



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

Although both men and women face comparable rates of mental health issues, certain disparities exist. Women, for instance, are twice as likely to experience conditions such as depression, generalised anxiety disorders, and affective disorders¹.

More recently, the burden of stress on women in every age group, life situation and economic bracket has amplified due to societal and environmental factors, leading to increases in stress and burnout experienced by women in the workforce². Women are more likely to juggle multiple responsibilities, both paid and unpaid, the combined effects of which can increase women's mental load³.

More organisations are committed to implementing strategies, policies and programs that contribute to the success and wellbeing of their women employees in ways that address their unique needs and challenges.

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

Approximately 62% of women participate in the workforce in Australia⁴. Recent research has shown that many women are switching jobs for better opportunities, but some are considering downshifting and leaving the workforce altogether. For many, this was due to being over-worked and under-recognised, and wanting a better company culture with more flexibility and a commitment to employee wellbeing⁵.

Supporting the positive mental health and wellbeing of women in the workforce does make good business sense. It has many benefits for employers including promoting equity and inclusion, retention and recruitment as well as productivity and performance. Importantly it creates a broader culture that values and promotes adoption of a positive work-life balance, and not just for women.

WHAT ARE THE TOP 5 THINGS CMHAA MEMBER COMPANIES ARE DOING TO SUPPORT WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE?

Women may face a range of issues when it comes to the workplace from balancing work and parenting to menopause misconceptions. As employers, many of our member organisations as well as organisations worldwide are taking proactive measures to enhance support for women's mental health and wellbeing at work.



1. Policies and Guidelines

Having clear policies and guidelines around **parental transitions** is key when supporting women in the workplace. CMHAA members* offer paid leave to primary and secondary carers while some include surrogacy, kinship, foster care and adoption. Many offer flexible and hybrid working arrangements with specific call-outs for carers and new parents.

Several CMHAA members also offer **support and assistance in vulnerable circumstances**. Examples include paid domestic and family violence leave, sexual harassment, discrimination and bullying policies, guidelines and training.

SPOTLIGHT ON: DLA PIPER



DLA Piper offer a variety of leave policies to support women in the workplace. Some of these include Fertility Leave, Pregnancy loss, Parental leave (26 weeks available without distinction, to mothers, fathers, foster carers, kinship care, surrogacy, and adoption) encouraging carer equality, in addition to support coaching and buddy program.

They also focus on gender pay equity through their Australia remuneration and reward policy and have a policy (Australia part time additional hours policy) for ensuring that those who hold a part time position are compensated for working additional hours.

SPOTLIGHT ON: COMMONWEALTH BANK AUSTRALIA



Commonwealth Bank Australia (CBA) offer a variety of support over the parental transition period including referral pathways for perinatal depression and fertility treatment support; parental leave coaching; resources for New Parents Wellbeing and Single Parent Families Financial Wellbeing.

They also offer their leaders conversation guides to assist in conversations with vulnerable employees experiencing domestic and family violence, pregnancy, infant loss and more.



2. Dedicated Employee Network Groups

Many of our members have set up dedicated Employee Network Groups to assist organisations in advocating for gender equality. CMHAA member examples include:

DLA Piper have a network called LAW (Leadership Alliance for Women) which is open to all (not just women). LAW plays an instrumental role in DLA's aim to be a gender balanced and inclusive firm. They also have a network called PACT (Parents and Carers Together) which provides a platform and wellness hub with tips and resources.

Suncorp's group is called Women Connect, focused on transforming the experience of women at Suncorp. They do this by driving initiatives to build connection, inspire, support, and promote growth for women, whilst raising awareness and advocating for gender equality action. Within this employee resource group, there is a dedicated Women in Tech stream, acknowledging the unique barriers they face. There is also an active ally stream of men advocating for gender equality.

MinterEllison have a gender equality network called WISE (Women, Inclusion, Support and Equality) with the overarching purpose to facilitate opportunities for education, awareness and engagement on gender issues within the firm and in the wider community. WISE is led by a national committee with local sub-committees in each office. All MinterEllison employees are invited and encouraged to join the network.

The network runs a number of activities including mentoring sessions, panel discussions and presentations focused on topics such as imposter syndrome, women's health and wellbeing; financial wellbeing; women's cancers and prevention, perimenopause and menopause and more.

MinterEllison also has a Parents Community designed to provide our people who are parents with a space to share experiences, advice and resources, ask questions and connect. The firm also has a partnership with Karitane and provide both informative webinars and regular free advice clinics for new parents and provides tailored support to parents going on and returning from parental leave.

King & Wood Mallesons have a networking program called gen-KWM. The objective is to work together to promote gender equality at KWM and the focus is to develop a wide range of activities across the firm which centre on two key themes (i) education and development and (ii) connections.

CBA have WeCan — a network focused on gender equality and a Parents at Work group on Yammer.



3. Programs and Partnerships

For organisations focused on supporting and developing women in the workplace, going above and beyond having an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is common. It may be running specific programs like the case studies below. Partnerships are also a way of offering support; for example, CBA have a partnership with Health Hub, which offers coaching, webinars and more. Platforms such as Circle In which provide support for families, carers and managers are also popular among CMHAA members.

SPOTLIGHT ON: CLAYTON UTZ



Clayton Utz support gender equality through their Momentum Program. They also offer a Parents Psychological Support Program, a Women's Health Hub as part of their holistic wellbeing program Embrace as well as webinars specifically aimed at women. The firm also provides Elder Care support via the Care and Living with Mercer platform to compliment their support for parents. This is particularly important as they know statistically the majority of elder care responsibilities generally fall to women.

SPOTLIGHT ON: REA GROUP



REA Group offer a Springboard to Tech Program, which is designed to support female identifying and non-binary people the chance to change careers into tech, or return to tech with formal education through the Holberton School, on-the-job training, mentoring and coaching over a 12-month period. At the end of the program, participants are offered ongoing full-time roles within the REA Group business.

- REA Group's Financial Services arm, Mortgage Choice, runs Aspire – a talent program for women in the Mortgage Choice network. Aspire was designed to support and promote the female talent in their broker network, address the gender imbalance in the industry, and inspire women in the network to take the next steps in their careers.
- Finally, REA Group sponsors Grad Girls – a program designed by VIC ICT for Women to help prepare female identifying tertiary student for careers in tech. REA's Women in Tech community plays an active role in delivering program elements, and attending Grad Girls events.



4. Training and Development Programs

Training and developing employees on topics relating to women in the workplace was common among CMHAA members. Some examples on the kinds of things they cover are below:

Clayton Utz offer diverse training opportunities through both their L&OD program as well as their wellbeing program, Embrace. This includes their Business Excellence programs for leaders, flexibility, sexual harassment and bullying as well as education on specific topics such as menopause and baby loss which include workplace supports and adjustments.

Bunnings offer bespoke training courses for women focused on topics such as perinatal wellbeing, growing their career and leadership.

Suncorp deliver targeted women in leadership development programs aimed at women in their first leadership positions and those moving into executive roles. Suncorp also support 'CloudUp for Her' partnership with Amazon Web Services (AWS) – a flexible, community-based learning program providing participants with professional AWS training aimed to inspire and empower women to build successful careers in cloud computing.

DLA Piper focus on gender equality, bullying and sexual harassment through their 'Respect@Work' workshop series. They offer initiatives such as a 6 month internal Mentor@LAW program and award winning development programs to elevate and support women.

Microsoft saw success with 'Women Rising', a leadership development program.

King & Wood Mallesons's partner-led Gender Working Group drives initiatives relating to the development and retention of women lawyers, and increasing women's representation in partnership. One initiative is 'Flourish', a program developed for women from positive psychology, neuroscience, leadership development, gender science and the foundations of wellbeing and resiliency to help women thrive as part of their longer term career plan.



5. Targets/Reporting/Memberships

WGEA states⁶: Setting targets can provide an organisation with the necessary focus to improve the gender balance within an organisation, and clarify accountabilities. Targets help focus attention and demonstrate commitment to deliver. CMHAA members tend to have reporting and targets around supporting and developing women in the workplace.

SPOTLIGHT ON: SUNCORP



Gender Pay Equity has been a focus for **Suncorp** for many years. On Equal Pay Day 2020, Suncorp's CEO announced the next step to address one of the largest barriers to women's full and equal participation in the workforce – the Gender Pay Gap (GPG).

A 'reduce by' target was set for the Group and has since progressed to Business line level. With the Finance & Insurance Industry currently holding the second worst GPG in Australia, this focus is not just important for Suncorp, it's important for all women across the industry in Australia and Aotearoa (New Zealand).

Finally, Suncorp are proud to have held equal representation of men and women at leadership levels for several years and to have been awarded the WGEA Citation as an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality for 12 years consecutively.

Suncorp also have targets for Women in Senior Leadership specifically, placing accountability firmly within the Business through scorecard measures.

SPOTLIGHT ON: BUNNINGS



Bunnings report regularly to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency and sends gender balance analysis to the Leadership Group and People & Culture leads each month. They also provide National Association of Women in Operations membership for all team members.

SPOTLIGHT ON: KPMG



Advancing Gender Balance — KPMG's target is to achieve a minimum of 40% women in partnership by 2025. Underpinning that target is a principle for a 40:40:20 gender balance — 40% men, 40% women and 20% all genders (which can include men, women, and non-binary people). In 2023, they achieved 35.1% women in partnership (up from 33.5% in 2022).

Reducing Gender Pay Gap — KPMG complete a detailed gender parity analysis annually and set targets for the reduction of overall gender pay gaps across the firm. They have made steady progress and as of 30 June 2023, their employee gender pay gap is 9.9%, down from 13.7% in 2021. On a like-for-like basis, their gender pay gap remains negligible (0.1%).

References:

1. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/mental-health/national-study-mental-health-and-wellbeing/latest-release#prevalence-of-mental-disorders>
2. <https://www.adp.com/spark/articles/2021/06/prioritizing-mental-health-and-wellbeing-for-womenwork.aspx>
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5. https://www.mckinsey.com/~/_/media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/diversity%20and%20inclusion/women%20in%20the%20workplace%202022/women-in-the-workplace-2022.pdf
6. [Targets and quotas \(wgea.gov.au\)](#)

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

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This document is not and should not be considered as clinical advice or support. Anyone who may have a need for such support should seek professional advice.