



FACTSHEET: Spotlight on Supporting Men's Mental Health in the Workplace

Despite significant progress in mental health discussions, one crucial area remains under-addressed: men's mental wellbeing.

Societal expectations of masculinity often discourage men from acknowledging and addressing their emotional challenges. Traits like strength, emotional resilience, and stoicism are typically linked to masculinity, which can inadvertently prevent men from seeking help, resulting in negative consequences for their mental health.

Despite men and women facing comparable rates of mental health issues, certain disparities exist. For example, women are more likely to experience conditions such as depression, generalised anxiety disorders and affective disorders. However, males have twice the rate of substance use disorders; are less likely to seek professional help and disturbingly account for 75% of all suicides in Australia.

“At work, men are twice as likely to have mental health problems due to their job compared to problems outside of work, with almost a third attributing poor mental health to their job.”

WHY IS SUPPORTING MEN'S GOOD MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE RELEVANT TO BUSINESSES?

Supporting good mental health in the workplace is crucial for everyone, as we spend a significant portion of our lives at work. Mental health directly impacts daily life and work performance, influencing productivity, performance, and motivation.

For men, major sources of stress often include physical health, financial, and family-related issues. These stressors can include serious illness, the death of a family member or friend, loneliness, retirement, unemployment, a partner's pregnancy and the birth of a baby, and divorce or separation.

At work, men are twice as likely to have mental health problems due to their job compared to problems outside of work, with almost a third attributing poor mental health to their job.

Men are also less likely to speak up about mental health issues and are more prone to engage in risk-taking behaviours. By focusing on men, employers have an opportunity to create a positive impact, foster a safe and supportive environment and encourage help-seeking behaviour when needed.

Many of the CMHAA members have implemented a series of mental health and wellbeing initiatives that are focused on all employees, regardless of gender. Examples include parental leave policies and training programs. However, some are creating male specific activities to engage this group – see our case studies.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS ORGANISATIONS CAN DO TO BETTER SUPPORT MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE?

Encouraging employees to check in on colleagues can be beneficial, but workplaces should aim for a more significant impact by intentionally fostering supportive behaviours and culture. Tailored health-improvement initiatives specifically designed for men are not only more effective at engaging them but are also welcomed and valued.



Promote Open Communication: Encourage a culture of openness where men feel comfortable discussing their mental health without fear of stigma or judgment. This can be facilitated through regular mental health check-ins, supportive leadership, and mental health awareness campaigns.



Provide Signposting and Access to Mental Health Resources: Clearly signpost all available mental health supports, such as the company's EAP service, specific men's mental health resources, and peer support programs. Offering anonymous helplines and online resources can also be beneficial.



Spotlight on: Clayton Utz

Men and women often have different health needs, are affected differently by various medical issues, and access services in different patterns and for different reasons. This is why at **Clayton Utz (CU)** we strive to improve awareness, provide education and practical resources for men at our firm. Examples of how we do this include the following:

Men's Health & Wellbeing Hub

- Creating a dedicated Men's Health & Wellbeing Hub that captures resources specific to the needs of men. The health, exercise, nutrition and health check information are laid out in an easy to read format and is segmented into differing age brackets to make sure information can be targeted and meaningful for the recipient.

Dedicated Workshops

- We have provided a workshop on menopause for the firm's senior male leaders. The purpose of the workshop was to bring men into the conversation around how we can build on CU's supportive culture and those supportive practices to make the firm more menopause friendly.

Mental Health First Aid Training (MHFA)

- We target men to undertake the MFHA training and for them to join our MHFA network.

Specific Campaigns

- We run initiatives and campaigns at the firm targeting men's mental health and wellbeing. Examples of this include Men's Health Week and Movember.



Manager Training: Line managers should be trained to recognise symptoms of poor mental health, such as an extrovert becoming withdrawn or a highly productive person falling behind. Spotting these signs can be crucial for those suffering, and managers should be equipped to have difficult conversations about mental health.



Targeted Language: Men may respond better to specific terms like anxiety, stress, anger, and overload rather than the general term "mental health." Using relatable language such as "worried," "fearful," or "feeling flat" can be more effective in engaging men in mental health conversations.



Foster a Supportive and Open Approach: Create a supportive work environment that recognises the unique mental health challenges men may face. Encourage CEOs, leadership teams, and managers to be open about their mental health issues. By role modelling vulnerability and sharing how they overcame challenges, leaders can create a powerful impact in male-dominated workplaces, encouraging others to be open.



Encourage a Safe Space and Peer Support: Develop peer support programs where employees can feel safe to share their experiences and offer support to each other. This can include peer mentoring, support groups, and buddy systems that provide a sense of community and shared understanding.



Spotlight on: Lendlease

Like many CMHAA members, Lendlease run a men's health campaign to mark Movember in November each year. However, throughout the year, their internal national approach is via a strong Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) network.

MHFA Internal Network

As a property and construction company, Lendlease requires a trained MHFAider on every site office and project providing active intervention and support to a male dominated workforce. Jason McGovern, Wellbeing Manager, Australia says that 'Mental health awareness and training is not a 'nice to have', it is essential in ensuring the wellbeing of your employees and that they are supported.'

Lendlease has been training their employees and sub-contractors in MHFA since 2014 and currently have a network of 379 active MHFAiders in Australia. Feedback to date has been positive with many managers and teams indicating that they have become more confident in dealing with and supporting those in their workplaces, and wider communities, experiencing mental health issues.



Spotlight on: KPMG

While these days, it is much more acceptable, men's mental health has not been typically discussed openly in the workplace. However, it's for this very reason that **KPMG** has programs and initiatives in place to ensure that men have a safe place to seek support, resources and programs to meet their needs.

We have a **Real Peers, Real Talk Network** of 142 at KPMG, members of which are equipped to support our people by having Real Conversations about anything, including mental health. We are growing our representation of men and those who are non-binary across the business. Men represent about 29 per cent of our network. This is a key element of our growth strategy and focus going forward.

Since 2023, we have included at least one **Wellbeing Circle** annually entitled **Men and Mental Health**. This has been a very popular session which is facilitated by one of our long-time male Partners. It is always well-received, and the impact has been that more men are speaking up.

Along with Men and Mental Health, we also run fertility-related Wellbeing Circles which are available to all genders across the firm. Recently we have done more to explicitly include our LGBTQI+ colleagues and men to attend these sessions, as these have historically attended by women. One attendee felt 'so relieved to finally be able to talk openly about his fertility challenges in the workplace.' It was the first time that he had been able to talk about the issue.

Another initiative which has been critical for us to include all genders is our partnership with the **Pink Elephant Support Network**. We will hold our first training session with selected Real Peers with lived experience with pregnancy loss and/or fertility challenges. We have one male colleague with lived experience who will participate in this training.

Our peer-led networks are another critical aspect of our inclusion program of work. We have a motivated and driven **Fathers' Network** across the Australian firm. This is led by one of our Partners and has a growing membership of 207. This network is currently focused on gender-based violence.

Another key tactic to engage more men in conversations around mental health has been storytelling. The article with our highest readership in 2022-23 was an article with our board and national executive committee discussing 'When I wasn't OK': KPMG leaders share. Because the conversations were mental health oriented, we had five of the seven contributors male leaders.

Finally, we have a regular program of Days/times of Significance across the business which include:

- Movember
- International Men's Health Week

CMHAA would like to thank members Clayton Utz, Lendlease and KPMG for providing case studies for this resource.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- [Australian Men's Health Forum](#)
- [MensLine Australia](#)
- [Mates in Construction](#)
- [Beyond Blue](#)
- [Healthy Heads in Trucks and Sheds](#)
- [Movember](#)

References:

- National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing, 2020-2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)
- Causes of Death, Australia, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics (abs.gov.au)
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/news/mind-survey-finds-men-more-likely-to-experience-work-related-mental-health-problems/#:~:text=New%20research%20from%20Mind%20shows,to%20problems%20outside%20of%20work.&text=The%20research%2C%20which%20comes%20from,Workplace%20Wellbeing%20Index%202017%2F18>.
- Converge International. The Workplace and Men's Mental Health. <https://convergeinternational.com.au/resources/the-workplace-and-mens-mental-health/>
- Healthdirect. Mental Health Resources for Men. <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/mens-mental-health>
- Mental Health Commission of NSW. Peer Work Hub. <https://www.nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au/content/peer-work-hub>
- NSW Government. Take action to be a mentally healthy workplace. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work/managing-mental-health-your-workplace/how-to-create-a-mentally-healthy-workplace/take-action-to-be-a-mentally-healthy-workplace#:~:text=Train%20peer%20supporters%20with%20off,support%20program%20in%20your%20workplace>.
- NSW Government. Mental Health at Work. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work>
- World Economic Forum. 5 ways to support men's mental health and raise awareness. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2024/03/5-ways-to-support-mens-mental-health-and-raise-awareness/>
- World Health Organisation. Guidelines on mental health at work. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240053052>



The Corporate Mental Health Alliance (CMHAA) is a group of Australian businesses dedicated to providing mentally healthy workplaces for their people.

CONTACT

For more information, please email: info@cmhaa.org.au

Website: cmhaa.org.au

LinkedIn: Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia