



PROJECT LITTLE PENGUIN

Barwon Water

As part of the Beyond Zero Safety Program, Barwon Water had been developing a Mental Health Strategy utilising the WSAA Mental Health Framework. The foundations of this strategy, and the framework, was particularly valuable in enabling a rapid response to supporting employee and customer mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

Barwon Water has long focused on delivering programs focused on the physical and mental wellbeing of employees, garnering a strong reputation internally and externally for its proactive approach across three key domains:

- Preventing Harm
- Early Intervention
- Recovery Support

With the onset of COVID 19, resulted in office base staff (71% of Barwon Water employees) finding themselves working remotely rapidly. Additionally employees in the field moved quickly to new ways of working, including moving to discrete cells with limited team members along with the introduction of extensive on-site controls. The need to promote and create additional programs to foster employees' wellbeing became a priority.

It was critical employees felt supported, team morale maintained and virtual social connectivity enabled.

Implementation

A number of initiatives were developed to support our people, including:

- Encouragement of utilisation of our EAP provider, Converge International, was driven through consistent messaging via a number of internal communication channels, including the COVID-19 intranet page, MD's Blog, and Connections articles.
- Establishment of Connect +, a program where employees subscribe to regular 'check in' calls from a trained Mental Health First Aider.

- Employees were encouraged to contribute ideas to the Future Ways of Working (FWOW) team on how Barwon Water can continue to build Barwon Water's culture virtually and help them stay connected to their teams, and to the business more broadly.
- Tackling fatigue by planning and managing annual leave. People Leaders and HR BP's encouraged employees to take annual leave to boost their health and wellbeing. This has included providing case studies from within the business on how you can still have fun taking leave and staying at home.
- Provision of equipment for employees to ensure they were safely set up to work from home.
- Translating in-person health activities to virtual programs and promoting participation, in particular yoga and other exercise groups, guided meditation and mindfulness, healthy eating and lifestyles masterclasses.
- Development of tip sheets on topics including working remotely effectively, leading remote teams in times of crisis, dealing with anxiety and uncertainty and boosting your immunity.
- A focus on prioritising resilience, with a number of staff members sharing their strategies and stories via the MD's blog.
- Personal Energy Management Program rolled out across the organisation to help boost energy levels and build resilience and wellbeing.
- Through a Safety Leadership Development Program which is being rolled out to the Senior Leadership Team, highlighting the important role that leaders have in being involved, supporting and role-modelling personal wellbeing activities using a 5-pronged approach.

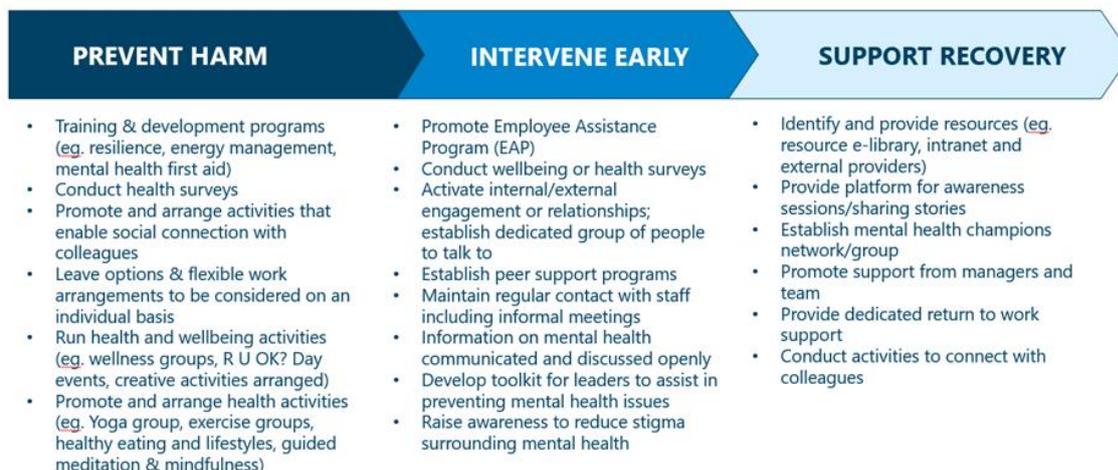
WINNING WAYS TO WELLBEING



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Benefits and outcomes

- Barwon Water’s annual utilisation rate for EAP services was more than 4% higher than industry standard, and around 3% higher than annual utilisation rate for 2018/19. Our EAP provider achieved an above 80% customer satisfaction rating, where employees indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with their EAP experience.
- After an initial decline through April and May, there has been a recent increase in annual leave usage in late June and July, with a continued commitment to encourage use of annual leave.
- A number of employees are currently participating in the Connect+ program, without which these employees may not have sought some level of support.
- By proactively soliciting ideas from employees, a number of employee suggestions will be implemented in the coming months to maintain social connectivity and continue to build Barwon Water’s culture.
- Through collaboration, Barwon Water has not only been able to continue to deliver existing programs virtually, but has also been able to build upon the existing framework to ensure employees health and wellbeing is prioritised.
- Results from our “COVID-19 Response and Future Ways of Working” survey in April 2020 received:
 - “My people leader genuinely cares about my wellbeing” – 91% favourable.
 - “My people leader is regularly checking in with how I am doing (not just work related)” – 86% favourable.
 - “Our leaders at Barwon Water and Barwon Asset Solutions have demonstrated that employee health and wellbeing are a top priority” – 92% favourable.



Some of the initiatives that make up the Barwon Water Mental Health & Wellbeing Program.