WORKPLACES AND OUR MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health Australia is a member of the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance who advocate to workplaces to take active steps to create mentally healthy workplaces, and that all people in the workplace, including those who experience mental health difficulties, their families and those who assist them, are supported.

The Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance represents a commitment by its members to work collaboratively to provide practical guidance to workplaces to create mentally healthy workplaces and a sustainable and measurable change in business practices. This will create mutually beneficial outcomes for all people in the workplace (particularly those who have experienced mental health issues), businesses and the broader community.

Employers and workplaces can play an active role in maintaining the health and wellbeing of their workers as well as supporting the recovery of staff with mental health problems and the caring role that so many people play.

Work provides a sense of purpose, acceptance within society, and opportunities for development, therefore plays a pivotal role for a person's mental health and recovery.

Developing a mentally healthy workplace requires an understanding of the key issues of job design, team and organisational factors, combined with home/work conflict and individual factors.

Research shows that work performance is highest when staff report high levels of psychological well-being and job satisfaction.

Find out more at
https://mentallyhealthyworkplacealliance.org.au/

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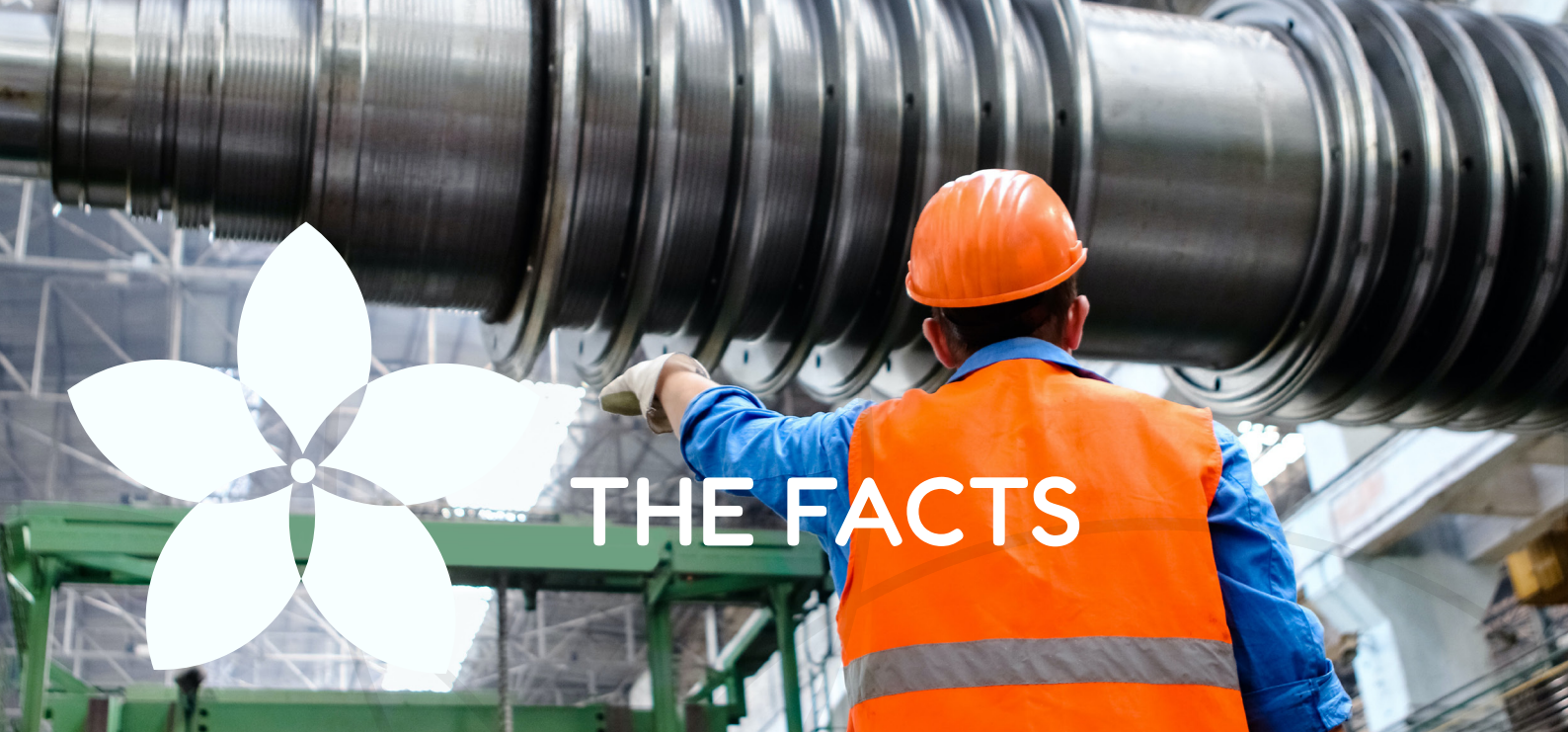
THE FACTS

Mental illness is one of the leading causes of sickness absence and long-term work incapacity in Australia.

At any point in time, one in six working age people will be living with mental illness, costing Australian businesses in the vicinity of $11 billion dollars each year. Meanwhile, many are also caring for and supporting people with mental health difficulties while juggling work and home responsibilities.

While depression, anxiety and work-related stress can be connected, it is important to make the distinction that depression and anxiety are clinical conditions, while stress is not. However, prolonged or excessive job stress is a risk factor for mental health problems, and accounts for 13 per cent of depression in working men.

Factors that contribute to job stress can include:

• High demands

• Low job control

• Work overload or pressure

• Lack of control and participation in decision-making

• Unclear work role

• Job insecurity

• Long working hours

• Bullying

• Poor communication

• Inadequate resources.

Good mental health is good for business – A PWC and Beyond Blue study found that every dollar spent on effective mental health actions returns $2.30 in benefits to the organisation.

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WHAT CAN THE GOVERNMENT DO?

Within the definitions of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 the word health means both physical and psychological health. Governments and leaders within business, and all workplaces, need to promote and educate their employees on the fact that Occupational Health and Safety is about more than just physical health, it is also about emotional, psychological and social wellbeing – mental health.

Research by the [Mentally Healthy Work Place Alliance](#) also shows us there are six key areas and strategies for creating mentally healthy workplaces.

1. **Smarter work design** – including flexibility around working hours and where, when and how work is performed.

2. **Build resilience** – including providing stress management and resilience training for those in high-risk jobs, as well as increased mentoring and coaching.

3. **Support recovery** – this includes providing training programs for leaders and supervisors on how to support workers' recovery from mental illness and during stressful life events, including facilitating flexible sick leave arrangements.

4. **Build better work cultures** – by ensuring senior staff are engaged in mental health promotion and ensuring a safe and positive work culture, including training programs for leaders and supervisors and workplace mental health education.

5. **Early intervention** – consider wellbeing checks and offer Employee Assistance Programs which use experienced staff and evidence-based methods.

6. **Increase awareness** – include mental health education in staff induction and professional development and conduct regular mental health awareness programs and training such as Mental Health First Aid, as well as taking part in R U OK? Day and World Mental Health Day activities.

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LOOKING FOR MORE DETAIL OR RESOURCES?

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Home | The Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance

Heads Up

The Heads Up initiative, launched by Beyond Blue in partnership with the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance encourages all people in every workplace to take action on mental health. The Heads Up website gives individuals and organisations free tools and resources to help them manage mental health issues in the workplace.

Mental Health Australia would like to thank its member organisations and key stakeholders for contributing to this extensive body of work on how workplace mental health impacts the mental health of all Australians. If you are a member of Mental Health Australia and would like to add to these resources, please contact info@mhaustralia.org

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