

FOCUSING ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING DURING COVID-19 AND LEARNINGS FOR THE FUTURE

Unitywater

Unitywater surveyed its team during COVID-19 to better understand their experiences and perceptions about the organisation's response. Survey insights are now informing future health and well-being programs to ensure they meet the needs of team members and the business while aligning with the WSAA water industry mental health framework.

Background

Unitywater's purpose is to keep its communities healthy. When faced with a global pandemic in early 2020, its purpose and the priorities of its Corporate Strategic Plan: Helping our Customers; Adding Value to our Community; and Better and Safer Together, guided Unitywater's response and decisions throughout COVID-19.

Given the upheaval from the pandemic, and the broad impact across the business, it was important to understand how team members were faring and their perceptions about the organisation's response. The survey was structured around four key areas:

Measure	Outcome
Perceptions of change management and leader effectiveness	Clarity and Care
Perception of team member effectiveness and productivity	Productivity
Perception of wellbeing and resilience	Support and wellness
Perception of social cohesion and connection	Trusted relationships

As well as the four key areas, Unitywater also gathered valuable information about the habits, health and wellbeing of its people that will provide an important guide for future mental health and wellbeing focus, including living arrangements, care-giving responsibilities,

average commute time and commute preferences. The survey results will also be useful to guide future communications, change and wellbeing approaches in Unitywater.

Implementation

The Unitywater COVID-19 Wellbeing Survey was completed by 36% of its team members, including 13% of the field team. It was important for Unitywater to understand different experiences for its remote team members, as well as those continuing in their field, operational or office-based roles. Responses indicated that 81% of participants had worked remotely a majority of the time, 9% had continued working in the field, and 9% had continued working in an office during the peak of the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, 59% of the respondents had worked remotely in some capacity.

A summary of findings in relation to each of the four key areas is outlined:

1. Perceptions of change management and leader effectiveness

- Effective change management, communication, support resources and leader effectiveness through the pandemic has positively contributed to pride, feeling of care and support and confidence of team members.
- Strong perception of leaders due to their demonstration of care and the priority placed on health and wellbeing, personal situations as well as the effectiveness and speed of decision-making.

2. Perception of team member effectiveness and productivity

- The majority of respondents indicated that they felt the same (if not more) productive and able to deliver on work priorities as well as manage their personal commitments in a more meaningful way.

3. Perception of wellbeing and resilience

- People indicated that they have felt safe working remotely and/or in the office/field.
- Team members have been appreciative of greater balance of work and home life which has led to improved personal wellness.

4. Perception of social cohesion and connection

- Team members have been able to stay connected with each other with opportunity for greater connection across teams.
- People felt as though they had been treated fairly and had supportive co-workers.



Benefits and outcomes

Insights gained from the COVID-19 survey are guiding the organisational approach to health and wellbeing specifically with focus on return to work transitions and access to information. Not only is the information helping Unitywater to address business needs during the pandemic response but it will also help align with the WSAA water industry mental health framework in the following ways:

- Leader capability, resources and commitment to support team member health and wellbeing is a key driver of team member perceptions and outcomes.
- Consistent reinforcement of contribution to Unitywater's community will build further alignment of its people to its purpose and strategy.
- A personalised and empathetic approach to care, wellbeing and flexible working is essential.
- Support services such as an employee assistance program and health management tools remain an important and valued component of Unitywater's wellbeing approach.
- Resilience development, health and wellbeing knowledge, and building practical “wellness” skills are important enablers of individual and team outcomes.
- Cultural strengthening to further enhance interpersonal trust, psychological safety, fairness, mutual support and enablement will provide a strong foundation for mental health and wellbeing.