



Inclusive workplace wellbeing:

**A resource guide for multicultural small
and medium-sized workplaces**

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Kurna people, whose ancestral lands we live, work, and raise future generations. We acknowledge the deep feelings of connection and relationship of the Kurna people to country.

Disclaimer

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Auctus Training and Education, Payneham

Purpose of this Inclusive Workplace Wellbeing Resource Guide

Mental health and Wellbeing Mastery is an essential part of the leadership toolkit.

1 in 5 Australian adults will experience a mental condition in their lifetime.¹ This costs Australian businesses about \$11 billion annually through absenteeism, reduced work performance, increased turnover rates and compensation claims.²

The Inclusive Leadership and Wellbeing project is a co-designed, business-led initiative for multicultural business leaders aimed at fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment while prioritising the overall wellbeing of multicultural Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and their employees.

The purpose of this Inclusive Workplace Wellbeing Resource Guide is to assist multicultural SMEs in their continuous journey toward creating and sustaining healthy and thriving workplaces. Workplaces and organisations are highly likely to succeed when they take active steps to ensure the wellbeing of their people. This guide is a blend of diverse practical tools designed to empower individuals, teams and leaders in the workplace.

The Project

Thirty-eight participants took part in the six-month project for and by multicultural SMEs to initiate conversations and further raise awareness on workplace wellbeing. The two Inclusive Leadership and Wellbeing consultation workshops primarily focused on stress and burnout management.

The survey results indicated that 70% of the participants managed their own businesses, and 10% reported holding leadership positions within their organisations. Eighty-five percent of the survey respondents agreed that the consultation workshops increased their awareness on the importance of a healthy workplace, while 100% noted that it raised their awareness on where to access support and resources to create a healthy workplace. Additionally, 100% of the participants expressed plans to implement healthy workplace strategies within their workplaces within 3 months.

70%

Manage own business.

10%

Hold leadership positions within their organisations.

100%

Increased awareness on access to support and wellbeing resources.

100%

Plans to implement healthy workplace strategies within three months.

Project Outcomes

With mental health often viewed as a stigmatised and taboo topic in many Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), or alternatively referred to as Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CARM) communities, the initial phase of the first consultation workshop aimed to unpack the meaning of mental health. The language used to address this concept is important, as it reflects how well it is received in various communities and organisations. Cultural differences were evident in people's understanding and responses to the terms mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. For instance, instead of using the term mental health, some cultures prefer psychological health, as it carries less of a negative connotation related to psychosis, and rather emphasises an appreciation for an individual's life experiences and trauma.

Like many other 'Australians,' achieving work-life balance can pose a challenge for many employees and business leaders from CALD and multicultural communities. Not knowing when to step back from business-related thoughts can have a detrimental impact on both business and family life. There was a consensus that more leaders should be better educated on mental health and workplace wellbeing to better support their own needs, those of their employees, and external stakeholders.



Virgara Fruit and Veg, Angle Vale

Cultural Differences and Workplace Wellbeing

Half of Australia's migrants feel unsafe at work³. Recent research conducted by Migrant Workers Centre (2023) reported that discrimination, bullying, and verbal abuse are the most common safety hazards experienced by migrants in the workplace.⁴

Individuals from CALD backgrounds and migrant business owners often face and experience additional stressors in their place of work, some of which include:

1 **Discrimination and bullying**

2 **Language barriers**

3 **Loss of family ties**

4 **Cultural adjustment difficulties**

5 **Feeling of belonging**

6 **Low control over type of work**

7 **Lack of qualification recognition**

8 **Pre- and post-migration traumatic experience**

9 **Navigating the business network landscape**



Self-employment vs Work-life Balance

Self-employment, the business ecosystem, erosion of work-life boundaries, rigid structures, occupational uncertainty, isolation in a connected world, people management, the challenge of switching off or setting boundaries, language barriers, and handling customer complaints can all exacerbate the risk of stress for multicultural business leaders.

As a leader, how do you prioritise workplace wellbeing for you and your organisation?

Stress and Burnout Management

The leaders who participated in the consultation shared some practices that helped with their mental health and wellbeing. One of the questions posed during the consultation was, *as diverse leaders within your organisation, how do you cope with stress?*

Evidence, personal stories, and experiences shared indicated that the following practices on page 16 can be therapeutic and powerful in coping with stress and burnout. The first step is to acknowledge and identify that you are stressed.

Continuous monitoring of physical and mental health can help leaders and their staff to avoid burnout and promote wellbeing.



Virgara Fruit and Veg, Angle Vale

South Australian Worker's Health



1 in 4

Experience a mental health condition



44%

Have at least one chronic disease



40%

Will experience a lifetime mental disorder⁵



1 in 3

Drink alcohol at risky levels



2 in 3

Are overweight or obese



Low physical activity levels

Employees with low physical activity levels exhibit higher rates of absenteeism, while increased sedentary time among employees correlates with reduced productivity and decreased job satisfaction.



\$6 - \$36 billion

The annual estimated cost of workplace bullying ranges from \$6 billion to \$36 billion, when factoring in hidden and lost opportunity costs.



\$5 billion

In South Australia, the estimated annual cost of work-related injuries and illnesses is \$5 billion.

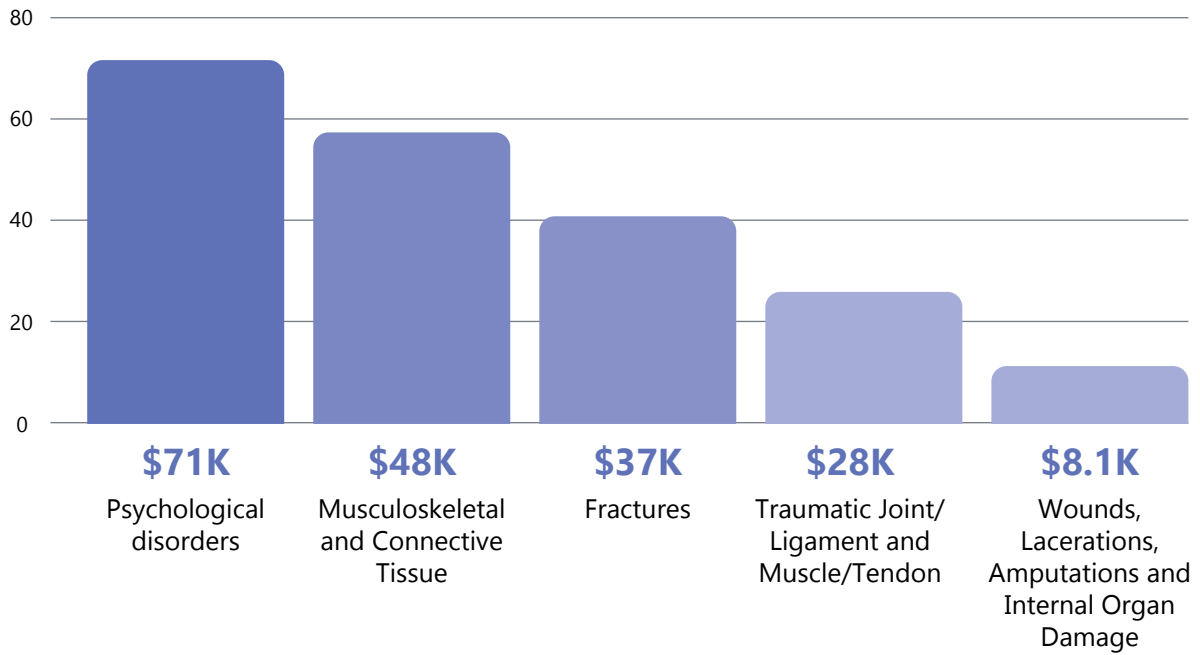


66 per cent

Employees with unhealthy diets were 66% more likely to report a decline in productivity.

This infographic is adapted from Preventive Health SA Healthy Workplaces Toolkit 2023. See page 5

South Australian Worker's Compensation Claims⁶



12,950 claims were received and accepted by ReturnToWorkSA in the 2023 financial year.

This graph is adapted from Return To Work SA.

Why is a Healthy Workplace Important?



Staff retention



Fosters open communication and teamwork



Supportive management



Inclusivity – acceptance of all within the workplace



Growth and capacity building



Employees grappling with poor psychological wellbeing often face a debilitating combination of burnout



Safe environment for genuine self-expression



Anxiety, depression, and disillusionment = a profound impact on life in and outside work

The South Australian Healthy, Safe, and Thriving Workplaces Framework



This framework is adapted from Preventive Health SA Healthy Workplaces Toolkit 2023. See pages 8-13.



Persian Creations, Royal Park

Practical 'go to' Resources

Many workplace hazards can have negative impacts on mental health. For every \$1 invested in successfully implementing a mentally healthy workplace program, the return on investment is \$2.30 on average⁷. The wellbeing goals you strategically develop for your organisation will help to create a clear action plan to keep yourself and your organisation accountable. In addition to nutrition, which is valuable to protect, respond, and promote a sound mental health, below are some practical steps to help you and your organisation plan and build a mentally stronger and healthier workplace for all to thrive.



Protect, promote and respond are the three pillars for establishing mentally healthy workplaces. As an inclusive leader, it is essential that you protect yourself and others from work-related risks to mental health. To establish a mentally healthy workplace, there should be systems, policies, and procedures in place to manage hazards and protect people. Once the protect foundation is laid, then could there be a focus on responding and promoting a healthy workplace. The promote and respond pillars will be explored with practical examples in the following pages.

- **Protect:** Identify and address work-related risks to mental health. See [Protect Guide, 2023](#).
- **Promote:** Acknowledge and enhance the positive aspects of work that contribute to good mental health.
- **Respond:** Identify and support individuals experiencing mental ill-health or distress, and assist with their recovery and return to work.

⁷ PwC, 2014, [The Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance Report](#).



MBEN Inclusive Leadership and Wellbeing Workshop, SA Business Chamber

Psychosocial Hazards in the Workplace

Psychosocial hazard is anything that has the potential to induce psychological distress⁸. Psychosocial hazards could cause physical and psychological harm to individuals in the workplace. Some common workplace stressors identified in CALD owned businesses that can lead to burnout include:



Discrimination



Poor communication



Bullying



Job demands and expectations



Inter-generational differences



Under resourced teams



Poor management



Harmful organisational culture

Promote and Respond: 5 Ways to Wellbeing⁹

Taking simple steps towards improving our health can lead to significant long-term benefits, enhancing our overall wellbeing and quality of life. Attempt to identify a suitable time during the day when you can allocate a few minutes for exercises. Physical activities can be performed individually or as a group within the workplace. Plan your exercises for moments when you feel most energised and least burdened by stress. Be consistent in anything that you chose to do. It is best to be proactive than reactive. The below evidence-based five actions will enhance your social and mental wellbeing.



1. Connect

Humans are social beings, and social connections are an integral part of our wellbeing. Promoting and responding to mental health involves building close relationships with colleagues, friends and family members.



2. Be Active

Engaging in activities that promote physical, psychological, and mental health positively impacts wellbeing. Example of these activities include moving around the office every hour, or going for a short 10-minute walk.



3. Keep Learning

Learning is a lifetime journey that continually enriches our knowledge and skills. Learning a new skill can be fulfilling and positively contribute to mental health. For example, taking part in professional development opportunities to stay abreast in your field of work.



4. Be Aware

Being mindful of your actions and aware of your surroundings helps you to make informed decisions in your daily life and workplace, which can reduce your anxiety and stress levels, creating a healthy and sound mind.



5. Help Others

Acts of kindness can give a sense of purpose and make a significant positive impact on your mental health. This could be as simple as being patient with a colleague or showing appreciation towards your team for the work that they do.



Auctus Training and Education, Payneham

Employee Wellbeing Programs to Promote Work-life Balance

These organisational strategies are intended to support the overall health and wellbeing of employees within an organisation. Implementing wellness initiatives within your workplace could result in cost savings for your organisation.

To make sure all employees have equal access to wellness programs, it is important to design programs that meet the different needs of different employees within your organisation.

On-site Wellness Sessions

Can assist in screening for health risks and psychosocial hazards. This involves inviting therapists and other specialists to address specific topics throughout the year. This approach promotes ongoing health management within organisations.

Mental Health Days Off

Offering mental health days off with no questions asked can significantly support employees in managing their wellbeing. Sometimes, taking a day off is the ideal solution when external pressures become overwhelming. Offering three to five mental health days annually can prove beneficial to employees.

Financial Wellness Initiatives

Grant employees the opportunity to enhance their financial literacy, which is a vital aspect of wellbeing. Your organisation can offer access to financial planning services including workshops on budgeting, debt management, and retirement planning. These programs aim to improve financial literacy and management skills, thereby reducing the stress associated with financial challenges.

Mindfulness

Provide your teams with resources to continuously support their health and wellbeing. These activities may enhance employee focus, decrease absenteeism, and improve overall job and organisation satisfaction. Meditation and mindfulness practices can help to reduce risk of employee burnout, stress and fatigue.

Body Scan Practice

Engaging in a body scan exercise can help you reconnect with your body and quieten your inner critic and distractions. This practice fosters increased awareness, acceptance, and the release of accumulated tension in areas of the body that may manifest as headaches, muscle pains, and fatigue¹⁰.

Try it out:

- 1 Find a comfortable position sitting or lying down.
- 2 Start with focusing your attention on your feet; wiggle your toes, stretch your foot, tune in and notice any sensations arising.
- 3 When discomfort arises, take a deep breath in through your nose and then actively exhale through your mouth, releasing and letting go of any tension in that area.
- 4 Continue this process by working your way up through your body, moving your focus to your ankles, knees, legs, stomach, etc., until you finally reach the crown of your head.
- 5 Focus on each muscle group, body part or whatever feels tensed, and use your breath to release tension.



Mindfulness Meditation

Create a private space for employees to decompress from stressful situations and revive. This also helps build a sense of community.

April is Australia's Stress Awareness Month to raise awareness of the causes and cures for the modern-day stress epidemic.

10th October is World Mental Health Day¹¹

Coping with Stress and Burnout at Work

Below are the coping strategies that were derived from the project's consultations.

1 Self-compassion

- Check in on feelings
- Check in with self and others
- Set boundaries
- Gratitude journal
- Mindfulness practices

2 Physical Movements

- Meditation / Yoga
- Team building
- Art
- Walk
- Exercise

3 Focus

- Plan ahead – time management
- Professional support
- Ergonomics
- Effective use of mental health aiders
- Organisation wellness days
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – leaders to take advantage of EAP programs

4 Social Connection

- Mentors
- Interact with external support systems
- Peer-to-peer support at work
- Welfare check
- Create a safe and inclusive workplace
- In collectivist cultures, joy comes from spending time with family and loved ones

5 Rest

- Downtime
- Zone out
- Stop, regroup, and recollect
- Disconnect from social media and other distractions to reduce stress

6 Emotional Regulation

- Deep breaths
- Humour
- Music – good for the soul
- Visit a religious / spiritual place with meaning to you



Zuva Allied Health, Prospect

Promoting a Good Workplace Culture – Case Study

Zuva Allied Health is a community-based practice offering Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy support to help individuals participate independently in everyday activities. Opening its doors in 2020, my business partner and I aimed to create a workplace where staff from all walks of life feel valued and want to come to work. Though our industry can be highly demanding, we wanted to build an organisation that provides adequate resources to staff to prevent burnout. When we first started, our biggest challenge was recruitment. However, when we started to focus more on individuals rather than the collective, we started to see measurable results, such as low leave record and turnover.

With an open-door policy, staff can speak to management, and urgent issues including Work Health and Safety (WHS) are addressed immediately and effectively. Outside of our scheduled one-on-one fortnightly supervisions, we organise spontaneous wellness chats and learning circles to assess how each staff member is doing. Though the job is demanding, there are minimal reports of stress because staff have reported that “they feel supported, beyond monetary compensation.”

All staff have a self-care plan and are encouraged to frequently use and review their individual plans. As an organisation, we embrace flexible work arrangements such as swap days. Ergonomics also contributes to a healthy workplace, which is the reason all of our employees have height adjustable desks and adjustable screens. The key to building a highly successful team and organisation is understanding that an organisation cannot exist without its people. Ensuring the wellbeing of your staff is essential for business success.

Zuva Allied Health Directors,
Sandra Moyo and Fadzai Razemba

Glossary of Terms

ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics
CALD – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CARM – Culturally and Racially Marginalised
EAP – Employee Assistance Program
MBEN – Multicultural Business and Entrepreneur Network
PHSA – Preventive Health SA
SMEs – Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
WHO – World Health Organization
WHS – Work Health and Safety

Support

[13YARN](#) – 13 92 76
[1800RESPECT](#) – 0458 737 732
[Beyond Blue](#) – 1300 224 636
[Dardi Munwurro](#) – 1800 435 799
[Lifeline](#) – 13 11 14
[MensLine Australia](#) – 1300 78 99 78
[Mental Health Triage](#) – 131 465
[Open Arms](#) – 1800 011 046
[Qlife](#) – 1800 184 527
[Regional Access](#) – 1300 032 186
[STTARS](#) – 8206 8900
[Suicide Call Back Service](#) – 1300 659 467

Further Resources

Below are some key resources to support your workplace wellbeing journey. From developing a business case proposal template to a quick guide to monitoring and evaluating your workplace wellbeing guide. Tailor each resource to your organisation for a maximum positive impact.

[Beyond Blue - Financial Wellbeing](#)
[Black Dog Institute](#)
[Comcare](#)
[Diversity Council Australia](#)
[Head to Health](#)
[Healthy Workplace Check](#)
[Healthy Workplace Toolkit](#)
[McKinsey's World of Work](#)
[Mental Health First Aid Australia](#)
[MoneyMinded](#)
[Multicultural Service Directory](#)
[National Mental Health Commission - Mentally Healthy Workplaces](#)
[NewAccess for Small Business Owners](#)
[Physical Activity in the Workplace: A Guide](#)
[Preventive Health SA](#)
[Psychological Health for Small Business](#)
[Psychological Health Safety Checklist](#)
[ReturnToWorkSA](#)
[RUOK](#)
[SANE Australia](#)
[Safe Work Australia](#)
[SafeWork SA](#)
[Small Business Guides to Mentally Healthy Workplaces](#)
[Small Business Resources and Templates](#)
[Thrive at Work](#)

Key Concepts

Burnout

Is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged chronic workplace stress ([WHO, 2019](#)).

Mental Health

Is “a state of mental wellbeing that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community” ([WHO, 2022](#)).

Stress

Stress is a physical, mental, and emotional response to challenging or demanding situations ([Lifeline, 2024](#)).

Wellbeing

Is more than the absence of disease or illness; it is the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy. It encompasses multiple dimensions, including physical, mental and social health ([Simons G, & Baldwin DS, 2021](#)).

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For more information or to obtain a copy of the
Inclusive Workplace Wellbeing Resource Guide



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