

ACT Public Sector (ACTPS) Mental Wellbeing Policy

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of the *ACTPS Mental Wellbeing Policy* (the policy) is to:
 - ensure that the ACTPS develops, implements and evaluates integrated, evidence based mental wellbeing policies and programs that help to protect, promote and support the mental health and wellbeing of employees;
 - encourage ACTPS employees to nurture their own mental wellbeing; and
 - clarify responsibilities in the workplace regarding the role of all employees in promoting a mentally healthy workplace.

APPLICATION

2. This policy contains a set of instructions issued by the Head of Service under the Public Sector Management Act 1994 which binds all employees and officers engaged under that Act.

BACKGROUND

3. Under the *ACT Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act) employers must take all reasonably practicable steps to protect workers against risks to their physical and mental health. This includes all people who participate in the workplace as workers, including employees, contractors, consultants, volunteers and students.
4. Beyond Blue Australia¹ describes a mentally healthy workplace as one where a culture of respect and inclusivity is created by:
 - people at all levels sharing a vision of, and commitment to, positive mental health and wellbeing.
 - work demands that balance the needs of employees and the employer that are aligned to the expected outputs and performance at the employee's classification and level, that do not pose an unreasonable risk to the mental health of individuals.

¹ Developing a workplace mental health strategy. Beyond Blue. Retrieved from <http://resources.beyondblue.org.au/prism/file?token=BL/1728>

- everyone in the workplace feeling comfortable to speak openly about mental health and mental health conditions, without fear of stigma or discrimination.
5. Good work is part of a mentally healthy workplace. Good work is that which is safe and appropriately resourced for the demands of the role, aligned to employee skills and abilities, offers social networks, and where financial and employment entitlements are provided. Good work supports positive mental wellbeing.
 6. Integrated mental wellbeing strategies and programs in the workplace lead to employees who are more satisfied, engaged and productive, and workplaces that deliver higher staff retention and more positive interpersonal relationships. Investing in the mental wellbeing of employees makes good business sense.

PRINCIPLES

7. The ACT Government will ensure that mental wellbeing becomes a core part of everyday business through consideration of risks to mental health and wellbeing in all that we do and support for strategic and targeted mental wellbeing programs and initiatives.
8. Work, work practices, and workplace training and supports provided to employees, will be designed to consider the mental wellbeing of employees and promote the positive aspects of work.
9. Evidence-based, best-practice initiatives will be integrated into business and support our obligations under the WHS Act with the goals of:
 - protecting the mental health of employees,
 - promoting employee mental wellbeing, and
 - supporting employees with mental health conditions.
10. A risk based approach will be used to develop policies and programs that target risks to mental wellbeing in the workplace with the aim of eliminating or minimising the risk to employees by:
 - a. providing a safe workplace for all employees;
 - b. optimising the mental health and wellbeing of all of our people;
 - c. preventing and reducing psychological harm in the workplace;
 - d. reducing the number and severity of psychological incidents;
 - e. reducing the impact to the workplace and the employee associated with poor mental health; and
 - f. improving the work environment, work performance and productivity.
11. Mental wellbeing initiatives will be aligned with the government's direction to create workplaces that promote equity, create inclusion and are respectful.
12. Mental wellbeing initiatives will be designed with the employees for which they are intended. This approach will:

- protect employee privacy
- prevent against psychosocial harm
- protect employees with a mental health condition against stigma and discrimination
- ensure reasonable adjustments can be implemented for employees with a mental health condition who may require them; and
- ensure initiatives are relevant and meet the needs of the employees they are designed for.

13. The ACT Government will work with, and engage, employees to develop reasonable and appropriate solutions that support positive mental health and wellbeing. This process will acknowledge the variable nature of mental health and will consider the individual circumstances of each case as to what workplace adjustments may be reasonable.

RESPONSIBILITIES

14. In addition to general responsibilities under the WHS Act and *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011*, the following responsibilities apply under this policy.

A. DIRECTORS-GENERAL, DEPUTY DIRECTORS-GENERAL OR EQUIVALENTS AND AGENCY HEADS

- must meet their due diligence obligations as officers under the WHS Act by ensuring that the workplaces across the directorate/agency they lead protect employees from harm to their mental health and safety
- demonstrate a visible and genuine commitment to, and support for, mental wellbeing
- must develop, implement and evaluate processes, programs and initiatives to promote and support the mental health and wellbeing of employees, tailored to the unique environment in which they work

B. EXECUTIVE AND MANAGERS

- will promote, protect and support the mental health of their employees by engaging with, and supporting employee participation in, initiatives that are designed to support mental wellbeing
- will, in consultation with employees, work health and safety and human resources teams and employee representatives, consider the risks to mental wellbeing, approaches to promote and support mental wellbeing
- will consider and implement requests for reasonable adjustments

C. EMPLOYEE

- must support and contribute to creating a mentally healthy workplace by engaging with policies, programs and initiatives that are designed to promote their mental wellbeing
- actively monitoring and managing their own mental health and wellbeing,

- demonstrating positive and appropriate behaviours at work
- meet their responsibilities under the WHS Act to take reasonably practicable care for their mental health and safety, and by taking reasonable care that their acts or omissions of acts do not adversely affect their own and others' mental safety at work.

D. THE CHIEF MINISTER TREASURY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS GROUP

- will develop, implement, evaluate and be accountable for whole of government approaches to drive continuous improvement in mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES

This policy is to be delivered with consideration to:

- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)
- [Public Sector Management Act 1994](#)
- [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#)
- [Human Rights Act 2004](#)
- [Information Privacy Act 2014](#)
- [Carers Recognition Act 2021](#)

RELATED SOURCES

This policy is to be delivered with consideration to:

- [ACT Public Sector – Reasonable Adjustment Policy](#)
- [Information and privacy policies](#)
- [Standards for Records and Information Governance](#)
- [ACTPS Work Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy 2019](#)
- [ACTPS Managing Occupational Violence Policy 2019](#)
- [Healthy Minds – Thriving Workplaces Mental Health Strategy](#)

REVIEW

The Policy will be reviewed after three (3) years unless earlier review is required.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

This policy is approved by Head of Service

DATE. 27 August 2022

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Review Date: October 2025