

Private Sector Pathways (PSP) Program

Improving Employment Pathways for Queenslanders with Traumatic Brain Injury

Challenge Statement

This Private Sector Pathways (PSP) challenge seeks innovative Queensland based organisations with practical, scalable solutions to help Queenslanders with an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) successfully reintegrate into the workforce to achieve meaningful independence.

Employment is widely recognised as a key contributor to recovery, wellbeing, identity and social participation post-injury. For individuals who have experienced an ABI/TBI, meaningful employment can play a critical role in rebuilding confidence, restoring routine and enabling long-term independence.

However, for many Queenslanders, the pathways back into the workforce following a brain injury remains complex, fragmented and difficult to navigate. This challenge presents an opportunity to develop innovative, connected solutions that better support individuals, employers and systems to achieve sustainable, person-centred employment outcomes.

This challenge seeks innovative, scalable solutions that improve employment pathways for Queenslanders with an ABI/TBI. Proposals must be feasible to implement, practical to maintain and capable of delivering long-term outcomes that support recovery, participation and meaningful independence.

Challenge Owner

This challenge is led by the National Injury Insurance Scheme, Queensland (NIISQ), in partnership with the Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI), Innovation Division.

NIISQ is a Queensland Government agency that operates a no-fault scheme, providing necessary and reasonable treatment, care and support to eligible people who have sustained serious personal injuries as a result of a motor vehicle accident.

Under the NIISQ Act, supports may include:

- medical or pharmacological treatment;
- Dental treatment;
- Rehabilitation;
- Ambulance transportation;
- Respite care;
- Attendant care and support services;
- Respite care;
- Aids and appliances, other than ordinary personal or household items;
- Educational or vocational training;
- Home or transport modification



Figure 1: NIISQ Strategic Plan 2022-2026 (Revised 2025) [NIISQ-2025-strategic-planning-design-a3-poster.pdf](#)

While NIISQ's primary role is to fund treatment, care and support, the Scheme has a strong interest in approaches that build participant capability and support long-term outcomes. Enabling access to employment pathways aligns with NIISQ's broader objective of maximising independence, community participation and quality of life for participants.

Challenge Context

The Current Situation

Evidence from research in Queensland and across Australia indicates that people with ABI/TBI experience lower workforce participation rates compared to the general population, even when they have the capacity and desire to work. National data demonstrates that employment outcomes for people with ABI/TBI are lower than the overall population and in many cases, lower than for other disability cohorts, reflecting persistent barriers to workforce participation.

Returning to work after ABI/TBI is often complex and non-linear. Outcomes are influenced by ongoing cognitive, behavioural and psychosocial challenges, such as difficulties with memory, attention, planning and fatigue, that may be less visible or frequently misunderstood in traditional workplace settings.

Barriers to workforce participation extend beyond individual factors to systemic and structural challenges within the broader support landscape. Workforce pathways for people with ABI/TBI are frequently fragmented and difficult to navigate spanning healthcare, rehabilitation, disability and employment systems. Access to vocational rehabilitation and employment supports is inconsistent and employers can often lack the knowledge, confidence, or practical tools to recruit, retain and support workers with cognitive disability. These barriers are further compounded for individuals living in regional and remote areas of Queensland, where access to essential services, vocational supports and employment opportunities may be more limited.

Research specifically examining return to work experiences of Queenslanders with ABI/TBI highlights inconsistent access to vocational rehabilitation services, fragmented employment pathways and variability in employer capability to support workers with cognitive differences. Together, this evidence indicates that the current pathway to employment for Queenslanders experiencing ABI/TBI is misaligned with the challenges they face, limiting the ability of many individuals to secure, sustain and progress in meaningful work.

Challenge Imperative

To improve employment outcomes for Queenslanders with ABI/TBI, solutions must address one or preferably both sides of the employment equation, supporting individuals to navigate pathways to work while also enabling employers to provide inclusive and sustainable opportunities. Currently there is no single, connected pathway. Instead, individuals must navigate multiple services, systems and decision points, often without clear guidance or continuity. At the same time, employers face practical challenges in understanding how to:

- Identify suitable candidates
- Provide appropriate workplace adjustments
- Support employees with cognitive or behavioural needs over time.

NIISQ invites forward-thinking, implementable solutions that can deliver measurable improvements in the employment outcomes for Queenslanders with ABI/TBI, while remaining practical to operate over the long term. Solutions may also be suitable for use by NIISQ staff (to support planning, linkage and coordination of employment pathways).

The Intended Objectives/Outcomes

The objective of this challenge is to identify and implement solutions that improve employment pathways for Queenslanders with ABI/TBI, enabling them to successfully return to the workforce and support meaningful independence.

Solutions may address one, multiple, or non-listed imperatives identified below.

Imperative	Short Summary
Accessibility and usability	Solutions must be easy to use, flexible and adaptable, and designed with the cognitive and functional needs of people with ABI/TBI in mind.
Cost Effectiveness and Scalability	Solutions should be affordable, scalable and capable of being implemented effectively across NISQ's participant base without significantly increasing long-term costs for NISQ.
Digital Enablement	A potential solution may involve creating a digital experience that brings together connections, information or opportunities relevant to both prospective employees and NISQ participants. Solutions should prioritise ease of use and accessibility, while remaining flexible enough to accommodate diverse users.
Employer Capability	Solutions should build employer confidence and capability to recruit, support and retain individuals with ABI/TBI.
Collaborative Design	Solutions should be informed by people with lived experience, NISQ staff, employers and support providers to ensure relevance and practicality. The perspectives of these stakeholders should be reflected in the solution to ensure it can be easily operated and deliver the desired outcomes for these stakeholder groups.
Sustainability of Employment	Solutions should prioritise long-term, meaningful employment outcomes rather than short term placements.

The Stakeholders Involved

Improving employment pathways and meaningful independence for Queenslanders with ABI/TBI requires collaboration and input from a broad range of stakeholders, as outlined below. Noting each group brings valuable perspectives, in creating enhanced and sustainable long-term outcomes.

Primary Stakeholders

- **Queenslanders with ABI/TBI:** Participants are central to improving employment pathways, as they bring lived experience of the cognitive, physical, and psychosocial impacts of brain injury. Their insights are critical to designing solutions that are practical, accessible, and capable of supporting sustainable workforce participation.
- **NISQ Support Staff:** NISQ support staff play a key role in planning for and coordinating care, rehabilitation, and capacity-building supports that underpin workforce re-entry. Their

involvement helps ensure employment-focused solutions align with participant needs, existing plans, and the day-to-day operation of the scheme.

- **Prospective Employers:** Employers are essential partners in creating meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for people with ABI/TBI. Building employer capability, confidence, and understanding is critical to enabling inclusive workplaces, appropriate adjustments, and long-term employment success.

Key Enablers

- **The Support Network of Queenslanders with ABI/TBI:** Family members and informal supporters often play a significant role in recovery, motivation, and day-to-day functioning following brain injury. Their involvement can help reinforce employment goals, support transitions back to work, and identify practical barriers or enablers outside the workplace.
- **Allied Health Providers:** Allied health providers support participants to build and maintain the cognitive, physical, and psychosocial capacity required for employment. Their expertise helps inform job readiness, workplace adjustments, and ongoing supports that enable sustained workforce participation.

Strategic and Supporting Stakeholders

- **QLD Government:** The Queensland Government provides the policy, funding, and regulatory environment that shapes disability support, recovery, and employment systems. Government leadership is critical to enabling cross-sector collaboration and scaling successful solutions across Queensland.
- **CTP Insurers:** CTP insurers play an important role in funding early rehabilitation and recovery pathways following motor vehicle accidents. Alignment between insurers, NIISQ, and employment-focused initiatives can support smoother transitions from recovery into longer-term participation and work.
- **Brain Institute Australia:** Brain injury research organisations contribute evidence, innovation, and best-practice insights into recovery, rehabilitation, and participation outcomes. Their involvement helps ensure solutions are informed by current research and grounded in an understanding of brain injury impacts.

Challenge Solution

Outcomes Desired

The desired outcome is the delivery of an innovative, accessible and scalable solution that improves employment outcomes for Queenslanders with ABI/TBI.

Solution Outcomes	Considerations
Technical and/or Regulatory Considerations	The solution must: • Be easy to use and accessible for individuals with ABI/TBI. • Be cost-effective to implement and maintain. • Be available at low or no cost to users. • Be practical to operate with existing systems. The solution should: • Integrate with existing services and supports where possible. • Be adaptable to changing user needs. • Support continuous improvement over time.
Sustainability and Implementation	The solution must: • Be viable for use by small and large businesses. • Deliver clear, achievable outcomes without reliance on complex or resource intensive models. The solution should: • Improve understanding of ABI/TBI within workplaces. • Support long-term behavioural and systemic change. • Enable scalable impact across Queensland.
Design Considerations	The solution must: • Be simple, intuitive and user-centred. • Be adaptable to individual capabilities and needs. The solution should: • Provide value to both participants and employers. • Enable better communication and ongoing support. • Contribute to more inclusive and sustainable employment practices.

This challenge is not only about improving access to jobs. It is about enabling Queenslanders with ABI/TBI to participate in the workforce in a way that is sustainable, meaningful, and aligned with their capabilities, supporting long-term recovery and independence.

How to apply

Applications can be submitted via the [link](#) and should include the following:

- A clear description of the solution, including its key features, assumptions, benefits and value proposition.
- A roadmap for implementation, including timelines, resources and milestones.
- A plan for measuring the impact and success of the solution, including metrics and evaluation criteria.
- A budget that outlines the financial requirements for implementing and maintaining the solution.
- A summary of the team's qualifications and experience, including relevant skills and expertise.

Selection Process

As part of the assessment process, shortlisted applicants will be notified and invited to a Solution Presentation Day mid-late June 2026. This will be an opportunity for you to present your proposed solution to the Challenge assessment panel. Presentations are expected to be up to 20 minutes long, with time afterwards for Q&A. Full details will be provided in due course.

Successful Applicant(s)

The winning proposal(s) will be selected based on its innovation, feasibility, impact and alignment with the challenge objectives. The successful applicant will receive grant funding of up to \$100,000 (excluding GST) through NIISQ and the DETSI Innovation Division's initiative to develop and pilot their proposed solution for up to 6-8 months alongside NIISQ staff.

Project Duration

The duration of the project is estimated to be up to 6-8 months. If a suitable solution to the challenge is found, project commencement is most likely to start in August 2026.

More information

The DETSI Innovation [Private Sector Pathways \(PSP\)](#) program aims to solve corporate challenges with solutions generated by proven innovative Queensland small to medium enterprises and scaleups. For more information about the PSP Challenge, contact DETSI Innovation Private Sector Partnerships team at partnerships2@detsi.qld.gov.au.

Further information about DETSI strategies can be found at:

- [DETSI Strategic Plan 2023-27](#)

Join us in this endeavour to improve employment outcomes for Queenslanders with ABI/TBI, supporting their meaningful independence through successful and sustainable workforce participation.

Further information can be found at:

- [About NIISQ - National Injury Insurance Scheme, Queensland](#)
- [NIISQ-2025-strategic-planning-design-a3-poster.pdf](#)
- [Traumatic brain injury - Queensland Trauma Education](#)