



Appendix 2

Give Where You Live Foundation WorkWell Learning Network Safe and Empowering Workplaces

The Work Care Factor Action Research Study

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1.0 Executive Summary

Give Where You Live's (GWYL) Safe and Empowering Workplaces project was funded by WorkSafe to engage Geelong based employers and young people in a co-design initiative to support the development of inclusive and mentally healthy workplace environments for young people. It commenced in August 2019 with a face-to-face meeting to discuss common workplace issues, and concluded with young people, businesses and key stakeholders reflecting on the co-design approach and resulting outcomes and exploring next steps at a breakfast on the 15th December 2021.

The key output is www.workcarefactor.com.au – an interactive digital resource designed to be used in the workplace by managers, workers and young people. The development of the resource was undertaken in three Cycles. Co-design 1 resulted in the production of the prototype, Co-design 2 progressed the prototype into a full minimum viable product and Co-design 3 supported the trial of Work Care Factor, gaining feedback from a wide range of businesses, young people and stakeholders and adapting the resource accordingly.

Sitting alongside the Co-design Cycles is the Safe and Empowering Workplaces Work Care Factor Action Research Study. The Study has interrogated the available literature on mental health and wellbeing in the workplace as it relates to *the factors that are critical for a workplace in providing safety for emotional health and wellbeing of young employees* and drawn conclusions about the validity of the approach taken by Safe and Empowering Workplaces Project and the resulting Work Care Factor resource.

The Study finds that poor mental health and wellbeing “is one of the leading causes of sickness absence and long-term work incapacity in Australia (and in most developed countries)”, impacting significantly on workplace productivity and leading to increased costs of doing business. In addition, the Study finds that mental health and wellbeing of workers is impacted by poor workplace culture and that “an inclusive and supportive workplace leads to improved quality of work life for workers, increased productivity and reduced absenteeism and presenteeism”.²

Whilst little of the available literature differentiates, in terms of good practice attributes for business, between young workers and workers more generally, two thirds of Geelong businesses participating in GWYL's GROW network reported having to deal with mental health in the workplace and articulated the need to pay particular attention to supporting and strengthening the emotional health and wellbeing of their young employees.

By embedding the voice of young people and employers, Work Care Factor brings highly practical models, scenarios, resources, and templates to support the creation and maintenance of emotionally healthy and well workplaces.

¹ Developing a mentally healthy workplace: A review of the literature A report for the National Mental Health Commission and the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance Prepared by Dr Samuel B Harvey 1,2 Ms Sadhbh Joyce 1 Ms Leona Tan 1 Dr Anya Johnson 3 Dr Helena Nguyen 3 Mr Matthew Modini 1 Dr Markus Groth 3 1. School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia 2. Black Dog Institute, Sydney, Australia 3. Australian School of Business, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia November 2014

² Becher, H., & Dollard, M.F. (2016). Psychosocial safety climate and better productivity in Australian workplaces: costs, productivity, presenteeism, absenteeism



2.0 Background

The aim of Give Where You Live (GWYL) Foundation is to address one of the most complex and entrenched social issues in our community – disadvantage. Since 1954, the Give Where You Live Foundation has been bringing together individual community donors, corporate supporters and community partners to help achieve its mission.

In 2019 GWYL founded the WorkWell Learning Network (WWLN). The WWLN involves 18 local Small/Medium Businesses and service organisations across industry sectors. With funding from WorkSafe, the WWLN is working with Small/Medium Businesses in the G21 Region on implementing the Safe and Empowering Workplaces Project to co-design interventions that support inclusive and mentally healthy workplace environments for young people.

The project approach had three Co-design Cycles and the following six phases:

- ❑ Problem Identification
- ❑ Problem-Solving
- ❑ Technical Advice
- ❑ Prototype Testing and Feedback
- ❑ Technical Refinement
- ❑ Resources Developed

The outcome of Co-design Cycle 1 was the design and development of an open-source prototype of a resource that aims to raise awareness, and support for the creation of safe places for discussions about emotional health and wellbeing issues experienced by young employees within small/medium business workplaces in Geelong and the broader G21 region.

In Co-design Cycle 2 the prototype was developed into a minimum viable product – www.workcarefactor.com.au - a digital tool to help identify workplace problems, start conversations about the emotional health and wellbeing of young people in the workplace, and find related resources to assist workplaces make change.

Co-design 2 and 3:

- ❑ Engaged youth and businesses to develop and determine key messages that seek to respond to the following key (draft) questions:
 - What do young people want businesses to know?
 - What do businesses think they need to know?
 - What does it mean to be a safe, mentally healthy workplace?
- ❑ Raised awareness and increase understanding of youth mental health within the workplace.
- ❑ Developed resource/s that have the capacity to stimulate attitude / behaviour change.

To ensure that the co-designed prototypes and resources are evidence based and meet best practice GWYL has commissioned a research project - **Safe and Empowering Workplaces Action Research Study**. The research seeks to answer the following question: *“What factors are critical for a workplace in providing safety for the emotional health and wellbeing of young employees?”*



3.0 Emotional Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace

3.1 Understanding Emotional Health and Wellbeing

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) mental health is defined as “**a state of well-being in which every individual realises 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**”.³ WHO believes that “mental health is essential to our overall well-being and is as important as physical health. It is not merely the absence of mental illness but rather a state of well-being”.⁴

Australia’s National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan has taken a similarly inclusive approach by describing mental health as creating the conditions in which individuals can achieve their potential.⁵ Organisations such as Veterans MATES describes mental fitness and emotional wellbeing generally as being “when we are able to recognise our strengths and abilities, able to cope with the stresses of life, able to build strong relationships and able to contribute to our family and community.”⁶

In an environment that supports emotional health and wellbeing human beings feel included, safe to learn, safe to contribute, and safe to challenge the status quo—all without fear of being embarrassed, marginalized, or punished in some way.⁷

3.2 The Prevalence of Mental Health and Wellbeing Issues

Poor mental health and wellbeing “is one of the leading causes of sickness absence and long-term work incapacity in Australia (and in most developed countries⁸) and is one of the main health related reasons for reduced work performance.”⁹

Around 45% of Australians aged between 16 and 85 will experience a mental illness at some point in their life, while one in five (20%) Australian adults¹⁰ and more than one in four among young people aged 16-24 years (26.4%)¹¹ experience a mental health issue in any one year.

³ Mental health (who.int)

⁴ Mental well-being: resources for the public (who.int)

⁵ Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System, Interim Report 2019, Penny Armytage, Chair, Professor Allan Fels AO, Commissioner, Dr Alex Cockram, Commissioner, Professor Bernadette McSherry, Commissioner

⁶ <https://www.veteransmates.net.au/topic-49>, Talking about mental fitness - it's OK (Apr 2015)

⁷ Leader Factor, Four Stages of Psychological Safety Results Summary Team: undefined Survey: undefined Generated September 17th 2020,

⁸ Developing a mentally healthy workplace: A review of the literature A report for the National Mental Health Commission and the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance Prepared by Dr Samuel B Harvey 1,2 Ms Sadhbh Joyce 1 Ms Leona Tan 1 Dr Anya Johnson 3 Dr Helena Nguyen 3 Mr Matthew Modini 1 Dr Markus Groth 3 1. School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia 2. Black Dog Institute, Sydney, Australia 3. Australian School of Business, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia November 2014

⁹ Developing a mentally healthy workplace: A review of the literature A report for the National Mental Health Commission and the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance Prepared by: Dr Samuel B Harvey 1,2 Ms Sadhbh Joyce 1 Ms Leona Tan 1 Dr Anya Johnson 3 Dr Helena Nguyen 3 Mr Matthew Modini 1 Dr Markus Groth 3 1. School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia 2. Black Dog Institute, Sydney, Australia 3. Australian School of Business, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia November 2014

¹⁰ Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010 Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers, Page 4

¹¹ National Report 2019 Community and Service Provider Consultations, 2016-18



Young people, themselves, identify mental health as the most important issue in Australia today. Concerns about their mental health have tripled since 2011¹² and suicide is now the leading cause of death for people aged 5-17.¹³

Nationally, 30 per cent of females, and approximately 21 per cent of males, aged 15–24 experience a mental health condition—the highest of any age group. Younger people experiencing mental illness do so during a crucial period of life when they are acquiring an education, forming important social relationships and setting a course for their later income-earning ability.¹⁴

Higher than average rates of mental health conditions are also experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The impact of colonisation, racism, discrimination, marginalisation and the compounding impact of intergenerational trauma have had a profound and enduring impact on mental health outcomes for Aboriginal people.¹⁵

Victorian's adult LGBTIQ+ population also experiences very high levels of anxiety, depression and psychological distress, 24.4 per cent in comparison with 15.4 per cent of the total Victorian population.¹⁶

The Australian Human Rights Commission highlights that mental health problems are the third biggest health problem in Australia, after heart disease and cancer.¹⁷

3.3 Mental-ill Health in Barwon South-West Region

Mental ill-health is considered one of the biggest challenges facing individuals and the community in the Barwon South-West region.¹⁸ In 2019 the Western Primary Health Network (PHN) estimated that 100,627 people in the broader region (16% of the population) experience a mental illness.¹⁹

Whilst the PHN doesn't hold data on emotional health and wellbeing specifically related to the workforce it highlights that there is a significant gap in life expectancy for people with mental illness (16 years for males and 12 years for females) in the region, that females in the rural areas are 24% more likely to seek mental health treatment compared to their metropolitan counterparts, male suicide rates are high in the region and the rate of prescriptions dispensed for antidepressant medications for people aged 18 to 64 years is above the Victorian and Australian average.²⁰ In addition, the PHN identifies that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the broader region have increased rates of psychological distress, mental illness, hospital admissions and suicide but make fewer claims for psychologists and psychiatrists compared to non-indigenous Australians.²¹

¹² <http://getgrowing.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GRW007-H-Get-Growing-Final.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.tacsi.org.au/mentalhealth/>, The future of mental health, Four actions to transform Australia's mental health

¹⁴ Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Interim Report 2019, Penny Armytage, Chair, Professor Allan Fels AO, Commissioner, Dr Alex Cockram, Commissioner, Professor Bernadette McSherry, Commissioner

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ Needs Assessment Report 2019 Western Victoria Primary Health Network

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ Needs Assessment Report 2019 Western Victoria Primary Health Network



Access to targeted primary mental health care is limited in rural and remote communities,²² with the PHN identifying that there are also “limited culturally sensitive and specialist mental health services for vulnerable groups in particular, such as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people.”²³

In response to COVID19, PHN is supporting GenU to introduce service that provides interventions for people being impacted by low intensity mental health issues²⁴ or who are at risk of, mild mental health conditions. These services are delivered from GenU’s sites across Western Victoria. The evidence-based, staged services for people experiencing mild symptoms or low levels of distress for a short period of time.²⁵ The PHN and GenU make it clear that these services are not appropriate for those who require intensive psychological interventions.²⁶

3.4 Workplace Factors Impacting on Mental Health and Wellbeing

Every Australian business has a legal and moral responsibility to provide a safe and fair workplace. A workplace that prioritises the emotional health and wellbeing of its workers leads to reduced absenteeism, increased employee engagement and improved productivity.²⁷

A healthy workplace can be conceptualised as one in which action is taken to minimise the potential negative impact of risk factors on an individual’s emotional health and wellbeing, whilst fostering protective or resilience factors.²⁸ In a healthy workplace there is a positive work culture where stress, heavy workloads, unrealistic deadlines and poor communication are managed, there is zero tolerance for discrimination and employees are encouraged to stay at or return to work²⁹ when experiencing emotional health and wellbeing issues, including mental ill health and diagnosed mental illness.

In creating and sustaining a healthy workplace it is useful to look at the factors that have been identified as key to contributing to creating and sustaining a strong positive workplace culture where the emotional health and well-being of the workforce, and in particular young people in the workforce, is a priority.

Many institutions and organisations globally have identified factors that they consider are either key to sustaining the emotional health and wellbeing of a workforce or risk factors associated with poor workplace mental health.

²² National Report 2019 Community and Service Provider Consultations, 2016-18

²³ Needs Assessment Report 2019 Western Victoria Primary Health Network

²⁴ [genU | Mental Health Support](#)

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Developing a mentally healthy workplace: A review of the literature A report for the National Mental Health Commission and the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance Prepared by Dr Samuel B Harvey 1,2 Ms Sadhbh Joyce 1 Ms Leona Tan 1 Dr Anya Johnson 3 Dr Helena Nguyen 3 Mr Matthew Modini 1 Dr Markus Groth 3 1. School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia 2. Black Dog Institute, Sydney, Australia 3. Australian School of Business, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia November 2014

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ A Strategic Approach to Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing G21 Network 12th November 2020 Tanya Heaney-Voogt Mentally Healthy Workplaces Strategy Specialist Director, Wombarra Consulting Georgie Chapman Workplace Health & Safety Lawyer Partner, HR Legal



WorkSafe Victoria has identified ten Workplace Factors³⁰ (Table 1) as critical for consideration when addressing issues related to the emotional health and wellbeing of young people in the workforce. The GWYL WorkWell Learning Network, in implementing the Safe and Empowering Workplaces project,³¹ agreed to specifically focus on six of the WorkSafe Workplace Factors.

Table 1: WorkSafe Workplace Factors Focus for Safe & Empowering Workplaces

WorkSafe Workplace Factors	Focus for Safe & Empowering Workplaces Project
Workplace Relationships	Poor Workplace Relationships
Recognition and Reward	Low Recognition and Reward
Job Control	Low Job Control
Job Clarity	Low Job Clarity
High and Low Job Demands	High and Low Job Demands
Support	Poor Support
Organisational Change Management	
Organisational Justice	
Environmental Conditions	
Isolated workers	

Attachment 2 compares the WorkSafe identified Workplace Factors with those identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO)³², The Black Dog institution³³, The National Mental Health Commission³⁴, the Australian Human Rights Commission³⁵, HeadsUp³⁶ and KPMG³⁷ to determine whether there is a level of consistency between the organisations and the factors each has identified.

Identifying Workplace Factors is useful to understanding the risk components to a strong supportive workplace culture. By taking a holistic and systematic approach to identifying and acting on the changes that need to be made, including addressing any manifestations of unconscious bias³⁸, a business will have a greater chance of embedding the prioritisation of emotional health and wellbeing into its workplace culture.

³⁰ <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/workwell>

³¹ GWYL WorkWell Learning Network Safe and Empowering Workplaces project submission

³² The World Health Organisation (WHO), https://www.who.int/mental_health/in_the_workplace/en/,

³³ The Black Dog Institute, <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/5-workplacewellbeing.pdf>

³⁴ <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/Mental-health-Reform/National-Workplace-Initiative>

³⁵ Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010 Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers, Page 4

³⁶ Creating a mentally healthy workplace A guide for managers, HeadsUp, Better Mental Health in the Workplace.

³⁷ Supporting Leaders to create psychologically safe workplaces, prepared for Worksafe Victoria, August 2020, KPMG

³⁸ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ericmosley/2019/11/05/how-to-identify-and-mitigate-unconscious-bias-in-the-workplace/#7bebad13600a>



4.0 The Impact of COVID19

COVID-19 – the novel coronavirus disease that originated in Wuhan, China - reached the level of a pandemic in early 2020. Millions of people all over the world contracted the disease, with death rates highest amongst the elderly and people with pre-existing medical conditions. New strains of the disease are continuing to emerge. In the wake of this global health crisis, stringent public health measures, including public lockdowns, have been implemented to curtail the spread of the disease. Vaccinations are well underway in Australia with the expectation that a sufficiently high level of vaccination in the community will lead to a *more normal* life.

Research and studies on the impact of COVID, in particular on the mental health and wellbeing of Australians, are starting to emerge. Also emerging is evidence that the enforcement of COVID spread suppression rules relating to freedom of movement, mask wearing and scanning, and emerging rules relating to the freedoms for those who are vaccinated versus those who are not, in sectors such as retail and hospitality, is exposing young workers to abuse from some customers.

4.1 Findings from Early Lockdown

Early reports identified that:

- People who were very worried about contracting COVID-19 were more likely to report clinically significant symptoms of depression and anxiety, thoughts that they would be better off dead, and irritability.
- People for whom the restrictions had exerted a highly negative impact on daily life were more likely to report clinically significant signs of depression and anxiety, thoughts of self-harm, and increased irritability
- Optimism was more common among people without direct experience of COVID-19, those who had not lost jobs, and people who did not find the COVID-19 restrictions too difficult.³⁹

People who were especially vulnerable to mental health problems during the COVID-19 restrictions were women and people aged 18–29 years; people living in regional and rural areas or in the lowest socio-economic positions, and those not in paid employment before the pandemic; people who had lost jobs or opportunities for study; people living alone, who have fewer opportunities for daily interactions with family and friends; and people whose main occupation is to provide unpaid care for children or other dependent family members.⁴⁰ Other populations identified at higher risk of adverse mental health outcomes, include patients with COVID-19 and their families, individuals with existing physical or psychiatric morbidity, and healthcare workers.⁴¹

³⁹ Mental health of people in Australia in the first month of COVID-19 restrictions: a national survey Jane RW Fisher, Thach D Tran, Karin Hammarberg, Jayagowri Sastry, Hau Nguyen, Heather Rowe, Sally Popplestone, Ruby Stocker, Claire Stubber and Maggie Kirkman

⁴⁰ Mental health of people in Australia in the first month of COVID-19 restrictions: a national survey Jane RW Fisher, Thach D Tran, Karin Hammarberg, Jayagowri Sastry, Hau Nguyen, Heather Rowe, Sally Popplestone, Ruby Stocker, Claire Stubber and Maggie Kirkman

⁴¹ [COVID-19 and mental health: A review of the existing literature \(nih.gov\)](#) Asian J Psychiatr. 2020 Aug; 52: 102066., Ravi Phillip Rajkumar



A CSIRO wellbeing survey (June 2020) of almost 4000 community members, uncovered that almost half (41%) of Australians emerged from the first lockdown with their emotional wellbeing affected. The study found significantly higher scores in one or more psychological distress states for females, single people, those in lower socioeconomic areas, or with a chronic illness.⁴²

4.2 In and Out of Lockdown

The long-term mental health impact of COVID-19 may take some time to become fully apparent and managing this will likely require a concerted effort not just from psychiatrists but from the health care system and other systems at large.⁴³

The findings of a recent study published by Frontiers found, however, markedly elevated rates of depression and anxiety, even among individuals with no current diagnosis⁴⁴ and the Psychiatry Journal, in May 2021, reported that researchers found evidence of a substantial impact on the mental health of young adults due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with a significant rise in depression symptoms and a reduction in overall wellbeing during lockdown compared to the previous autumn. Levels of clinical depression in those surveyed were found to have more than doubled, rising from 14.9 per cent in autumn 2019 to 34.7 per cent in May/June 2020.⁴⁵ Researchers identified a significant shift towards 'eveningness' (a preference to go to sleep and wake later), which has previously been associated with higher levels of anxiety and a greater prevalence of minor psychiatric disorders.⁴⁶

In September 2021 the OECD reported on a global survey of 15–24-year-olds that showed their greatest concerns are the toll the pandemic is taking on their mental health, employment prospects and education. Young people are reporting that coronavirus has made their mental health worse. Isolation and loneliness have been exacerbated by working and/or learning from home and restrictions from socialising during extended lockdowns.⁴⁷

4.3 Out of Lockdown – and living with COVID19

With vaccinations now available to young people and the number of vaccinated in the community over 90% (+ 12 in Victoria) the pathway beyond COVID19 is becoming clearer. The longer-term impact of COVID and lockdowns is complex, however, with some of the effects on young people not yet fully understood. In addition to isolation and loneliness, young people are moving into work without the same exposure to work experience as pre-COVID. Lower numbers of young people have moved into traineeships and apprenticeships because of the issues related to onboarding during lockdowns, many are now facing the isolation of working from home or working in a hybrid environment and many are in roles where they are required to enforce social distancing, masks and signing in.

⁴² News GP, 16th June 2020, [RACGP - COVID-19, healthy habits and emotional wellbeing](#)

⁴³ [COVID-19 and mental health: A review of the existing literature \(nih.gov\)](#) Asian J Psychiatr. 2020 Aug; 52: 102066., Ravi Philip Rajkumar

⁴⁴ [Frontiers | The Effect of COVID-19 on Mental Health and Wellbeing in a Representative Sample of Australian Adults | Psychiatry \(frontiersin.org\)](#)

⁴⁵ 25-May-2021, [Maintain Your Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing During Covid Pandemic \(newswise.com\)](#)

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ [Mental health, unemployment and education – COVID concerns for the young | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](#)



Many life trajectories are set in place during adolescence and young adulthood. Hence, there is a need for ongoing comprehensive monitoring of the impact of COVID19 on young people's wellbeing. Areas of particular interest for monitoring include wellbeing, including mental wellbeing, access to educational choices after secondary school, education attainment, achievement and outcomes, longer term outcomes for young people; for example, the potential consequences of unemployment on their long-term employment prospects and finances, their access to secure housing, and their mental health and variation in outcomes for different population groups.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ [Australia's youth: COVID-19 and the impact on young people - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(aihw.gov.au\)](https://aihw.gov.au)



5.0 Business Case for a Caring Workplace

There are three compelling reasons for small to medium size businesses to ensure that they support the emotional health and wellbeing of their staff in the workplace. These reasons are:

- ❑ In Australia, businesses have a legal obligation to provide a safe workplace for their employees.
- ❑ Direct business costs - financial, productivity and reputational costs of not providing a supportive workplace culture are high.
- ❑ The opportunity gain is high for a workplace that supports its employees' emotional health and wellbeing.

5.1 Legal Obligation

Employers have a legal obligation to provide a safe workplace, including a psychologically safe environment, for employees. Under the Victorian state's Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004⁴⁹ employers obligations include to "eliminate and minimise risks to health & safety (as far as reasonably practicable), monitor the health of employees (in Section 5 of the Act, health is defined as including psychological health), not discriminate due to disability (including mental health and wellbeing), provide 'reasonable adjustments' for employees, prevent disclosure of health information and prevent repeated unreasonable behaviour that is a risk to health and safety".⁵⁰

With respect to eliminating and minimising risks to health and safety, employers are required under the law to proactively identify hazards and eliminate risks not just manage the consequences. Risk minimisation and mitigation involves:

- ❑ Identifying possible workplace practices, actions or incidents which may cause, or contribute to, the mental illness of workers
- ❑ Taking actions to eliminate or minimise these risks.⁵¹

In identifying and taking workplace actions employers need to understand their obligations under three sets of legislation:

- ❑ **Occupational Health and Safety legislation** requires employers to ensure the workplace is safe and healthy for all workers and does not cause ill health or aggravate existing conditions.
- ❑ **Disability discrimination legislation** requires employers to ensure the workplace does not discriminate against or harass workers with mental illness.
- ❑ **Privacy legislation** requires employers to ensure personal information about a worker's mental health status is not disclosed to anyone without the worker's consent."⁵²

⁴⁹ <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/occupational-health-and-safety-act-and-regulations>

⁵⁰ A Strategic Approach to Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing G21 Network 12th November 2020 Tanya Heaney-Voogt Mentally Healthy Workplaces Strategy Specialist Director, Wombarra Consulting Georgie Chapman Workplace Health & Safety Lawyer Partner, HR Legal - Productivity Commission of Australia | AHRI Wellbeing Hub Research Reports | Diversity Council of Australia

⁵¹ Australian Human Rights Commission 2010 Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers, Page 4

⁵² Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010 Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers, Page 4



5.2 Direct Cost to Business

Ignoring, condoning and directly promulgating poor approaches to workplace management of the workforce's emotional health and wellbeing is financially costly to businesses.

Poor mental health in Australian workplaces is estimated to cost the economy between **\$10-18bn per year**⁵³, including \$200 million worth of workers compensation claims⁵⁴ and high levels of workplace absenteeism and presenteeism⁵⁵ due to mental ill health.

Work-related mental injury resulting in psychological harm' currently accounts for 11 per cent of workers compensation claims in Victoria and is the second most common cause of workers compensation claims in Australia. Each year, Victorian businesses pay approximately \$263.4 million in workers compensation insurance premiums associated with these claims.⁵⁶

The Australian Human Rights Commission reported on a survey of over 5000 workers where 25% of workers indicated that they took time off each year for stress related reasons⁵⁷. The Commission also reports that in relation to psychological injury work pressure accounts for around half of all claims and harassment and bullying for around a quarter of claims.⁵⁸ The Commission identifies that an 'unhealthy' work environment or a workplace incident can cause considerable stress and exacerbate, or contribute to, the development of mental illness, and that 'job stress and other work-related psychosocial hazards are emerging as the leading contributors to the burden of occupational disease and injury'.⁵⁹

The direct financial costs to business of poor emotional health and wellbeing in the workplace are identified as workplace stress and anxiety in terms of high sick leave, poor productivity, low job satisfaction, high staff turnover and low retention of skilled staff.⁶⁰ Other costs have been identified as:

- ❑ Lost time in addressing internal workplace disputes.
- ❑ Litigation and fines for breaches of health and safety laws
- ❑ Lost time and cost involved in discrimination claims
- ❑ Industrial disputes.⁶¹

About two-thirds of people living with mental illness are in the workforce.⁶² Its estimated that Australians experiencing mild depression take approximately three sick days a year more than

⁵³ <https://www.jeanhailes.org.au/resources/mental-health-tips-in-the-workplace-managers>

⁵⁴ The Black Dog Institute, <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/5-workplacewellbeing.pdf>,

⁵⁵ Developing a mentally healthy workplace: A review of the literature A report for the National Mental Health Commission and the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance Prepared by: Dr Samuel B Harvey 1,2 Ms Sadhbh Joyce 1 Ms Leona Tan 1 Dr Anya Johnson 3 Dr Helena Nguyen 3 Mr Matthew Modini 1 Dr Markus Groth 3 1. School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia 2. Black Dog Institute, Sydney, Australia 3. Australian School of Business, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia November 2014

⁵⁶ WorkSafe, 'Mental Injury Support' <<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/mental-injury-support>> [accessed 9 October 2019]. Note, the term 'mental injury' is used here to be consistent with analysis published by WorkSafe and Safe Work Australia.

⁵⁷ Australian Human Rights Commission 2010, Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers, Page 4

⁵⁸ *ibid*

⁵⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010 Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers, Page 4

⁶⁰ <https://www.jeanhailes.org.au/resources/mental-health-tips-in-the-workplace-managers>

⁶¹ Australian Human Rights Commission 2010, Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers, Page 4

⁶² Australian Bureau of Statistics, National Health Survey: First Results, 2017–2018 – Australia, 2018, p. 40.



those with no depression, an additional six days for those experiencing moderate depression and 16 for those experiencing severe depression.⁶³

Inadequate supports in the workplace, along with inadequate mental health services, can mean that people living with mental illness are more likely to require time away from work⁶⁴ or are more likely to be less productive while at work.⁶⁵

An employer survey conducted by Superfriend⁶⁶ showed that the reasons that employers don't focus on building a strong culture of supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of the workplace are lack of time, lack of skills and training, lack of understanding around mental health and wellbeing, more important business issues to address, perceived costs and lack of commitment from the top."⁶⁷

Workplaces that do take time to promote mental health and support people are more likely to reduce absenteeism, increase productivity and benefit from associated economic gains⁶⁸ such as a lower turnover in staff, lower recruitment costs, a better employee value proposition for top talent, higher innovation and engagement and improved team performance."⁶⁹

5.3 Opportunity Gain

Businesses that care about good mental health get the best out of everyone in the workplace. They attract and keep their staff (including front line workers, emerging leaders and top executive talent) because they are great places to work. A healthy workplace provides a positive return-on-investment (ROI).⁷⁰

A healthy workplace means that management and staff are focussed on optimising the resources in the business to deliver on the mission, vision and products⁷¹. They are not distracted with dealing with the consequences of a poor workplace culture, rather are able to collaborate, innovate and create, providing the business with better products, services and approaches to reaching the customers.

A business that has a good workplace culture builds a strong reputation as a fair and healthy workplace among potential clients, customers and employees. Small to medium size businesses work in local communities where reputation is critical to building a strong client and customer base and where employee retention builds valuable networks and relationships from which to leverage further business.

⁶³ Wesley P McTernan, Maureen F Dollard, and Anthony D LaMontagne, 'Depression in the workplace: An economic cost analysis of depression-related productivity loss attributable to job strain and bullying', *Work & Stress*, 27.4 (2013), 321–38, p. 331.

⁶⁴ Ron Z Goetzel and others, 'Health, absence, disability, and presenteeism cost estimates of certain physical and mental health conditions affecting U.S. employers', *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 46.4 (2004), 398–412, p. 404.

⁶⁵ *ibid*

⁶⁶ Superfriend, *Indicators of a Thriving Workplace Survey, 2018, National Report*

⁶⁷ Superfriend, *Indicators of a Thriving Workplace Survey, 2018, National Report*

⁶⁸ The World Health Organisation (WHO), https://www.who.int/mental_health/in_the_workplace/en/

⁶⁹ A Strategic Approach to Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing G21 Network 12th November 2020 Tanya Heaney-Voogt Mentally Healthy Workplaces Strategy Specialist Director, Wombarra Consulting Georgie Chapman Workplace Health & Safety Lawyer Partner, HR Legal - Productivity Commission of Australia | AHRI Wellbeing Hub Research Reports | Diversity Council of Australia

⁷⁰ <https://www.headsup.org.au/healthy-workplaces/what-is-a-mentally-healthy-workplace/9-attributes-of-a-healthy-workplace?>, Heads Up, Beyond Blue and the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance

⁷¹ <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en.htm>



From a legal perspective, a healthy workplace ensures that employers meet their ethical and legal obligations to protect employee health and safety.⁷²

Taking action to improve the focus of a business on supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of their workforce is likely to result in a much higher return on investment for the business. As well as reducing the costs arising from those working with mental health issues, an organisation is likely to see even further improved productivity from a healthier more engaged broader workforce.⁷³ Research by Price Waterhouse Coopers has shown a well-implemented plan to promote a healthy working environment and culture has financial benefits. For every dollar a business invests in creating a mentally healthy workplace, they get an average return of \$2.30 in improved productivity and profitability.⁷⁴

Human Resources Director (HRD) supports the link between productivity and employee engagement. In discussing corporate wellness, HRD tells us that “we know from research that employees who are engaged at work – who like their jobs and feel motivated to give their best – are more productive,” and we know “that high levels of engagement are linked to people retention, better customer service, higher rates of employee commitment, better teamwork, and organizational profitability”.⁷⁵

Every business has a legal and moral responsibility to provide a safe and fair workplace. Creating a mentally healthy workplace has many benefits for both employers and employees. A well-designed workplace should support individual mental health and lead to reduced absenteeism, increased employee engagement and improved productivity.⁷⁶

⁷² Creating a mentally healthy workplace A guide for managers, HeadsUp, Better Mental Health in the Workplace

⁷³ *ibid*

⁷⁴ *ibid*

⁷⁵ <https://www.hcamag.com/au/specialisation/corporate-wellness/how-to-measure-the-roi-on-wellbeing/153762>

⁷⁶ Developing a mentally healthy workplace: A review of the literature A report for the National Mental Health Commission and the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance Prepared by: Dr Samuel B Harvey 1,2 Ms Sadhbh Joyce 1 Ms Leona Tan 1 Dr Anya Johnson 3 Dr Helena Nguyen 3 Mr Matthew Modini 1 Dr Markus Groth 3 1. School of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia 2. Black Dog Institute, Sydney, Australia 3. Australian School of Business, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia November 2014



6.0 Good Practice for Small to Medium Size Businesses

6.1 Good Practice Workplace Attributes

WHO describes a healthy workplace as one where workers and managers actively contribute to the working environment by promoting and protecting the health, safety and well-being of all employees.⁷⁷

*“With Work Care Factor we are not handing out a band aid, we’re providing a whole first aid kit”
(Participating business)*

Attachment 3 summarises good practice workplace attributes identified by Heads Up⁷⁸, Superfriend⁷⁹, WHO⁸⁰, Black Dog Institute⁸¹, Outward Bound⁸², The Global Shapers⁸³ and The Australian Human Rights Commission.⁸⁴

As expected, there is an inverse correlation between the Workplace Factors that contribute to poor conditions for emotional health and wellbeing in the workplace identified in Table 3 and the Good Practice attributes of businesses that prioritise the emotional health and wellbeing of their staff.

Little of the available literature differentiates, in terms of good practice attributes for business, between young workers and workers more generally. The World Economic Forum, however, highlights the importance of paying particular attention to the emotional health and wellbeing of young people in the workplace. “Young people, those under the age of 30 constitute more than 50% of today’s global population and projections say the figure will hit 75% by 2030. In all walks of life, this staggering demography is an important factor in the work and business landscape, it’s the largest percentage of the workforce.”⁸⁵

Considering the importance of young people to the Australian workforce of the future and the prevalence of mental health illness and disorders⁸⁶ businesses need to ensure that there are channels of support available to young employees in the workplace, both formal and informal.”⁸⁷

These channels include ensuring that there is an effective process for supporting young employees to gain a better understanding of the opportunities to feel engaged in the business. Giving young people a clear path from the outset and tying their development into the business’ growth can go a long way to develop strong engagement.”⁸⁸

⁷⁷ https://www.who.int/mental_health/in_the_workplace/en/

⁷⁸ <https://www.headsup.org.au/healthy-workplaces/what-is-a-mentally-workplace/9-attributes-of-a-healthy-workplace?>, Heads Up, Beyond Blue and the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance

⁷⁹ Superfriend, Indicators of a Thriving Workplace Survey, 2018, National Report

⁸⁰ https://www.who.int/mental_health/in_the_workplace/en/

⁸¹ <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/5-workplacewellbeing.pdf>

⁸² Your Well Space, <https://yourwellspace.com/workplace-health-and-wellbeing-for-young-people/>

⁸³ <https://www.outwardbound.org.uk/blog/supporting-young-peoples-wellbeing-workplace>

⁸⁴ Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010 Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers, Page 4

⁸⁵ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/10/business-leaders-here-are-the-5-ways-to-promote-a-youth-friendly-culture-at-the-workplace/>

⁸⁶ National Report 2019 Community and Service Provider Consultations, 2016-18

⁸⁷ <https://www.outwardbound.org.uk/blog/supporting-young-peoples-wellbeing-workplace>

⁸⁸ <https://www.monash.edu/talent/blog/employment-advice/whats-the-best-work-environment-for-young-people-in-australia/>



The Brotherhood of St Laurence identifies the importance to young employees of clear and regular communication across the organisation in bridging generational differences at work⁸⁹ and the commitment of supervisors to emotional wellbeing and workplace safety is seen as important to being able to engage younger workers in speaking up about workplace safety.⁹⁰

Studies have also found that job satisfaction amongst young workers is higher when supervisors are “open” in their communication with employees: sharing information, conveying bad news, evaluating job performance regularly, creating a supportive climate, soliciting input, and making appropriate disclosures,⁹¹ thus creating a ripple effect to positive mental health and wellbeing.”⁹²

6.2. Framework for Action

There is a strong business imperative for workplaces to invest in creating and sustaining a culture focussed on emotional health and wellbeing. The responsibility for creating change lies with the leadership of the business.

Recognising and promoting mental health is an essential part of creating a safe and healthy workplace. Importantly, both managers and workers have roles to play in building a safe work environment, one that will not create or exacerbate mental health problems and where workers with mental illness are properly supported.⁹³ Regardless of the organisation size, managers dealing with employees day-to-day, play a crucial role in creating a mentally healthy workplace. ⁹⁴

*We need to keep on developing our managers and supervisors, they still want to come to me for all the answers
(Participating business)*

Managers are critical in creating a workplace culture where employees feel safe to call out poor behaviour, whether it is directed at them or their colleagues. Providing a culture where employees are safe to Step Forward⁹⁵ and choose not to look down or away will benefit the workplace because it provides a baseline for the behaviours that a workplace and employees are prepared to accept. Workers who step forward provide a role model, and once the role models appear, the followers get onboard. Stepping forward shines a light on poor behaviour and provides the workplace with the opportunity to deal with it.⁹⁶

Businesses that are known as “good businesses” are recognised as having a commitment from organisational leaders for change. These businesses demonstrate a high level of employee participation in workplace initiatives. They also have a robust policy framework to guide the workplace and the necessary resources to support the workforce.⁹⁷

⁸⁹ Tresize-Brown, M. (2004) Employing young workers: How well are we managing them?, Brotherhood of St Laurence,

⁹⁰ “Revisiting vulnerability: Comparing young and adult workers’ safety voice intentions under different supervisory conditions” Accident Analysis & Prevention 135 (Feb 2020)

⁹¹ Myers, K.K. and Sadaghiani, K. in Millennials in the Workplace: A Communication Perspective on Millennials’ Organizational Relationships and Performance. J Bus Psychol 25, 225–238 (2010). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-010-9172-7>,

⁹² Superfriend, *Indicators of a Thriving Workplace Survey, 2018, National Report*

⁹³ Australian Human Rights Commission 2010, *Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for Managers*

⁹⁴ Creating a mentally healthy workplace A guide for managers, HeadsUp, Better Mental Health in the Workplace.

⁹⁵ Leigh Bartlett, BATforce, uses a Step Forward, Step Sideways or Step Backwards model to explore the decisions we make to take, or not to take action.

⁹⁶ [Calling out bad behaviour in the workplace - Inside Small Business](#)

⁹⁷ Price Waterhouse Cooper Australia (PWC), *Creating a mentally healthy workplace – Return on Investment Analysis*,



Employment Hero's survey of over 1,400 Australian workers throughout January 2021 found that employer actions make a meaningful difference. The greater the workplace's commitment to wellness, the better the employees were more likely to feel. Across the board, workers who rated their employer's commitment to wellbeing highly found that their quality of life was better. Workers who rated their work/ life balance highly were 28% more likely to have an employer that they felt was invested in their wellbeing. Workers who felt productive were 18% more likely to feel that their employer cared about their wellness.⁹⁸

Small to medium size businesses and employers are often aware of the importance of providing a psychologically safe workplace but don't know how to go about building on the strengths and diversity of their workforce, in particular younger employees, to achieve this. **Attachment 4: A Framework for Action** provides a summary of what the literature has to say about how business owners, leaders and managers can take practical action to strengthen the culture of supporting emotional health and wellbeing in their workplaces. It identifies four key strategies, why these are important and the tactics to use in the implementation of each strategy. These strategies are:

- ❑ Owners and Managers leading the way
- ❑ Making communication central
- ❑ Addressing the unaddressed
- ❑ Supporting and responding to management pressures

Developing leadership is critical. We need to keep developing and resourcing our people as leaders. (Participating business)

A first step is to increase awareness in the workplace about the importance of emotional health and wellbeing, the supports that are available and what needs to change. The WorkSafe Workplace Factors and Good Practice Attributes provide guidance to Managers on what to prioritise in terms of workplace change.

Second is to ensure regular communication with staff about team goals, key achievements, activities, issues and developments and gain their input into how to create a team that feels that they have support for their emotional health and wellbeing.⁹⁹ For a worker, at the heart of psychological safety is the belief that they will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistake. It requires high levels of trust and mutual respect.¹⁰⁰

Third is to have, and use, the right processes and systems such as induction and work orientation, work design, feedback mechanisms, skills, policies and procedures, workloads, timelines and resources to determine if there is alignment of these factors to meet commitments to customers. Staff need to be able to perform their role confidently and competently.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ 2021 wellness at work report. SURVEY FINDINGS ON WELLBEING, Employment Hero

⁹⁹ Creating a mentally healthy workplace A guide for managers, HeadsUp, Better Mental Health in the Workplace.

¹⁰⁰ Supporting Leaders to create psychologically safe workplaces, prepared for Worksafe Victoria, August 2020, KPMG

¹⁰¹ Creating a mentally healthy workplace A guide for managers, HeadsUp, Better Mental Health in the Workplace.



In considering appropriate policies to guide to workplaces in complying with their legal obligations, the Australian Human Rights Commission has identified the following as necessary:

Necessary policies (AHRC)	Work Care Factor Resources
A commitment to providing a safe and healthy workplace	OH&S Policy
Policies that address managing mental illness issues in the workplace and deal with matters such as consultation, confidentiality and training	HR Policies
Broad equity and non-discrimination policies, including disability and mental health	Code of Conduct
A policy related to harassment and bullying	Workplace Behaviour
A policy to enable feedback	Supervision, Guide for New Starters, Handbook
Policies and procedures for providing reasonable adjustments so that requests are dealt with promptly, fairly and appropriately. ¹⁰²	HR Policies

¹⁰² Australian Human Rights Commission 2010, *Workers with Mental Illness: a Practical Guide for M*



7.0 Validity of Safe and Empowering Workplaces Approach and Resources

This Action Research Study provides the opportunity to reflect on the direction being taken by the Safe and Empowering Workplaces Project and determine the degree of alignment between the Project Approach and Resources, what young people are saying, the actions of participating businesses, and what the literature reveals about the best strategies to strengthen emotional (mental) health and wellbeing in the workplace.

7.1 What Young People in the G21 Region have to say

Data shows that by 2025, Gen-Z workers (born between 1997 and 2012) will make up 27% of the workforce. While research indicates that actual differences between generations are quite small, this is not the perception in the workplace, where stereotypes are strong and impact directly on relationships and communication. These stereotypes often lead to actual or perceived sense of power imbalance.¹⁰³ In response, “openly talking about these stereotypes and meta-stereotypes can be a great first step. Combining this effort with practices in perspective-taking (e.g., role-taking, role reversal exercises), cooperating (e.g., emphasizing the advantages of working with an age-diverse group), and sharing of stories among age-diverse employees can help people recognize and possibly call attention to stereotyping when it creeps into the workplace.”¹⁰⁴

Leigh Bartlett, BATForce, led the co-design cycles with young people for the Safe and Empowering Workplaces Project. The focus was on exploring the issues experienced by the young people in with workforce, the availability of information and support and potential for managers to approach issues in the workplace differently and more effectively. The three key messages from these groups were the need for good communication, effective inductions, and a safe and empowering culture.

Young people consulted indicated they recognised the power imbalance, and it impacted their communication:

- ❑ Don't assume they know what to do or where to go, as they may not want to ask. Young people need to know what is expected of them each day.
- ❑ They don't know how to say no to something that is unreasonable or even unsafe. They feel as though they don't have a voice – as “if you say something you get your shifts cut”.
- ❑ They are not clear about the “line” between personal and professional in the workplace.

The young people in the consultations recommended that employers provide a clear understanding of rights and responsibilities and ensure that young workers are encouraged to speak up and speak out without fear of repercussion. Employers need to check that young people feel safe to ask questions when they don't understand instructions and let them know it is ok to make mistakes as they learn. Young people need explicit permission to ask for help. This is with small day to day tasks and with emotional health issues, whether the source is home or work.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashleystahl/2021/05/04/how-gen-z-is-bringing-a-fresh-perspective-to-the-world-of-work/?sh=35c68e610c22>

¹⁰⁴ <https://hbr.org/2019/08/generational-differences-at-work-are-small-thinking-theyre-big-affects-our-behavior>

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.acas.org.uk/stress-and-anxiety-at-work-personal-or-cultural>



The available literature supports the experience of the young people in the G21 region. It recommends that employers:

1. Avoid making assumptions or judgements.
2. Ensure unthreatening body language and ensure conversations are in a safe space.
3. Establish clear boundaries (establish what is professional and what is personal, this can be specific to each workplace culture but needs to be explicit).
4. Use simple language, avoiding jargon, but not dumbing down.
5. Build trust and authentic relationships through empathetic listening.
6. Acknowledge that young people are skilled at 'code switching' or adapting their communication for various audiences.¹⁰⁶

The young people consulted for Safe and Empowering Workplaces also articulated the following difficulties associated with transitioning into work and taking on the first job:

- ❑ Not knowing what their workplace rights are, and not knowing things that are workplace specific – tax, superannuation, annual and sick leave, policies and procedures are foreign to them initially and can be stressful.
- ❑ Work is very different from school. At school it is clear about where to seek help and “you only have to look after yourself”. At work “other people rely on you”.
- ❑ There is still a real “rite of passage” into workplaces.

At school we knew what the boundaries were and who to go to, but it isn't clear in the workplace, the “rules” are different, and they are different in each workplace. There are questions we want to ask but don't know if we can
(Feedback from young people)

Young people advised that effective ‘Induction’ is essential to building confidence, as well as access to information and resources. They identified that asking questions is a key part of the ‘Induction/Onboarding’, in a process that ensures they feel safe and without risk of repercussion.

The literature also talks about the importance of induction and recommends:

1. Developing youth-specific induction processes, rather than a one size fits all approach.
2. Offering regular feedback during the onboarding process, not just at the start.
3. Providing mentors and/or buddies as an effective strategy, if suitable staff are recruited and supported by the management.
4. Recognising that young people can be less aware of risks and more confident of their abilities, so will need strong guidance around safety, both physical and psychological.
5. Offer safe opportunities to ask questions.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ <https://yerp.yacvic.org.au/build-relationships/involve-young-people/communicating-with-young-people>
<https://youthempowerment.com/effective-communication/>
<https://csuspeechgroup6.weebly.com/adolescents.html>
<https://empoweredexistence.com.au/effective-communication-with-young-people-part-two/>

For information about difficult conversations refer https://tacsi.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TACSI_Toolkit2_Difficult_Conversations_v2.pdf

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/young-people-employability-and-the-induction-process-jrf.pdf>
<https://www.icare.nsw.gov.au/employers/industry-and-partners/industry-hub/your-industry/manufacturing/work-health-and-safety-inductions-for-new-and-young-workers/#gref>
http://library.bsl.org.au/bsljspl/bitstream/1/6198/1/young_workers.pdf



Finally, young people were aware that workplace culture is hard to change, and they don't want to look vulnerable at work. Most can cite instances of bias and experiences of witnessing discrimination or derogatory language or behaviour towards women, people who are LGBTQI and/or Indigenous people and people from CALD communities.

Initially most young people Leigh spoke with think they would manage differently when they are old enough to become managers. When she checked back a few months later, however, they realised that they had just conformed to the existing culture, in order to fit in. "Plenty of people want jobs, employers don't need to keep people on who might rock the boat".

Gender differences were apparent. For the males in the consultations personal relationships were critical and played heavily on their minds. For the females in the consultations progressing careers and working out how to navigate work was the most pressing issue.

The recommendation from the young people to employers is to let them be involved in the cultural change process, and be leaders, even though their skills sets are very different.

The literature reinforces the solutions being offered by the young people in the consultations and offers the following advice to employers:

- ❑ Avoid stereotypical expectations and get to know the individual young person
- ❑ Offer reverse mentoring so young workers can show their expertise and build their sense of belonging and value
- ❑ Focus on building Leadership, Connectedness, Policy, Capability, and Culture for high quality psychosocial workplaces
- ❑ Improve awareness of mental health.¹⁰⁸

In conclusion, it is apparent that the factors that support mentally healthy workplaces for young workers, also apply to the overall workforce.

"...most of the factors that proved important among young employees were also found to be important for workers in other age groups. The one exception was the delegation of decision-making autonomy to work teams, which was uniquely associated with commitment among young people. [In the report *Young Peoples Experiences in the Workplace*] the results support theoretical propositions that employers can implement HR practices which raise levels of commitment and engagement among young workers. They also suggest that that many of these practices are also the kinds of practices that can raise commitment more generally across the workforce."¹⁰⁹

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JOCM-02-2020-0058/full/html>
<https://elearningindustry.com/tips-design-onboarding-online-training-for-generation-z-corporate-learners>
<https://elearningindustry.com/tips-design-onboarding-online-training-for-generation-z-corporate-learners>

¹⁰⁸ https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Mental-health/Work_Life-Satisfaction_Scoping-Study.pdf?la=en&hash=84388D3BoAF8282CBBA21E441AC013EB0E47C4C3
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/10/business-leaders-here-are-the-5-ways-to-promote-a-youth-friendly-culture-at-the-workplace/>
<https://superfriend.com.au/resource/building-thriving-workplaces/>

¹⁰⁹ <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.729.4844&rep=rep1&type=pdf>



The suggestions by young people and the findings from the literature in relation to providing and safe and empowering workplace have been aligned to Work Safe's Work Related Factors, as follows.

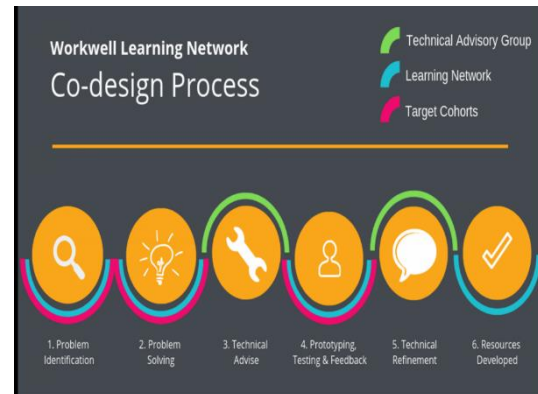
WorkSafe Identified 'Work Related Factors'	Suggestions based on feedback from young people and the literature
Workplace Relationships	Give permission to ask for help (and mean it). Avoid stereotypes. Build trust through empathetic listening.
Recognition and Reward	Offer regular feedback that is tailored to the individual. Do they prefer one to one or group acknowledgement? An email or a chat? Consider reverse mentoring.
Job Control	Create a safe space for learning and asking questions. While workers may not be able to change their roles, ask how they can contribute in other ways – staff social activities, or skills development.
Job Clarity	Ensure induction and onboarding is simple and clear, appropriate for young workers. Don't assume they know what to do next, always check they are clear about their tasks (every day if needed).
High and Low Job Demands	Communication is key. Explain the needs of the role over time to give context to the current situation, whether high or low job demand. Ensure that your requirements of the role are viable and realistic, check this with the worker. Provide a plan for the future, if nothing can be changed in the short term.
Support	Focus on empathetic and practical communication. Build a culture of support in the organisation, based on leadership values.
Organisational Change Management	Communicate changes in a timely manner. Offer opportunities for engagement if realistic and authentic.
Organisational Justice	Ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place.
Environmental Conditions	Ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place.
Isolated workers	Ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place.



7.2 Employer and Young People Involvement in Co-design 1, 2 & 3

7.2.1 Co-design 1

Co-design 1 cycle of the Safe and Empowering Workplaces ran from August 2019 through to June 2020. A Technical Advisory Group was established to guide the project, co-design workshops were held with employers and mechanisms were established to gain the input of young employees into the direction of and outputs from the project. As a result, supporting young people and businesses in raising awareness about the importance of emotional health and wellbeing in the workplace was established as a priority.



Co-Design 1 commenced with a Problem Identification workshop held in August 2019 and included systems mapping and a survey of all participants. The Problem-Solving Workshop was held with the Learning Network and Technical Advisory Group on 2/3/20. Solutions were mapped and a survey sent to prioritise actions. A list of the top actions included the need to “Develop tools to understand pre-existing issues or non-work issues.”; “Ensure young people’s voice is incorporated” and Develop tools to normalise the discussion of mental health within the workplace.”



The Technical Advisory Group meeting held 8/4/20 identified requirements in terms of mental health, youth engagement and technical expertise to resolve the following problem statement: “How do we normalise and create awareness of (youth) mental health in the workplace?”

The project went on to develop a prototype of a digital awareness raising tool that provided simple scenarios to engage people in thinking about and discussing common workplace issues that can impact on the emotional health and wellbeing of young people in the workplace. The development process included consultations with young people and employers to ensure that the content, presentation style and tone would engage the target audience and achieve the awareness raising purpose.



7.2.2 Co-design 2

The Co-design 2 cycle commenced in July 2020 and ran through until March 2021. A co-design workshop with employers in August 2020 revisited the original plan for the project and the outcome from Co-design 1 and determined that the critical next steps for the project were to develop the prototype into a fully functioning minimum viable product throughout Co-design 2 and to work with young people and employers to initiate and embed awareness raising, cultural change and capability building into workplaces.

Co-Design 2 Problem Statement was “What tools and resources might help employers (and young workers) understand their roles and responsibilities?”

As a result of the workshop Co-design 2 focussed on:

- ❑ Progressing the prototype into a fully developed minimum viable product (MVP), www.workcarefactor.com.au. This included building a digital platform to house the Work Care Factor and other appropriate resources identified as part of Co-design 2 and 3.
- ❑ Arriving at an operational name for the initiative that will resonate with young people and businesses – **Work Care Factor**.
- ❑ Developing practical tools for businesses to use in creating emotionally healthy and safe workplaces.

**WORK/
CARE
FACTOR.**

Because caring is good for business.

Identify
workplace
problems, start
conversations,
find practical
resources.

Which areas would you like to
improve in your workplace?

www.workcarefactor.com.au contains the following:

- ❑ Interactive Flow Charts - common workplace situations that provide the user with decision making options leading to potential outcomes
- ❑ Audio stories – voices of young people and employers talking through the issues they are trying to resolve
- ❑ An Audio Wall – voices of owners, managers and experienced employees reflecting on what happened when they were young employees
- ❑ Common workplace scenarios
- ❑ How to tips, resources and reports.
- ❑ Must have Policies and Templates organised under the **Employee Care Lifecycle**,
- ❑ Easy read summaries of the top policies a workplace should have

In addition, during Co-design 2 the project explored additional non digital supports that young people and small to medium businesses may need to successfully deal with situations that arise, including questions relating to how young employees and businesses access expert advice when they need it and how to best support the capability building that is needed for managers and prospective managers to successfully run a workplace that values the emotional health and wellbeing of its employees.

The available literature strongly supports the need for businesses to be proactive in raising awareness of the importance of emotional health and wellbeing in the workplace. Other



attributes linked to awareness raising relate to organisational communication and staff professional development and staff engagement.

The flowcharts, audio stories and Audio Wall provide real workplace stories that, whilst common, are thought provoking when considering the impact of workplace practices and workplace decisions on the emotional health and wellbeing of individual employees.

A robust policy framework is also identified in the literature as an integral part of the operations of all businesses that are committed to consistently providing a workplace environment that supports the emotional health and wellbeing of employees. The literature identifies both the need for a policy framework and the particulars of key workplace policies.

The **Employee Care Lifecycle** provides workplaces with:

- ❑ A full suite of workplace policies
- ❑ Guidance on, and templates for the top policies that a workplace should implement if it wants to be successful in supporting the emotional health and wellbeing of its staff.
- ❑ Easy read illustrated versions of the top policies to accompany the full policy versions
- ❑ Guidance on the policies that are applicable to each stage of the Employee Care Lifecycle.

The policies included in the **Employee Care Lifecycle** align with those identified in the literature as most important for all businesses. The addition of “easy read” summaries of the policies points to the thinking that the project has done on who will access these policies and how best to embed them into the way a workplace operates.

Supporting the policies are workplace Scenarios and “How To” Tips. These provide practical examples of situations for managers and young people when approaching issues that arise in the workplace. These Scenarios provide the following:

- ❑ Support for managers in handling workplace situations
- ❑ Support for young people in approaching workplace situations
- ❑ Confidence for managers and young people that they are not the first to experience these situations and that there are proven ways to successfully navigate these issues
- ❑ Reinforcement of the importance of following policy and process in the workplace.

The use of “real” scenarios demonstrates that the project team has identified the need to connect the resource to the reality facing managers and employees and provide them with a reason to use it both for capability building and as a just in time resource when resolving workplace issues.

www.workcarefactor.com.au also provides a repository for resources and reports relating to emotional health and wellbeing of young people in the workplace, providing young people and businesses with access to deeper information about the importance of psychological wellbeing in the workforce. This repository is designed to develop over time and can house research reports, articles and other resources that may be of use for small to medium size businesses.

The key message on the home page of www.workcarefactor.com.au is that **Caring is Good for Business**. This message underscores the consistency of the digital resource with the findings from the literature, that is that strong emotional health and wellbeing in the workplace is good for business and good for young people in the business.

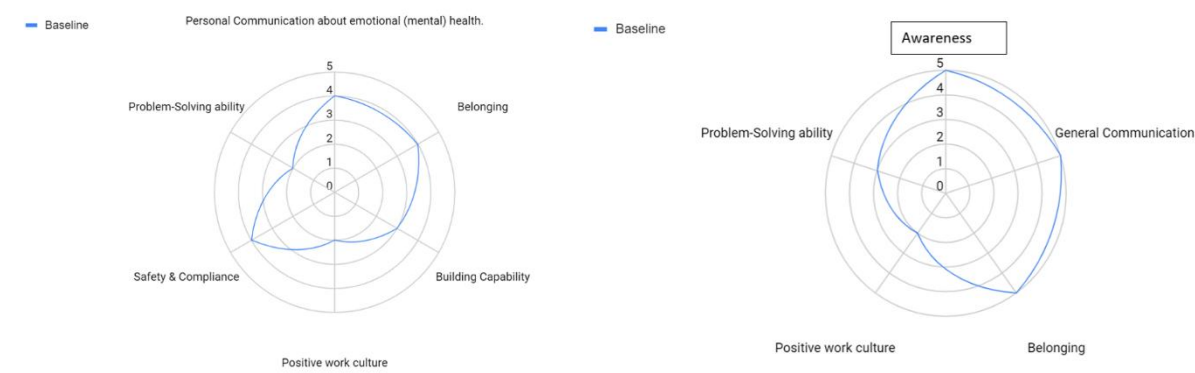


7.2.3 Co-design 3

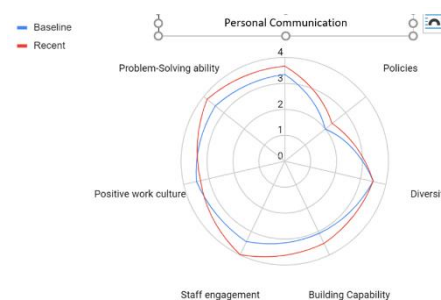
The Co-design 3 cycle commenced in March 2021 and concluded in December 2021. The Co-Design 3 Problem Statement was: “How do we activate and embed these resources into organisations for longer term sustainability and engagement?” The focus of this Cycle has been on:

- ❑ Testing www.workcarefactor.com.au through a roll out with participating businesses
- ❑ Identifying and making small adjustments to the resource to ensure that it is optimal
- ❑ Identifying with employers the workplace indicators that tell them that they are making or have successfully made changes to workplace practices and culture
- ❑ Checking with employers on the indicators used to measure the changes they are making
- ❑ Supporting the uptake of www.workcarefactor.com.au through consultations with young people and employers, communities of practice meetings for employers and young people
- ❑ Incorporating the changes suggested by young people and employers into the resource
- ❑ Working with the Committee for Geelong’s Leaders for Geelong program to explore how the resource can be effectively embedded in local workplaces
- ❑ Developing a sustainability model that ensures the resource remains up to date, is utilised and that young people and employers are supported to access skills building and expert advice as required.

Discussions with the employers identified the need for a simple tool to use to measure the outcome of changes resulting from the focus on emotional health and wellbeing in the workplace. Management Governance Australia has provided its Impact Indicator Tool with the possible indicators (refer **Attachment 5**) co-designed with employers. Six businesses completed a baseline assessment. The sample diagrams below demonstrate the way the Tool can provide a visual baseline of the areas for change in the workplace.



The following chart provides an example of baseline indicators of improvement and a follow up assessment by staff after workplace changes were implemented.





Deakin University researchers undertook an evaluation of the Work Care Factor web-based resource. The evaluation involved:

- assessment of the utility of the Work Care Factor
- assessment of how the Work Care Factor has achieved the project objectives
- assessment of how the Work Care Factor has achieved the project's proposed outcomes – both short-term and mid-term outcomes
- assessment of the extent that the Work Care Factor addresses the WorkSafe Work Related Factors
- recommendations for how the Safe and Empowering Workplaces project could achieve mid-term to long-term outcomes proposed as part of the project
- recommendations for enhancing the utility and sustainability of the Work Care Factor web-based resource.¹¹⁰

Participants in the 2021 Leaders for Geelong program (a Committee for Geelong leadership development initiative) have agreed to explore the options for businesses to incorporate Work Care Factor into the workplace as a resource for change. The Leaders will also provide a short instructional video to help SME business to engage directly with the tool.

Two workshops were held with employers in Co-design 3. The first was with employers involved in the first two Co-design cycles to check in with them on their response to the resource and the second was as part of the Geelong Small Business Festival for employers not familiar with the project or the Work Care Factor resource.

Feedback on the concept and the resource was overwhelmingly positive. Employers reported using elements such as the scenarios and the policies and procedures and finding the approach with the flowcharts and audios as impactful. Participants also discussed how the resource could be used with young people entering the workforce. In looking at what is missing or needs to be improved they offered the following observations:

- ❑ The need for a “front page” introducing the resource
- ❑ Refine the filtering options at the outset: I am a SMB employer/I am a Young Worker
- ❑ The need for a Privacy Policy – it had been missed in the upload of policies
- ❑ Integrate the Work-Related Factors across the Scenarios
- ❑ An explanation of the audio wall so that people know why it has been included and how to use it.
- ❑ Provide a Red Flag – NEED HELP RIGHT NOW - and a link to a Quick Help Guide to local service providers if the employer or employees are facing an urgent situation where they are critically concerned for the health of a young employee
- ❑ A resource that explores what “good” looks like when it comes to managers and workplaces – in Co-design 1 the project team looked at developing a position description for the “ideal supervisor” – revisit this for potential inclusion.
- ❑ Short videos of young people talking about their work
- ❑ A scenario on financial insecurity

¹¹⁰ *Safe and Empowering Workplaces, 'The Work Care Factor', Deakin University*



Follow up with young people was undertaken in October 2021 and lead to the following changes to Work Care Factor:

- ❑ The incorporation of the Workplace Decision Maker Tool – a model for young people in making decisions at work. Do they step forward, step sideways or step back?
- ❑ Scenarios from the young person's perspective
- ❑ Asking Questions At Work – Q & As for Young Workers

In addition to the Communities of Practice, businesses have identified the need to continue building the ability of their management and staffing teams and the importance of drawing other businesses into the discussions.



8.0 Work Care Factor - The Perspective of an Organisational Psychologist

Dr Joy Humphreys, Organisational Psychologist, has provided a review of the Work Care Factor resources, the Impact Indicators and the Interim Action Research Study. The following provides a summary of her feedback:

- ❑ The action research study could become a helpful resource for leaders in an organisation.
- ❑ The practicality of the tool is really appealing, and the website is easy to use.
- ❑ Make sure a Whistle-blower Policy supports the notion that it is OK to come forward with difficult issues (such as sexual harassment).
- ❑ Particularly like the acronym and ease of use of CLEAR – it is a clear process and provides consistency with useful scenarios which help to make it simple to use.
- ❑ It would be useful to owners and managers to provide practical advice and support on how to build an organisational narrative and shared vision – starting with engaging everyone in the workplace and helping them buy into it as ‘the way we do things around here’ by ensuring that policies and support mechanisms accompany any changes.
- ❑ It seems to be a tool of cultural change and as such it needs everyone involved in the application of it across the business.

Dr Humphrey’s observes that to achieve workplace change and support a strong culture of emotional health and wellbeing a business would need to include emotional health and wellbeing of staff in its strategic plan to ensure leaders and managers are buying into the change as a vision for the business.

She believes that the drive for change will work best if at least 80% of the people buy in to. To get this buy in, depending on the size of the workforce, it may be necessary to pilot it in a section of the business, so that it becomes known and talked about, and people want it.

Working with staff is critically important so that managers and staff, together identify what the barriers and enablers are to getting change embedded into the workplace culture. This approach also provides the opportunity to consider what the business might do in a practical sense to resolve barriers and strengthen enablers. A typical list of barriers might be

“This approach is perceived to ‘take time away from BAU’; resistance to discussing personal issues or having hard conversations; resistance because people who have personal problems are ‘just time wasters’; individuals (both managers and reports) fear saying the wrong thing”.

Conversations with staff will also provide insight into the measurements that will demonstrate the need for change (both positive indicators and areas of concern) and the achievements related to change. Indicators have two key uses in measuring change, a) they provide management with evidence that what is being implemented is working or not and assist in promoting evidence-based decision making, and b) they can provide employees with direct input into identifying changes. Critically they need to be simple to introduce and simple to use.

In evaluating and recognising change Dr Humphreys suggests that a revision date for a project be set and everyone in the workplace becomes involved in the conversation about how we might evaluate change. This may be a cascade of conversation down through managers and team



leaders – identifying barriers and enablers and practical action to reduce the barriers and strengthen the enablers (identifying solutions).

Getting people in the workplace, those most directly impacted, involved is fundamental. Where a business is a bit larger, they may look at facilitation methods such as Harrison Owen's Open Space¹¹¹, World Cafe¹¹² to help people feel like they are creating the change themselves.

Dr Humphreys suggests that Work Care Factor can be used to assist in changing workplace culture – to develop a culture where it is safe to be vulnerable, and to say 'I'm not coping'. To do this, however, the leadership team and managers need to be committed to role modelling this kind of culture. She also suggests that a workplace use the tool to re-think barriers – such as exploring difficult conversations - and to find ways to reduce things that get in the way of growing a strong workplace culture. She has identified the importance of organisation wide training to help people learn how to use the tool, go through scenarios, and learn how to manage it themselves. Bringing psychological wellness into every meeting would assist in normalising discussion about wellness in the workplace.

Dr Humphrey's identified that, after reading the scenarios, listening to the audio, and scrolling down and listening to the rest of the audios, the question arises what advice is there for Jade, who is being discriminated against because she is a female? This leads to thinking about the website from a worker's perspective - someone who is experiencing something that doesn't seem right – what direction can be provided to worker if they find something is not right.

Dr Humphrey's believes that tool is very workable, but that Managers may need a short document, drawing on the Action Learning Research, that guides them on how they might utilise the tool. She also highlights the importance of bringing managers together so they can learn from each other

In summary Dr Humphrey's found that the Work Care Factor tool would make an excellent resource on which to build a strong workplace culture of emotional health and wellbeing. The Action Research Study can be used to provide information to support the argument for change and the CLEAR process provides managers with a simple clear consistent approach to addressing workplace issues. To fully adopt the tool and create workplace change, managers need information about the benefit to the business, and a process to support them to introduce change into the workplace.

¹¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCPZ5iQLnA>

¹¹² <http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>



9.0 Sustainability Model

In October 2021 GWYL sought Expressions of Interest from members of the project's Technical Advisory Group, and other related organisations or networks, for the ongoing management and sustainability of the <https://workcarefactor.com.au/> website.

Intellectual Property

At the conclusion of the funding contract with WorkSafe on 31 December 2021, the Intellectual Property for this website will be vested in the Give Where You Live Foundation. WorkSafe will hold a perpetual license for use, reproduction or publication.

The management arrangement going forward needs to acknowledge initial funding from WorkSafe to GWYL as the founding entity, for a minimum of two years.

All content and materials on the final website are to remain open source for two years.

The following criteria underpinned the decision by GWYL on the model for the website going forward:

- ❑ Alignment with the original project aim - to provide accessible and affordable support to SMB in the G21 Region, and particularly for their young workers.
- ❑ Co-Design - the co-design process to continue for future design and development of the website.
- ❑ Technical capacity – for ongoing website maintenance and new material and content to be added to the website at regular intervals to ensure ongoing currency and relevance.
- ❑ Subject matter expertise - input from mental health, Human Resources and engagement professionals to ensure material meets required WorkSafe standards.
- ❑ Local engagement in the G21 region – a level of local relational engagement to continue to leverage existing relationships in the G21 Region, with strong networks and connection to local SMB.
- ❑ Financial Sustainability - source new funding.

GWYL has agreed to contract a consortium led by BATForce and consisting of six members of the Technical Advisory Committee to take on future responsibility for the Work Care Factor resource.



10. Reflections from the Key Stakeholders

10.1 Liz Everist, Project Manager, Give Where You Live

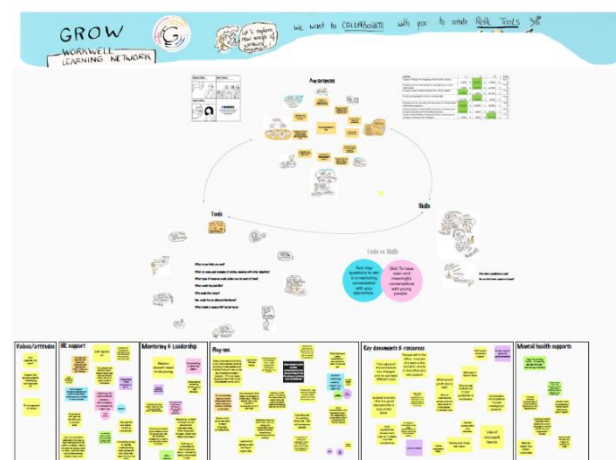
Liz Everist, the Contract/Project Manager with Give Where You Live (GWYL), played a key role with the Safe and Empowering Workplaces project from the time of conception through to the development of a sustainability model and the delivery of the outcomes required by the WorkSafe funding.

The need for a response in the Geelong area to issues associated with the emotional health and wellbeing of young employees was identified through the GROW network of businesses and the GWYL Jobs Victoria Employment Network program, where two thirds of the businesses reported having to deal with mental health in the workplace. Initially the focus was to be on supporting small business in the GROW community to develop strategies to support disadvantaged job seekers as they transition into the workplace. The funding from WorkSafe focussed the project more acutely on all young people in the workplace and their experiences. As the project rolled out, however, the project team and the participating employers found that the strategies for supporting young people and their mental health in the workplace made a difference for all employees.

At the first workshop in August 2019 employers were very quick to articulate the issues they needed assistance with, including raising awareness of mental health and wellbeing, understanding their role in workplace, having policies, procedures and tools to support a strong culture and being able to make change to entrenched and old ways of managing. The August face to face workshop and the second one in March 2020 were really important in building relationships and trust and a co-design approach that enabled businesses to contribute openly to the identification of the issues as well as the solutions.

Employers and young people were encouraged to imagine/envisage what they wanted and to provide direct and honest input into the product as their wants and needs were interpreted by the project team. Whilst awareness raising was a clear first priority the concept of a HR truck continued to be explored and influenced the decision to populate the digital resource with template policies and procedures and scenarios and models that are applicable in small to medium businesses.

The employers and young people involved in the co-design were clear that the resource needed to be engaging and interactive and to normalise mental health as a conversation in the workplace. It had to be highly practical. The decision to locate the solution (workcarefactor.com.au) into the digital space was not taken until well into Co-design 1 with the creation of a prototype resource directed at small to medium businesses and not confirmed until feedback on Co-design 1 and re-articulation of priorities in August 2020 (used a Mural collaborative canvas to refer back to the original plan and look at what had changed for employers and young people).





The COVID19 lockdowns provided an interesting overlay to the project. On one hand the lockdowns curtailed the ability of the team to be face to face with each other or with employers or young people to any great extent. On the other hand, video meetings were easy to hold, could be at a time that suited small groups and provided a level of flexibility that may not have been there in a conventional environment. The project team also made use of Mural as a collaborative canvas to assist in facilitating interactivity between themselves and with employers in the August 2020 workshop.

Further innovations to the resource arose through the use of other simple applications such as Trello, enabling workcarefactor.com.au to be linked to the contact details of local service providers in the event a workplace or a young person needs urgent help.

COVID created higher expectations around mental health in the workplace and in communities more generally. Employers were worn down by the uncertainty and volatility and this was evidenced by high engagement in the first cycle, dropping off as the project progressed. At the end of Co-design 3, however, a number of businesses and young people came together to celebrate and share their observations.

The three Cycles of Co-design were quite distinct with:

- Co-design 1 & 2 focussing on design and creation of, firstly the prototype and secondly the minimum viable product that is now known as workcarefactor.com.au
- Co-design 2 & 3 overlapped on consolidation, additions, refinement, promotion and sustainability
- Co-design 3 also started to explore and understand more about what would help employers to use the resource, always the missing piece. Co-design3 has shown that just putting a resource into the cybersphere doesn't lead to usage. There needs to be more. The evaluation by Deakin and the work by the Leaders for Geelong will help in identifying the next steps in further connecting workcarefactor.com.au and other resources, including those created by WorkSafe to employers and young people.

The young people involved in the consultations saw things differently from the employers, with gender differences in the points made by the young women compared to the young men interviewed. One of the shared complexities raised by all young people was the need to know the workplace boundaries. They compared work with school. At school they always knew where to go for information and what to do. Once they moved out of school that clarity was no longer there. In response practical resources were developed such as Workplace Decision Maker and flip cards of Asking Questions at Work: Q&As for Young Workers. When feedback came in the form of "Yeh it was good" from one young man the team knew that they had received high praise indeed.

In addition to the employers, young people and the project implementation team, the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) met regularly throughout the project and provided feedback on the content and presentation of the resource and support for the project. The TAG represented the major local networks, excepting the Chamber of Commerce. Efforts were made throughout the project to make sure the Chamber was up to date with the progress of the project.

The stickiness of the TAG members is reflected in the sustainability model with six members forming a consortium to take the initiative into the future.



10.2 Leigh Bartlett, CEO, BATForce

Leigh Bartlett, CEO, BATForce, held the critical role of drawing young people into the project and gaining their input into the content and design of the resource and into discussions about how best to achieve changes in the workplace.

In looking back across the Safe and Empowering Workplaces Project Leigh made the following observations:

1) The important role of the Project Manager in forming and maintaining the right team
Leigh observed that the people involved in the TAG and the project implementation team knew, and had complete faith in Liz Everist, GWYL Project Manager, and her ability to pull the right people with the right skills set together.

In the first instance Leigh felt that people, including employers, weren't sure where the project would lead but they were prepared to buy into the process of exploring the issues and working together because they trusted the process and each other built on their trust in Liz. As the project progressed team members found that they enjoyed working with each other and were able to spark a high level of creativity and innovation.

2) Impact of COVID19
COVID19 lockdowns definitely impacted the project and changed the way people worked together. Pre-COVID19 the team would have spent time in working together face to face and getting to know each other. COVID19 impacted the ability to be face to face but by using zoom the team could progress the project using different ways of working. Consultations online were shorter with smaller numbers per session to ensure that each of the employers and young people could have their say. The impact on employers was evident as, in the early lockdowns, they juggled decisions about how their business would continue to operate and how they would keep staff engaged.

In addition, COVID19 led to BATForce changing the way it worked on its other projects and implementing innovations in the way it brings people together and the way it aggregates and presents information. These innovations had a positive impact on the design of Work Care Factor resource (e.g. using a Trello board to provide information on Geelong based services).

3) Building the skills of young people in Co-design
Safe and Empowering Workplaces has contributed to BATForce focussing on its innovative approach to co-design and to rebranding its approach as Co+design – an approach where young people not only have input into a project but also build their own skills in implementing co-design. The BATForce Co+design model is grounded in action learning principles and reflective development and reframes the language around young people, to look at multiple rather than complex needs, to focus on where the power lies in the workplace, i.e. Owners, Managers and Supervisors and to provide resources aimed at “fixing the workplace” not the young people.



10.3 Bernadette O'Connor, Executive Director, Management Governance Australia

Bernadette O'Connor, the Executive Director, Management Governance Australia (MGA), joined the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for the Safe and Empowering Workplaces project upon invitation by the GWYL Project Manager, Liz Everist. MGA then took on the role of facilitating Co-design 1, 2 & 3 Cycles, managing the content and design teams and writing this Action Research Study.

The following reflections are drawn from the experience of MGA's involvement in the project and in facilitating the development of the Work Care Factor digital resource as a solution to the issues raised by young people and employers with respect to mentally healthy workplaces.

1) Determining and Prioritising the Issues

Bringing employers together at the beginning of the project to explore issues associated with mental health and wellbeing of young people in the workplace was critical to laying the foundation for the 1st Co-design Cycle. The August 2019 and March 2020 workshops clearly identified the need to raise the awareness of business owners, managers, employees and young people of the importance of mentally healthy and well workplaces. Clarity in relation to raising awareness as a priority assisted MGA in establishing a foundation for the workshops and consultations in Co-design Cycle 1. The employer workshop in August 2020 confirmed that further priorities included policy templates and resources to assist in managing issues.

2) Effectiveness of Co-design Process

The Co-design Process ensured that employers, managers and young people have been continuously involved in the project scoping, design and roll out. Whilst the term 'co-design' is used as a descriptor for all sorts of project consultation and engagement processes, in Safe and Empowering Workplaces the Co-design Process was a genuine and iterative process for identifying issues, agreeing on problems, exploring solutions, taking account of different perspectives, testing options and agreeing on a way forward. As a result, Work Care Factor provides both young employees and small to medium size businesses with a range of practical resources to assist in building a strong workplace culture of wellbeing.

3) Strong Project Relationships

The broader Safe and Empowering Workplaces project team, including GWYL, BATForce, MGA and the TAG, has maintained and strengthened relationships throughout the duration of the project, leading to a diversity of expertise, a range of perspectives, design and content creativity and skills across the youth sector, small to medium size business, management, human resource management, community services, graphic design and digital tech.

4) Understanding the Target Audience

Initially it was thought that the target audience would be young people. The project team took time to explore this proposition and agreed that, whilst the target audience is in part young people, it is also managers, business owners and key people within a workplace. This conclusion was based on understanding that owners, managers and senior people are key to ensuring a workplace is an emotionally healthy and well place for employees. Whilst young people are an equally critical audience, for them, however, the message is about rights and responsibilities, navigating the workplace and getting help when needed.



10.4 Final Meeting with Employers and Young People

The final meeting for the Safe and Empowering Workplaces project was held on December 15th, 2021, over breakfast in Norlane, Geelong. Participating businesses and young people attended the breakfast along with members of the TAG and the Project Team.

The event provided the opportunity to:

- Celebrate the project and its achievements and thank all the project contributors
- Update everyone on the changes to the resource resulting from feedback throughout Co-design 3
- Announce the sustainability arrangements for Work Care Factor
- Gain reflections from the participants.

What worked and is working?

The feedback on what worked clustered around the approach, the resource and the expertise.

In reflecting on the approach taken throughout the project, the key feedback was that it was real co-design, we listened, we tested, and we trialled. It wasn't a linear process and sometimes it was a bit messy, but the messiness worked for ideas, opinions and innovation. Employers, young people and TAG members agreed that the process was enjoyable to be part of and that it was clear that everyone's expertise was used to inform the project.

The resources reflect real people and real problems, and they can continue to be built on, e.g. added in more youth specific resources e.g. Workplace Decision Maker. Overall, the feedback is that the strength of the resource lies in its simplicity – it is easy to use, and it is accessible. The young people were pleased to have their voices heard and included in the resource and feedback that they could see the suggestions they made acted on.

What needs more development?

Employers feel that to get the most from the resource there is a need for further work to understand what needs to change in their businesses and to understand how best to use the tool to get the changes they need. They need to work with their managers and supervisors to grow their skills to embed the practices rather than just touch on it and move on. They want to use their tool to assist them in becoming better leaders.

The platform needs to be kept fresh so that people go back and back to it. It can be an ongoing driver for change if people know that there will be fresh content.

And,

“My hope is that in Geelong and surrounds we have a really agile business environment that is well equipped to working with a diverse workforce – and champion the value of that.”¹¹³

¹¹³ Quote from participating business



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13.0 Attachments

Attachment 1: Methodology

Attachment 2: Identified Work Factors

Attachment 3: Good Practice Workplaces

Attachment 4: A Framework for Action

Attachment 5: Work Care Factor Workplace Impact Indicators