



**Corporate Mental Health  
Alliance** AUSTRALIA



# **Managing Psychosocial Risk in the Workplace:**

**Case Study: Bunnings**

## Planning the assessment

### Why we assessed psychosocial risks at Bunnings

Bunnings has always had a strong focus on mental health and wellbeing. Genuine care for our team members, customers, and community is part of our culture and the way we work. Our traditional approach to wellbeing has largely focussed on health promotion and the provision of support and care for injured and ill team members. COVID-19 challenged us to find new ways to prioritise team member wellbeing and ultimately be more strategic in how and where we focussed energy and resources.

Joining CMHAA as a founding member gave us the opportunity to learn from what other leading organisations were doing to support their teams. As a retail business operating throughout COVID-19, job demands, customer harassment, violence, and aggression were clear psychosocial hazards, however we wanted to ensure that we fully understood the range of hazards likely to affect all of our team members.

Our Wellbeing Steering Committee agreed that finding ways to identify and manage psychosocial hazards upstream would be a more effective approach than our traditional focus on downstream support. An organisation-wide risk assessment was commenced to help us better understand the psychosocial hazards and protective factors impacting our team members.

### Getting the timing right

Given the scale of our business and the importance of getting it right, it was decided that a dedicated resource would be engaged to design and implement the assessment, and lead and oversee future wellbeing strategy and interventions. This allowed both a level of objectivity and the time and space to design and implement a thorough assessment without the distraction of business-as-usual work. As this was our first assessment, 12 months were dedicated to completing the assessment including design, data collection, and implementation.

The first four months of the assessment focused on the collection and analysis of existing data using the Thrive at Work audit tool from Curtin University. A major guiding principle of the assessment was to integrate with existing infrastructure wherever possible. When it came time to consult with our team members our priority was to leverage and integrate existing consultation methods such as routine surveys, leader listening posts, and our collaboration platform 'Workplace'. As a retail business, it was also important that we avoided busy

periods and remained conscious of pulling team members away from serving customers. Specifically for example, consultation wasn't possible for two months during our Christmas blackout period and our assessment scheduling was designed accordingly.

### The team involved

The assessment was led by our Wellbeing Manager and Wellbeing Steering Committee with support from our Wellbeing Support Team, Safety and Wellbeing Advisory Team, Employment Relations Team, and Human Resources Team. To ensure a diverse representation of the business, a broad cross-section of leaders and team members were included in the consultation process via focus groups and interviews.

## Tools and strategies used

### Bunnings' unique needs

The realities of the retail sector meant that different approaches were required for customer-facing roles compared to support team roles. For example, many customer-facing team members don't have access to mobile phones or laptops and have less opportunity to leave the warehouse floor to complete surveys or participate in focus groups. The size and breadth of our business also restricted us from fully engaging with a single survey tool or provider due to either constraints on the number of sites captured within the tool (we have over 400 sites) or the cost for an external organisation to implement a survey to ~55,000 team members.

### External tools considered

We considered the People at Work Assessment Tool, Curtin University's Thrive at Work Survey Tool, and the Flourish Dx Assessment Tool from People Diagnostix. Due to the noted constraints, none of these tools were suitable for our needs. Instead, a custom internal survey tool was designed based on a combination of existing validated tools and survey scales.

### Overcoming limitations

Our initial survey was embedded within an existing and well-accepted engagement survey to limit the need for additional internal promotion and minimise survey fatigue. Careful attention was paid to survey design and length (led by our Head of HR Insights & Engagement) to make completion as easy as possible for all team members. Our Internal Communications team also actively promotes consultation opportunities such as surveys and communicates key initiatives and programs informed by survey results.

## The implementation process

### Communicating at all levels

Fortunately, our senior leadership team actively champion and advocate for team members' mental health and wellbeing and no additional support for the assessment was required. Our risk assessment was overseen by our Wellbeing Steering Committee, with key milestones reported to our senior leadership team via our existing Safety and Wellbeing governance framework.

When engaging with our team members we focussed on using simple and easy-to-understand language, leveraging existing language and terminology wherever possible. For example, terminology such as "hazards to mental health" was used over 'psychosocial hazards' for our team member-facing communication. Communication is primarily managed via 'Workplace', which has consistently good engagement across the entire business. A selection of senior leaders and Wellbeing Steering Committee members have been utilised as influencers to drive promotion and engagement.

### Bringing others on the journey

We are fortunate to have a network of passionate and talented team members in our Operations and Support teams who take a genuine interest in wellbeing. Team members always form part of the consultative process when designing wellbeing interventions – the same has been true for our risk assessment.

We found that including team members from a diverse cross-section of our business in the design and planning of our assessment has helped to ensure that our assessment was fit for purpose and set up for success from the beginning. For ongoing promotion, our Internal Communications team does a fantastic job of designing messaging to encourage participation.

### Evaluating the process

The initial assessment was designed for evaluation to occur in line with our annual Engagement and Wellbeing Survey. Between annual reviews, our Wellbeing Steering Committee monitors control effectiveness, emerging hazards, and work in progress every six weeks.

### Using metrics for success

Metrics for success include our annual Wellbeing and Engagement survey results, serious psychological injuries, serious psychological injury near misses, high-risk employment relations cases (especially related to bullying and harassment, violence and aggression, and workload concerns), workers' compensation

claims, and reported EAP primary presenting concerns. At present, we don't have sufficient maturity to align risk assessment-related interventions to business outcomes (e.g., absenteeism, turnover, performance), however we will aim for this capability in the future.

### Direction for the future

We're very early in our intervention phase and have a lot of work to do. Our initial focus post-assessment was to set up our Wellbeing Steering Committee to be better equipped at overseeing our highest priority hazards and we've made some initial changes to membership, cadence, and structure to help us achieve this.

Moving forward, our initial focus will be to build internal psychological risk management capability to better equip our leaders and support teams to proactively manage psychosocial risk in their sites and teams. We'll also be focussing on improving how we track key mental health and wellbeing metrics, and improving our capacity to learn from psychological incidents, injuries and near misses. Evaluation will be ongoing rather than a single point in time as we continue to learn and evolve our wellbeing strategy.



