

Work Well, Live Well

Mental Health and Meaningful Employment

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Agenda



- ✓ Who are ORS?
- ✓ Mental Health and Employment in Australia
- ✓ The Biopsychosocial Model for Mental Health
- ✓ Benefits of Employment for Mental Health
- ✓ Key considerations when providing support to Participants with Mental Health concerns
- ✓ What is ORS doing to collaborate with allied health supports?
- ✓ Questions?

Who are ORS?



ORS is a family owned and Australian operated organisation that has been transforming lives for over 30 years, since being founded in 1992. We are a national, multidisciplinary provider with 21 offices across NSW, VIC, WA and ACT, supporting over 20,000 Australians every year through more than 800 staff nationwide.

Our services span Positive Behaviour Support, Psychology, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Dietetics, Workplace Rehabilitation, and Employment Services, including **Inclusive Employment Australia (Specialist Mental Health Cohort)** and **NDIS Finding and Keeping a Job**. Alongside our NDIS and government-funded programs, we also provide private and Medicare-funded services, giving clients flexible access to support regardless of their funding pathway.

Mental Health and Employment in Australia



Mental health and employment in Australia



1 in 5

Australians experience a mental health challenge each year



1 in 2

Australians (around 45-50%) will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime, with anxiety and depression the most common forms



People who experience mental health challenges are less likely to be employed than other people with disability, and are more likely to experience discrimination and stigma.

Employment rates



26%

People with psychosocial disability

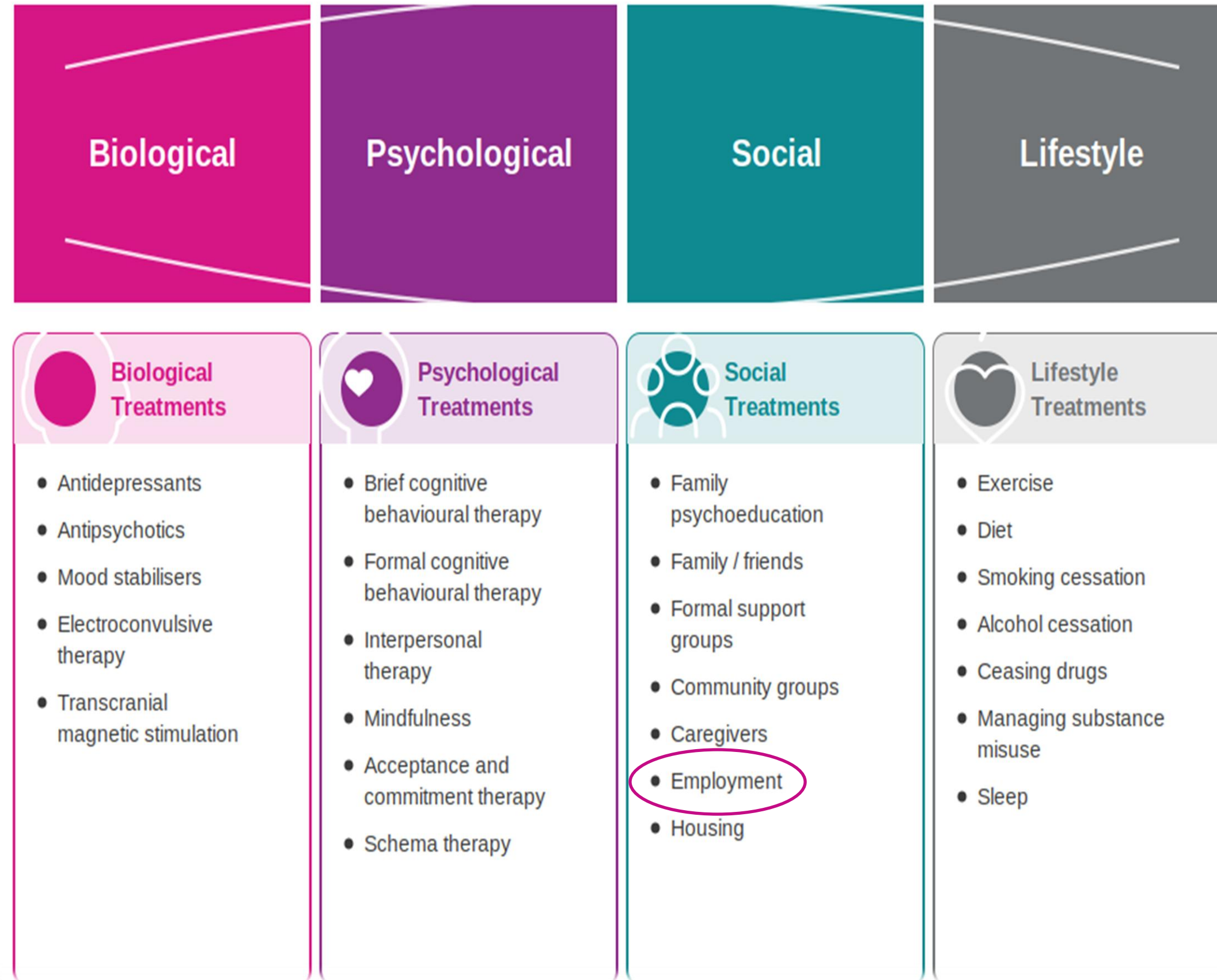
57%

People with other disabilities

80%

People without disabilities

The Biopsychosocial Lifestyle (BPSL) Model For Mental Health



Benefits of Employment for Mental Health



Meaningful employment
is associated with:



1

Increased self-esteem



2

Improved quality of
life



3

Increased community
participation



4

Fewer psychiatric
symptoms



5

Enhanced recovery for
people experiencing
complex mental health
challenges



6

Strengthened social
relationships and
community integration

Key Considerations when Providing Support to Participants with Mental Health Conditions



- Participants experiencing mental health challenges face several barriers to employment (e.g. discrimination and stigma), as well as a lack of coordinated supports to participate in employment.
- Symptoms can fluctuate, and factors like medication side effects, past negative work experiences, and gaps in work history can all affect job readiness and confidence.
- Mental health rarely exists in isolation - housing, finances and relationships often intersect with employment outcomes, so coordinated, joined-up support matters.
- Recovery isn't linear, and neither is the pathway to employment - the right job, at the right time, with the right support, matters more than speed.

Supporting People with Mental Health Concerns to Prepare for and Find Employment

1



Person-centred support

- Match jobs to skills, interests and goals.
- Involve the person in decisions about work readiness and job search plans.

2



Strengths-based approach

- Focus on strengths, abilities and capabilities.
- Build confidence by recognising what the person can do well.

3



Trauma-informed support

- Consider the impact of past trauma, including workplace trauma.
- Create a safe, respectful and predictable support environment.

4



Integrated support

- Coordinate employment services with mental health supports.
- Use a joined-up approach to improve employment outcomes.



Employment support is most effective when it is person-centred, strengths-based and trauma-informed.



What is ORS doing to collaborate with allied health supports?

What sets ORS apart is our ability to deliver truly integrated support.

As a multidisciplinary provider working across IEA, NDIS and Workplace Rehabilitation and Health, ORS connects participants directly with our own psychology, dietetics, occupational therapy and speech pathology teams - providing allied health input to address barriers to employment, funded either through the NDIS or Medicare.

- Medicare Better Access provides rebates for up to 10 individual psychology sessions per calendar year, bulk-billed (no gap) for IEA participants.
- A Medicare Chronic Condition Management Plan provides rebates for up to 5 individual sessions per year with a dietitian and/or occupational therapist.
- NDIS Capacity Building – Finding and Keeping a Job (as well as Improved Daily Living) provides funding for vocational, functional, cognitive/IQ and communication assessments, as well as on-the-job coaching and customised support, delivered by the same provider as a participant's IEA services.
- Referrals happen in-house, so allied health input can be coordinated directly with the participant's plan and goals in mind.



Medicare Better Access - Psychological Support



- **Who it's for:** Participants where anxiety, depression, trauma, low confidence or vocational uncertainty are getting in the way of finding or keeping a job.
- **How referral works:** Our IEA Specialists identify psychological barriers, then refers in-house to one of ORS's own psychologists - no waitlist.
- **What it covers:** Coping strategies for workplace stress, rebuilding confidence and self-worth, processing trauma that affects teamwork or feedback, and vocational counselling to clarify goals and direction.
- **Funding:** Medicare Better Access – up to 10 individual sessions per calendar year, bulk-billed (no gap) for IEA participants.
- **Why it matters:** Psychological support runs alongside, not instead of employment support, so progress in one area reinforces the other.

Mental Health and Psychological Barriers



1



Mental Health and Psychological Barriers



Depression and Anxiety: Treating symptoms that drain energy, cause absenteeism, or trigger job avoidance.



Trauma and PTSD: Processing past or current trauma that impairs teamwork, focus, or coping with feedback.



Addictions: Managing dependency on drugs, alcohol, or gambling that disrupts work stability.



Eating Disorders: Nutrition-related barriers to energy, concentration and wellbeing.



Medication Side Effects: Fatigue, concentration or mood changes linked to psychiatric medication.

2



Behavioural and Social Challenges



Anger Management: Developing emotional regulation to prevent destructive conflicts or job loss.



Interpersonal Difficulties: Improving communication and social skills for better workplace collaboration.



Coping and Stress: Building resilience to handle high-pressure tasks and daily work demands.

3



Cognitive and Motivational Issues



Low Self-Confidence: Rebuilding self-worth and reducing the fear of failure or workplace stigma.



Vocational Direction: Clarifying career motivation, decision-making, and goal-setting strategies.

Support, treatment and practical strategies can assist workplace participation.

Medicare Chronic Condition Management Plan - Dietetic Support



- **Who it's for:** Participants where nutrition, energy levels, disordered eating, or medication side effects are affecting their capacity to obtain or sustain employment.
- **How referral works:** IEA Specialist flag nutrition-related barriers and refers in-house to ORS's own dietitians – no waitlist.
- **What it covers:** Building regular eating routines around shift or work hours, improving energy and concentration, addressing disordered eating, and managing the nutritional impact of psychiatric medications.
- **Funding:** Medicare Chronic Condition Management Plan – up to 5 individual sessions per year, bulk-billed (no gap) for IEA participants.
- **Why it matters:** Stable nutrition supports the energy, focus and physical stamina needed to obtain and sustain a job long-term.

Mental Health and Nutritional Barriers



1



Eating Patterns and Access

-  **Eating Disorders:** Disordered eating patterns affecting energy and workplace wellbeing.
-  **Poor Meal Regularity:** Irregular meals around shift or work hours affecting focus and mood.
-  **Food Scarcity and Budgeting:** Limited access to regular, nutritious meals due to cost or planning barriers.

2



Energy and Physical Symptoms

-  **Low Energy:** Nutrition-related fatigue affecting stamina and concentration at work.
-  **GI Disorders (e.g. IBS):** Digestive symptoms disrupting comfort and attendance.
-  **Metabolic Syndrome:** Managing weight, blood sugar and related risk factors alongside work demands.

3



Medication and Comorbidities

-  **Managing Medication Side Effects:** Appetite, weight or energy changes linked to psychiatric medication.
-  **Comorbid Health Conditions:** Coordinating nutrition needs alongside other physical or mental health conditions.

Stable nutrition supports the energy, focus and stamina needed to sustain work.

Medicare Chronic Condition Management Plan - Occupational Therapy Support



- **Who it's for:** Participants whose day-to-day functioning - energy, routine, sensory tolerance, or task management is getting in the way of starting or sustaining employment.
- **How referral works:** IEA Specialist identify functional barriers and refers in-house to ORS's own occupational therapists – no waitlist.
- **What it covers:** Building sustainable daily routines, energy and fatigue management, functional capacity assessments for specific job tasks, and practical strategies or workplace modifications to support sensory or cognitive needs.
- **Funding:** Medicare Chronic Condition Management Plan – up to 5 individual sessions per year, bulk-billed (no gap) for IEA participants.
- **Why it matters:** Practical, functional support helps translate psychological and vocational progress into a job that a participant can physically and mentally sustain day-to-day.

Mental Health and Occupational Barriers



1



Physical and Energy Barriers



Fatigue and Low Energy: Persistent tiredness that limits stamina across a full workday.



Reduced Physical Stamina: Difficulty sustaining physically demanding tasks over a shift.



Poor Sleep-Wake Patterns: Disrupted sleep affecting alertness and reliability at work.

2



Routine and Cognitive Barriers



Disrupted Daily Routines: Struggling to build the structure needed for regular attendance.



Concentration and Cognitive Load: Difficulty focusing or managing multiple job demands at once.



Difficulty Starting Tasks: Trouble initiating or sequencing the steps in a task.

3



Sensory and Environmental Barriers



Sensory Sensitivity: Noise, lighting or textures that make a workspace hard to tolerate.



Workplace Environment Fit: Physical or sensory environment not matching functional needs.

Practical, functional strategies can help sustain workplace participation.

NDIS Finding and Keeping a Job



- **Who it's for:** Participants on the NDIS looking to build the capacity, skills and confidence they need to find and move into employment, particularly where vocational direction, functional capacity, cognitive profile, or communication needs are getting in the way.
- **How referral works:** IEA Specialists identify the need for further capacity building and refer in-house. If a participant isn't already engaged with IEA, they can be referred via orsgroup.com.au – no waitlist.
- **What it covers:** General capacity building and employment assistance, which can include vocational assessments to explore suitable career pathways, functional assessments of capacity for daily and work-related tasks, cognitive/IQ assessments to identify strengths and support needs, and communication assessments to support confident, effective workplace communication.
- **Funding:** NDIS Capacity Building – Finding and Keeping a Job, funded directly through the participant's NDIS plan.
- **Why it matters:** Building the right supports early means job matching, workplace adjustments, and ongoing assistance are grounded in a clear understanding of the participant's needs - reducing the risk of placements that don't stick.

NDIS Finding and Keeping a Job

1

Functional Assessments



Assesses a participant's capacity to perform daily tasks - including mobility, strength, movement and cognition - with recommendations to support work.

2

Vocational Assessments



Explores vocational options suited to a participant's interests, strengths and preferences, guiding the right career pathway forward.



Employment Assistance

3

Cognitive / IQ Assessments



Standardised testing of intellect, memory, problem-solving and processing speed to identify cognitive strengths and inform tailored support.

4

Communication Assessments



Evaluates language, speech, fluency and cognitive-linguistic skills relevant to communicating confidently with employers, colleagues and customers.

Employment assistance and capacity building, with assessments as needed.



Case Study- David



- **Background:** Workplace anxiety affected David's concentration, memory, task completion and confidence.
- **Employment history:** Regularly secured employment but struggled to sustain roles, increasing anxiety after each unsuccessful placement.
- **New role:** Commenced a TAFE customer service position on 9 February 2026.
- **Initial challenges:** Reported feeling excluded, overthinking workplace interactions, working slowly, making mistakes and experiencing emotional meltdowns.
- **Early intervention:** Weekly Post Placement Support, debriefing opportunities and guidance to focus on work tasks while allowing workplace relationships to develop naturally.
- **Psychological support :** Better Access psychology commenced in April to address anxiety, unhelpful thinking patterns, workplace barriers and employment sustainability.
- **Integrated strategies:** Monitored thinking styles, changes over time, barriers encountered and use of available workplace resources.
- **Outcome:** David is progressing very well and has reached six months of employment.
- **Current Plan:** Psychology services concluded. Weekly support continues to monitor progress and provide assistance as required.

Questions?

