

Encouraging team members to be supportive and patient during this transition can strengthen workplace relationships and prevent any resentment from building.

But it's hypocritical to expect others to do it, if we are not doing it ourselves.

Genuinely recognising and acknowledging the progress that the returning worker has made in their recovery can be incredibly affirming.

A simple "welcome back" or appreciation for their resilience can boost confidence and reinforce that they are a valued member of the team.

This recognition doesn't have to be a big song and dance, it can be as simple as a team lunch or a few kind words in a meeting.

Avoiding isolation is also crucial. It can be easy for a returning worker to feel disconnected, especially if they've been away for an extended period.

Catching them up on what has been happening and giving them some leeway for workplace chats and catch-ups can make a huge difference.



CICA – Vic / Tas Branch Crane Safety Bulletin #360 April 2025



Ultimately, leadership plays a crucial role in the success of a return-to-work transition. If managers set a positive and inclusive tone, it sends a clear message that employee well-being is a priority.

Put yourself in their shoes.

A workplace that truly cares for its people will not only see improved individual outcomes but will also cultivate a culture of loyalty, respect, and teamwork.

Everyone will be watching, and if employees feel supported, valued, and empowered to contribute to their fullest potential, this benefits not only the individual but also the entire workplace, resulting in a healthier and more cohesive team dynamic.

We never know what may happen in life, so the tone and culture we set is one we may need to rely on someday.

CICA Members now have access to a [confidential Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) to support their own and their employees well-being.

CICA has engaged the services of Telus Health to support you, our valued member and those working for you, through life's ups and downs.

Why Telus Health EAP and wellness solution?

Telus Health is a confidential program available to all CICA Members and their employees, not just those employed on construction sites.

Telus Health offer support for any life challenge at any stage. Mental and physical health and wellbeing needs are best addressed before they become a problem, but whether it be preventative measures or help at a point of crisis, Telus Health is available. 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

If you would like to subscribe to these safety bulletins please send an email [here](#).

To become a CICA Member, click [here](#).

Stay Safe - CICA