



# Try, Test and Learn Fund

## Initiative: *Support to Skills*

Location: New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory

## What are we trying to achieve?

To increase apprenticeship completion rates and create a skilled, resilient young workforce positioned for financial independence through enhancing the mental wellbeing of apprentices employed by small businesses.

## What is Support to Skills?

Young apprentices and small business owners will be supported to address barriers to apprenticeship completion caused by the impact of mental health issues in the workplace.

Young apprentices, aged 16 to 25 years and experiencing mild to moderate anxiety, depression or other symptoms, will receive an evidence-based intervention — Beyond Blues' *NewAccess* program. Trained coaches will provide six free sessions of low-intensity cognitive behavioural therapy via video, telephone or face-to-face. Participants needing more support can be referred to other services, such as headspace.

Two hundred small businesses hosting young apprentices will also be supported to provide a mentally healthy workplace. Support to Skills staff will work with them to identify psychological risks in the workplace and provide support, including Mental Health First Aid training.

## What does the evidence tell us?

- Young unemployed people face a variety of barriers to further education and employment. Data from the National Centre for Vocational Educational Research (2018) shows that 47 per cent of all apprentices who commenced in 2013 did not complete their training, 29 per cent withdrew within the first year, and small businesses tend to have lower apprenticeship completion rates.
- If nothing changes, 42 per cent of 16-21 year olds currently receiving Youth Allowance (other) or Disability Support Pension with mental health as the primary condition will be receiving income support payments in 10 years, and 33 per cent will be receiving income support payments in 20 years.

## How is this initiative new and innovative?

The project will test whether early intervention therapy, made possible by a flexible service delivery that uses phone and video technology, can improve employment and training outcomes. Support to Skills will also test the effectiveness of a mental health service that engages both individuals and workplaces, rather than individuals alone.

Using insights from the Priority Investment Approach, the \$96.1 million Try, Test and Learn Fund is gathering evidence on new or innovative approaches to addressing barriers to work.

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.

## Fast facts

**Priority group:** At-risk young people

**Participant numbers:** 1,000

**Locations:** Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo and Canberra

**Trial period:** 17 months

**Total funding:** \$1.92 million

**Service provider:** Marathon Health

**Potential future saving:** If around five per cent of participants are prevented from moving onto income support because of this project, the savings to the welfare system are likely to outweigh the costs of the project.