



# Managing mental health in your business

Preventing People Problems

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According to the Australian Government's National Mental Health Commission, it is estimated one-sixth of the working age population suffers from symptoms of mental illness.

Relationship breakdowns, financial worries, grief, and many other issues can be the trigger.

Poor mental health is not always obvious. Although conversations around mental health are now becoming more commonplace in society, a stigma remains leaving some people opting to suffer in silence.

Ongoing issues left unsupported can result in increased absences from work, leading to financial losses for a business and extra strain placed on those covering for absent colleagues.

## Your legal obligation

Employers have a legal obligation to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of their staff. Failing to adequately address mental health in your business can lead to a disability discrimination claim, which can result in a damaging employment tribunal.

But even more important than this is the fact that happy and healthy staff are more productive.

## A mentally healthy workplace

Company culture can impact workplace well-being.

Leading by example and fostering a mentally healthy workplace, which leaves no room for stigma or discrimination, lets employees know that they are respected and working in a safe space.

Without being intrusive or presumptuous, employers need to address and tackle mental health matters in their workplace. Don't worry, there is support available to help with this.



## Employee Assistance

You may feel as though you are not the best person to speak with an employee who is experiencing poor mental health. Fortunately there are resources available to help you take care of your staff and your business.

Providing accessible support services to your employees through an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) can ensure that your staff receive confidential advice from an independent and qualified specialist. Support can be made available through a free phoneline and email, as well as face-to-face counselling sessions.

Implementing an Employee Assistance Programme can help you feel prepared and can reassure your employees that support is available should they need it.



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## Mental health first aid

There is already a requirement for companies to carry out a stress risk assessment. But in addition to that, the government is recommending that a mental health first aider is trained. This provides practical support to employees and can encourage conversations that they may be reluctant to have with their line manager.

Mental health first aid training introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health concerns. It builds understanding of their impact and provides an overview of common treatments.

Through role-playing and simulations, it demonstrates how to assess a mental health crisis; select interventions; provide initial help; and connect people to professional, peer and social support as well as self-help resources.

Mental health first aid encourages early detection and intervention. It teaches participants about the signs and symptoms of specific illnesses like anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, eating disorders and addictions.

## Take care of yourself too

Running a business can be stressful. If your moods are becoming more irritable, you have difficulty sleeping or you find things are getting too much, it is time to get help before you become ill.

## Get support for your business

There are costs associated with the mismanagement of workplace mental health.

Our experienced HR advisers will take the time to listen to the unique needs of your business and provide expert advice on how best you can support your employees and manage mental health in your business.

If you'd like to know more about EAPs, mental health first aid training or how you can implement a health and well-being policy in your business, contact your local HR Dept today.

## Further resources for mental health support

[www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au)

[www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)

[www.embracementalhealth.org.au](http://www.embracementalhealth.org.au)

[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

[www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)

[www.ruok.org.au](http://www.ruok.org.au)



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