**Transcript: The role of a Rehabilitation Counsellor**

Core issues discussed:

* Major role of a Rehabilitation Counsellor
* What does the counselling role entail

**Paul:** Now to the panel generally – how would you define the role of a Rehabilitation Counsellor? To have heard little bits and pieces about what people do and that’s great, but if you had to define it in maybe a few sentences?

**Michael:** Rehabilitation Counsellors are a specific Allied health profession who work within a counselling and case management framework. So, basically that’s how we define it. But that can mean a lot of things. The important part of that is that – it’s a profession, and the idea is that we can assist people that are injured or disabled, who are socially disadvantaged – to participate as maximally as they can in life and in the community. So that’s the underpinning principal behind what we do, but the form that that takes and how people do that and depending on the jurisdiction whether its *WorkCover*, transport accident, Commonwealth vs State or whether it’s a private setting or a rehabilitation hospital that can be done in different ways. But I guess the underlying principal is the restoration to the community and as full participants by the injured or disabled or health affected individual.

**Paul:** It’s about people reaching their full potential.

**Michael:** Exactly.

**Paul:** Thanks Michael. Anyone else want to say anything else about how we define…

**Greg:** I think it’s important to remember full potential means that 80 percent of the community needs paid work. People lost that message in the 1960’s and people concentrated on adjustment. Adjustment is not enough. Because, without work, people develop chronic pain problems, somatically pre-occupied, relationship breakdowns, depressed affect, popping pills so the highest force of participation is labour force participation. So everyone is pushing for *Return to Work*. They are a small group who mainly psychiatric participants who cannot handle responsible jobs. So you have to be very thoughtful about that.

**Paul:** So that’s the main thing - getting people back to work and they will be operating effectively.

**Greg:** Definitely.

**Janette:** I think the other aspect, the really important aspect is around the persons own goals for themselves. Even if you take something like Return to health and we don’t know what the person’s health was prior to injury and an idealised view of what a Return to Health might look like might not be realistic for that person. So really, at the outset it’s around working with the person as an individual as oppose to the collective. So that is the other aspect to rehabilitation counselling that differentiates the work that we do.

**Paul:** Janette, would that be the counselling role, that one on one with the person to get an understanding of their perspective.

**Janette:** Absolutely. The first thing as a practitioner that you do, is sit down with the person on a very personal level about broad ranging topics to understand who they are and where they have been and what’s important to them in their life and their goals and aspirations are for the future. Then, understand the context within which you are working with them to really come to a plan as to how to maximise their recovery and *Return to Work* or *Return to Community* or resuming the life goals or the life activities that are important to them