

EMBEDDING A WHOLISTIC APPROACH TO WELLBEING

SA Water

Strengthening SA Water's focus on health and safety with a wholistic approach to the wellbeing of its people required the right tools, approach, and a clear pathway forward.

Background

A strong safety culture embedded across the business underpins SA Water's focus on the physical health of its people. Mental wellbeing was also supported yet viewed as separate to the focus on physical health and safety.

The need for a more wholistic and robust approach to support the health and wellbeing of its people was identified. Further, the approach needed to consider wellbeing at a professional and personal level, with consideration given to mental health, physical health, relationships and all aspects contributing to individual's ability to live a whole and happy life.

With a clear understanding of the support SA Water was looking to implement, it researched wellbeing best practice across a range of workplaces in Australia and internationally, reviewing successful programs that considered people's wholistic health and provided practical solutions to achieving it.

A solution was found in the principles of PERMA+ which focuses on the pillars of Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment, with the '+' representing exercise, nutrition, sleep and opportunity for optimism.

Implementation

Before introducing PERMA+, SA Water looked to its people to understand what was important to them, holding a workshop with a broad cross section to look at what the focus could be and what role the business needed to play. Through this workshop SA Water was able to discover and agree on its 'wellbeing why', defined as:

Together we will create and support a safe and caring workplace where everyone can thrive and grow.

From here, a graphic device was developed to capture the focus of the wellbeing program. The device could be used to immediately identify and bring together all SA Water wellbeing initiatives and messages.



PERMA+ is a broadly proven tool designed to cover all the aspects of a person's physical and mental wellbeing, and it supported the outcomes SA Water was looking to achieve.

The principles of PERMA+ are shaped by 'positive psychology' which works towards an individual living the best possible life they can at any given moment – through improving skills, using existing strengths and finding success in aspects of their life they value the most.

To effectively embed the wellbeing approach into the business and introduce the PERMA+ pillars to its people, a staged approach was adopted, including announcement, building awareness, embedding into its culture, building capability and measuring how people live, grow, and thrive based on the pillars of PERMA+.

SA Water's commitment to wellbeing is introduced to employees during onboarding and is highlighted in all relevant training across the employee lifecycle.

With a clear set of principles guiding the approach to wellbeing, selecting external providers to help support and deliver its wellbeing activities became simple. This also proved useful in SA Water's response to COVID-19. Having an existing relationship with an external provider that understood the SA Water approach enabled the business to provide an agile response to the wellbeing impact on its people.

In collaboration with a consulting company that uses PERMA+, SA Water created a six part video blog series, with each episode focusing on a different pillar and providing practical activities for SA Water employees to build resilience during the changing environment. A workbook was created to complement each video episode, providing more information and activities for groups and individuals.

SA Water also conduct monthly 'pulse checks' with its people using an emailed survey. Survey questions are based on PERMA+ pillars to provide insight into the wellbeing of SA Water people at that moment in time.

Benefits and outcomes

Investing the time to create a wellbeing approach that resonates with SA Water's diverse workforce, adopting an evidence based psychological concept to support its people, and



embedding these into the business has enabled SA Water to react as needed in a time of rapid and significant change, as well as proactively support the health and wellbeing of its people. The wellbeing approach is inclusive of the whole person and the supports SA Water provide are usable in all environments.

This helps people bring wellbeing to life to 'live, grow and thrive' every day, even when faced by community wide challenges.



PERMA+

<https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/learn-more/perma-theory-well-being-and-perma-workshops>

Bakjac Consultancy

<http://www.bakjacconsulting.com/>

SAHMRI Wellbeing & Resilience centre

<https://www.wellbeingandresilience.com/>