

# **Mentally Healthy Workplace Policy**



**Australian Government**

**National Mental Health Commission**

---

## Mentally Health Workplace Policy Statement

The National Mental Health Commission (the Commission) is committed to ensuring employees are supported in the workplace to achieve the best possible mental health and wellbeing.

In Australia, one in five people experience mental illness each year and nearly one in two (45%) will experience it in their lifetime. The consequences of mental illness on individuals, their families, communities and the economy are profound.

With most adults spending more of their waking hours at work than anywhere else, workplaces can play an essential part in maintaining positive mental health. Workplaces can give people the opportunity to feel productive and can be a strong contributor to employee wellbeing. However, it can also be a stressful environment that contributes to the rise of mental health problems and illnesses. No workplace is immune from these risks.

As a champion of mentally healthy workplaces across the country and founder of the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance, the Commission is aware of the importance of demonstrating leadership in the workplace. We believe that a mentally healthy workplace not only benefits staff, but is key to organisational success and sustainability. Mentally healthy workplaces deliver higher productivity, increase workforce participation, and enhance social inclusion.

The Commission recognises its obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* to provide a workplace that is both physically and mentally safe and healthy. This policy aims to enhance the Commission's responsibilities to provide a framework based on commitment, risk management, education and training and genuine staff participation and engagement to create a workplace culture that supports positive mental health and wellbeing.

Developing and maintaining a mentally healthy workplace is an ongoing dynamic process in which all employees and managers play a crucial role. In recognition of this, staff will be engaged in the development of a Mentally Healthy Workplace Action Plan to support the implementation of this policy and will periodically review and evaluate its effectiveness.



Ms Maureen Lewis  
Interim Chief Executive Officer  
13 August 2018

---

## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to create a workplace environment that promotes and supports the mental health and wellbeing of all staff.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all staff working at the Commission, including ongoing, non-ongoing, full-time and part-time employees.

## 3. Legislation and Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

1. *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*
2. *Privacy Act 1988*
3. *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
4. *Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 2013*
5. *National Mental Health Commission Work Health and Safety Policy (incorporating Health and Safety Management Arrangements)*
6. *National Mental Health Commission Bullying and Harassment Policy*

## 4. Commitment

The Commission recognises that mental ill-health, and particularly workplace stress, is a work health and safety issue and commits to:

- a) Creating a workplace culture that supports positive mental health and wellbeing.
- b) Proactively identifying and mitigating hazards and risks to mental health.
- c) Providing information, resources and training for staff on mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.
- d) Promoting active, meaningful and effective participation of staff in the workplace.
- e) Supporting employees experiencing mental ill-health.
- f) Maintaining no-tolerance for discrimination, bullying and/or harassment.

## 5. Work Culture

To create a work environment that supports positive mental health and wellbeing, the Commission will:

- a) Set realistic work targets that do not require employees to work unreasonable hours.
- b) Ensure employees have clearly defined job descriptions and individual development plans.
- c) Provide staff with the management support, training and resources necessary to do their jobs.
- d) Set clear expectations of positive workplace behaviour that embody the Commission's Values, APS Values, Employment Principles and Code of Conduct.
- e) Actively manage disrespectful behaviours.
- f) Establish and revise Commission policies and procedures to take appropriate account of mental health and wellbeing.

---

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

Active, meaningful and effective participation of all staff is a key factor in creating a mentally healthy workplace.

### **6.1 Leadership**

The Executive and Directors will:

- a) Promote and implement this policy.
- b) Foster and actively encourage a mentally healthy workplace.
- c) Identify and mitigate hazards and risks to mental health and wellbeing.
- d) Proactively engage with staff and encourage participation.
- e) Engage and support staff to:
  - i. be aware of the importance of mental health and wellbeing.
  - ii. be aware of hazards and risks to mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.
  - iii. provide feedback to help the Commission determine the effectiveness of this policy, related measures, implementation and operation.
  - iv. identify and provide feedback on hazards, risks and areas for improvement.
- f) Take reasonable care of their own mental health and wellbeing, and that of their colleagues.
- g) Seek to continuously improve their knowledge, awareness and understanding of mental health issues and behaviours.

### **6.2 Staff**

Staff will:

- a) Read, understand and comply with this policy.
- b) Actively participate in creating a mentally healthy workplace.
- c) Identify, mitigate and report hazards and risks to mental health and wellbeing.
- d) Take reasonable care of their own mental health and wellbeing, and that of their colleagues.
- e) Seek to continuously improve their knowledge, awareness and understanding of mental health issues and behaviours.

## **7. Identification, assessment and control of risks to mental health and wellbeing**

### **7.1 Work Health and Safety**

The Commission considers psychological risks to be just as significant as physical risks and will ensure that processes are in place to identify, assess and mitigate hazards and risks to mental health and safety (see the Work Health and Safety Policy for further information).

The Commission will include an assessment of potential hazards and risks to psychological health and safety as part of its Work Health and Safety risk assessment processes. To identify potential risks to psychological health and safety and the efficacy of control measures the Commission may make use of information such as:

- a) Organisational policies and plans.
- b) Aggregated HR information such as relating to: rates of absenteeism and turnover, return to work, workers compensation claims, review of incident reports/worker complaints/investigations.
- c) Employee surveys and feedback.
- d) Legislation and regulation (e.g. relating to WHS, workers compensation or the APS Code of Conduct).

- 
- e) Research, audits or industry-best practice guides.

## **7.2 Mentally Healthy Workplace Action Plan**

Developing a collective vision of a mentally healthy workplace, articulating specific goals for reaching the vision, and a plan for ongoing monitoring and continual improvement is critical to enabling a mentally healthy workplace.

The Commission will develop an Action Plan to identify, implement, monitor and review initiatives to support positive mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. The Action Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure continual improvement.

### Guide to the Action Plan

- a) The Action Plan will be developed, implemented and revised by staff.
- b) Staff can volunteer to participate in a group to develop, implement and revise the Action Plan.
- c) Participating staff will nominate a Chair to manage meetings and all processes associated with the Action Plan. The Chair can delegate responsibilities to other participating staff.
- d) All actions under the Action Plan must be endorsed by the Chief Operating Officer and approved by the Chief Executive Officer, and must be consistent with the Commission's Vision, Mission and Values; NMHC Enterprise Agreement; legislation, policy and procedure and operational requirements.
- e) Updates on the Action Plan will be provided at staff meetings.

## **8. Confidentiality**

The Commission will ensure individuals' confidentiality and privacy is respected and protected.

Where discussion of psychological hazards in the workplace takes place – whether between the Work Health and Safety Representative and the Chief Operating Officer or any other persons – the confidentiality of all persons shall be respected. Wherever appropriate identifying markers shall be removed from meeting minutes.

Where surveys are conducted, responses will be anonymous and surveys will only be conducted following consultation with staff.

## **9. Education, training and communication**

Improving employee knowledge, awareness and understanding of mental health issues and behaviours is key to reducing stigma and creating a culture that supports positive mental health and wellbeing. Further to this, the Commission will:

- a) Provide information about workplace factors that affect mental health and wellbeing, and specifically how to reduce hazards and risks and how to enhance factors that promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- b) Ensure managers have access to information and training about managing mental health in the workplace.
- c) Provide all employees with access to Mental Health First Aid training.
- d) Communicate to workers about mental health related policies and plans – including making these easily accessible on TRIM and, where appropriate, on the Commission's website.
- e) Communicate to workers and other stakeholders the processes and services available should issues arise that might impact mental health and wellbeing.

---

## **10.Support for employees experiencing mental ill-health**

Work can play a key role in a person's recovery from mental illness. Providing support to workers is central to this as well as to creating an open, inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued and supported.

The Commission is committed to providing effective support to workers and will:

- a) Ensure workers experiencing mental ill-health are treated fairly and consistently.
- b) Provide non-judgemental and proactive support to employees experiencing mental ill-health or stress.
- c) Recognise that while employees are encouraged to talk to their managers about their mental health, they are under no obligation to do so.
- d) Support the establishment and maintenance of Personal Situation Plans for staff who choose to use one.
- e) Encourage all employees, through the provision of information and training, to recognise and respond appropriately to early signs of distress or deterioration in a person's mental health.
- f) Make reasonable adjustments to support employees who are experiencing a mental health condition. These are any form of assistance or adjustments that are necessary, possible and reasonable and that reduce or eliminate barriers to work, provided that the person is able to fulfil the core requirements of their job.
- g) In cases of long-term absence and when appropriate, develop a coordinated Return to Work Plan in consultation with the employee and the treating medical practitioner.
- h) Ensure employees are aware of the professional counselling and assistance available through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Counselling accessed through EAP is free, voluntary and confidential and can be accessed for any reason including relationships, work/life balance, stress, anxiety or depression. Our provider is Converge International, who can be reached on 1300 687 327.
- i) Treat all matters relating to the mental health of individual employees in the strictest confidence and share only on a 'need to know' basis with the consent of the person concerned.

## **11. Bullying, harassment and discrimination**

### **11.1 General**

Discrimination, bullying and harassment can have a devastating effect on mental health and wellbeing, resulting in psychological and emotional stress not only on the individual or group targeted but also on teams and bystanders. The Commission has zero tolerance for these behaviours and will:

- a) Provide all leaders with access to training to help them recognise the signs of bullying, enforce anti-bullying policies, and understand that ignoring bullying behaviour will not be tolerated.
- b) Provide information and access to training to all staff on what they can do to prevent and respond to workplace bullying.
- c) Develop and encourage respectful workplace relationships through good management practices and communication.
- d) Include bullying and harassment information in workplace induction programs.
- e) Provide regular and honest performance feedback in a respectful way.
- f) Encourage employees talk to their manager or the Harassment Contact Officer if they feel they are being bullied or see inappropriate behaviour taking place.



---

See the Commission's Prevention of Bullying & Harassment in the Workplace Policy for further detail.

### 11.2 Harassment Contact Officer (HCO)

The HCO is a voluntary member of staff who provides information, support and raises awareness about bullying and harassment. The HCO:

- a) Provides information – including definitions, options for resolution, the complaints process and how they can assist.
- b) Receives and makes reports relating to bullying and harassment.
- c) Supports staff through resolution processes and makes referrals.

The HCO *does not* resolve complaints. See section 10.4 of the Prevention of Bullying & Harassment in the Workplace Policy for further detail.

## 12. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually to determine whether objectives are being met and to identify barriers and enablers to ongoing implementation. Reviews will be informed by feedback from staff.

## 13. Further resources

For further information and guidance on mental health and wellbeing in the workplace please see:

- [Heads Up – the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance](#)
- [Working together: promoting mental health and wellbeing at work](#) – Australian Public Service Commission
- [Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers](#) - Australian Human Rights Commission
- [The Mental Health First Aid Program](#)

Version	Release Date	Consultation	Drafted by	Authorisation
1.0	August 2018	All Staff	Senior Projects Officer	Interim CEO