



**Australian Government**

**CRS Australia**

# Sharing knowledge on the road to employment

## Vocational rehabilitation strategies for mature aged men

**Presented by Donna Currie, Bachelor of Social Work  
CRS Australia Rural and Remote Network of Excellence**

Rehabilitation ■  
Employment ■  
Independence ■

Employment solutions for people with an injury, disability or health condition

- assessment of individual needs and abilities
- tailored rehabilitation programs
- employment assistance
- workplace safety and design

# CRS Australia

***CRS Australia is a national network of more than 175 offices and is part of the Australian Government Department of Human Services.***

***CRS Australia is the largest provider of vocational rehabilitation services in Australia assisting people with a disability, injury or health condition to work independently in the open labour market.***

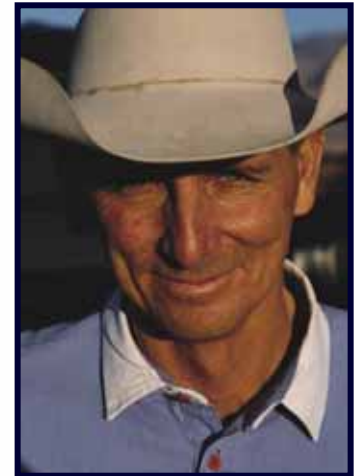


# Networks of Excellence (NoE)

- Unique to CRS Australia
- Community of practice model
- Made up of specially selected practitioners who cross organisational boundaries
- Aim to pursue excellence in vocational rehabilitation
- Eight virtual teams
- Rural and Remote NoE aims to promote and support quality practice in rural and remote areas

# The study: mature aged men

- Mature aged men in rural and remote areas of Australia
- High proportion of mature aged men referred to vocational rehabilitation in rural and remote areas
- Barriers mean difficulty achieving outcomes:
  - low education levels
  - poor literacy
  - limited interests in retraining
  - few transferable skills.



# The aims

1. Identify specific barriers for mature aged men with a disability in gaining and maintaining employment.
2. Gain greater awareness of effective vocational rehabilitation strategies.
3. Determine if target group experience more difficulty keeping a job.



# Literature review

- International literature review (Australia, UK and USA)
- Some issues facing target group included:
  - geographical remoteness and low population density
  - localised skill mismatches
  - low skilled, casual (often seasonal) work
  - limited training options
- Key principles to gain employment outcomes
  - holistic approach to their needs and social/personal resources
  - education of older workers
  - personal networks and self-employment
  - strong service infrastructure

# Methods

- Questionnaire
  - Interviews with rural and remote rehabilitation consultants
  - 23 completed questionnaires addressing range of issues
- File review
  - Review of CRS Australia files within target group
  - 30 randomly selected job seeker files with recorded durable outcome for males aged 45 years +
  - Files reviewed using checklist



# Findings: general

- Average 9½ month vocational rehabilitation program lead to successful durable outcome (13 weeks at time of research)
- Back injury primary disability (30%)
- Employment outcomes:
  - Transport industry (17%)
  - Self-employment (13%)
  - Working more than 30 hours/week (46%)



# Findings: improvement strategies

- Job seeker strengths such as:
  - motivation to work
  - transferable skills
- Address barriers such as:
  - lack of job opportunities
  - minimal qualifications and formal training
- Improvement strategies such as:
  - vocational counselling
  - job seeking training
  - rapport building and increasing motivation
  - developing support networks



# Finding: useful resources

- CRS Australia groups, for example Job Club
- CRSNet: CRS Australia intranet resource
- Career Planning
- Community Health Services
- Physiotherapists, psychologists, dieticians, counsellors, GPs
- Registered training organisations
- Community support organisations



CRSNet

# Discussion

- Job seeker moderately difficult to work with
- Age differentiation impacts on relationship building
- Education level, computer literacy, transferable skills and access to reliable transport can cause concerns



# Project conclusions

- Vocational rehabilitation for mature age men in rural and remote areas remains a challenge
- Multiple barriers do exist
- Strategies identified to help overcome barriers include:
  - rapport building
  - increasing job seeker motivation
  - developing support networks
  - empowering job seekers
  - 'thinking outside the square' in terms of possible employment placements

# Thank you

[www.crsaustralia.gov.au](http://www.crsaustralia.gov.au)

