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# MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

**This template has been drawn from policies of the TTIA, MGA TMA and sample policies provided via ForestWorks.**

**Each policy has common elements. Something is described as optional where it does not appear in all the sample policies.**

**The template has been drafted for you to choose from options that best suit you and your business.**

## INTRODUCTION

### What we mean by mental health?

The term ‘mental health’ is frequently misunderstood. It is often used as a substitute for mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety conditions, schizophrenia and other. However, according to the World Health Organisation, mental health is “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”.

### What is mental health in the workplace?

When we talk about mental health in the workplace, we are looking at how the business environment affects us – either positively or negatively – as well as the effect our mental health has on our ability to do our jobs.

### There are a number of things you can do to care for your mental health. This may include:

* Make time to exercise each day: for example, a simple daily lunch time walk can help maintain a positive outlook.
* Practice mindfulness: mindfulness means being aware of your reactions/feelings/thoughts as you have them. This helps you choose how to manage matters as they arise. Mindfulness is a great tool to help lower stress and anxiety levels.
* Adopt work/life boundaries: don’t let work overtake your life. Set some boundaries to ensure you have time for both work and a social life. You might decide not to discuss work from 5pm Friday night to 8am Monday morning, because weekends are for family, friends and other non-work commitments.
* Connect with others: find someone worthy of your stories – a confidant or mentor you can talk to about your business experiences. Make sure this person is supportive, a good listener and someone whose opinion you value.

### Mental health red flags

It’s important to know the mental health indicators that may require attention. These may include:

* Physical signs: for example, a constant knot in your stomach, tense neck and shoulders, feeling nauseous, heart palpitations or chest pains.
* Changes in behaviour: for example, being unable to sleep, crying regularly, feeling moody or often irritable, increase or loss of appetite.
* Unclear thinking: for example, not being able to make decisions, not understanding directions, not being able to focus, being inattentive.
* Feeling sad or anxious regularly: we all have bad days – they are a normal part of life. This needs attention if you begin to notice feelings like these regularly.
* Disconnecting from others: this may include not joining in social activities, choosing to spend time away from family and friends or stopping hobbies/sporting activities.
* Feeling overwhelmed: it is difficult to find solutions to problems, and in some instances, it feels like they are insurmountable. Problem solving becomes difficult.

### Creating a mentally health workspace for others

Normalising mental health in the workplace helps to reduce stigma and creates a space where it’s safe to talk about and address mental health challenges. People often work closely together in small businesses so it’s important to create a workplace that respects individual experiences.

### Ways to do that include:

* Talking about mental health at work: check out the Heads Up’s ([www.headsup.org.au](http://www.headsup.org.au/)) resources to see how you can develop a plan to address this topic in a safe and interesting way in the workplace.
* Lead by example. Your approach to your own mental health will help create a team approach to the topic.
* Encourage staff to take their breaks. A quick walk in the sunshine or a casual chat in the lunch room may be of benefit.
* Provide access to mental health resources: share information and tips about managing mental health, and make sure local support service details are readily available. If needed, get advice on how to refer someone to professional help.
* Embrace workplace campaigns: sign up and support campaigns like ‘R U OK? Day’ to get your team talking about workplace mental health.

### Help is available:

* **{insert Organisation’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) contact details where applicable}**
* [**Heads Up**](https://www.headsup.org.au/): this site has lots of resources and information about mental health in Australian workplaces. In particular, look for the section for small business owners.
* [**Business In Mind**](http://learn.beyondblue-elearning.org.au/businessinmind/%23/home): located as part of the Heads Up website, Business In Mind is an online resource specifically designed to support business owners who may be experiencing mental health challenges. It provides a range of case study video vignettes using real small business owners and demonstrates that mental health challenges are common throughout the small business community.
* [**Beyond**](http://learn.beyondblue-elearning.org.au/businessinmind/%23/home) **Blue**: provides information and support to help everyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health, whatever their age and wherever they live. Their phone number is 1300 22 4636.

## DEFINITIONS

### Mental health

Mental health is a positive concept related to social and emotional wellbeing of individuals

### Good mental health

A state of wellbeing where an individual can feel positive about life, realise their own potential, manage everyday st resses, work productively and contribute to their community

### Mental ill-health

The term 'mental ill-health' is used when referring to a spectrum of problems that interfere with an individual's cognitive, social and emotional abilities. This term encompasses both 'mental health problems' and 'mental illnesses'.

### Mental health problem

A mental health problem interferes with a person's cognitive, emotional or social abilities, but may not meet the criteria for a diagnosed mental illness.

### Mental illness

A clinically diagnosed disorder/medical condition. May be an ongoing problem, a one off experience, or intermittent occurrences of poor mental health in response to life events . Severity of a mental illness will vary.

### Recognise and Refer

An action where indicators of mental health problem or illness are recognised, the response is in a way that is appropriate to the situation and the relationship and that referral is made to the appropriate resources so the person can access the services available to him/her in conjunction with guidance from People and Culture

### Wellbeing

A mental and physical state characterised by comfort and happiness

## RATIONALE/BENEFITS (OPTIONAL)

### Option One

* Mental health can be 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.
* Mental health problems have causes including stressors within the workplace and the outside world. The most common mental health problems in the workplace are stress, anxiety and depression. These can result in poor working relationships, errors and accidents, absenteeism and high staff t urnover.
* Recent trends indicate that mental ill health in the workplace is increasing. It has been suggested that mental health problems are an increasing cause of injury, illness and absences across Australian workplaces (WH&S, Workcover)
* The potential benefits of mental health promotion include increased productivity and loyalty, reduced absenteeism and staff turnover. The worker experiences enhanced wellbeing, which also impacts on physical wellness and family life.

### Option Two

* Reduction in the wastage of trained workers
* Improved efficiency and effectiveness of the workforce
* Enhanced company image
* Decreased stress and work related illness
* Improve staff morale, satisfaction and motivation

### Option Three

* To decrease absenteeism by eliminating organisational factors which contribute to poor mental health and wellbeing.
* To improve substantially the awareness, knowledge and understanding of mental health and wellbeing at all levels of the organisation.
* To improve the productivity of the organisation by providing better support to employees who are experiencing mental health problems.
* To minimise the disability of employees by ensuring that mental health issues are recognised early and that effective treatment is made available.
* To reduce stigmatisation and other barriers by educating staff about mental health and wellbeing.

## PURPOSE

### Option One

The purpose of this policy is for **{Insert organisation name}** to establish, promote and maintain the mental health and wellbeing of all staff through workplace practices, and encourage staff to take responsibility for their own mental health and wellbeing.

**{Insert organisation name}** believes that the mental health and wellbeing of our staff is key to organisational success and sustainability.

### Option Two

**{Insert organisation name}** is committed to providing a mentally healthy workplace for all workers, through the protection and promotion of mental health and wellbeing and creation of a positive workplace culture. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that our workplace[s] has[have] a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of workers and risks are identified and actively managed .

### Option Three

To provide a working environment that promotes and supports the mental health and wellbeing of all workers.

### Option Four

**{Insert organisation name}** recognises that poor mental health can be brought about by excess pressure at work or from domestic situations, and can result in poor work performance and deteriorating physical and mental condition. We are committed to working towards a healthy organisation, which places high value on both physical and mental health and wellbeing.

## GOALS/OBJECTIVES

**{Choose goals or objectives that are relevant to your organisation}**

A mentally healthy workplace is one that takes a proactive and preventative approach to mental health, where risk factors are identified and reasonably practicable action is taken to minimise their potential negative impact on an individual's mental health. It is also one where protective and resilience factors are fostered and maximised and there is a focus on ensuring good workplace outcomes for workers at risk of mental health problems and illness.

To achieve this **{Insert organisation name}** will aim to:

(Culture)

* Build and maintain a workplace environment and culture that supports mental health and wellbeing and prevents discrimination (including bullying and harassment).
* Actively promote positive mental health and wellbeing to ensure our workplaces develop a positive work environment that supports and encourages good mental health and wellbeing through a genuine, continuous commitment across all levels of the organisation.
* Develop a 'recognise and refer' culture that promotes a positive informed attitude towards mental health with a focus on prevention, early identification and intervention, strategies that support recovery and approaches that encourage people to feel safe and supported to disclose mental health issues.

(Awareness)

* Increase knowledge and awareness of good mental health and wellbeing.
* Increase worker knowledge and awareness of mental health and wellbeing issues and behaviours.
* Increase worker's knowledge and awareness of good mental health and wellbeing and empower workers to take responsibility for their own mental health and wellbeing.
* Improve mental health/ ill health literacy.
* Raise awareness of mental ill-health, its causes and associated factors

(Workplace)

* Enhance the mental health and wellbeing of all workers through the identification and management of organisational risk factors as reasonably practicable arising from the workplace.
* Provide leadership and support that engages workers to build organisational and individual resilience in the workplace particularly to change, stress and work demands.
* Design and manage work to minimise harm.
* Change aspects of the workplace which may adversely affect mental health
* Provide a working environment that promotes and supports the mental health and wellbeing of all workers

(Support)

* Support people who are experiencing mental health difficulties/ mental ill health.
* Provide assistance to workers with mental problems
* Encourage the early recognition of problems by all the workforce
* Provide well-publicised system of support
* Encourage sufferers to seek help at an early stage
* Offer easy access to counselling and other professional help
* Ensure confidentiality to those seeking assistance
* Guarantee job security, sick leave provision, the retention of status and ensure that there is no allocation of blame to those using the support mechanisms
* Ensure that the system is sufficiently flexible to meet varying needs

(Stigma)

* Reduce stigma around depression and anxiety in the workplace.
* Protect the rights of people with a mental illness or a mental health problem and discourage stigma attached to mental illness.
* Foster wellbeing and discourage the stigma attached to mental illness

(Wellness activities)

* Promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
* Promote awareness of key health issues for workers (including mental health and social and emotional wellbeing)
* Enhance organisational factors that are conducive to mental wellbeing
* Provide organisational responses that support mental health and wellbeing.
* To facilitate workers active participation in a range of initiatives that support mental health and wellbeing.
* Encourage life balance and support flexible work arrangements.
* Encourage workers to be more physically active by making provisions in the workplace for activity opportunities (in cluding reducing sitting time where practical)
* Educate the workforce in techniques for coping with pressure and stress
* Encourage workers to self-manage their schedule during business hours, so long as this contributes to the functioning of both the individual and the organization
* Provide healthy eating choices in the workplace through addressing healthy physical settings, and education
* Educate workers around safe alcohol consumption and the health effects of smoking
* Encourage workers to provide input into health and wellbeing initiatives
* Implement a health and wellbeing program incorporating mental health.

(Evaluation)

* Evaluate our programs (measuring objectives).

These objectives sit alongside those in the overarching **{Insert organisation name}** *Work Health and Safety* policy.

## SCOPE

### Option One

This policy applies to all employees of **{Insert organisation name}** , including contractors and casual staff.

### Option Two

This policy applies to all employees of **{Insert organisation name} .**

*Important note*

It is recognised that some groups of individuals performing duties for **{Insert organisation name}** are not employees. These include volunteers, students on work placement and those employed by third parties , for instance contractors and consultants.

With respect to this policy, these groups are covered by this policy **OR - {Insert organisation name}** is undertaking a review of the arrangements of those groups of individuals not classified as employees, but who are engaged to carry out work for, or on behalf of, **{insert organisation name}.** The implementation of any changes to the working arrangements for these groups as a consequence of the release of this policy will be phased in over time.

### Option Three

* This policy will comply with Australia Work Health and Safety legislation and best practice guidelines.
* This policy will be developed in accordance with existing organisational policies and practices such as HR, EEO and WHS.
* This policy will be owned at all levels of the company, developed and implemented across all departments, evaluated and reviewed as appropriate.
* This policy applies to all employees of the organisation.

## PRINCIPLES (OPTIONAL)

**{Choose goals or objectives that are relevant to your organisation}**

This policy is underpinned by the principles that:

Wellness

* Healthy people, who feel safe and valued in their work, are more productive and better able to contribute to the communities in which they work and live.
* Health and wellbeing practices and initiatives align and foster our organisational values.
* **{insert organisation name}** will promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
* **{insert organisation name}** will ensure application of appropriate WHS systems in relation to good mental health and wellbeing.
* **{insert organisation name}** will promote and support opportunities to enhance professional development
* We empower people to manage their own health and wellbeing.
* Programs should be available that address the mental health and wellbeing of all workers.
* All workers are encouraged to be actively engaged in a positive culture across all of our workplaces.

Support for workers

* Our workers are our most important asset and will be reasonably provided with support services required such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) to strengthen mental health and wellbeing.
* Workers are the most important asset of the organisation and will be reasonably provided with any support services required.
* Workers should be adequately supported to achieve their work tasks and career goals.
* Workers should have access to treatment for mental health problems. It is cost -effective for an organisation to ensure the early treatment of workers .
* All workers shall have a clearly defined role within the organisation and a sense of control over the way their work is organized.
* Job design will be appropriate to the individual, with relevant training, supervision and support provided as required.
* {insert organisation name} will support people in the organisation who are experiencing mental health difficulties/ mental ill health.
* {insert organisation name} will provide and promote ease of access to a range of support mechanisms, including confidential counselling, for those in need of personal assistance

Organisational factors

* That we provide a supportive culture that encourages early identification of changes in mental health status and recognises that people can recover and make positive change to their mental health.
* {insert organisation name} will promote a culture of partnership, participation and responsiveness. Open channels of communication will foster positive working relationships and provide clear methods of conflict resolution.
* That we endeavour to reduce organisational factors which may contribute to poor mental health.
* That consideration of mental health and wellbeing issues are part of our risk management practices.
* Managers and supervisors are always available to assist a person who may be experiencing a mental health problem.
* Every worker has the right to participate in a workplace free from harassment or discrimination.
* {insert organisation name} will provide systems that encourage predictable working hours, reasonable workloads and flexible working practices where appropriate.
* {insert organisation name} will improve mental health literacy through education and training at an individual level to improve individual mental health and wellbeing and enable support to others who may have a mental health issue.
* {insert organisation name} will provide a physical environment that is supportive of mental health and wellbeing including a sound, ergonomically designed workstation or work situation with appropriate lighting, noise level, heating, ventilation and adequate facilities for rest breaks .

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**{Choose the responsibilities for management and workers that are relevant to your organisation}**

The **{CEO/ Board with support of the Executive Team}** is responsible for providing overall direction and commitment for this policy.

The **{People and Culture Team/ WHS TEAM}** is responsible for:

* Facilitating the development and delivery of tools, information, training and education as necessary to support the effective implementation of this policy;
* Monitoring the effectiveness of mental health strategies and reporting outcomes to the WHS Management Committee and Executive Team;
* Providing independent and confidential advice and support to managers and workers; and
* Ongoing awareness raising and improving the organisation's literacy of, and capability with mental health and wellbeing.

Managers have a responsibility to:

* Actively support and foster understanding and implementation of this policy and promoting a positive workplace culture;
* Ensure that all workers are made aware of this policy;
* Manage the implementation and review of this policy.
* Developing their capacity to recognise and support workers with mental health problems and illness;
* Understanding and managing, so far as is reasonably practicable, organisational factors that may be a risk to a mentally healthy workplace;
* Adopting a proactive and preventative approach to mental health and wellbeing;
* Engaging in conversations at all levels of **{Insert organisation name}** to build a positive workplace culture.

All workers are encouraged to:

* Understand this policy and seek clarification from management where required
* Consider this policy while completing work-related duties and at any time while representing **{Insert organisation name}**
* Support fellow workers in their awareness of this policy
* Support and contribute to **{Insert organisation name}** ’s aim of providing a mentally healthy and supportive environment for all workers.

All workers have a responsibility to:

* Take reasonable care of their own mental health and wellbeing, including physical health
* Take reasonable care of their own mental health and wellbeing and ensure their acts or omissions do not adversely affect others;
* Take reasonable care that their actions do not affect the health and safety of other people in the workplace.
* Recognise their role in creating and maintaining a mentally healthy workplace;
* Actively engaging in education programs, initiatives and conversations to build a positive workplace environment.
* Recognise and identify mental health and wellbeing issues with their colleagues and supporting colleagues

## COMMUNICATION

**{Insert organisation name}** will ensure that:

* All workers receive a copy of this policy during the induction process
* This policy is easily accessible by all members of the organisation
* Workers are informed when a particular activity aligns with this policy
* Workers are empowered to actively contribute and provide feedback to this policy
* Workers are notified of all changes to this policy.

## IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES (Optional)

Getting started (1-3 months)

* Nominate a designated person or department who shall be responsible for the development, implementation and evaluation of the policy.
* Establish systems to assess the mental health of the organisation. This analysis shall be a prerequisite to any new or changed process and will be monitored and reviewed in accordance with evolution procedures. In assessing the mental health of the organisation the guiding principles of section 4 shall be used as standards against which to measure current organisational culture and practices.
* Formulate objectives that reflect prioritised needs, take account of available resources and provide the baseline for systematic evaluation.
* Prevent, or alter processes, procedures or behaviours that may cause psychological injury or illness to all staff.
* Provide clear information, training and advice on mental health and wellbeing to all workers .
* Provide training for designated staff in the early identification, causes and appropriate management of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, stress and change management .
* Establish systems to promote ease of access to confidential counselling and other appropriate means of support. The development of self-support groups for special needs will be actively encouraged .
* Manage return to work for those who have experienced mental health problems.

## MONITORING AND REVIEW

### Option One

**{Insert organisation name}** will review this policy **{six/twelve}** months after implementation and annually thereafter.

Effectiveness of the policy will be assessed through:

* feedback from workers, the Health and Wellbeing Committee/Co-ordinator (if applicable), and management; and
* review of the policy by management and committee to determine if objectives have been met and to identify barriers and enablers to ongoing policy implementation.

### Option Two

* The policy will be audited, monitored and reviewed in line with existing policies and procedures
* Evaluation will be conducted by those personnel with overall responsibility for this policy.