



Try, Test and Learn Fund

Rewire the Brain

Using insights from the Priority Investment Approach, the \$96.1 million Try, Test and Learn Fund is trialling new and innovative approaches to assist groups of people at risk of long-term welfare dependence.

The Try, Test and Learn Fund will help achieve the objectives of welfare reform—that is, to develop a modern welfare system that increases the capacity of individuals, reduces the risk of welfare dependency and maintains a strong welfare safety net.

What does the evidence tell us?

- 22 per cent of all current 17-19 year olds receiving student payments are expected to be on income support in 10 years.
- From 2003 to 2012, there were 7,160 vocational or university students who started receiving a student payment aged 17 to 19; then experienced more than 12 months on unemployment payments; and were receiving unemployment payments in 2015-16. On average, all of these former young students who transitioned directly to unemployment payments are expected to receive income support in 33 years of their future lifetimes.
- If nothing changes for these former young students, 39 per cent will be receiving income support payments in 10 years, and 30 per cent will be receiving income support payments in 20 years.

What is *Rewire the Brain*?

Face-to-face and computer-based training will assist participants improve their cognitive functioning and social and emotional skills. This includes improvements to their memory, the processing speed of their brains, their social interaction and resilience, and general life skills.

Students will also be linked to external help to ensure they learn specific skills required by employers that will enable them to gain long-term employment.

What are we trying to achieve?

Increased attendance and reduced drop-out rates amongst participants, by equipping them with the skills to complete their studies. The goal is to improve lives through improving students' employability.

Fast facts

- **Priority group:** Young students
- **Recipient numbers:** 240
- **Locations:** South-West/Western Sydney, and South East Brisbane
- **Trial period:** 18 months
- **Total funding:** \$2 million
- **Co-designers/service providers:** Pathways to Resilience Trust and Stronger Brains
- **Potential future saving:** The purpose of these initiatives is to test whether an intervention works to reduce long-term reliance on welfare. It is not possible to predict success rates in advance—this is the purpose of testing new approaches. If 27 per cent of participants (65) move off welfare, the savings to the welfare system are likely to outweigh the costs

How is this initiative new and innovative?

This initiative is the first of its kind in Australian social policy and is based on the relatively new understanding that like a muscle, the brain can be trained and improved.

How will this initiative be evaluated?

This initiative is being tracked using a range of evaluation methods, such as surveys, participant interviews and actuarial analysis.