

CASE STUDY OUTLINE - Peer Employment Work

BACKGROUND

Outcare's reintegration services help all Australians to fully engage with society in a positive, contributing manner. They assist anyone over 12 years of age and have programs dedicated to meet the needs of Indigenous Australians. They offer support to help people regain direction and maintain positive social engagement. These services include:

- Aboriginal Throughcare - In the final 3 months of their sentence, Aboriginal prisoners can work with the Outcare team through the Aboriginal Throughcare program. The program supports prisoners as they transition out of custody. It begins 3 months before release and continues for 12 months post release. Clients are provided with essential support and can be referred to a range of services during the transition period where patterns of behaviour are identified and addressed. Case managers act as advocates to support and provide coaching to remove barriers to successful engagement with services in the community. In addition, the program focuses on building stronger relationships with family, culture and community.
- Time to Work Program - This program provides in-prison employment support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The service is designed to assist participants to prepare for employment upon their release.

IDENTIFYING PEER WORK EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The organisation had a peer support framework in place and currently employed peer support workers, however they were not aware of available wage subsidies.

The organisation was currently looking to hire a peer support worker who had mental health lived experience journey who also had experience in Case Management

The project provided information on various wage subsidies and offered help in identifying accessing and organising the appropriate subsidies.

The organisation was aware of the benefits of employing peer workers for clients as well as peer workers themselves. Specifically cited were:

- Improved retention of client base particularly those with mental health & homelessness issues ensuing from the empathy and understanding provided by peer workers with similar lived experience
- Improved sense of hope, empowerment and social inclusion for those accessing services
- Greater staff awareness of mental health & Homelessness issues leading to improved organisational culture
- Improved sense of confidence and inclusion for peer support worker within society through their training paid employment and improved life opportunities
- Creating new career pathways for people with lived experience

ENABLERS:

- The organisation already had framework in place to employ peer workers
- The organisation was currently wanting to employ peer workers
- The organisation was eligible for Government wage subsidies
- The organisation was looking to hire peer support workers with lived experience in a Case Management Peer role

BARRIERS:

ESTABLISHING PEER WORK POSITIONS

Project assisted the organisation with the creation of a peer worker role in Aboriginal Thru-care program as a Case Worker and the following selection criteria for the role was created

- Lived experience on a mental health journey and be in recovery
- Case Worker experience
- The capacity to show empathy through their own lived experience
- Experience liaising with key stake holders and customer service experience
- Assisting pre-release prisoners navigate exiting the prison system

ENABLERS:

- The project and organisation were able to work collaboratively to create job requirements for the peer support administration role.
- The organisation was eligible for Government wage incentives

BARRIERS:

RECRUITMENT OF PEER WORKER/S

Project assisted with liaising with 1 disability job networks to source a Peer Support Worker 2 people were identified and 2 fit the selection criteria and all had variable wage incentives attached to them.

The Project worked with and assisted human resources, organisational manager and disability job network to secure candidates and arrange job interviews.

Interviews took place and a candidate with lived experience on mental health journey with administration experience was successful for the role who matched selection criteria and had a \$1,500 wage subsidy attached.

Candidate started fulltime employment the following week in the peer-based case worker role assisting pre-release prisoners in preparation for release from prison.

ENABLERS:

- Project was successful in assisting organisation in procuring a suitable candidate for the peer support role with experience in administration and with a lived experience journey in mental health.
- Project was successful in liaising with key stake holders in the recruitment process
- Project was successful in assisting linking in of a job network provider and creation of wage incentives.
- Project was successful in creating a fulltime Peer Support Worker role

RETENTION AND WORKPLACE SUPPORT

The project assisted with daily contact with the employer offering any assistance that may be required to make the transition easier.

The organisation reported to Project that new employee was extremely proficient in her work ethic reliable conscientious and on time and need little or no direction or guidance to perform her duty's.

The new Peer Worker had training in her new role and commenced training in the I-induct online portal.

ENABLERS:

- New Peer Worker was proficient and knowledgeable of her new role and needed little or no guidance.
- Improved sense of self and self-esteem for Peer worker
- Improved financial situation for peer worker
- Improved retention of clients engaging in the organisations pre release prison program due to peer support workers input and sharing lived experience journey.

BARRIERS: None