



WATER SERVICES
ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



Water industry mental health framework

A FRAMEWORK TO DRIVE A STEP CHANGE IN MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AND MANAGEMENT IN THE WATER INDUSTRY



Acknowledgement

WSAA would like to recognise and thank all those involved in contributing to the development of these work products. In particular, WSAA acknowledges the significant contributions of the organisations listed.

Beyond Blue	Queensland
CBP Contractors	Urban Utilities
Chisolm	SA Water
City West Water	SFP JV
Coliban Water	South East Water
Comdain	Sydney Water
GHD	TasWater
Icon Water	Unitywater
John Holland	Water Corporation
Lendlease	Water Industry
Mates in	Operators
Construction	Association of
Melbourne Water	Australia
Moodys	WaterNSW
	Western Water

WSAA has produced these work products with EY undertaking research, analysis and drafting.



Water industry health and safety context

Through a clear and coordinated approach, we can push our industry forward towards a better health and safety future.

Organisations that work both in, or with the water industry in operation, maintenance, construction, corporate, and program activities, face similar health and safety challenges irrespective of where they may be in their health and safety journey.

In considering these forces of change, the future of the work environment, and thorough consultation with WSAA members, delivery partners and other key stakeholders, we have determined that the development and advancement of health and safety performance and culture in the water industry is best achieved through two key areas:

- 1 **Water Industry Health and Safety Maturity Model** which explores eight key principles that will positively direct the way organisations approach health and safety in the water industry, and
- 2 **Mental Health Framework** which explores eight critical areas to drive change through a pipeline of actions.

Application of the content in these documents will help develop physically and mentally healthy workplaces, and promote the industry learning and growing together.

WSAA commits to cultivating positive, engaging, and safe workplaces across the water industry where workers are supported, and able to thrive

Key industry challenges

1 Future trends

As disruption becomes an everyday occurrence, there are primary global forces that are shaping our future which include; changing workforce demographics and technology advancements. There are also a number of local forces including; increased regulatory pressures, cost pressures, and capability gaps, which are all impacting the way health and safety is managed.

2 Industry and regulator focus

Organisations across the industry are facing similar health and safety challenges, for example in mental health; there is increasing attention from regulators, release of guidelines, and potential for future audits and improvements notices. It has become more important than ever to unify as an industry and collaborate and innovate on solving these health and safety challenges.

3 Health and safety and the project lifecycle

Historically in the water industry, health and safety and mental health have not been adequately considered as part of the entire project lifecycle, including planning and design, construction, operations, maintenance, and demobilisation. As the industry and workforce continues to change in to the future, adequately addressing these challenges are critical to changing the way health and safety is approached.

4 Delivery partner engagement

With the complex and changing environments that organisations work in, it is recognised that to appropriately manage the health and safety risk to the workforce, the water industry needs to develop a more effective and consistent approach to engage with delivery partners and other key stakeholders such as regulators.

Future of the work environment

In developing the **Water Industry Health and Safety Maturity Model** we have looked at the strengths, stressors, opportunities, and current actions of the water industry in relation to health and safety in the industry.

In addition to this, it is worth taking note of broader implications of general workforce changes and challenges going into the future.

Key skills and attributes likely required are detailed to the right.

The considerations for the future, and key skills and attributes have been considered in the development of the **Water Industry Health and Safety Maturity Model**.

Considerations for the future

Role of technology and varying digital literacy

Changing workforce (e.g. demographics, ageing and retiring workforce)

Cost pressures, trying to do more with a smaller workforce

Regulatory pressures and high profile nature of the industry

Capability gaps, particularly in leadership roles

Climate and resource stress

Urbanisation

Skills and attributes of the future¹

Leadership Change management, strategic planning, learning mindset, communication, culture

Data and analytics Digital literacy, internet of things

Resilience Flexibility, agility, critical thinking

Customer Service, culture, experience, focus

Technical skills Network operation skills, engineering, general operations, risk management, knowledge management

Delivery models Contracting, commissioning, outsourcing, insourcing

Entrepreneurship Innovation

Collaboration Partnerships within the water sector and partnerships with other sectors

¹ Workforce Skills of the Future (Water Services Association of Australia)

How to use this document

This document is intended for use by the water industry, including utilities, councils, delivery partners*, and subcontractors.

It outlines a vision and commitment for the industry to improve mental health through use of eight key areas. Actions from each of these areas are then specified in a pipeline which can be tailored for use by individual organisations.

Vision, definitions and industry context

The first sections of this document set the purpose and background through:

- Detailing the industry vision for improving the way mental health is managed across our communities,
- Providing definitions for mental health, and wellbeing,
- Considering the specific context for the water industry.

> Pipeline

This section describes, in depth, eight key areas an organisation may use to address mental health. This pipeline explores the factors affecting mental health in each area through looking at:

- What and why the area is important,
- A case study of good practice,
- Actions to implement.

> Pipeline actions

The actions put forward in the previous section have been placed in a pipeline to provide guidance around the order in which each action should be implemented. Organisations should use this as a basis to develop a pipeline specific to its own organisational context, tailored to their current state, in order to improve their mental health management.

> Measurement and collaboration

In order to drive industry continual improvement, the final section provides guidance as to how the progress and implementation of a mental health system could be measured as well as ideas of how expertise can be leveraged through industry collaboration. Finally, we have included a list of further resources an organisation could utilise.

* Delivery partners are companies whom perform work on water services on behalf of client organisations.

Limitations: The pipeline presented in this document is general in nature and assumes a level of interpretation and customisation is required in application.

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WSAA mental health vision

WSAA commits to cultivating positive, engaging, and safe workplaces across the water industry where workers are supported and able to thrive.

This **Mental Health Framework** has been developed to improve the mental health of workplaces in the water industry. The framework contains practical actions and examples of case studies, and outlines a pipeline which should be tailored to the organisation and implemented to drive better practice.

Improving the mental health across the water industry will provide benefits through improved performance, reduced absenteeism, improved worker retention, greater worker engagement, increased resilience of workers, and reduced cost to the industry.

Working together as an industry will improve mental health performance and make a real and positive difference, not only to the water industry but also to the communities in which they operate.

Industry commitment

Water industry organisations and delivery partners work in a rapidly changing world, within which we need to adapt and change in order to thrive.

Concerns around the mental health of society are growing and with this comes greater awareness of mitigating factors and proactive strategies that can be implemented. It is now widely recognised that the wellbeing of workers is strongly influenced by the environment within which they work. Individual wellbeing is a combination of a person's mental health, physical health, and social health. This places the workplace in an important and powerful position to have a positive impact on the mental health of employees and the wider community.

The water industry is committed to helping achieve a step change improvement in health and safety performance. As a part of this commitment, this **Mental Health Framework** provides guidance on the role the workplace can play and the steps that can be strategically taken by each service provider and delivery partner to address mental health. Working together the water industry can improve performance in managing mental health in the workplace and thereby contribute positively to the mental health of the community.



Mentally healthy workplaces

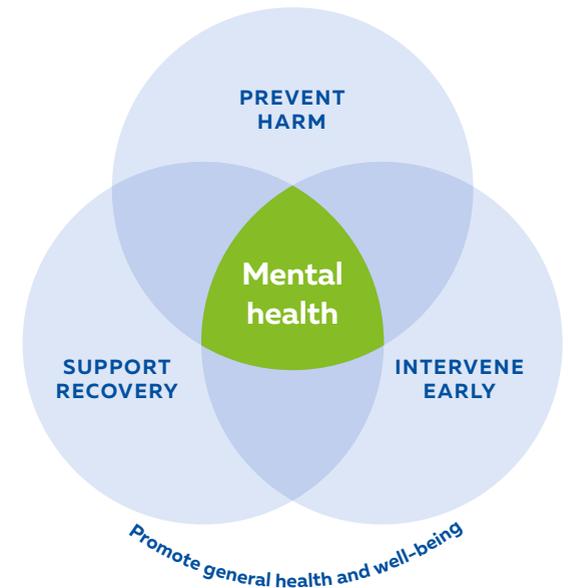
Further to this industry commitment, workplaces have a legal obligation to prevent and manage mental ill-health of their workers.

Safe Work Australia have developed national guidance material for **Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties**. This guidance material is based on work health and safety or workers compensation laws across Australia.

The model from Safe Work Australia's national guidance material represents key components for organisations to address in preventing and managing mental harm to workers.

Each component detailed in the diagram has an integral part to play. With adequate prevention of harm, early intervention, and support recovery the industry can:

- Create safer workplaces
- Support workers
- Address workplace mental health risks
- Reduce stigma
- Reduce bullying
- Help prevent suicide
- Improve understanding.



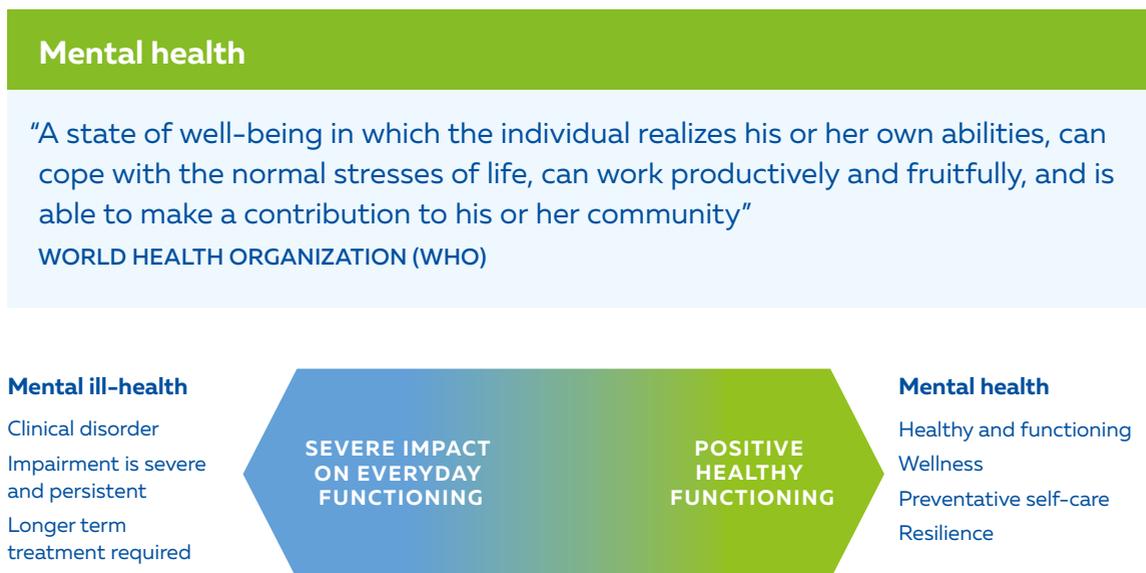
Model Source: Safe Work Australia "Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties"

What is mental health

In order to foster a mentally healthy workplace it is important to understand what mental health is. In the water industry it has been identified that there is a need to change dialogue around mental health in order to remove the stigma that mental health is a negative condition.

The mental health continuum is an overarching term for the range of wellbeing a person could be experiencing at any one time and may be either positive or negative in nature. It is important to recognise all parts of this mental health continuum from mental health all the way to mental ill-health as detailed in the diagram at right.

The three components, prevention of harm, early intervention, and support recovery, which make up the model from Safe Work Australia's national guidance material, can impact an individual's position along this mental health continuum.



Model Source: Based on Beyond Blue mental health continuum

What is wellbeing

Mental health is a component of the overall personal wellbeing of an individual. Personal wellbeing is not just the absence of injury, rather, it is a holistic combination of inter-relating factors which contribute to happiness and life satisfaction.

The main factors which contribute to worker's personal wellbeing include mental health, physical health, and social health as detailed in the diagram at right. Each of these can shift a person along the mental health continuum and are directly influenced by the workplace. It is important to consider the broader context of workplace wellbeing when implementing this Mental Health Framework.

In order for the water industry to move forward in providing healthy workplaces, a strategic and coordinated approach is required. All organisations are responsible for fostering mentally healthy workplaces. To achieve this outcome, this framework focuses on methods to improve the mental health of organisations across eight key areas detailed through the pipeline of actions.



All organisations are responsible for providing a mentally healthy workplace

Mental health context of the water industry

In order to provide a mentally healthy workplace in alignment with the model from Safe Work Australia’s national guidance material, it is important to understand the specific industry context of the work environment.

Identifying the stressors, strengths, and opportunities in the water industry is useful in improving the management of mental health risks. With this understanding, stressors can be managed, and strengths and opportunities leveraged. The boxes below provide a general insight into the industry stressors, strengths, and opportunities as they relate to mental health. These should be further refined by considering individual organisational nuances.

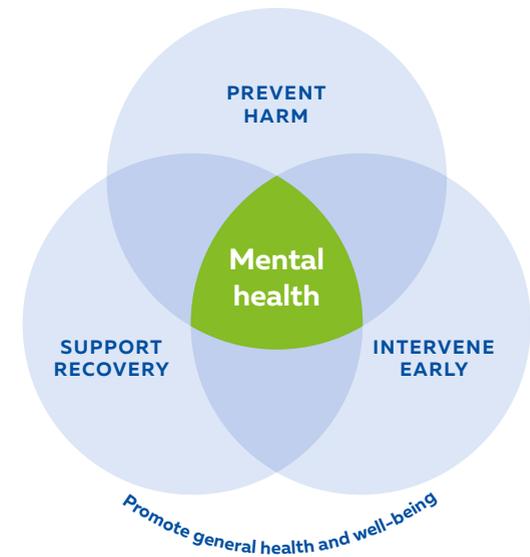
INDUSTRY STRESSORS	INDUSTRY OPPORTUNITIES
Customer expectations	Improving mental health of workers (regardless of where their concerns stem from)
Regulator pressure	Having a positive impact on communities
Commercial pressure to reduce costs	Reducing suicide
Work and priority pressure, deadlines/timeframes, and stress from reporting lines	Decreasing absenteeism
Operators and maintainers needing to wear different hats	Improving reputation of the industry
Expectations on delivery partners and punitive approach to failure	Improving industry performance
Rate of disruption and change	Leveraging new technology and services
Geographical spread leading to regional and social isolation	Potential to collaborate as an industry to come up with suitable solutions
Recruitment methods	
Shift towards 'lean' organisations	INDUSTRY STRENGTHS
Deficiency in leader expertise and health and safety manager turnover	Breadth of influence on communities
Lack of support and understanding to manage mental health risks	Organisations have started the journey
Mental health stigma	Collaboration exists in the industry
Outsourcing of work	Partnerships with external expertise exist
	Existing awareness of the issues and supply chain/ownership dependencies.



Common actions of the water industry

There are a number of ways organisations in the water industry are already implementing actions aligned with the model from Safe Work Australia's national guidance material.

However, a more strategic and coordinated approach is necessary to further maturity across the industry and create a step change in the way mental health is managed. The following pages detail eight key areas followed by a pipeline which explains how an organisation can develop mentally healthy workplaces.



Model Source: Safe Work Australia "Work-related psychological health and safety: A systematic approach to meeting your duties"

Support recovery

Resources (e.g. resource library, intranet)

Awareness sessions/sharing stories

Mental health champions network/group

Return to work support

Activities to connect with colleagues.

Prevent harm

Training (e.g. resilience, mental toughness, mental health first aid)

Health surveys

Outline aspirations of organisation

Activities to connect with colleagues

Leave options and flexible work arrangements

Health and wellbeing activities
(e.g. exercise challenges, R U OK? Day events, creative activity)

Health activities
(e.g. bicycle group, exercise at lunch).

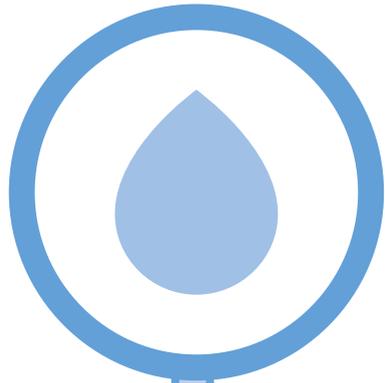
Intervene early

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Wellbeing or health surveys (e.g. Martin Seligman's PERMA model - Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishments)

Peer support programs

Toolkit for leaders



Pipeline

This pipeline consists of eight key areas and provides a high level overview of actions an organisation may consider, in order to influence a mentally healthy workplace. It was developed considering water industry stressors, strengths, opportunities, and current actions detailed earlier.

Through implementing this Mental Health Framework we will cultivate mentally healthy workplaces where workers are supported, and able to thrive. The activities to consider and pipeline should be tailored to each individual organisation.

Use governance and leadership to contribute to positive mental health management

The values, tone and culture of the organisation comes from the top and is developed by the whole organisation. Boards and leaders play an important oversight role, which can be proactively used to support a mentally healthy workplace.

Engage with people and encourage participation to establish and grow a positive mental health culture

People are the cornerstone of an organisation and integral in developing culture. With a flexible and inclusive culture, people are supported and share responsibility in growing a mentally healthy workplace.

Implement systems and an organisational structure to facilitate a mentally healthy environment

The organisation's system and structure are necessary to facilitate programs and detail functions geared toward promoting positive worker mental health.

Leverage digital technology to assist with identifying, controlling, and monitoring mental health risks

Digital technology is disrupting the global market and can be leveraged to facilitate improved management of mental health in many innovative and interesting ways.

Develop a clear mental health strategy to provide direction and alignment to the organisation

The mental health strategy of a workplace is integral in setting the tone and direction, and is an essential tool in the mental health management repertoire.

Apply methods to assess mental health risks and identify opportunities for improved mitigation and control

Identifying key mental health risks is essential for an organisation in managing and mitigating them to establish a mentally healthy workplace. This also helps in identifying risk controls and opportunities tailored for improvement.

Develop processes to review and report on the implementation of mental health plans

Programs to review and report on mental health provide support and essential feedback on the implementation and effectiveness of mental health plans and can provide guidance on where to focus support.

Become a learning organisation to continuously improve the maturity and performance of mental health actions

Continuous improvement is integral to the ongoing improvement and increasing maturity of an organisation in implementing this Mental Health Framework.



Governance and leadership of mental health

Use governance and leadership to contribute to positive mental health management.

The values, tone and culture of the organisation comes from the top and is developed by the whole organisation, however, boards and leaders play an important oversight role, which can be proactively used to support a mentally healthy workplace.

What

Organisational governance sets out relationships, accountability, and responsibilities between organisation levels. It provides a framework for achieving objectives and managing risks. With an effective governance structure boards and leadership are supported in setting the tone and culture of the organisation.

Visible and strong leadership is a fundamental factor to shape the culture of an organisation. Leaders need to consistently and authentically engage with the workforce, including delivery partners, to inspire a sense of shared vision and set of values to encourage buy-in and commitment.

It is essential that governance frameworks and leadership actions support behaviours which develop a mentally healthy workplace.

Why

Having strong leadership, and clearly defined and communicated accountability and responsibility across an organisation builds trust through transparency. It ensures that all levels of the organisation have clarity on what is expected of them and others, leading to a more cohesive team whom can work together to reduce mental health risks across the organisation.

Actions to consider

Communicate mental health values, vision, and principles across the organisation

Consider current governance structures and whether they facilitate leadership/Board risk understanding and supporting mental health management

Lead by example through setting expectations and following them (e.g. hours worked)

Demonstrate leadership commitment through leaders attending mental health activities/events

Determine meaningful metrics which inform and assist leaders to deliver tangible outcomes for the future of mental health in the organisation

Conduct training to enable leaders to better manage the mental health of workers, particularly when they are on the ill-health end of the mental health continuum

Identify suitable support for leaders (e.g. EAP, HR support)

Implement leadership forums and conduct leadership visits with delivery partners to share mental health learnings

Consider applicants' commitment to improving the mental health of workers during leader recruitment

Review roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities of organisations and delivery partners for managing mental health risks and update as deemed necessary.

CASE STUDY

Appointing a Chief Health Officer

A software and analytics organisation recognised the importance of creating a healthy work environment through a targeted focus on health and wellbeing.

In order to demonstrate their commitment to becoming a leading organisation in the way they manage both the mental health, and physical health of their employees, the Board appointed a Chief Health Officer (CHO) that is responsible for the health and wellbeing of their employees. This role provides the organisation with executive level leadership for health and wellbeing within the organisation.

It has resulted in a low turnover of employees, saved millions of dollars, and strengthened the organisational reputation as employer of choice.



Mental health strategy

Develop a clear mental health strategy to provide direction and alignment to the organisation.

The mental health strategy of a workplace is integral in setting the tone and direction, and is an essential tool in the mental health management repertoire.

What

A mental health strategy is developed around a collective vision of a mentally healthy workplace. It includes clear objectives, and clearly articulates the policies or programs to be implemented to achieve this vision. There should be either alignment with or integration into the overall organisational strategy.

The mental health strategy may consider aspects such as work design, worker support, resources, autonomy, monitoring, procurement, training and awareness, roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities. It should consider what the benchmark is to measure against such that there is consistency in guidance provided across the organisation.

The strategy should be promoted and understood across the whole organisation and contain the commitment of leaders to the vision.

Why

Implementing a robust strategy for the management of mental health sets the tone and provides a framework and basis to springboard into a more mentally healthy workplace. It sets the organisation up for success by providing a common language and central understanding of what the organisation aspires to be. As a result organisational outputs will be more cohesive and strategic plans will be in alignment leading to a better engaged workforce and improved organisation outcomes.

Actions to consider

Define organisational mental health values, vision, and principles for developing a mentally healthy workplace

Develop a mental health strategy

Seek and include feedback from workers in developing a mental health strategy

Ensure the mental health strategy is aligned with the overall organisational strategy

Define roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities across the organisation with respect to mental health management in alignment with the mental health strategy

Communicate roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities across the organisation

Develop and implement a mental health management plan

Conduct leadership training on how to effectively implement the mental health strategy

Communicate how different organisation levels can contribute to achieving the organisational vision through implementing the mental health strategy and plan

Define roles and responsibilities between WSAA service providers and delivery partners with respect to mental health management.

CASE STUDY

Icon Water mental health initiative

In 2016, Icon Water decided that mental health should be a key objective in their Work Health and Safety Strategy for 2017-19. The aim of this key objective was to support and educate workers to identify and seek help for mental health issues.

Icon Water used this strategy as a basis from which to implement a mental health initiative. This initiative included implementation of: awareness sessions, a manager toolkit, a leadership forum (for leaders to share experiences) and an intranet page with guidance, and tools.

The initiative has been successful in reducing mental health compensation claims, increasing EAP usage, and increasing worker engagement. A greater number of workers were noted to be reaching out when things were difficult, and discussing personal and work related issues with supervisors.



Engaging with, and participation of people

Engage with people and encourage participation to establish and grow a positive mental health culture.

People are the cornerstone of an organisation and integral in developing culture. With a flexible and inclusive culture, people are supported and share responsibility in growing a mentally healthy workplace.

What

Building capability of people and sharing the responsibility of mental health management across the organisation is key to developing a flexible and inclusive organisational culture that promotes positive worker mental health.

This can be done through a variety of means and should be tailored to an individual organisation. It is important that engagement with people considers different methods of communication (e.g. email blasts, newsletters) and consultation (e.g. meetings, toolbox talks, take 5s) which are most suited to an organisation's operational profile including relationships with delivery partners.

Well defined roles and responsibilities, and training people about mental health needs to be implemented across the entire organisation.

Why

People are the culture of an organisation and are pivotal to the development and implementation of a mental health strategy. By setting people up for success, supporting, and engaging them, the organisational culture can be directed to consider mental health throughout all operations.

Actions to consider

Implement a mental health committee/working group as appropriate to the organisation

Implement a worker champion network as appropriate to the organisation

Implement a mental health peer support officer position as appropriate to the organisation

Communicate regularly with workers and delivery partners in line with the mental health strategy and plan (emails/posters/newsletters)

Distribute mental health progress and impact reports across all levels of the organisation

Conduct mental health activities/events

Consult regularly with workers and delivery partners in line with the mental health strategy and plan (meetings/toolbox talks/take 5s)

Conduct mental health training and education programs (e.g. capability training)

Recognise and reward positive and supportive mental health behaviour

Include delivery partners in mental health activities and groups

Confirm that workers have a clear understanding of the mental health vision and their role, responsibility, and accountability in achieving it

Recognise and reward positive and supportive mental health management by delivery partners.

CASE STUDY

Volunteer counsellors program

In 2000, following a World Health Report, an information technology consulting company reviewed their approach to managing employee wellbeing in India. They identified that whilst they had some physical and health programs in place there was no wellness, or mental health, program.

As a result, the company implemented a 'volunteer counsellors' program. Counsellors undergo intensive training and have a monthly support meeting with the EAP. Every office has one trained counsellor, with all counsellors advertised on the intranet so workers can reach out to someone in a different office if they wish. The role is to assist colleagues with life's challenges, it is entirely voluntary, and discussions are confidential. The program has been aggressively embedded in the workplace through inductions, frequent communication mechanisms, and leadership buy-in.

The program is considered a success as a result of quantity and ongoing nature of use.



Assess mental health risks and identify opportunities

Apply methods to assess mental health risks and identify opportunities for improved mitigation and control.

Identifying key mental health risks is essential for an organisation in managing and mitigating them to establish a mentally healthy workplace. This also helps in identifying risk controls and opportunities tailored for improvement.

What

A mental health risk in an organisation is the likelihood and consequence of workers being exposed to a particular psychological hazard, such as increased workload, rate of change and competing priorities. The combination of mental health risks experienced at an organisation will be unique to that organisation as it is influenced by the particular operations, pressures, and culture.

Therefore the mental health risks which exist for an organisation need to be specifically identified such that they can be managed.

Following identification of the organisation's mental health hazards, the risk is assessed and opportunities for mitigation identified. Leveraging delivery partner knowledge is also critical to the identification of mental health risks and opportunities to mitigate.

A holistic view of a workers mental health risk exposure should note that external factors will have an impact on the worker, however this does not discount or reduce the importance of managing the workplace risks.

Why

Knowledge of mental health risks is fundamental to the ability to control them. Without this knowledge it is not possible to effectively manage and reduce the impact of mental health hazards across the organisation.

Actions to consider

Review the current state and identify gaps in mental health management

Conduct a mental health risk assessment (engaging with subject matter experts as appropriate) which looks to identify organisational mental health risks and underlying causes

Identify, in consultation with the workforce, suitable controls for mental health risks and determine implementation timeframes

Ensure all workers and leadership are aware of the key mental health risks they could face in their roles and how to mitigate these

Ensure mental health risks are adequately incorporated into broader enterprise risk management processes

Identify, record, and use existing, and new data sources for identifying and managing mental health risks (e.g. exit interviews, absenteeism rates)

Engage expertise (e.g. delivery partners) when designing work programs

Review critical mental health controls and identify opportunities for improvement

Commit to implementing improvement opportunities and learnings identified in reviews and feedback

Engage delivery partners with good mental health management when designing and accepting tenders

Following commencement of employment, implement a health declaration process to determine how best to provide support to new workers.

CASE STUDY

Safe work training

As part of a larger strategic focus on improving wellbeing across the organisation, Melbourne Water identified the need to implement a structured process to identify and control hazards prior to work operations commencing, when returning from a break or when things change.

Where the work was not a high risk construction activity, and therefore a safe work method statement was not conducted, workers were required to use a situational awareness tool. This process prompts workers to think about the work environment and identify hazards, including those which may impact mental health, across four areas: people, environment, equipment, and process.

With suitable training on the identification of hazards, this process of identifying hazards prior to work commencing allows the organisation to reduce mental health risks and promote the organisation's mental health understanding and vocabulary.



Systems and organisational structure

Implement systems and an organisational structures to facilitate a mentally healthy environment.

The organisation's system and structure are necessary to facilitate programs and detail functions geared toward promoting positive worker mental health.

What

The systems and structure of an organisation play an important role in empowering and supporting workers. A well designed and tailored system will provide the means to assist rather than hinder mental health initiatives.

Systems and structure should take into consideration aspects including: work design, workforce planning, role requirements, rostering, procedures, accountabilities, and responsibilities. At a mature level systems and structures to support mental health management should be integrated and embedded across the entire organisation rather than a separate system or structure focused only on mental health.

It is important to also consider how delivery partners are managing their mental health and how existing structures and systems can be designed to work together to achieve better outcomes for all.

When undertaking restructures to the system and organisational structure, organisations should consider change management processes to ensure effective implementation.

Why

Without a supportive system and structure to the organisation it will be significantly more difficult to implement mental health initiatives and processes. Looking at the system and structures (including how it considers delivery partners) will help implement and support good practices around mental health management.

Actions to consider

Define a clear organisational system and structure which supports the mental health strategy and plan, and considers: reporting lines (including delivery partners), and the management system

Ensure the organisation structure supports two way communication and collaboration

Establish mental health policies and procedures which support delivery of the mental health strategy and plan

Actively integrate changes as a result of mental health management initiatives into existing change management processes, including for large organisational changes (e.g. restructuring)

Include mental health in workforce inductions and onboarding processes

Ensure work program and planning procedures consider mental health (e.g. unrealistic contractor deadlines)

Implement mental health documentation control systems which support and are supported by the organisational structure

Look at work design systems and adjust to address mental health considerations

Understand how the organisation can assist in the management of the mental health of delivery partners

Review operational systems to ensure they promote mental health factors where applicable

Integrate mental health policies and procedures into business as usual policies and procedures

Integrate and embed mental health systems within the existing overall organisational systems including agreements with delivery partners

Review the mental health across the worker lifecycle and what systems are in place to support workers.

CASE STUDY

Four day work week

A New Zealand estate planning service provider wished to test assumptions about productivity, motivation and output of work.

In order to test this they decided to implement a trial around changing the structure of work. All workers were given a paid day off every week, meaning they only needed to work four days but were still paid the same. No other conditions of employment were adjusted however staff were asked to deliver the same amount of work as they would in a standard week.

The outcomes of this trial were measured and it found that work life balance increased 24%, stress levels reduced 7% and engagement levels of leadership, commitment, stimulation and empowerment increased between 18% and 20%. As a result of this success the company has permanently implemented the four day week on an opt-in basis.



Processes to review and report on mental health management plans

Develop processes to review and report on the implementation of mental health plans.

Programs to review and report on mental health provide support and essential feedback on the implementation and effectiveness of mental health plans and can provide guidance on where to focus support.

What

Reviewing and reporting on mental health management plans provides feedback on how effectively mental health is being managed across the organisation. By reviewing the implementation of the management plan, gaps, and improvement opportunities can be identified and actioned. Reporting on the progress of management plans and mental health metrics provides leadership, and the workforce with an understanding of progress. Feedback and monitoring of lead and lag indicators is an essential part of managing mental health as without knowing the current state it is difficult to target efforts where needed.

Three lines of defence should be considered including internal and external third party reviews and analysis of mental health management.

Why

The metrics being reported on will have a direct impact on the priorities and focus of an organisation. It is important to select appropriate review and report mechanisms which complement and encourage a mentally healthy workplace e.g. delivery partner selection including consideration of those with positive mental health operations or strategies.

Actions to consider

Ensure workers understand what a mental health injury is and encourage the reporting of them

Ensure themes communicated during training and awareness programs align with the overall mental health strategy

Establish metric ownership, and determine which metrics are reported to which organisational levels

Measure and report to all organisation levels on mental health metrics

Consider external (e.g. delivery partners) as well as internal reporting mechanisms

Implement a mental health assurance program which considers three lines of defence methodology

Gather and review feedback on mental health programs

Review and monitor the mental health strategy

Review the metrics being measured and consider proactive lead and lag mental health indicators to use

Embed mental health checks into existing data collation activities (e.g. culture assessment surveys)

Integrate mental health management plans and reviews with broader organisation management processes

Receive peer review by delivery partners.

CASE STUDY

Health risk assessment plans

Following the World Economic Forum's release of projections for future costs of non-communicable diseases a global consumer goods company recognised the link between workplace productivity and wellbeing.

This company sought to rectify it with health risks assessments and tailored management plans. Nutrition, exercise, mental resilience and biometric indicators were assessed and workers were given a health status grading. The results were used to create a personal work management plan. Workers were offered targeted interventions such as online stress reduction courses or therapy. Workers receive periodic reviews of their health and associated management plan based on their level of risk. Furthermore, every five years a detailed review of the global program was conducted and used to drive improvement.

The program has reached over 35,000 workers, driving improvements in health status across 30 countries including a 40% increase in mental resilience.



Digital technology for mental health risks

Leverage digital technology to assist with identifying, controlling, and monitoring mental health risks.

Digital technology is disrupting the global market and can be leveraged to facilitate improved management of mental health in many innovative and interesting ways.

What

Digital technology can be used in a variety of ways as an enabler to help organisations develop a mentally healthy workplace. This includes collecting and displaying data, through mechanisms such as a monitoring tool for reporting or assurance. Alternatively, digital options can be used in work design to reduce risks to workers through the use of smart controls that both reduce the likelihood of harm as well as provide feedback to the organisation on effectiveness.

However, if digital systems aren't supported with processes, they can become a disruptor and disengage people rather than engage them. Thereby having an adverse impact on the organisation.

Good supporting processes and a planned, methodical approach to implementation will be essential to get the maximum benefit of digital technology use.

Why

Whilst digital technology can be a challenge in aging workforces, with changing demographics it can also be used to improve the organisation's operational, recording, and reporting environment. Digital technologies can be used to manage and reduce mental health risks across organisations.

Actions to consider

Identify digital technologies which could be implemented to reduce mental health risk

Implement digital technologies for reporting mental health incidents

Review how digital technology could support systems and operations across the organisation and their delivery partners

Review whether the current systems and worker digital literacy supports implementation of digital technologies, and if not identify how they could be adjusted to support

Implement training and support for improving worker digital literacy

Implement digital technologies for monitoring mental health risks and hazards, and identifying hot spots

Implement digital technologies for promoting worker connectedness and support

Implement digital technologies for mental health training programs in order to increase efficacy and/or reach the remote workforce efficiently (e.g. augmented reality, virtual reality, or other digital platforms)

Implement digital technologies for providing parameters within which the organisation shall work (e.g. switch off times).

CASE STUDY

Stress wristband program

A construction organisation implemented wearable technology to monitor and report on their worker stress levels. Recognising the high risk nature of the construction industry, the organisation partnered with a university to implement a stress monitoring program to mitigate the increased risks of high stress levels that may be indicative of unsafe behaviours.

Workers wore monitoring wristbands to measure stress, physical demands, and risk perception levels through heart rate, skin temperature, and electrical activity on the skin.

The program aimed to reduce workplace injuries and accidents through continuous measurement and reporting, enabling the organisation to better understand, manage, and design construction work to create a safer workplace.



Learning organisation for continual improvement

Become a learning organisation to continuously improve the maturity and performance of mental health actions.

Continuous improvement is integral to the ongoing improvement and increasing maturity of an organisation in implementing this Mental Health Framework.

What

Integrating continuous improvement and learning into day to day operations is important in order to increase maturity of processes and become a leading organisation in any field. This can be done through implementing both internally and externally looking processes, with consideration to external reporting.

Internally focused improvement processes should focus on learning from experience. Externally focused improvement processes should leverage knowledge of delivery partners and organisations in the water, and other industries.

Both of these focuses need to include avenues to take action from learnings in order to improve performance of mental health management within the water industry. Concurrently, implementation of external and public reporting is integral to becoming a leading organisation. This key area can be used to drive improvement across the other seven key areas.

Why

Becoming a learning organisation that focuses on continual improvement is essential to deliver a long term and sustainable mental health management system. Whilst external reporting of these efforts helps drive the organisation into a leading role. By learning (e.g. through annual reporting/case studies) about strategies being implemented across an organisation, and why they worked or didn't work, good practice can be leveraged to improve performance. Looking for opportunities to learn outside the limits of the organisation through disclosures, annual reporting and case studies will further facilitate improvement in the management of mental health within the organisation.

Actions to consider

Through consultation seek, provide, and implement improvement feedback internally to improve management of mental health risks and encourage a culture of continual improvement

Through consultation seek, provide, and implement improvement feedback with delivery partners to improve management of mental health risks and encourage a culture of continual improvement

Embed processes for internal review and feedback into mental health management systems

Ensure mental health policies and procedures are frequently revised and updated to drive continuous improvement.

Investigate and implement better practice mental health management conducted by delivery partners

Investigate and implement better practice mental health management conducted by other water industry organisations

Leverage good practice examples across the industry

Investigate and implement better practice mental health management conducted by other industries

Implement external reporting mechanisms (e.g. publicly available annual reports which address mental health metrics and case studies)

Continue to iterate and improve mental health management and supporting systems in line with current research, trends, and organisational change.

CASE STUDY

Family support review change

A number of years ago a construction, property and infrastructure company identified the need to consider the wellbeing of workers and their families. As a result they established a foundation focused on nurturing wellbeing and supporting workers' involvement in charitable and community affairs.

Recently the company has acknowledged that the foundation needed to evolve given the context for businesses was changing rapidly. With this understanding they sought to conduct a strategic review of the foundation. Subject matter expertise was engaged to conduct the review, develop case studies of leading practice approaches, engage in discussions with relevant peak bodies and analyse potential gaps and opportunities for improvement.

This focus on ongoing learning in this ever changing work environment was identified as necessary in order to deliver better outcomes to its workers, and their families.

Pipeline actions

The pipeline provides a high level overview of actions an organisation may consider, in order to influence a mentally healthy workplace. The actions link back to the eight key areas of this framework. The pipeline provides general guidance around the order in which actions could be implemented. It was developed considering the water industry stressors, strengths, opportunities, and current actions.

START

Define organisational mental health values, vision, and principles for developing a mentally healthy workplace

Review the current state and identify gaps in mental health management

Communicate mental health values, vision, and principles across the organisation

Conduct a mental health risk assessment (engaging with subject matter experts as appropriate) which looks to identify organisational mental health risks and underlying causes

Identify, in consultation with the workforce, suitable controls for mental health risks and determine implementation timeframes

Ensure all workers and leadership are aware of the key mental health risks they could face in their roles and how to mitigate these

Develop a mental health strategy

Seek and include feedback from workers in developing a mental health strategy

Ensure the mental health strategy is aligned with the overall organisational strategy

Define roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities across the organisation with respect to mental health management in alignment with the mental health strategy

Communicate roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities across the organisation

Identify digital technologies which could be implemented to reduce mental health risk

Develop and implement a mental health management plan

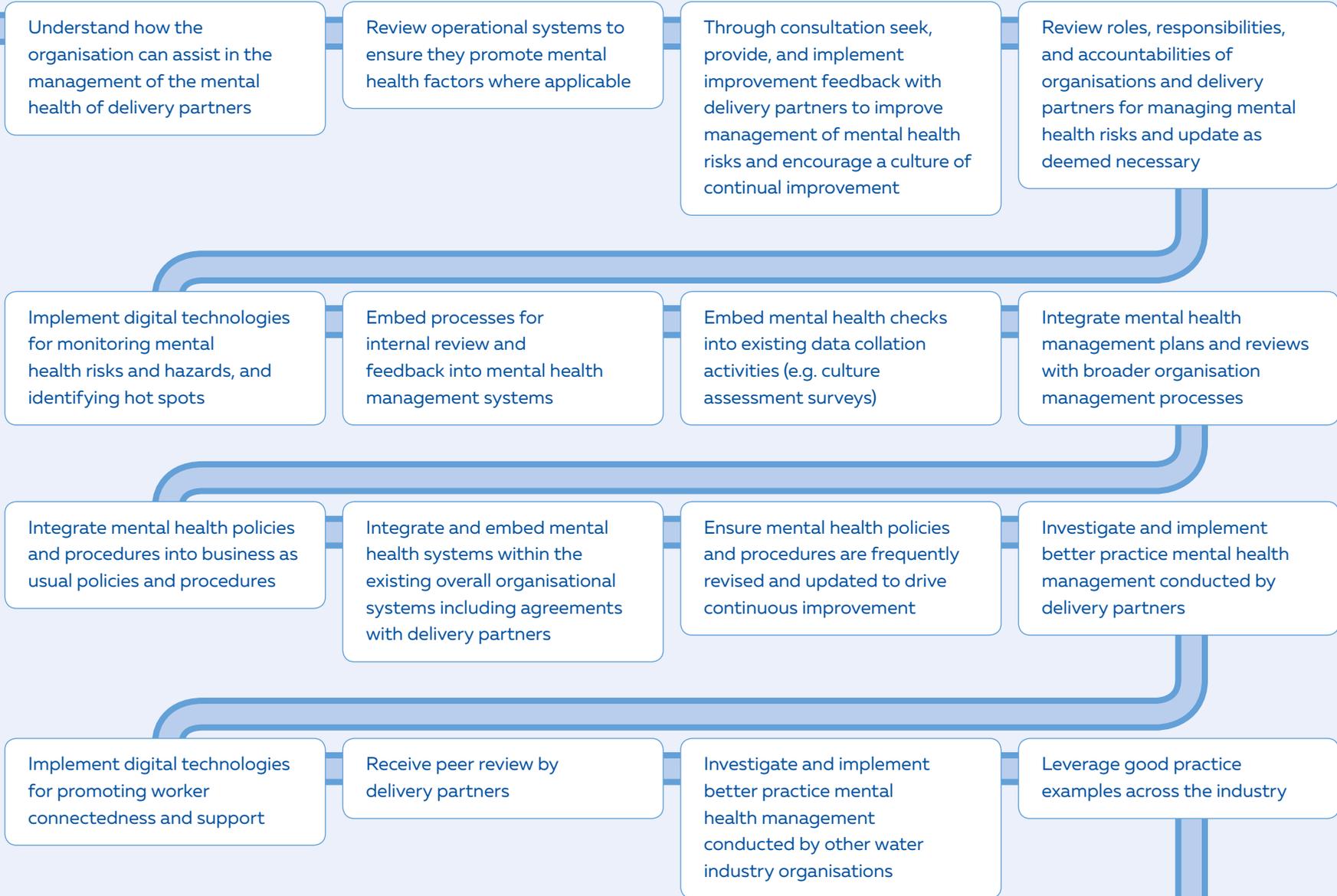
Define a clear organisational system and structure which supports the mental health strategy and plan and considers: reporting lines (including delivery partners), and the management system

Consider current governance structures and whether they facilitate leadership/Board risk understanding and support mental health management









Review the mental health across the worker lifecycle and what systems are in place to support workers

Investigate and implement better practice mental health management conducted by other industries

Implement external reporting mechanisms (e.g. publicly available annual reports which address mental health metrics and case studies)

Implement digital technologies for mental health training programs in order to increase efficacy and/or reach the remote workforce efficiently (e.g. augmented reality, virtual reality, or other digital platforms)

Implement digital technologies for providing parameters within which the organisation shall work (e.g. switch off times)

Continue to iterate and improve mental health management, and supporting systems in line with current research, trends, and organisational change

Measurement and collaboration

As a part of implementing this Mental Health Framework it is important to measure and evaluate performance via both qualitative and quantitative measures in order to identify whether a positive impact is being had and where further effort would be beneficial.

A focus should be made to consider lead indicators in preference to lag indicators. Collaboration within the industry can and should be leveraged to improve the implementation and efficacy of programs.

Measurement of progress

Surveys (e.g. Martin Seligman's PERMA model, mental health questions in employee engagement surveys, generative safety culture surveys, alignment surveys, regular one question pulse surveys)

Focus groups to gather feedback (e.g. successes, improvement areas, employee awareness, utilisation)

HR performance metrics (e.g. number of volunteer hours/days taken, parental leave taken, productivity, retention, workers compensation claims, absenteeism)

Committee meetings to share information (e.g. feedback, experiences, outcomes, improvement opportunities)

EAP provider reporting (e.g. utilisation rates, trends)

Mental health incident reporting (e.g. trends prior, during and post roll out of initiatives)

Number or percentage of workforce attending mental health programs, initiatives and activities

Number or percentage of workforce accessing their wellbeing allowance

Return to work monitoring (e.g. number of employees returned back to pre-work hours and duties after being off with a mental illness, recovery duration, trends and any relationship to initiatives and processes in place)

Peer reviews

Industry collaboration opportunities

Jointly developing and leveraging education and training programs

WSAA partnership with national and international bodies (e.g. Mates in Construction, Beyond Blue)

Being involved in industry working groups (e.g. HR working groups)

Identify leading expertise and leverage across the industry (e.g. adding case studies to the WSAA website)

Collaboration with other WSAA work groups/networks (e.g. strategic workforce planning).



Additional resources

Some additional resources are detailed below.

This is not an exhaustive list, however, provides a first port of call for further information.

Support services

Beyond Blue
1300 224 636

Lifeline
13 11 44

MensLine Australia
1300 789 978

Suicide Call Back Service
1300 659 467

WSAA contact

WSAA Health and Safety
Network

External resources

Better Health Channel
[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/
health/healthyliving/wellbeing](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/wellbeing)

Beyond Blue
www.beyondblue.org.au

Heads Up
www.headsup.org.au

Mates in Construction
matesinconstruction.org.au

Safe Work Australia
[www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/
doc/work-related-
psychological-health-and-
safety-systematic-approach-
meeting-your-duties](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/work-related-psychological-health-and-safety-systematic-approach-meeting-your-duties)

WSAA Skills of the Future
[www.wsaa.asn.au/publication/
workforce-skills-future](http://www.wsaa.asn.au/publication/workforce-skills-future)

**Well-being, Productivity
and Happiness at Work**
Ivan Robertson and Cary
Cooper, 2011

More information

info@wsaa.asn.au

About WSAA

The Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) is the peak body that supports the Australian urban water industry. Our members provide water and sewerage services to over 20 million customers in Australia and New Zealand and many of Australia's largest industrial and commercial enterprises.

WSAA facilitates collaboration, knowledge sharing, networking and cooperation within the urban water industry. The collegiate approach of its members has led to industry-wide advances to national water issues.

WSAA can demonstrate success in standardising industry performance monitoring and benchmarking, as well as many research outcomes of national significance. The Executive of the Association retains strong links with policy makers and legislative bodies and their influencers, to monitor emerging issues of importance. WSAA is regularly consulted and its advice sought by decision makers when developing strategic directions for the water industry.

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ISBN 1 920760 98 9

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