

A New Mindset

A resource kit for developing a workplace mental health and wellbeing framework



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Disclaimer

This resource kit is not designed to be a solution in itself; rather, it is a starting point for workplaces to develop and implement (or expand) workplace mental health and wellbeing in conjunction with existing OH&S and physical health and wellbeing policies.

The information, opinions, recommendations and ideas contained in this resource are based on experience of the contributors and on research that is believed to be accurate, but not infallible. The advice in this resource is given in good faith and follows acceptable professional standards, but is not meant to encourage any activity, practice or exercise which may exacerbate any pre-existing medical, psychological or organisational difficulty. If you are in doubt about any advice printed in this book, you are urged to consult with a qualified, competent professional first. While written with the best of intentions, the OzHelp Tasmania Foundation and the Tasmanian Leaders Group do not assume any responsibility or liability to anyone for any loss or damage caused directly or indirectly by reliance on the information contained in this resource.

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Mental Health - *Understanding the Bottom Line*

“The Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research . . . reports that on average, **each employee with depression symptoms will cost their employer on average \$9,665 per year**”

“... they estimated \$7,878 could be recouped if the affected individuals accessed treatment for their symptoms.”

The Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research, 2004

“More people in Australia take their own life than die from motor vehicle accidents in a year”

Department of Health and Ageing, LIFE - living is for everyone, 2008

Achieving a return on your investment – everyone wins!

The majority of employers recognise and respect the need to invest in their greatest asset – their workforce. Investment in physically healthy workplaces and OH&S is today embraced by employers looking to build productivity through their most valuable resource.

Of equal importance, yet overlooked, is the vital issue of workplace mental and health and wellbeing. Fundamental in achieving a productive workforce is the need to embrace the broader aspects of health and wellbeing.

It has been the general lack of understanding of mental health and wellbeing combined with insufficient access to relevant information that has frustrated progress in the workplace.

This resource has been designed to bridge this gap and to assist workplaces incorporate and integrate workplace mental health and wellbeing as part of their broader health and wellbeing strategies.

Business today is highly competitive and productivity is front and centre to success. While the symptoms of physical health and wellbeing are often more evident it is the impact of poor mental health and wellbeing in the workplace that can frustrate productivity.

The following statistics will alert those employers that rely heavily on the health and wellbeing of their workforce.

Mental Health – Some Alarming Workplace Statistics!

- More than one million people in Australia experience depression, anxiety or related alcohol and drug problems each year.
- Each year, undiagnosed depression in the workplace costs \$4.3 billion in lost productivity. This excludes Workcover/ insurance claims, part-time or casual employees, retrenchment, recruitment and training ¹
- Tasmania is the only state not to have recorded a drop in suicide rates over the past decade
- Tasmanian suicide statistics are the highest in the nation (14.7 per 100 000, versus a national average of 8.6 per 100 000).²
- In Tasmania 72 individuals completed suicide in 2006 – up from 51 in 1997³
- More people die in Tasmania from suicide than road accidents
- Depression affects one in five people at some point in their adult lives
- Depression is currently the leading cause of non-fatal disability in Australia⁴ but only three per cent of the population identifies it as a major health problem⁵
- Depression is second only to heart-related illness in terms of disability in Australia⁶
- On average, every full-time employee with untreated depression costs an organisation \$9,665 per year⁷
- Each employee with depression will, on average, take three to four days off work per month which is equivalent to over six million days lost each year in Australia⁸
- In addition to absenteeism, depression accounts for more than 12 million days of reduced productivity each year
- Sixty-two per cent of people with depression don't get help for it⁹
- Research shows that implementation of early diagnosis and intervention programs can result in a five-fold return on investment as a result of increased employee productivity¹⁰
- Workplace stress is a significant risk factor for developing depression¹¹
- Over 70% of people with mental health problems recover and get on with their lives.

Adapted from www.beyondblue.org.au, and the ABS national suicide statistics, www.abs.gov.au

¹ Hilton, M. (2004). Assessing the financial return on investment of good management strategies and the WORC Project. The University of Queensland.

² LIFE, Living is for Everyone, Factsheet 3, DoHA, 2007

³ Mental Health Services Chief Executive Officer John Crawshaw, August 2009

⁴ Begg, S., Voc, T., Barker, B., Stevenson, C., Stanley, L., & Lopez, AD. (2007). The burden of disease and injury in Australia 2003. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

⁵ Highet, N.(2005). beyondblue Depression Monitor. beyondblue: the national depression initiative.

⁶ Todd, K (2008). "Mental Health in the Workplace", OzHelp Foundation Newsletter: Issue 4

⁷ Hilton, M. (2004). Ibid

⁸ Andrews G, Hall W, Teesson M, and Henderson S. (1999). The Mental Health of Australians. Mental Health Branch, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care

⁹ Andrews, G (1999). et al, ibid

¹⁰ Hilton, M. (2004). Ibid

¹¹ VicHealth (2006). Workplace Stress in Victoria: Developing a Systems Approach. Available at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/workplacestress

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Business and communities recognise the benefits of good physical health and wellbeing. However, just as poor physical health can have an impact on workplaces, mental health issues can also impact on workplaces through increased absenteeism, reduced productivity and increased costs.

'A New Mindset' was developed following extensive research and experience across hundreds of Tasmanian workplaces. It is designed to improve support for, and awareness of, the mental health and well-being needs of employees.

From 2007 to 2009 the OzHelp Foundation carried out extensive and varied research and found that, whilst most organisations have policies on Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) or general physical health, none had specific policies relating to the mental health of employees who might be suffering from depression, addictions, suicidal tendencies or other such problems.

More specifically, and part of a wider concern, there were no strategies or processes that facilitated the education and training of key staff in how to recognise employees who could be suffering mental health issues.

The OzHelp Tasmania Foundation also found that there was very little awareness of the types of support a manager could access if they suspected an employee might be experiencing a mental health or wellbeing problem.

What is mental health?

There is widespread misunderstanding of the term "mental health", with 'mental' being fearfully associated with negative stereotypes. 'Mental' simply means "of the mind".

'Mental health' is defined as: *The capacity to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face* (World Federation for Mental Health)

Mental health is multi-faceted, with complex interactions between physical and mental health, spiritual and cultural values, between individual and community wellbeing; between benefits of good health operating individually, socially and economically.

Having employees with an enhanced ability to enjoy life (and work), and the capacity to deal better with the challenges of work, benefits every organisation.

It is important for organisations to move past the negative stereotypes associated with mental health.

What is a mental health problem?

A mental health 'problem' refers to something which interferes with a person's cognitive, emotional or social abilities and to a lesser extent a mental disorder.

The term 'mental health problem' can be used to describe the full range of mental health issues, from common experiences such as 'feeling depressed', to more severe clinical symptoms such as 'clinical depression', and enduring problems such as schizophrenia.

A mental health problem may include interference with normal functioning experienced temporarily as a reaction to life stressors such as death and bereavement.

It is important to understand the range of presentations that might be classified as a mental health problem. Many potential problems can be avoided with early identification and action.

Mental health problems are less severe and of shorter duration than mental disorders but may develop into mental disorders. The distinction between mental health problems and mental disorders is often subjective and is made on the basis of the severity and duration of the symptoms.

While mental health problems can cause significant suffering for individuals and their family, and have a negative impact on work performance, they do not necessarily lead to the development of a mental disorder.

What factors might contribute to a mental health problem?

There are many explanations and theories about factors which may contribute to mental health problems. Some of these may include:

- Genes, biology or brain chemistry
- Psychological impact of trauma and life experiences
- Social influences, including childhood environments, violence in society, unhealthy family dynamic/relationships
- Cultural factors such as oppression or misunderstanding of cultural influences

The World Health Organisation estimates that by 2020 depression will be the most disabling illness in the world. For employees working in any organisation, a healthy mind is as important as a healthy body and a healthy work environment. A pro-active approach to the mental health and wellbeing of staff directly impacts on staff satisfaction and business productivity.

Misconceptions of others can stigmatise those persons suffering from mental health problems and prevent people from both seeking early support and from seeking the best possible support.

A lack of understanding also commonly hinders people from providing appropriate support. This lack of hands-on knowledge can result in discrimination in the workplace and missed opportunities.

Mental health problems can significantly impact on the life and livelihood of individuals, their families and the broader community. Individuals are often too embarrassed to talk about their problems. They do not want to burden others and feel that they should be able to deal with their issues without external help.

While the causes of mental illness are still debated, we do know that mental illness can be improved or made worse by the individual's social environment – interactions with family, friends, health and other services (and the workplace).

Almost 9 in 10 Australians are stressed and many say work is to blame, according to a national poll commissioned by Lifeline Australia.

“work stress is on the up with 73 per cent of working Australians indicating they were stressed about work and 17 per cent saying they were very stressed about it.”

“We know that small amounts of stress can sometimes help us, but each year, these results are showing us that we are no longer just feeling a little bit of stress,” she said.

“Extreme levels of stress can lead to real and lasting mental and physical health problems, like anxiety, depression, back and neck pain and heart problems.”

Lifeline Australia Chief Executive Officer Dawn O'Neil, June 2009

“Our recent survey ... told us that 45% of people with disabilities who responded said that having a supportive line manager was the most important factor in them finding and staying in work and developing their careers. This support generally comes from understanding and awareness.”

‘Training managers to recognise mental stress and depression would mean they could be aware of the need to provide more support during bad periods’

‘Greater awareness surrounding disability for managers. Training in this area for managers should be mandatory regardless of whether or not you manage someone with a disability’.

‘Many people with a mental disability will not ‘come out’, as there is still a huge stigma attached to it. Awareness and education are the key factors in overcoming such a problem, but we, as a society, are still a very long way behind in this’

‘(there is a) stigma attached to depression and the immediate assumption is that one is ‘fragile’ or ‘not to be trusted’.

Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Limited (ANZ) National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy: Submission June 08

The value of good mental health in the workplace

A healthy workplace is a place where people generally want to come to work. Unhealthy workplace practices can literally make people ill and increase costs. Increased absenteeism can be an early warning sign that there may be a problem.

A stable, loyal skilled workforce is at the heart of any successful business. Australian estimates put a conservative cost of a person leaving at between 75 - 150% of worker's salary depending on the job. (*Australian Human Resources Institute, 2008*) Direct costs include recruitment training, lost productivity while the position is vacant and reduced productivity while the new person learns the role.

Other costs include poor work performance, reduced morale, high staff turnover (costs of recruitment, induction and training), early retirement and work complaints and litigation. These indirect costs can be difficult to quantify.

It is in the best interest for workplaces to understand what constitutes a healthy workplace - on average, people spend 60% of their 'awake time' at work. One in five people will suffer depression¹² at some time in their lives. Most significantly, Tasmanian suicide statistics are among the highest in the nation (14.7 per 100000, versus a national average of 8.6 per 100000).¹³

Defining a mentally healthy workplace

- Personal, social and professional development are supported and encouraged;
- Mental health values in the workplace are espoused and demonstrated by executive management levels;
- Management and staff are encouraged to be creative and proactive;
- Obstacles to optimum mental health are identified and removed;
- Staff perceive the work environment as supportive and one in which they are valued;
- Professional and personal merit is recognized and commended at all levels;
- Training and supervision have high priority in both quality and frequency;
- Staff turnover and sick/stress leave is low, relative to the industry norm;
- Staff loyalty is high;
- Both staff and customer wellbeing/satisfaction are high;
- Focus is on building long-term strengths rather than short-term competitive success;
- Diversity is viewed as an organisational advantage for both managers and staff;
- People feel safe disclosing their mental health concerns to trusted colleagues;

Source: Caird, B & Stephen M. (2000) *Countering Stigma and Discrimination: Organizational Policy Guidelines for the Public Sector: (1st Ed) Project to Counter Stigma and Discrimination Associated with Mental Illness. Mental Health Foundation of NZ.*



¹² Beyond Blue, National Depression Initiative

¹³ LIFE Living is for Everyone factsheet 3, DoHA, 2007

Chapter 2 - A Mental Health Framework

A Mental Health Framework – is yours in place?

A Mental Health Framework (MHF) involves a combination of:

1. **Policy development and business planning** – specifically for mental health and wellbeing and incorporated into OH&S and other workplace 'health' policies
2. **Promotion** - of mental health in the workplace including an introduction to what mental health is, workplace policies and procedures and education and training possibilities
3. **Prevention** – preventative measures including understanding mental health, how to recognise mental health problems and, significantly, where to go for assistance
4. **Early Intervention** – providing workplace and individual assistance and support
5. **Evaluation** – monitoring of policy and program effectiveness

A workplace MHF helps to define the vision for improving the mental health of your workforce. It establishes a model for action.

MHF implementation will assist your organisation to provide workplace initiatives and strategies that promote and support the mental health and wellbeing of your workforce. Employees will be enabled to support the needs of co-workers experiencing mental health problems.

An effective Mental Health Framework will benefit your organisation – positively impacting on both your employees and your bottom line.



The benefits of implementing a mental health framework

Employer

- ✓ Improved staff health and wellbeing
- ✓ Improved staff morale and motivation
- ✓ Reduced staff turnover
- ✓ Decreased absenteeism
- ✓ Decreased stress and work-related illness
- ✓ Increased productivity
- ✓ Reduced health costs
- ✓ Increases return on investment
- ✓ Improved corporate image

Employee

- ✓ Improved health and reduced health costs
- ✓ Improved quality of life
- ✓ Improved job satisfaction
- ✓ Increased energy and ability to concentrate
- ✓ Increased support from supervisors
- ✓ Increased understanding from fellow employees
- ✓ Decreased stigmatisation of mental health problems

Chapter 3 - OzHelp Can Help Your Workplace?

OzHelp Tasmania has developed a comprehensive response to workplace mental health and wellbeing. Based around four independent yet complementary strategies we are ideally placed to meet the requirements of all workplaces.

Our progressive program is designed to support workplaces to implement a workplace mental health and wellbeing framework that is tailored to their needs. Our strategies are designed to be implemented incrementally with one leading into the next.

Each stage has been carefully developed to facilitate independent implementation. This flexibility allows workplaces to build on the success of previous stages and to tailor the program design to the precise needs of each workplace.

One Program – multiple solutions!

Developing a Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework:

Your workplace may simply need a more structured approach to mental health and wellbeing to ensure that it becomes part of planning and management processes.

Our service is designed to quickly and effectively assist in the establishment of a workplace mental health and wellbeing framework. We will provide you, and key stakeholders within your workplace, the support and guidance necessary to clearly document a tailored workplace response to issues around mental health and wellbeing.

This can include a stated commitment to hazard recognition, education, early identification of distress, non-discriminatory management of health problems and return to work processes. It may include statements about the organisation's commitment to a healthy workforce and comprise written statements of acknowledgement and intent, a statement of values and principles along with core policies / processes.

Some organisations include mental health issues under their health and safety strategies around general health and wellbeing. Having independent policy and processes for mental health and wellbeing can focus awareness clearly on the issues of how to create a mentally healthy workplace.

The process of discussion, development and implementation of your health and wellbeing framework is extremely worthwhile because it can foster closer relationships across the entire workforce.

Workplace Promotion of Mental Health and Wellbeing

Stage two of our service delivery model is designed to build on your framework through the active promotion throughout the workplace of mental health and wellbeing.

This service is designed to raise awareness and support of mental health. Our strategies include a mix of information, training and social activities packaged to meet the needs of your workplace culture. Promotion is geared to individual interests and learning styles and includes both educational component as well as practical 'action strategies' designed to change behaviour.

Activities can include structured information sessions designed to break down myths surrounding mental illnesses and raise awareness of the importance of looking after colleagues in the workplace. The success of our 'tool box' strategies have demonstrated the value of promotion and awareness. Posters, leaflets and articles on suicide awareness, postnatal depression and even sleeping problems are all geared to improved awareness and acceptance.

Examples of promotional activities OzHelp offers include:

- An introduction to mental health and wellbeing in the workplace
This one to one and a half hour session is designed provide an understanding of what mental health is all about. It breaks down myths surrounding mental illnesses and raises individual awareness about the importance of looking after their own, and their mates' mental health.
- Participation in tool box meetings promoting workplace mental health and providing information
- Posters in the workplace on mental health issues
- Leaflets, newsletter articles and updates – topics could include: exercise and mental health, suicide awareness, postnatal depression, sleeping problems, myths associated with mental health issues
- On-site visits
- Assist in the development of an intranet page with information on mental health and wellbeing

Workplace **Prevention** of Mental Health and Wellbeing

The focus of this service is in providing all employees with the necessary practical skills, tools and alertness to not only understand and look after their own mental health and wellbeing but also to remain alert to issues affecting workmates and colleagues.

Our service is geared to varying levels of education and training in line with individual employment roles and responsibilities. The following activities reflect the type of strategies OzHelp has applied to great effect throughout Tasmanian workplaces.

Education / training components

- **Workplace Life Skills Tool Box.** This is a three day course specifically designed for young workers, apprentices and trainees in their first year of transition from school into the adult workforce. It provides critical workplace life skills including; financial management, how to communicate in the workplace, values, work ethic, anger management, conflict resolution, decision making and health and wellbeing.

Workplace Life Skills Tool Box is built on a vision to enhance the resilience of apprentices and young workers. Flow on effects from this program indicate increased individual productivity, greater apprentice retention and enhanced employee wellbeing brought about by participants being less distracted and having the tools to effectively address issues arising in the workplace. It is recommended for all apprentices, trainees and young workers during the first year of employment.

- **Gatekeeper.** The Gatekeeper programs are suicide alertness training programs held over three hours. It helps a person to identify another who may be having suicidal thoughts, and how to connect them to the resources they need.
- **Individualised Workplace Training.** This training incorporates a range of topics that can support mental health and wellbeing areas of concern in the workplace. They are individualised for the workplace to address specific needs such as addictions (including drugs, alcohol and gambling), workplace communication, generation Y, teamwork, anger management and bullying. They can be focused from raising awareness to providing practical tools and skills.
- **Supervisor Mentor Training.** This two day (or four ½ day course) provides the practical skills for supervisors and mentors within workplaces to provide improved support to workers, apprentices and trainees in the workplace. Outcomes from the training include providing a supported environment where workers, apprentices and trainees are able to achieve their full potential, utilising the knowledge and skills of experienced personnel to maintain high quality performance and staff retention, and increasing the resilience and wellbeing of workforces.

Workplace **Early Intervention**

Workplaces are not equipped to meet the complex needs of those suffering from mental health issues. That is why this final service has been welcomed by employers in assisting to manage difficult situations in the workplace. Early intervention is geared to providing the support processes and structures that allow workplaces and individuals to seek assistance when mental health and wellbeing issues arise. Supporting promotion and prevention programs early intervention can range from:

1. Workplace visits
2. The provision of advice and guidance for all employees
3. Providing support and advice to supervisors and managers
4. Providing individual assessment
5. Providing mental health interventions and support
6. A referral service to specialist organisations

