



Feedback that has informed the National Workplace Initiative Blueprint for Mentally Healthy Workplaces, Release 2

Background
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Blueprint for Mentally Healthy Workplaces was released on 15 September 2021 on the National Mental Health Commission's engagement platform and promoted widely through the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance and other stakeholder partners of the National Workplace Initiative (NWI).• The NWI Blueprint is a living document that will be iterated over time based on consultation. People were invited to give feedback on Release 1 of the Blueprint, with formal feedback closing on 26 November 2021.• Release 2 of the Blueprint for Mentally Healthy Workplaces in July 2022 presents an updated vision of mentally healthy workplaces that can be shared by all organisations across Australia.• This discussion paper shares the key feedback received on the NWI Blueprint and how this input has been incorporated into Release 2.• We also highlight some areas of ongoing discussion that may be of interest to others seeking to support organisations in creating mentally healthy workplaces.
Summary of feedback
<p>Strengths of the Blueprint</p> <p>Overall, the feedback to Release 1 was very positive. Some specific strengths included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managing to present complex ideas related to mental health and wellbeing in a format that was approachable and easy to understand.• Using graphic design and illustration as a powerful tool for engaging readers and communicating complex concepts.• Adopting a focus that extended beyond the traditional “mental illness lens” to consider the broader nature of mentally healthy workplaces.• Successfully pulling together multidisciplinary aspects of mentally healthy workplaces (e.g., human resources, occupational health and safety, organisational psychology) into a holistic and clear picture.• Acknowledging the different needs of different workplaces, such as across size, industry and location.• Similarly, presenting a vision for what mentally healthy workplace can look like for workplaces of different sizes.• Highlighting continual improvement and moving attention away from silver bullets or single-focused interventions.• Focusing on organisation-level responses (e.g., work design) and moving away from a primary focus on individual-level interventions.
<p>Areas for improvement</p> <p>Feedback also highlighted some specific areas for improvement including:</p>

- The difference between legislated requirements and more aspirational aspects of mentally healthy workplaces needs to be more clearly differentiated.
- It is important to orient workplaces to start with legislated requirements first rather than suggesting they could start at any of the pillars. For instance, workplaces starting their journey should start with “Protect” rather than “Promote”.
- Enhance how the need for a systems-level approach to creating mentally healthy workplaces is communicated, including representing the different layers of factors that shape workplaces (e.g., policy, funding, legislation, industry-level groups).
- List or refer to lists of common psychosocial hazards in the workplace so readers can understand more about what this term includes.
- Clarify the language used in the Blueprint – e.g., leadership, work design.
- Seek to ensure more equal attention is provided across the three pillars, with the Promote pillar in particular seen as requiring further detail.
- Ensure the potential actions in the three pillars prioritise organisation-level approaches over actions focused on supporting individuals.
- Clarify and highlight the value of consultation with workers and their representatives.

Changes incorporated in Release 2

Based on the feedback received and following further consultation with a range of groups from business, industry, union, academia, workplace health and mental health organisations, new changes were introduced to Release 2. These include:

- Clarifying organisations’ legal obligations through text changes and the introduction of a new graphic icon that calls attention to mandatory versus aspirational elements.
- Clarifying that legislated requirements are a good place for organisations to start, and these are concentrated in the Protect and Respond pillars.
- Expanding on the complex systems-level approach through a new full-page graphic that illustrates the national and international events, policies, attitudes and trends that can create challenges.
- Linking readers to further information on psychosocial hazards including examples of common hazards.
- Further refining the language used in the Blueprint – both through clarifications in the body of the document and introducing new terms to the Glossary.
- Adjusting the level of detail across the pillars to ensure greater parity, with further elaboration in the Promote pillar.
- Ensuring actions in the pillars are organised by organisation level first following by individual level.
- Further highlighting the value of consultation with workers throughout the Blueprint.

Ongoing issues to consider

The consultation on Release 1 also highlighted areas of divergent views around key issues that have been a common theme throughout the National Workplace Initiative. These areas represent ongoing tensions to be considered in future iterations of the Blueprint:

- Balancing the need to reflect uniform requirements (e.g., meeting legal obligations) and a “nationally consistent approach” with an acknowledgement that every workplace is likely to require a different approach.
- Needing to balance the importance of including aspirational elements in the NWI Blueprint without overwhelming readers who may be at the beginning of their journey.
- Providing enough detail and examples to complement the principles-based approach without these being read as a comprehensive list of examples.
- Acknowledging and capturing the complexity of the legislative and policy landscape and how these influence workplaces while not overwhelming organisations or being seen to give legal advice.

- Acknowledging that there are factors outside the direct control of organisations that impact mental health (e.g., tender deadlines, supply chain challenges, litigious nature of some industries) that need to be acknowledged, managed and mitigated.
- Balancing the need for global principles with acknowledging unique needs or circumstances of specific population groups or audiences, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Adopting a tone that balances the negatives (e.g., highlighting the harms that occur in mentally unhealthy workplaces) with the positives (e.g., highlighting the benefits and gains from mentally healthy workplaces).
- Using technical language where required (e.g., terms with specific legislative or regulatory meaning) without sounding academic or abstract.
- Finding consistent language to use throughout resources without isolating some audiences. An example of this is whether to refer to businesses, organisations, workplaces, enterprises, entities as where people work.

Next steps

- The Blueprint for Mentally Healthy Workplaces Release 2 is available for feedback until 30 November 2022.
- Go to <https://haveyoursay.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/blueprint-for-mentally-healthy-workplaces>