



## **OZHELP TASMANIA FOUNDATION**

**UPDATE JUNE 2009**

### **CEO Welcome**

Welcome to the second OzHelp Tasmania update.

The last 12 months for OzHelp has been a time of consolidation and growth. Guided by a 5 year business plan developed through stakeholder participation, the Foundation is now focused on delivering its core training and support products; developing new innovative courses to meet industry needs and positioning itself to reach a level of self sustainability.

Whilst there is still some way to reaching total building and construction industry coverage we are now firmly established with a significant number of large to medium sized Tasmanian building and construction industry companies and are in the process of increasing our connection with smaller enterprises.

Recent external evaluations undertaken by the University of Tasmania with employers who use OzHelp's training and support services indicate that their partnership with OzHelp has been extremely positive and successful. This is also reflected in training and support figures that show that over the last year we have increased our training numbers by 120 to 350 and direct client support figures have increased from 27 to over 50 per month.

However whilst statistics are important, and they provide a benchmark on which to measure outcomes they do not convey the complete message. At the high end of the scale over the last 12 months OzHelp has been involved with seven suicide related cases and three of serious self harm. The age range is from late teen to late 20's indicating that it is not just apprentices that are at risk. This is also borne out by recent Australian Bureau of Statistic figures for Tasmania that indicate an increase in completed suicides in the 25 – 40 year old bracket.

On the other end of the scale the Life Skills Tool Box Training is also showing positive results. By the end of the year approximately 80 apprentices will have completed the Tool Box Training and those that have completed it to date rate it very highly. As future leading hands and job managers they will carry the skills they have learnt forward and pass these onto the next generation of workers in the industry.

There are still many challenges ahead and I will focus on these and other activities throughout the update.

In closing my welcome I would like to thank the many supporters of OzHelp Tasmania for their contribution to the ongoing success of OzHelp.

## **Training**

### **The Life Skills Toolbox**

Feedback from employers and participants of the six day Life Skills Tool Box Course indicated that there was a need to relook at the delivery timeframe. Fundamental to this was achieving a balance between 'time off work', workplace productivity and providing essential life skills for participants.

To meet this feedback a pilot has been set up this year to trial a three day tool box program designed to meet both employer and participant needs. This new Tasmanian developed program has been designed to provide the critical 'workplace' skills in the first year of an apprenticeship whilst at the same time developing individual resilience and appropriate support connections. Early indications from both the industry and participants indicate that we are heading down the right track. Following an evaluation in June this year it is anticipated that this new program will become the standard package, with the six day program still an option for companies wishing to maintain the current arrangements.

### **Supervisor and Mentor Training – A New Program**

Following further industry feedback a skills shortfall was identified at the supervisor level. Primarily this related to difficulties supervisors and mentors are having connecting with their workforces, especially young workers, in a support capacity.

With an extension of funding from the Department of Health and Aging a new Supervisor and Mentor training package has been developed and is currently being piloted with three building industry companies. It is designed to facilitate the professional development of mentors and supervisors within industry workplaces in order to provide improved support to workers, apprentices and trainees in the workplace. This package is a practical hands on program providing 'the skills required' rather than 'the theory of' how to support workers in their role as either a supervisor or mentor.

Initial feedback has seen the package evolve considerably as participants provide information and constructive feedback on 'what is needed' from a workplace perspective. The pilot will be completed in June 09 and it is hoped to have this up and running as a formal training package from Jul / Aug this year.

## **The Tasmanian Building and Construction Industry Leads the Way - Expansion into Other Industries**

The leadership and vision shown by the Tasmanian building and construction industry through its introduction, development and implementation of OzHelp Tasmania has attracted interest from other Tasmanian industries keen to replicate the positive difference that the industry / OzHelp partnership has created.

This leadership, and the success of the program to date, has resulted in a new grant from the Federal Department of Health and Aging to pilot programs of the OzHelp model in three new industries. To this end pilot programs are being conducted for apprentice chefs in the hospitality industry (through the Federal Group), apprentice mechanics in the motor trade industry (through the Tasmanian Automobile Chamber of Commerce) and young road workers in the civil industry (through Roadways). These three pilot programs are due for completion in June and initial feedback is very positive

## **Support Services**

### **Industry Driven Change**

Support services for OzHelp comprises various forms of support which range from pastoral type care, site visits, case management, mental health promotion and counselling to all workers in the building and construction industry.

In the last update I mentioned that response to the support service had been twofold. On one level it was viewed as a 'foreign process' and as 'a little touchy feely' and unnecessary to employers.

However due to employer feedback and the demand for support services OzHelp has changed the role of Regional Coordinators by splitting their training and support functions. As a result the Foundation now has dedicated Regional Support Coordinators (who have a reduced training role) and Regional Training Coordinators responsible for all training. This change has resulted in a greater capacity to provide industry support and the success of this functional split is reflected in the number of direct support activities which have doubled in the last three months.

This shift towards 'a general acceptance of' and 'support for' the 'mental health and wellbeing' of industry workers as a key issue is an extremely welcome development. Whilst there is still some way to go before it is incorporated in all workplaces, the industry can take credit for leading the way within Tasmania.

In closing the support service update OzHelp Tasmania has also developed a Health and Wellbeing Folder that is designed for workplaces – from the board room to the site hut. This folder includes fact sheets and information that is relevant to all workers and provides another avenue to connect with OzHelp.

## **State Recognition for the Industry Partnership**

### **OzHelp Tasmania wins a Tasmanian LIFE (Living is for Everyone) Award**

In recognition of World Suicide Prevention Day, The Tasmanian Government launched the 4<sup>th</sup> Tasmanian LIFE Awards. Held on 2 December 2008 the OzHelp Tasmania Foundation was announced as the winner and presented with the Red Herring Healthy Workplace award in recognition of the contribution of individuals and organisations in promoting life and suicide in Tasmania. The Tasmanian building and construction industry initiative and partnership was seen as a leading example of what can be achieved in the workplace.

The award represents that we are beginning to achieve the vision of the OzHelp Tasmania Foundation Steering Committee in 2006 and is a reflection of the positive way the Tasmanian building and construction industry has embraced OzHelp.

### **Suicide Prevention in Tasmania – A Workplace Model**

OzHelp Tasmania recently undertook a presentation to the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Conference in Hobart. Attended by over 120 delegates including interstate and overseas organisations OzHelp presented the model that we have adopted in the Tasmanian building and construction industry to prevent suicide and develop resilience in its workforce. Feedback and general conversation from the presentation was extremely positive and has created local and interstate interest as a practical and effective model.

As highlighted at the presentation the OzHelp model is a 'partnership' arrangement and whilst some of the success can be related to the implementation by OzHelp, by far the most critical component is the willingness and acceptance by an industry to make change. In this regard the industry can take credit for not only making a difference but leading the way in workplace suicide prevention in Tasmania.

### **Governance Board**

At the OzHelp Tasmania 2008 AGM the following Board was elected:

|                   |                   |                 |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Chairman          | Royce Fairbrother | Fairbrother Pty |
| Vice Chairman     | Tony Benson       | CFMEU           |
| Secretary         | Fred Lijauco      | TBCITB          |
| Treasurer         | Phil Sidney       | Roadways        |
| Committee Members | Gary Knight       | BGas            |
|                   | Dicky Post        | CBus            |
|                   | Jon Schwaiger     | Hazell Bros     |
|                   | Adrian Granger    | CCF             |

### **The OzHelp Tasmania Foundation Staff**

Current staff are as follows:

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| CEO                                  | Doug Vautier (Feb 07)                     |
| Training and Marketing Manager       | Keith Morrison (Sep 08)                   |
| Admin Manager                        | Cheryl Hogarth (Aug 07)                   |
| Regional Support Coordinator (S)     | Cecilia Nagy (Apr 07)                     |
| Regional Support Coordinator (N/NW)  | Marian Zwart (Aug 07)                     |
| Regional Training Coordinator (N/NW) | Simon Wiggins (Aug 08)                    |
| Regional Training Coordinator (S)    | Michelle Meehan (Aug 08 – contract basis) |

### **Sustainability 2009 and beyond**

Currently the ability for OzHelp Tasmania to deliver its training and support services in the Tasmanian building and construction industry has been as a direct result of Federal funding from the Department of Health and Aging (DoHA)- under the National Suicide Prevention Strategy Grant Program - combined with financial and 'in kind' support from within the industry. In last two years DoHA has contributed over \$800,000 with the industry contribution around \$100,000.

Early last year the OzHelp Tasmania Foundation Board prepared a Business Plan that focused on delivering core activities whilst at the same time allowing the Foundation to move away from a reliance on Federal funding and the development of its own sustainability.

To achieve this the Business Plan reflects that over the next fiscal year (09/10) OzHelp Tasmania will begin implementing a 'fee for service' model on a full cost recovery basis for its training services. At the same time it is intended to provide the current support service free of charge (on the basis of reduced, but continued funding from DoHA for the next two years). In the 10/11 fiscal year it is likely that the support service may also move to, at a minimum, a partial cost recovery basis.

However in order to reduce the financial impact of moving to a full cost recovery basis for training in the short term, the OzHelp Tasmania Foundation is currently negotiating with TBCITB for a training subsidy. In the longer term OzHelp Tasmania will continue to seek support through Federal and State training and health organisations.

Indications from DoHA are that we will continue to receive funding based on both the success of the program to date and to provide a period of transition to develop sustainability.

## **The Future**

Over the last two years the partnership between the OzHelp Tasmania Foundation and the Tasmanian building and construction industry has developed to a point where there is a recognised need, general acceptance and a demand for the training and support activities that OzHelp provide.

In this regard the Tasmanian building and construction industry has led the way towards not only reducing suicide within the industry (and by extension the wider Tasmanian community), but also developing a resilient and robust workforce. The Life Skill Tool Box Program, the Workplace Model of Suicide Prevention and the workforce Support Services are becoming widely recognised by other industries as model that they are considering implementing. This is backed up by the Department of Health and Aging who are keen to support the expansion of the OzHelp Tasmania model in other industry workforces based on the program's success to date.

However whilst a great deal of success has been achieved in the past two years the key activity for the Foundation over the next two years is to develop a sustainable future. We cannot continue, and it is unfair to expect, that the Federal Government will continue to fund the operating costs of the Foundation forever.

For its part the Federal Government (through DoHA) looks likely to continue to fund at least part of the operating costs for OzHelp Tasmania for the next two years. This will allow time for the industry partnership to continue to develop and give the Foundation time to implement and transit to a sustainable future.

## **Thank-You**

In closing I would like to take the opportunity to thank the members of the Tasmanian building and construction industry for supporting the OzHelp partnership and developing a highly regarded and well recognised workplace suicide prevention model that also develops a resilient and robust workforce.

I would also like to thank the many supporters of OzHelp for their financial contribution and in kind support. Your commitment to the building and construction industry has saved lives, assisted in helping industry workers cope with life's difficulties and set a benchmark that other industries are looking to copy.

Whilst there is still some way to achieving all the goals and future sustainability of the OzHelp Tasmania Foundation we are on the right track and we look forward to your continued support.

Doug Vautier  
CEO