

## MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGIES WORKING GROUP

### COMMUNIQUE

A summary of the  
Mental Health Strategies Working Group Meeting on 31 January 2017

#### 1. University of Newcastle presentation of research findings

Professor Brian Kelly from the University of Newcastle gave a presentation on his research into the extent and impact of mental health problems in employees in the coal mining industry in New South Wales and Queensland. Research findings indicate there may be increased levels of mental health related symptoms and alcohol use in coal industry employees in comparison with equivalent populations.

Professor Kelly is currently conducting a similar study in metalliferous mines in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia. Early indications suggest similar issues exist. However, after the implementation of various workplace mental health strategies, there is evidence of an increase in employees seeking professional and non-professional help and a reduction in persons reporting moderate to high levels of psychological distress and perceived mental illness stigma.

#### 2. Terms of Reference

Members endorsed the revised Terms of Reference membership of the Mental Health Strategies Working Group as follows:

- Chamber of Minerals and Energy (CME) representatives Ms Bronwen Otto (Theiss Pty Ltd) and Ms Nicola Peel (BHP Billiton) have replaced Ms Kristy Campbell (Rio Tinto Iron Ore) and Mr Roger Hughes (Macmahon Holdings Ltd);
- Mr Rod Astbury (WA Association for Mental Health) has replaced Ms Alison Xamon (WA Association for Mental Health).

#### 3. Government mental health programs

The Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) has appointed a Graduate Officer (Mental Health and Wellbeing) and an Inspector of Mines (Mental Health and Wellbeing) will commence on 20 February 2017.

#### 4. Baseline results for psychosocial harm audits

Members considered the DMP report *Baseline results for psychosocial harm audits of mining operations, and petroleum and major hazard facilities*. This report summarises audit information collected from mining operations and petroleum and major hazard facilities over a ten month period from February to October 2016.

The Working Group supported the report being provided to the Mining Industry Advisory Committee (MIAC), the Legislative Assembly Education and Health Standing Committee and to stakeholders via the DMP website.

The [Psychosocial Harm Audit tool is available on the DMP website](#) to assist companies take a proactive approach to mental health risk management in the workplace. This will be reviewed by members to identify improvements.

#### 5. Mining / Petroleum Safety Bulletin : Suicide awareness for the Western Australian resources sector

DMP's Investigations Branch has proactively conducted several investigations into suicides and attempted suicides at Western Australian mine sites, the findings of which align with recent publications on the subject. Consequently, the department has produced a safety bulletin *Suicide awareness for the Western Australian resources sector* to aid industry deal with such circumstances and incidents at mine sites. Members were asked to provide feedback.

## **6. Mental health training program assessment criteria**

Members agreed to merge documentation prepared independently by both the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance and the CME which summarised mental health training objectives and assessment criteria to aid employers identify appropriate training programs. Members will provide feedback on the unified paper.

## **7. Mental Health Commission to act as a repository for mental health information**

On 06 December 2016 the Chair of the Mining Industry Advisory Committee (MIAC) wrote to the Mental Health Commissioner with a request that the Mental Health Commission (MHC) host a proposed central repository for mental health information. A reply was received from the MHC on 11 January 2017 which was supportive of the request in principle but requested additional information about the primary purpose of the repository, the extent of information to be included, the process for approving what is included, and how the repository will be maintained, before making a decision. The Working Group will provide additional information to the MHC.

## **8. Codes of practice / guidance material**

The Working Group noted that in response to the recommendation for a FIFO Code of Practice, the Government instead requested that MIAC review and strengthen existing codes and practices.

DMP and Worksafe prepared a list of codes of practice and guidance material relevant to mental health and FIFO arrangements.

As health and safety legislation is currently undergoing reform and changes to codes of practice can be a lengthy process, the Working Group will identify which codes and guidelines should be prioritised for review, and why.

## **9. Communications strategies**

Members noted DMP's proposed *Mental health and wellbeing in Western Australia's resources industry: Communications Strategy*, and provided comments. The strategy is intended to inform industry of mental health training knowledge requirements to enable assessment of training products, and to profile case studies of industry good practice in the provision of mental health support.

Working group members will consider communication mediums in their own organisations and identify positive mental health case studies for promotion to industry.

## **10. Next meeting – 23 May 2017**

The focus of the next meeting will be:

- Training program assessment criteria;
- Prioritise codes of practice and guidelines for review;
- Identify further communication mediums; and
- Identify positive mental health case studies in industry.

Nicole Roocke

Acting Chair (Chamber of Minerals and Energy WA)