



Creating Mentally Healthy Workplaces

Tri-Peaks Webinar Series
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Agenda

- ◆ Importance of mental health in the workplace
- ◆ Legal foundations, roles, rights and responsibilities
- ◆ Mental health and wellbeing strategies in the workplace
- ◆ A systemic approach to prevention of mental ill health
- ◆ Workplace factors influencing mental health
- ◆ Addressing mental health issues as they arise
- ◆ Promoting positive mental health & wellbeing
- ◆ Self-care tips
- ◆ Q & A

Understanding mental health

About mental health

Mental health is important to everyone, at all times, everywhere, including at work.

It means different things to different people at different points in their life.

Key aspects of being mentally healthy:

- Capacity to enjoy life
- Cope with and be resilient in response to stress
- Set and fulfil goals
- Develop one's potential
- Build and maintain relationships
- Participating fruitfully in the community.

Therefore it needs to be strategically prioritised



About mental health

Mental health continuum



Severe impact on everyday function

Positive, healthy functioning

- Individuals can fluctuate across the continuum.
- Mental health is not the absence of sickness. It's a dynamic state of wellbeing.
- Mental disorder symptoms are generally characterised by some combination of abnormal thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others.
- Most disorders can be successfully treated. Support and seeking help are vital.
- Protective factors can help prevent mental ill health.

Source: HeadsUp and BeyondBlue, Developing a workplace mental health strategy. A how-to guide for health services

COVID-19 impacts on mental health

- Isolation
- Reduced sense of community
- Loss of autonomy
- Uncertainty/ anxiety/ fear
- Greater pressures / demands

However...

- Not necessarily leading to symptoms or mental ill health
- Some positive outcomes of more meaningful connections and community support
- Achievement of new demands
- More flexible work options

Potentially leading to:

- Feeling overwhelmed / stressed
- Relational conflicts
- Feeling unfocused
- Lack of motivation/ languishing
- Unhealthy choices



COVID-19 impacts on mental health at work in Health Care and Social Assistance industry

- Challenges in connecting with clients personally
- Dealing with constant changes to routines
- Juggling challenging personal and work demands
- Uncertainty about our roles

However...

- Dedication and commitment to clients unwavering
- Adaptability and resilience
- Greater use of technology
- More flexible future work and client connection options

Potentially leading to:

- Feeling exhausted
- Feeling frustrated
- Self-doubt
- Lower self-care



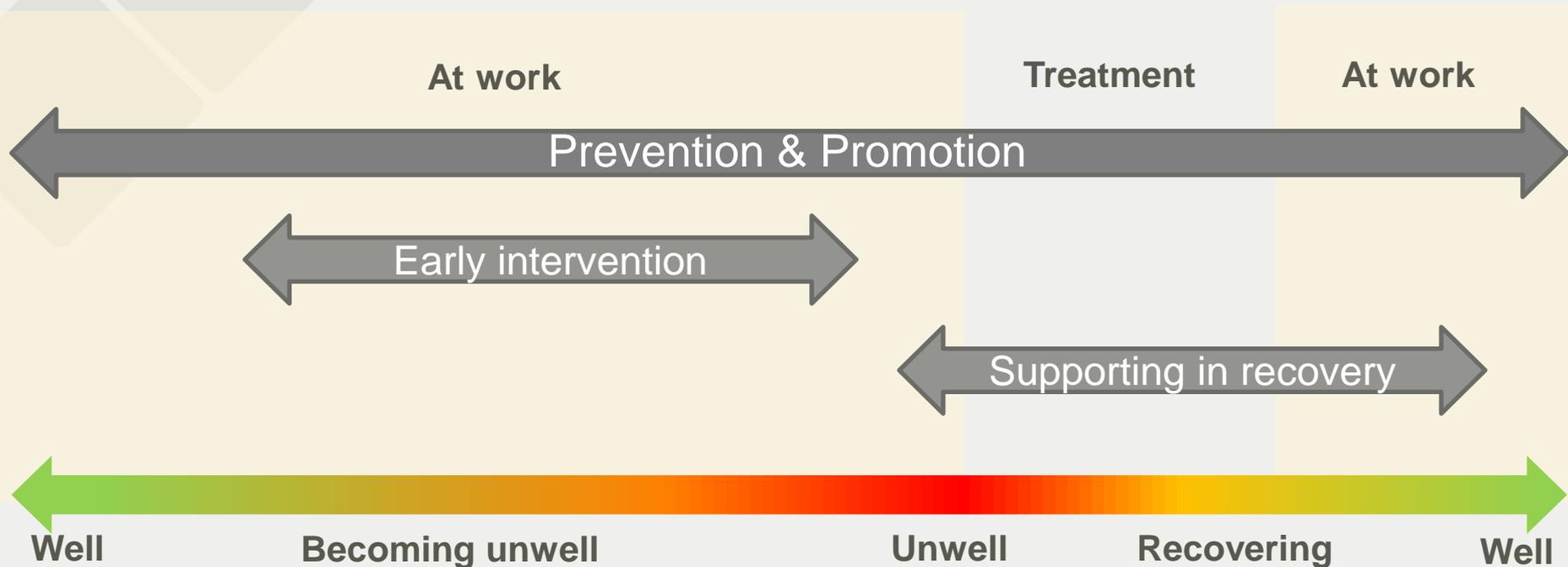
Mental health and work

- Work is a positive protective factor for our mental health & wellbeing (under the right conditions)
- Bi-directional impact:
Mental health \leftrightarrow Work
- Working environment is a major influence on mental health & wellbeing
- Organisations that prioritise mental health benefit by more engaged, satisfied and productive workplaces, and a return of \$2.30 for every \$1 invested¹.

Achievement
Competency
Self-efficacy
Growth
Social connections
Positive relationships
Meaning
Purpose
Social value
Engagement
Productivity
Fulfilment
Structure
Reward

Roles and responsibilities

Mental health intervention continuum



- Mentally healthy workplaces are everyone's shared responsibility
- Leaders especially influence work systems and culture supporting mental health
- It is not the role of managers or co-workers to diagnose or treat staff

Legal foundations

Ensuring health and safety - OHS Act (Vic) 2004

- Defines health as **including psychological health**.
- Requires employers to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to health.
- Requires employers to consult with employees (and HSR's) on matters that affect their health or safety, e.g. when identifying mental health hazards, assessing risks and deciding on risk controls.
- Employees have a duty to take reasonable care for their own H&S and the H&S of people their work may affect.

Legal foundations

Avoiding discrimination

- Mental illness is a 'disability' under the Equal Opportunity Act.
- Disability discrimination legislation (both State and Federal) requires employers to ensure their workplace does not discriminate against or harass workers with mental illness.
- They are required to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of workers with mental illness.
- Positive duty to take measures to prevent discrimination.

Returning to work

- Injury includes mental injury under the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act.
- Provisions for planning the return to work (RTW) of an injured worker who has work capacity and consult about their return.

Legal foundations

Ensuring privacy

- Privacy legislation requires that personal information about a worker's mental health status is not disclosed to anyone without the worker's consent.

Avoiding adverse actions

- Employers are also required under Commonwealth Fair Work Act to ensure your workplace does not take any adverse action against a worker because of their mental illness.

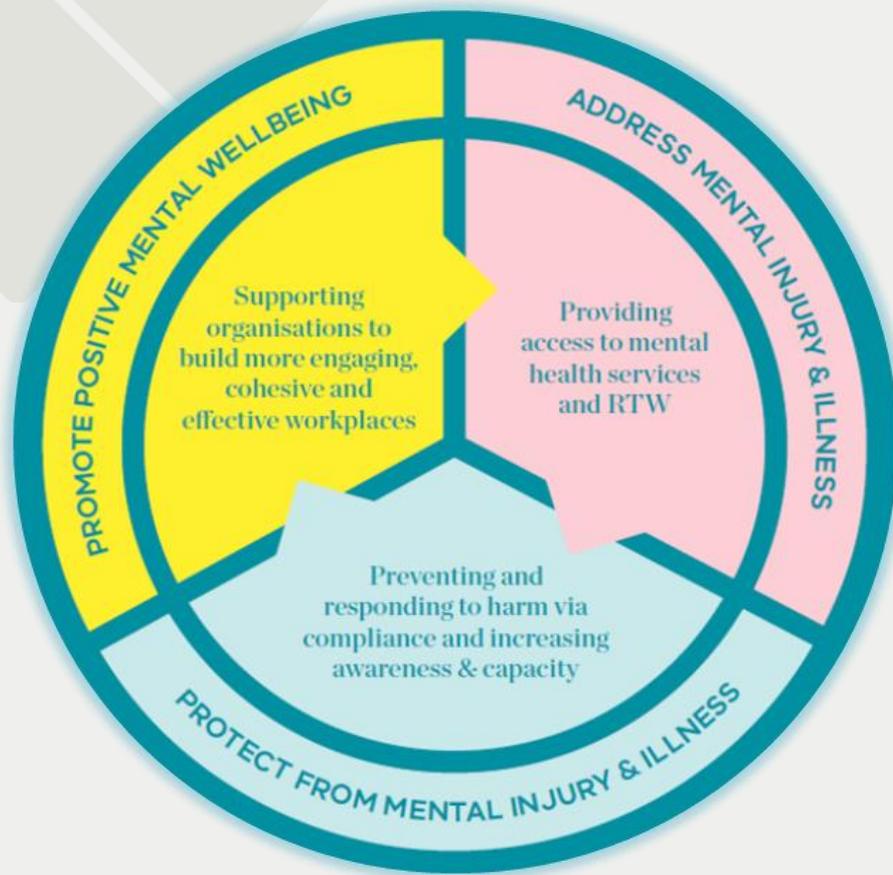
What is a mentally healthy workplace?

In a mentally healthy workplace:

- People at all levels have a shared vision of, and commitment to, positive mental health – mental health is prioritised.
- Risks to mental health are systematically identified and measures are in place to prevent harm to mental health.
- Work demands are realistic in a way that balances the needs of staff and the employer and do not pose an unreasonable risk to mental health.
- Everyone feels comfortable to speak openly about mental health, without fear of stigma or discrimination.
- There is a culture of respect, fairness and inclusivity.
- There are good systems of support for mental health.

***“A healthy workplace is one in which workers and managers collaborate to use a continual improvement process to protect and promote the health, safety and wellbeing of all workers and the sustainability of the workplace”
(WHO)***

An integrated approach



An integrated approach to creating a mentally healthy workplace seeks to:

- **Prevent work-related harm**
- **Promote the positive**
- **Address mental ill health**

underpinned by:

- **Leadership commitment**
- **Meaningful participation**
- **Ongoing communication.**

Adapted from LaMontagne, A.D., Martin, A., Page, K.M. Workplace mental health: developing an integrated intervention approach. BMC Psychiatry 14, 131 (2014).

Focus on Prevention

Prevention strategy – A risk management approach

To prevent harm to mental health
at the source and systematically.

Initial and ongoing steps:

- ✓ Management commitment & support
- ✓ Consultation & participation strategy
- ✓ Training, support and resources

1. Identify psychosocial hazards:

- Check available data
- Use a systematic hazard checklist

2. Assess risks:

- Prioritise the hazards for each workplace

3. Control risks:

- Decide and take action

4. Review and Revise the action plan



Work-Related Stress - Mental injury pathway



Work-related factors

Work-related factors are anything in the design or management of work that affects mental health. If not managed well, they increase the risk of work-related stress and become psychosocial hazards.

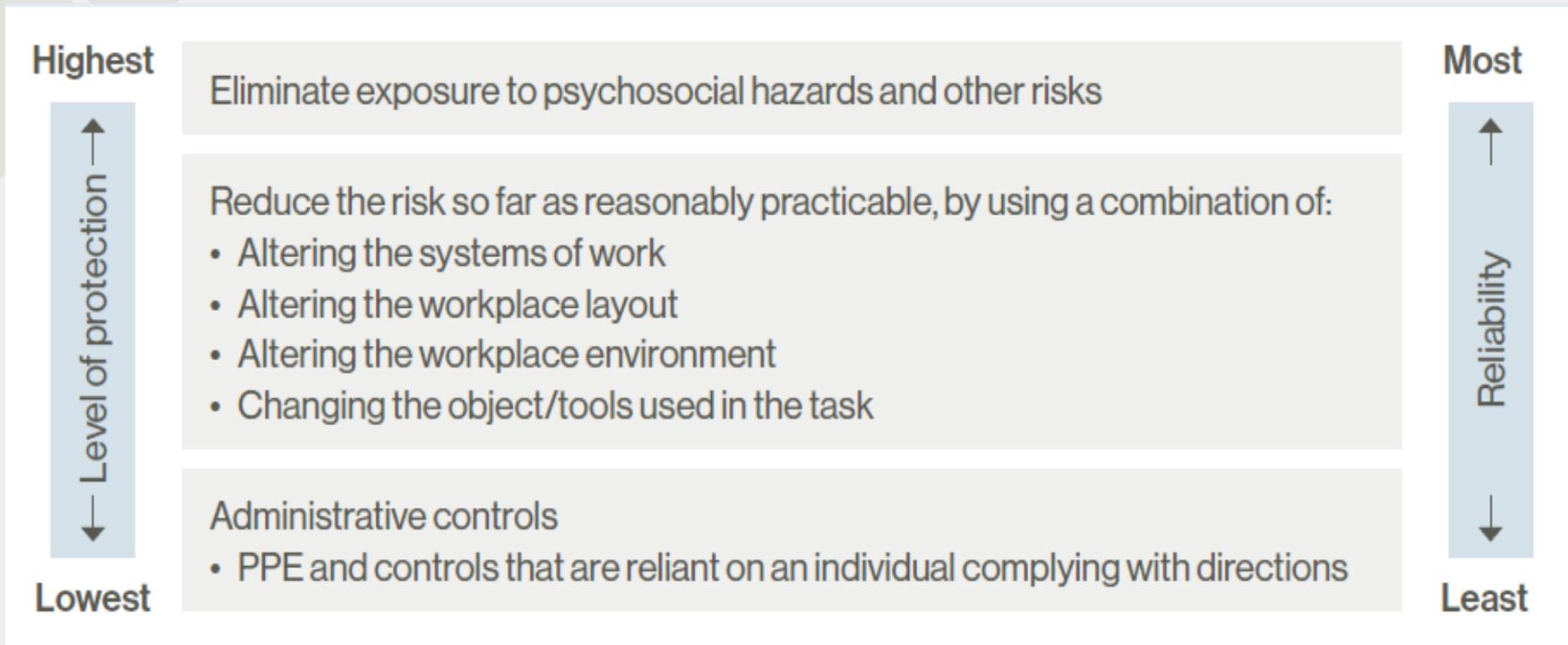
Common psychosocial hazards:

- Low job control
- High and low job demands
- Poor support
- Low role clarity
- Poor workplace relationships
- Poor organisational change management
- Poor organisational justice
- Low recognition and reward
- Poor environmental conditions
- Remote and isolated work
- Violent or traumatic events

A sample of relevant psychosocial hazards to COVID-19 context

- Working in areas with high exposure risk
- **Remote or isolated work** – working from home
- Work / home demands out of balance
- **High or low job demands** – additional or change in demands to manage exposure risk/ fewer available staff
- **Poor support** – fewer opportunities to offer and seek support
- **Poor organisational change management** – rapid introduction of new processes
- **Poor organisational justice** – greater benefits to more visible staff
- **Low role clarity** – new requirements poorly specified and communicated
- **Poor relationships at work** – online incivility
- **Poor environmental conditions** – requirement to wear PPE for long periods
- **Violent or traumatic events** – high anxiety situations

Risk control measures – applying the risk hierarchy



Examples of hazards and risk controls

Work-related (Occupational) violence and aggression

- Exposure to any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.
- Includes behaviour often described as acting out, challenging behaviours, behaviours of concern and hostile behaviours.
- Can be either verbal or physical.
- Risks can be either psychological or physical injuries.
- Can be perpetrated by clients, patients, residents, visitors, work colleagues and members of the public.

Sample risk controls:

- Intentionally create a safety culture that guards against “silence”, under-reporting or trivialisation of violence as being ‘part-of-the-job’, where aggression, harassment, and incivility, are not tolerated.
- Take a systems approach to incident investigation to identify contributory factors.
- Set up an organisational-level committee with an oversight of violence and aggression strategy and program development, and provide resources and training.
- Review building and workplace design.
- Review practice procedures and behaviour risk assessments.

Work-related gendered violence including sexual harassment

- Any behaviour, directed at any person, or that affects a person, because of their sex, gender or sexual orientation, or because they do not adhere to socially prescribed gender roles, that creates a risk to health and safety.
- Work-related gendered violence can also be experienced indirectly.
- Sexual harassment is a common form of work-related gendered violence.

Sample risk controls:

- Focus on creating and maintaining a culture of civility, respect and inclusiveness.
- Create an environment where people feel confident to report confidentially.
- Encourage bystander intervention, with training in when and how to intervene.
- Address unwanted and offensive behaviour early, with a clear response to reports that does not disadvantage, further harm or place blame on the reporter.

Poor support

Tasks or jobs where employees have inadequate:

- Emotional or practical support from supervisors and colleagues.
- Information, training or feedback to support their work performance.
- Tools, equipment and resources to do the job.
- Sense of freedom to call for support, seek information or raise concerns.
- Connections with others in geographically dispersed jobs.

Sample risk controls:

- Re-organise team structures and roles to clarify lines of support.
- Planned sessions to discuss needs for support and problem-solve freely without fear of sanctions.
- Innovative skill training, induction and refresher sessions for all staff including part-time/ casuals.
- Promote a culture of team support.
- Plan for backfilling of roles when employees are absent.

Work-related trauma

- Direct or indirect exposure to violence or traumatic events can cause trauma.
- Trauma can be direct, vicarious and cumulative.
- For example, helping others cope with traumatic events, witnessing a fatality, reviewing distressing information or investigating a serious injury or fatality.

Sample risk controls:

- Develop tailored approaches to managing critical incidents, including Psychological First Aid approaches.
- Provide proactive training in responses to trauma.
- Develop and maintain peer support programs.
- Rotate roles or activities to have adequate breaks from roles involving exposures to distressing events.
- Consider becoming a trauma-informed organisation.

High and low job demands

Demands involving sustained high or low physical, mental or emotional effort, for example:

- Long work hours, high workloads fast pace or significant time pressure.
- Emotional effort in responding to distressing situations.
- Shift work leading to higher risk of fatigue.
- Working with clients with challenging behaviours.
- Repetitive or monotonous work or work well below capabilities.

Sample risk controls:

- Design jobs considering the work environment and working conditions.
- Regularly review workload to ensure employees have sufficient resources and monitor load during periods of peak demand/ provide additional support where required.
- Ensure rosters allow for a continuous break of sufficient time between rostered shifts and ensure additional time is allowed where overtime is involved.
- Have systems in place to support employees when they have to make difficult decisions or when challenging situations might arise following decisions they have made.

Remote and isolated work

Working from home or work at locations where:

- Access to resources and communications is difficult.
- Travel times may be lengthy.
- There are no or few other people around and;
- Access to help from others, especially in an emergency, may be difficult.

Sample risk controls:

- Conduct and report regular risk assessments of the workplace i.e. at home, client's home etc.
- Maintain regular systematic contact and check-in's with employees.
- A buddy system.
- Review job design, in consultation with employees or HSRs, considering known and experienced risks.
- Security guards, escorting to car parks.
- Develop or review and communicate emergency procedures in consultation with employees or HSRs.
- Consult and communicate with clients about their service expectations.

Addressing mental health concerns

Supporting those with mental ill
health symptoms

Supporting recovery and RTW

Identifying and addressing concerns

Notice changes in:

Appearance

Behaviour

Conversation

Compared to before
and over time

Initiate a supportive/
check in conversation

A useful structure for check-in conversations :

1. **Ask** – prepare and approach appropriately
2. **Listen** – with an open mind, without judging
3. **Encourage action** – explore support options
4. **Check in** – make a time to follow up

Adapted from ruok.org.au

Facilitating return to work (RTW) - after mental injury

- Foster an environment that supports mental health – awareness/ skills.
- An employee with a diagnosis may or may not need to take leave.
- Follow RTW policy and processes.
- Actively manage absence – maintain appropriate contact.
- Ensure any work-related factors that may have led to the mental injury have been controlled before expecting the employee to return to work.
- Conduct a work assessment.
- Involve the employee in planning their RTW (with RTW Co-ordinators, managers, treating practitioners).
- Develop a clear, written RTW plan and implement it.
- Provide reasonable adjustments as required.
- Encourage support from colleagues, respecting confidentiality.

Promotion of positive wellbeing

Promoting positive mental health

Proactive promotion of the positive mental health and wellbeing buffers against negative effects of stress.

A mental health strategy aims to:

- Raise awareness
- Combat stigma
- Create a positive and supportive work environment.
- Create a respectful and inclusive workplace.

Examples of strategies

- Develop transformational / supportive leadership skills - to promote strengths, growth, provide constructive feedback.
- Encourage discussion of wellbeing strategies and experiences (e.g. PERMAH or 5 ways to wellbeing).
- Focus on the meaning and social value of caring work.
- Encourage mindfulness as a simple evidence-based action.
- Promote mental health support options.
- Train in positive conflict resolution.
- Promote healthy lifestyles.

Self-care tips

Self-care in uncertain times

Put on your “oxygen mask” first

- Keep perspective – think effectively
- Balance consumption of news/ media
- Problem-solve
- Take action where you have control
- Reflect on positive aspects of your life
- Get adequate rest and sleep
- Seek support when needed – it’s a sign of strength

Five simple research-based actions to improve your mental health:

1. Connect – develop authentic relationships
2. Be active – engage in an activity you enjoy
3. Keep learning – learn new skills and gain a sense of achievement
4. Be aware – find time to take notice of how you are and what’s around you
5. Help others – do something kind for a friend or a stranger

www.5waystowellbeing.org.au

Resources

Useful resources

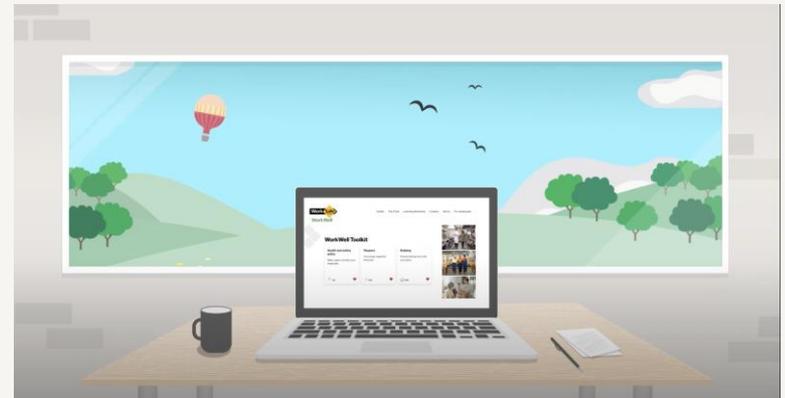
- **Mental health safety basics** <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/mental-health-safety-basics>
- **A guide for Victorian workplaces – Consultation** www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/consultation-guide-victorian-workplaces and <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/video-consultation-employers-responsibility>
- **Preventing and managing work-related stress: A guide for employers** <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/preventing-and-managing-work-related-stress-guide-employers>
- **Working from home** www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/officewise-guide-health-and-safety-office-handbook
- **Prevention and management of exposure to COVID-19 in the healthcare and social assistance industry** <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/prevention-and-management-exposure-coronavirus-covid-19-healthcare-and-social-assistance-industry>
- **Preparing for a pandemic - A guide for employers** <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases>
- **Working alone** www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/working-alone
- **Work-related violence and aggression** <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/work-related-violence-information-employers>
- **Work-related violence and aggression in health services** <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/prevention-and-management-violence-and-aggression-health-services>
- **Work-related gendered violence including sexual harassment** <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/work-related-gendered-violence-sexual-harassment> and <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/itsneverok>
- **Return to work** <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/information-employers-return-work-obligations>

The WorkWell Toolkit

<https://www.workwell.vic.gov.au/toolkit>

The WorkWell Toolkit is a free online tool, with a lot of great benefits!

- ✓ Step by step advice.
- ✓ Information and tools tailored to your business size and industry type.
- ✓ Access to practical resources such as case studies, policy examples, videos, tip sheets and templates.
- ✓ Track progress and share information.
- ✓ All the best resources from Beyond Blue, Black Dog Institute, Safe Work Australia, VicHealth and more in one place!



The WorkWell Toolkit is designed for employers and workplace leaders. This looks different for each business but includes business owners, senior management, human resource managers, occupational health and safety staff and health and safety representatives.

If you are distressed and need immediate emotional support, contact:

- Lifeline on **13 11 14** or via their website www.lifeline.org.au
- Beyond Blue on **1300 224 636** or via their website: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

Contact

WorkSafe Victoria

1 Malop Street
Geelong, Victoria. 3220

Advisory Service: 1800 136 089
General Enquiries: 03 9641 1555
24 Hr Emergency: 13 23 60

Email: info@Worksafe.vic.gov.au



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