CREATING MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACES

A REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

THE MENTALLY HEALTHY WORK PLACE ALLIANCE

BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

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Australian Government
National Mental Health Commission

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.

A NEW REPORT FOR THE NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION AND THE MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE ALLIANCE OFFERS AUSTRALIAN BUSINESS LEADERS NEW WAYS TO SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES AND REDUCE THE PERSONAL AND ECONOMIC RISKS OF MENTAL ILL HEALTH. THIS REPORT BRINGS LEADING MENTAL HEALTH AND BUSINESS EXPERTS TOGETHER TO LOOK AT THE EVIDENCE OF WHAT WORKS.

OVERVIEW

A mentally healthy workplace is achievable for all organisations, but requires a genuine, continuous commitment across all levels of the workplace.

The majority of mental illness seen in the workplace is treatable and in some cases may be preventable.

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.

Individuals frequently identify work as providing a sense of purpose, acceptance within society, and opportunities for development, therefore playing a pivotal role in a person's 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.

Work performance is highest when staff report high levels of psychological well-being and job satisfaction.

Business leaders need to think of workplace mental health strategy as an ongoing process, well beyond simply putting a policy in place to providing a series of targeted actions that promote mental health.

EMPLOYERS SHOULD FEEL EMPOWERED TO MAKE CHANGES WITHIN THEIR WORKPLACE TO MAKE THEM MORE MENTALLY HEALTHY

"...HAVING A HEALTHY WORKFORCE IS FUNDAMENTAL TO THE SUCCESS OF ANY BUSINESS..."

Jennifer Westacott, Chief Executive, Business Council of Australia and Chair, Mental Health Australia

ECONOMIC ANALYSES CONSISTENTLY SHOW THAT MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS ARE COSTING AUSTRALIAN BUSINESSES IN THE VICINITY OF $11 BILLION DOLLARS EACH YEAR THROUGH ABSENTEEISM, REDUCED WORK PERFORMANCE, INCREASED TURNOVER RATES AND COMPENSATION CLAIMS.

GOOD MENTAL HEALTH IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Every dollar spent on effective mental health actions returns $2.30 in benefits to the organisation.

PwC/beyondblue/ National Mental Health Commission (2014)

SIX KEY AREAS AND STRATEGIES FOR CREATING MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACES

The research shows that there are six domains which workplaces need to address to maximise the mental health and wellbeing of their workforce. A number of evidence-based strategies have also been identified.

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SMARTER WORK DESIGN

- ✔ Create flexibility around working hours and where, when and how work is performed
- ✔ Create more opportunities for individuals and teams to be involved in decision-making processes
- ✔ Meet WHS requirements to reduce risks to mental and physical injury

BUILD RESILIENCE

- ✔ Provide stress management and resilience training for those in high risk jobs
- ✔ Provide stress management and resilience training which use evidence-based approaches such as cognitive behavioural therapy
- ✔ Create a workplace that provides opportunities for regular physical activity
- ✔ Provide mentoring and coaching

SUPPORT RECOVERY

- ✔ Provide training programs for leaders and supervisors on how to support workers' recovery from mental illness and during stressful life events
- ✔ Facilitate flexible sick leave arrangements
- ✔ Provide return-to-work programs
- ✔ Modify job/work schedule/duties where appropriate
- ✔ Ensure that those with a history of mental illness (and their carers) are not discriminated against

BUILD BETTER WORK CULTURES

- ✔ Provide training programs for leaders and supervisors including workplace mental health education
- ✔ Ensure senior staff are engaged in mental health promotion and ensuring a safe and positive climate
- ✔ Develop, implement and monitor a mental health policy including zero tolerance of bullying and discrimination
- ✔ Ensure that change is managed in an inclusive manner with open and realistic communication

EARLY INTERVENTION

- ✔ Promote and facilitate staff to seek help early
- ✔ Consider conducting well-being checks once appropriate support and resources are in place
- ✔ Offer Employee Assistance Programs which use experienced staff and evidence-based methods
- ✔ Provide mental health training so all staff can help support each other
- ✔ Consider providing a peer support program for staff

INCREASE AWARENESS

- ✔ Provide access to mental health information and resources
- ✔ Conduct regular mental health awareness programs and training
- ✔ Include mental health education in staff induction development
- ✔ Actively engage in R U OK? Day and World Mental Health Day

STRATEGIES ARE NEEDED & AT THE INDIVIDUAL, TEAM ORGANISATIONAL LEVELS

DEVELOPING A MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE IS A CONTINUOUS AND ONGOING PROCESS

These five steps can help guide an evidence-based, staged approach to developing and implementing a workplace mental health strategy, and creating a mentally healthy workplace.

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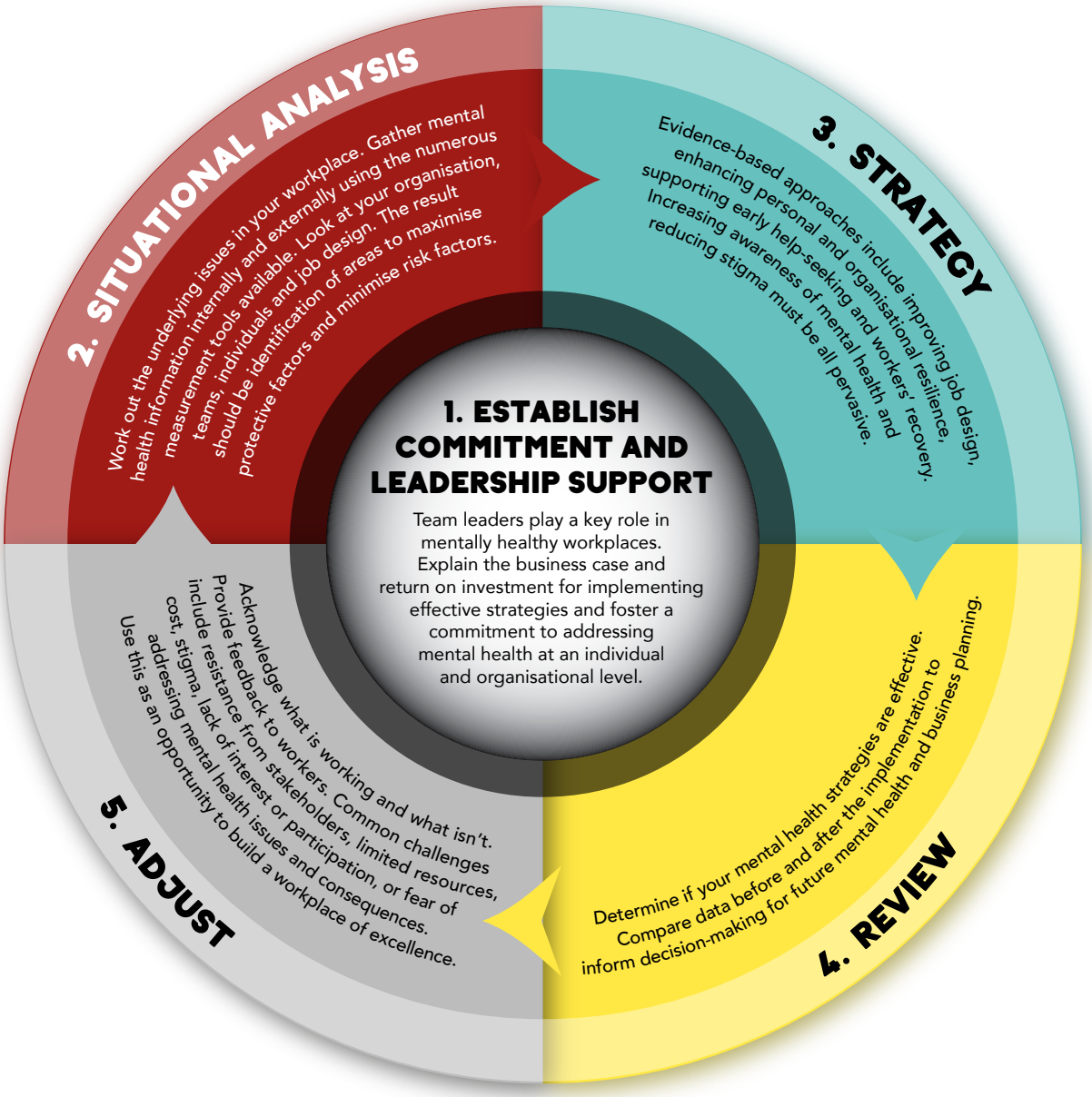

CREATE A CULTURE

THAT UNDERSTANDS THAT THE MAJORITY OF MENTAL ILLNESS SEEN IN THE WORKPLACE IS TREATABLE AND IN SOME CASES MAY BE PREVENTABLE.

MENTAL ILLNESS IS NOW THE LEADING CAUSE OF SICKNESS ABSENCE AND LONG-TERM WORK INCAPACITY IN MOST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.

CREATE A CUSTOMISED BUSINESS ACTION PLAN AT

HEADSUP.ORG.AU

WORKPLACES THAT SUPPORT THE MENTAL HEALTH OF ALL EMPLOYEES CAN REDUCE ABSENTEEISM & PRESENTEEISM AND INCREASE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & PRODUCTIVITY.

TAKE ACTION

Developed by the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance and *beyondblue*, the Heads Up initiative calls on business leaders to make a commitment and start taking action in their workplaces. You can visit the Heads Up website to:

- Access a wide range of resources, information and advice – all of which offer simple, practical guidance for organisations of every size and industry.
- Create an action plan that's tailored for your business. This tool will help you define and prioritise your goals, identify risk areas and take a step-by-step approach to creating a mentally healthy workplace.

GO TO WWW.HEADSUP.ORG.AU TO GET STARTED.

MENTAL HEALTH: TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS

The National Mental Health Commission set up the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance in 2013 with a wide range of organisations wanting to promote and support mental health at work.

MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACES PREVENT HARM TO THE MENTAL HEALTH OF THEIR PEOPLE, MAKE SURE PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE MENTAL HEALTH DIFFICULTIES ARE SUPPORTED AND HAVE POSITIVE CULTURES THAT ARE CONDUCIVE TO MENTAL WELLBEING.

BUSINESSES THAT INVEST IN MENTAL HEALTH ARE ALSO MORE PRODUCTIVE, INNOVATIVE AND LIKELY TO RECRUIT AND RETAIN THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST PEOPLE.

Prof. Allan Fels, Chair, National Mental Health Commission

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

There tends to be a wide gap between what is published in health journals and what occurs in workplaces. *Developing a mentally healthy workplace: A review of the literature*, a report for the National Mental Health Commission and the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance aims to bridge this gap. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time there has been a collaborative effort from mental health and business experts to appraise the current state of research evidence on workplace mental health. The report analyses what the peer-reviewed literature suggests workplaces can do in relation to stress, mental strain, psychological health and wellbeing in the workplace. Where possible, the report provides practical advice for employers based on the evidence.

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THE FULL REPORT CAN BE FOUND AT:

www.MENTALHEALTHCOMMISSION.GOV.AU

www.HEADSUP.ORG.AU

www.BLACKDOGINSTITUTE.ORG.AU