



Australian Government
Comcare



Comcare
National Work Health
and Safety Awards

Awards Program

18 May 2021



Welcome to the 2021 Comcare National Work Health and Safety Awards

These prestigious Awards highlight the diversity of the Comcare scheme that covers some 400,000 workers and 200 employers across a very broad range of occupation types and risk profiles.

We had planned to celebrate the awards as part of the Comcare National Conference, however with the travel situation across Australia remaining unpredictable we decided to celebrate the incredible achievements of our award finalists virtually.

The finalists this year all highlight outstanding success in 'Creating a safer workplace together' under the Comcare National Conference theme and demonstrate the opportunity that exists to make significant impacts in enabling safe and healthy work.

It's important that we celebrate and reward leadership achievements like the ones we are showcasing to inspire others to prevent and reduce injury and harm in the workplace.

Thank you to everyone who nominated and congratulations to the winners and finalists. The entries show great commitment at both the organisational and individual levels and it has been great to see such innovative and positive initiatives across the scheme – particularly during these challenging times.

We are also grateful to the members of the judging panels, including members of the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, Comcare staff and industry experts.

I encourage you and your organisation to consider nominating for the awards in the future – we could be celebrating you at the next awards presentation.

Enjoy the presentation and we look forward to recognising all winners and finalists in person at the 2022 Comcare National Conference.

Sue Weston PSM
Chief Executive Officer
Comcare

About the Awards

Comcare's National Work Health and Safety Awards recognise and reward excellence in workplace health and safety, recovery at and return to work achieved by individuals and organisations covered under the Comcare scheme.

The award finalists highlight outstanding success in collaboration, innovation and achievement across four categories. The 2021 award categories are:

Category One: Prevention Award

Category Two: Early Intervention Award

Category Three: Recovery at and Return to Work Award

Category Four: Individual Contribution Award

Judging Panel

Steering Committee

- **Natalie Bekis**, General Manager, Comcare (Chair)
- **Michael Duke**, General Manager, Comcare
- **Justin Napier**, General Manager, Comcare
- **Matthew Swainson**, General Manager, Comcare
- **Justine Ross**, Independent

Panel members

- **Yvette Adeney**, Director, Comcare
- **Ngaire Anderson**, Director, Comcare
- **Megan Buick**, Director, Comcare
- **Kellie Heran**, Director, Comcare
- **Jane Hall**, Member, Safety, Rehabilitation Compensation Commission (SRCC)
- **Nathan Hannigan**, General Manager, Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
- **Louisa Hudson**, Member, Safety, Rehabilitation Compensation Commission (SRCC)
- **Peter Richards**, Chair, Safety, Rehabilitation Compensation Commission (SRCC)

Category One: Prevention Award

The Prevention Award recognises work undertaken to ensure workplaces provide a healthy and safe environment for employees, by addressing the physical and/or psychosocial risk factors to prevent an incident from occurring.



WINNER

Advanced Ordnance Technologies Defence Science and Technology Group

About Defence Science and Technology Group

Advanced Ordnance Technologies (AOT) is a unique Australian Defence Force (ADF) capability within the Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG), that supports ADF knowledge programs and operations. AOT process includes the demilitarisation of Explosive Ordnance (EO) across the conventional ordnance spectrum to ensure the safety of Defence personnel.

The problem and/or challenge

An element of this demilitarisation process is the safe removal of explosive material from an ordnance component, such as a warhead, while preserving the rest of the ordnance for research applications. This is conventionally achieved through manual application of high-pressure water and/or steam to extract the explosive hazard.

This manual process poses several risks to the onsite team including fatigue, heat stress, exposure to hazardous energetic materials and high-pressure fluid systems. The task is exceedingly labour intensive and requires a considerable level of concentration and precision. Size and explosive material type in the ordnance dictates duration and detailed methodology of extraction; this may necessitate uninterrupted extraction that extends well beyond standard working day.

This activity is usually conducted at a remote and largely open-air site, involving a large team, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), decontamination processing and an onsite medical team. Through a critical engineering design process, AOT committed to minimising the hazards associated with the removal of explosive material by significantly automating the hazardous processes and eliminating personnel from the operation environment as much as possible.

Category One: Prevention Award

The approach and outcome

The development, delivery and commissioning of the automated extraction capability was a multi-staged process, involving DST Group EO subject matter experts, external engineering consultancies and automation specialists. Data obtained from previous manual extraction campaigns and EO knowledge bases conceived internal engineering conceptualisation and evaluation and assisted in the establishment of a detailed specification requirement. This culminated in the design and development of an innovative and unique Defence capability called the Semi-automated Explosive Ordnance Inerting Capability (SEOIC). Staff and engineers continuously reviewed the design and safety concepts throughout modelling and simulation, including safety critical human-machine interfaces, hazardous area assessments and site integration and operation considerations.

SEOIC operators can control, monitor and execute commands to the various sub-systems through a graphical user interface within the safety of a remote-control hut. The innovative robotic system uses imported high fidelity computer aided design models, to manage the operating robotic environment and the team can control every aspect of the robot including the water pressure. The SEOIC has significantly reduced workplace hazards by removing personnel from the hazardous activity and the solution is a world-leading technological capability in the field of EO extraction.

Key achievements

- Automation of plant and equipment to specifically remove personnel from the site during hazardous operations with the development of a world leading capability, technology, and facility.
- Increased precision and safety using Digital Twin technology.
- A substantial reduction of manual operations in a physiologically demanding hazardous (requiring extensive PPE) task with a 50 per cent reduction in human risk factors such as fatigue and heat stress.
- Time and efficiency – substantial reduction in the total number of people required and in the overall time required to complete tasks.
- AOT have extended the working lives of many longstanding employees as age and fitness levels have become less of a consideration in the risk management process.

Category One: Prevention Award

WINNER

COVID-19 – ATO's response to ensuring a safer workplace

Australian Taxation Office

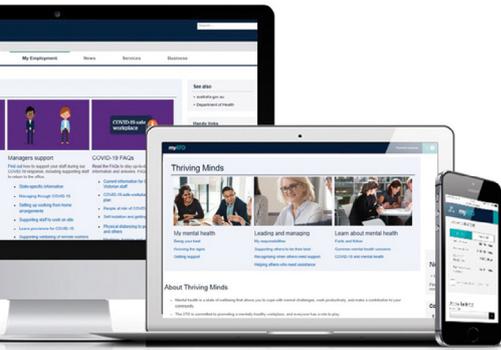
About Australian Taxation Office

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is the Commonwealth Government's principal revenue collection agency, with almost 21,000 staff working across 21 sites, primarily in law, service delivery, assurance/compliance, analytics and information technology. Approximately 2,000 of the current workforce was recruited to deliver the Government's Stimulus Package.

The problem and/or challenge

As a large and diverse agency faced with the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation, the ATO had to act quickly to ensure the health and safety of all staff, applying judgment in the context of APS, Comcare direction and state guidelines. The organisation was faced with safely transitioning 14,500 staff across 21 sites to work from home in just three weeks. A number of challenges were identified including a need to scale up IT systems to cater for mass working from home arrangements, strengthen manager and staff capability in working virtually, and build flexibility in standard operational environments to cater for local government restrictions for those essential staff continuing to operate in ATO offices.

When COVID-19-related restrictions started to ease across states and territories, the ATO was then faced with how to gradually transition staff, ensuring ATO sites were COVID-safe workplaces, and addressing heightened anxiety and fatigue risks. The ATO's Business Continuity Framework and pandemic planning was activated in early January 2020, and a COVID Response Committee consisting of senior leadership was established to oversee processes and ensure a rapid, comprehensive, and coordinated response.



Category One: Prevention Award

The approach and outcome

To enable early identification and contact tracing for any potential COVID-19 cases onsite, a COVID-19 Response Unit was established to track and trace ahead of the relevant health authorities, including a digital notification form and automatic SMS alerts when staff were tested.

Other measures included:

- The Keeping Connected morale-boosting communication campaign was delivered where senior leaders encouraged staff to see the more positive and humorous aspects of the challenging environment.
- Communication strategy with regular email updates, centralised intranet hub and health and wellbeing campaigns, and a series of education and support webinars.
- A proactive campaign to encourage staff to take leave, to address ongoing risks (energy levels, fatigue, mental health, productivity).
- Mental health support portal, access to external mental health specialists (i.e. psychiatrists, psychologist), and dedicated specialist support for staff facing inappropriate client behaviour or domestic violence.

The ATO had 14,500 staff working safely and productively from home and fewer work-related incidents. 3,470 COVID-19 notifications were proactively managed, with average staff contact times under five minutes.

Key achievements

- ATO's swift COVID response resulted in no workplace transmission, while reducing work-related incidents by 32 per cent despite record numbers working from home and high numbers of contact centre staff working on sites.
- The CPSU acknowledged the ATO's positive and proactive efforts with 90 per cent of ATO members surveyed stating the ATO provided helpful guidance on safe home office and set up.
- A June 2020 staff engagement survey stated 95 per cent of staff felt they had a safe work environment.
- The ATO has set new standards with the streamlined notification and COVID response unit approach, which has been recognised as best practice across the APS business continuity management group.

Category One: Prevention Award



COMMENDATION

Empowering our people to prevent harm during COVID-19

Department of Education, Skills and Employment

About Department of Education, Skills and Employment

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) contributes to Australia's economic prosperity and social wellbeing by creating opportunities and delivering better outcomes through education, skills and employment pathways. They work across states and territories to support the delivery of Government policies/priorities and are central to the Government's response to COVID-19.

The problem and/or challenge

As a newly formed department of 3,500 staff, DESE took a lead role in the Government's response to COVID-19, working collaboratively to support Australians in their time of need. The newly formed teams went into lockdown, barely having spent more than a few weeks working together as a new department. The unique circumstances of a new department in its infancy, meant preventing psychosocial risk factors and preventing harm became a key priority. The **COURAGE – CONNECT – CARE** internal campaign was designed and implemented to ensure the physical and psychosocial health of staff was treated with urgency and focus. In a period of uncertainty, the campaign focused on forming a sense of supportiveness, togetherness, caring which are essential to establishing the resilience of the department and to keep staff connected when working from home, and remotely from their teams.

The three pillars of **COURAGE – CONNECT – CARE** launched a vital platform which facilitated open discussion on psychosocial hazards and established a supportive environment where all staff had access to support networks, resources and were empowered to prevent harm.

Category One: Prevention Award

The approach and outcome

COURAGE reminds staff to recognise fear, uncertainty and anxiety are natural responses, and there are very practical things we can do to build our resilience, to be strong and look forward.

CONNECT prompts staff to connect with colleagues, family and friends during times of isolation, to find new ways of communicating – to come together when social distancing keeps us apart.

CARE reminds staff to reflect, maintain perspective and to care. Care for yourself, to care for and be supportive of others. Care recognises that we feel challenged in different ways, and to respond with compassion.

By providing practical advice, tips and resources for these pillars, staff were informed, and empowered to look after themselves and each other. DESE used virtual meetings, email messages, videos, mobile text alerts, cascaded communication approaches, office signage and intranet communication to ensure a truly integrated approach. DESE created guidance in response to staff feedback ensuring actions could be applied as consistently as possible and made regular updates and changes to ensure staff had access to the latest health advice.

Key achievements

- Building a supported environment and tools for staff to talk about their mental health and wellbeing.
- Implemented SES/EL2 fortnightly webinars to educate and support managers (~550) to be the conduit for key messages and to assist managers in leading their staff through change.
- Initiated preventative HR 'Reach-Out' programs for staff in lockdown, on secondment to Services Australia, allowing HR to provide early intervention and direct support to staff.
- Staff satisfaction was greater than 90 per cent and other APS agencies requested campaign material to inform their engagement campaigns to support staff and prevent harm.

Category One: Prevention Award

COMMENDATION

SCAN4SAFETY Situational Awareness Tool ABC

About ABC

Australia's public broadcaster, the ABC, has been Australia's voice for close to 90 years, delivering stories, news and information we need, and services that enrich our culture and civic life. Amongst Australia's most trusted brands, more than two thirds of Australians watch, read or listen to the ABC each week.

The problem and/or challenge

ABC's activities take staff across Australia and throughout the world, to places and spaces that are not completely within control. Journalists and content makers may travel to unique situations, sometimes with unknown hazards and often the environment can change, sometimes unexpectedly, which may significantly impact the way in which the work is undertaken and can put workers at risk. An analysis of the ABC's incident statistics showed that a significant proportion of worker injuries were caused by site-specific hazards and situations that could not be specifically identified before arrival on location. Time-pressure inherent in the nature of the work is not conducive to the same document-reliant risk assessment approach to managing onsite hazards.

An approach was needed to prompt workers in the field to take stock of their situation on arrival onsite, to identify and recognise potential hazards, and to plan and communicate preventative actions, often referred to as 'situational awareness'. The ABC's approach needed to be fast, palatable, and effective. The ABC WHS team consulted widely with stakeholders, including workers, to develop a suitable approach.



Category One: Prevention Award

The approach and outcome

Using focus groups comprising employees, WHS committees and facilitators, and management, key requirements for an approach were identified where a habit or routine could be integrated into existing processes that did not require a physical checklist. It was proposed that a 'tag line' be developed as a memory jogger to assist workers arriving onsite and through an iterative process the focus groups developed the mnemonic: SCAN4SAFETY.

Stop,

Check your surroundings for threats,

Articulate - discuss hazards and precautions with co-workers,

Never take unnecessary risks,

for

Structures (unsafe derelict)

Aggression (animals, people)

Falls (slips, trips)

Environment (fumes, chemicals, asbestos, weather)

Traffic (vehicles, machinery)

You (fatigue, wellness, PPE)

A SCAN4SAFETY toolkit was developed to support manager toolbox talks with staff to implement the approach, comprising of a short video, manager prompts and worker aids such as vehicle stickers and flash cards. Involvement of stakeholders throughout the development of the support toolkit has facilitated worker engagement, and tools that are designed to appeal to the target audience.

Key achievements

- The toolkit was developed entirely inhouse, using ABC workers and production facilities to produce the video, manager's implementation toolkit, and worker support aids.
- The roll-out strategy addresses the geographical disbursement of ABC staff across 59 locations in Australia and 11 International locations, with resources for both local meetings (where these are possible face-to-face), virtual on-line meetings as well as e-learning.
- Initial response and take up of the program has been extremely positive providing staff with an easily relatable memory jogger without burdensome checklists.
- The entry sets a new standard for best practice, with learnings being shared across the broader broadcast media industry.

Category One: Prevention Award



FINALIST

Amphibious Combat and Sealift Systems Program Office (ACSSPO)

Department of Defence

About Department of Defence

The Amphibious Combat and Sealift Systems Program Office (ACSSPO) mission is to sustain Navy amphibious capability through balanced, effective and affordable asset management for the landing helicopter deck (LHDs), HMAS Choules and the LHD Landing Craft (LLC).

The problem and/or challenge

The LLC has an infamous reputation for creating excess exhaust when the main engines are started. To manage the volume of smoke the engines are started consecutively and require 15 minutes per engine until the exhaust reduces to a normal level. Routine exposure to this hazard has prompted the release of numerous safety incident reports from HMAS Diamantina, AUSCDT1, HMAS Waterhen and raised at the AAS SAFE forum to highlight the hazard and the effect on the dive air supporting compressors.

This hazard has also been the subject of public complaints in Sydney Harbour, impacting the Navy's reputation as a responsible maritime user. During amphibious operations in the LHD well dock, members must wear a face respirator as mitigation for exposure to vehicle exhaust, largely attributed to the LLC. Commencing in July 2018, wide consultation commenced with all the stakeholders to resolve this issue, and to trial and implement a solution. Resolving this issue required an innovative approach which commenced with a technical investigation to target the issue and determine a feasible cost-effective solution.

Category One: Prevention Award

The approach and outcome

The technical investigation revealed the excess exhaust was directly related to the main engine temperature. Further analysis of the problem, and consultation with the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) revealed that the coolant system was capable of integrating with a pre-heater, which maintains a higher dormant engine temperature, and reduced the time to warm the engines. To assess the effectiveness of the proposed initiative, a trial was carried out with industry support to assess the effectiveness of the pre-heaters.

This approach was innovative, targeted an identified need to reduce diesel fume emissions with the intent to deliver a measurable outcome and reduced diesel emissions, including a significant reduction in visual pollution. The trial was completed in two phases: two LLCs were started at Waterhen, one fitted with pre-heaters and the improvement documented. The results showed the volume of exhaust on start-up was reduced by up to 60 per cent and the time to reach normal operating temperatures significantly reduced. The vessel was then passed to HMAS Adelaide to assess the compatibility during amphibious operations.

Key achievements

- A significant reduction in diesel fumes and exposure, achieved by fitting an engine preheater.
- Improvement in Navy reputation by demonstrating a response to public complaints and responsible management of the hazard.
- The unprecedented result from the trial generated strong momentum to ensure all LLC have pre-heaters installed, with half the fleet installed within 11 months of the initial trial.
- Further resources on adapting these models to other vessels has since been developed to assist the Navy when purchasing landing/watercraft in the future.

Category One: Prevention Award



FINALIST

Virtual Workstation Assessments

Department of Health

About Department of Health

The Department of Health (Health) develops and delivers policies and programs, advises Government on health, aged care and sport, and works with a range of stakeholders to ensure better health for all Australians.

The problem and/or challenge

When employees were directed to work from home due to COVID-19, the department faced significant challenges in enabling everyone to do their best work, safely, wherever their location. The challenge was the lack of available equipment to assist employees to work safely and to reduce risk of any potential physical injuries, specifically, overuse injuries or aggravations of pre-existing physical conditions. The department quickly realised not all employees had equipment, or could even set up a workstation, thus the introduction of the Virtual Workstation Assessment (VWSA).

The majority of home office set ups assessed were not conducive to a safe working environment for any duration of time, and due to high demand for IT equipment, purchase equipment such as aids, and appliances to support working safely was difficult. Employees were not only working from home, but also sharing spaces at home with partners and children who were being home schooled.

As the pandemic continued more employees commenced fulltime remote working. It then became apparent this was going to be a much longer-term issue than first anticipated.

Category One: Prevention Award

The approach and outcome

A dedicated staff intranet site relating to COVID-19 was created which provided updated information for all employees, including guidance materials and a suite of videos to assist employees to set up a safe workplace remotely. The first video introduced employees to the concept of working safely at a dining table, kitchen bench or the concept of a sit stand workstation, the ironing board. This enabled employees to not be static and move postures during the working day.

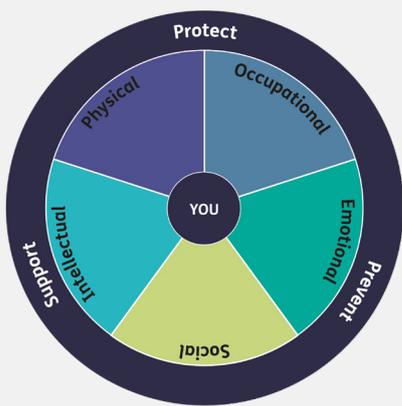
The VWSA involved employees taking 'selfies' of themselves at their workstation, capturing arms, wrist, feet and leg placement and the pictures were then sent via text, along with any questions or queries to a dedicated Occupational Therapist (OT) who reviewed and made an assessment. The OT would provide endorsement for the setup, or suggestions, which could include adjustments using objects that could be reasonably found in homes or recommend aids. If the set up required more intervention, the OT would discuss with the employee the provision of equipment. A video was also created to assist employees with the process and employees working in the office are now also choosing to undertake their workstation setup through the virtual process.

Key achievements

- Developed a workstation assessment process to support employees to work safely at home, including guidance materials and videos.
- No incidents or hazards reported from employees working remotely since the implementation of the VWSA process.
- The program has conducted 150 Workstation assessments since March 2020 of which 50 per cent have been in the new format.
- The program has received positive feedback for its simplicity in navigation, timeliness, and ability to be accessed safely from home.

Category Two: Early Intervention Award

The Early Intervention Award recognises work undertaken to proactively support employees following an incident, in order to manage and prevent further harm.



WINNER

SuperYou

Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation

About Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation

Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (CSC) exclusively serves current and former members of the Australian Defence Force, and government employees. With a workforce of 500, CSC achieve long-term investment objectives, guide informed retirement decisions, and give members peace of mind that their families and futures are in safe hands.

The problem and/or challenge

In the 2018-19 financial year, CSC's Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) statistics showed that their usage rate was higher than usual. In addition to this, their annual health assessment results showed that staff generally had poor flexibility, higher than average body fat percentage, and high numbers of staff with high blood pressure, high cholesterol and high blood glucose levels. Several scenarios in which staff would be exposed to a risk of a mental health threat were also identified.

In response to the findings, CSC implemented their SuperYou program, designed based on staff feedback to provide a safe and healthy workplace and global best-practice health initiatives for the workplace. SuperYou focuses on the individual at the core of the program with five pillars/segments that impact the person: physical, occupational, emotional, social and intellectual. SuperYou provides access to support, and training programs which are designed to identify risks with a focus on prevention, healthy workplace culture and to reduce stigma around physical and psychological injury/illness. SuperYou was also designed with a focus on maintaining excellent customer service to demonstrate a direct link between healthy staff and the value for members.

Category Two: Early Intervention Award

The approach and outcome

The program enables staff to view resources to seek their own information and prepare to have meaningful conversations with their managers on the impact of their work. The tool has improved facilitated conversations with peers and in turn, CSC has now implemented its first Peer Support Officer networking group. Staff have access to team and individual debrief sessions with psychologists, and the online program is available 24/7 which has supported the recent transition from a physical working environment to a virtual space due to COVID-19.

The SuperYou program is a comprehensive holistic approach that targets the whole of CSC. Considering the geographical diversity of staff, and the move to working from home, managers began seeking more information on how to provide specialised support to their staff given they could no longer see them face-to-face daily. The program provides training such as webinars on conducting successful virtual meetings and maintaining positive body language, as well as upskilling staff on identifying their own at-home work health and safety issues. CSC have been pleased to see staff being such active participants in this space.

Key achievements

- Partnerships with SuperFriend to help reduce stigma associated with mental health, and Lifeline with increased awareness of mental health support, resources and training.
- Improvements against clinical risk factors, e.g. reduction in body composition and blood pressure.
- Staff continue to engage with EAP services with user rates higher than industry standards.
- CSC also received three national AIA Vitality awards who externally validated the positive results shown throughout their first year.

Category Two: Early Intervention Award



HIGH COMMENDATION

Early Intervention – Injury Management Australia Post

About Australia Post

Australia Post are Australia's leading logistics and integrated services business, supporting customers and communities to thrive, by creating products that people trust, and delivering a great service and value to their customers and community.

The problem and/or challenge

In recent years Australia Post has evolved predominantly from a letters business to a parcels business. This has brought substantive changes to the physical requirements of tasks and demands of job roles. The re-design of these tasks and the introduction of new delivery modes, processing machinery and load shifting equipment has also been substantive. In 2017, Australia Post introduced a new medical services provider to support their already established early intervention WorkReady program which involved a national doctor network of 1800 providers. The voluntary WorkReady program provides pre-claim immediate medical access for all employees with work-related injuries or illnesses.

In the 2020 financial year, 2800 employees accessed WorkReady services and Australia Post were challenged with ensuring that medical service providers, and any other doctor who supported an employee's recovery following an injury, understood the evolving specific work employees performed and the suitable duties that were available to facilitate recovery at work or early return to work.

Category Two: Early Intervention Award

The approach and outcome

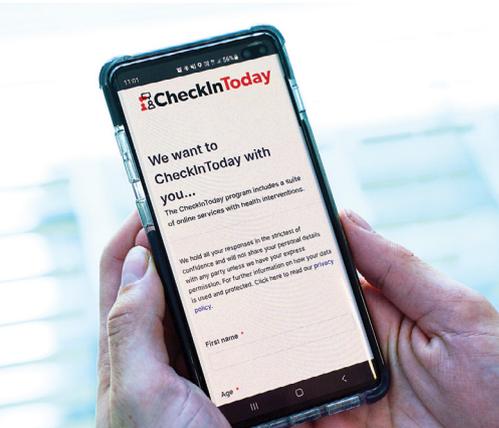
A series of short suitable duties videos were developed to promote doctor awareness of the typical physical demands of tasks and range of suitable duties available across all job roles. The videos were designed to visualise the biomechanical actions of tasks within roles enabling doctors to make informed medical decisions about an injured employee's capacity for work.

The suitable duties videos are accessible by all doctors through a YouTube link provided as part of each initial WorkReady program referral. The videos are also made available for use by the wider Injury Management and Human Resource teams, rehabilitation case conferences, independent medical assessments, Administrative Appeal Tribunal matters and management of non work-related medical conditions. The suitable duties videos have been an important tool to inform relevant stakeholders of the flexibility in duties that Australia Post can provide to support early return to work following injury. The suitable duties initiative led to the production of sixteen videos with recent additions targeted around some of the more complex job roles at Australia Post. The videos have enabled doctors to make informed decisions regarding an employee's capacity to rehabilitate at work and to recover in a safe, timely and durable manner within the workplace.

Key achievements

- 85 per cent of employees (total of 2310) who participated in the WorkReady early intervention program in the 2020 financial year were able to recover at work without time away from the workplace.
- 75 per cent of all WorkReady cases were managed without the need for workers' compensation or, formal rehabilitation intervention.
- Doctors and employees located in all locations, metropolitan, rural and remote can access the videos online to support early return to work.
- A satisfaction survey of 1000 injured employees conducted independently in late 2019 showed 78 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the overall support provided through the early intervention program.

Category Two: Early Intervention Award



HIGH COMMENDATION

CheckInToday Rehab Management

About Rehab Management

Rehab Management is a multi-award-winning, national workplace rehabilitation provider who achieve consistently outstanding results for both government and corporate clients and injured workers (customers). They deliver services nationally across 56 locations, operating across multiple legal frameworks and Australia-wide jurisdictions including insurance, workers compensation, defence, income protection and disability.

The problem and/or challenge

With mental health issues increasing globally, and the observed return to work rates dropping at the peak of COVID-19 in April 2020, Rehab Management were concerned that even the most resilient individuals were being impacted by heightened stress and anxiety due to the pandemic. Research showed that 50 per cent of workers reported working longer hours and 58 per cent were finding their work 'somewhat stressful' compared to 2.5 per cent previously. Rehab Management also saw an increase in primary psychological injury referrals between March and July 2020, when compared with the same time last year. Anxiety, 'stress' and PTSD-related injury types showed a 28 per cent to 65 per cent increase.

Rehab Management looked to develop an innovative program which would enhance current service delivery, use positive psychological principles, and have a holistic approach to both physical and mental injury claims, resulting in increased wellbeing and resilience to improve recovery outcomes.

Category Two: Early Intervention Award

The approach and outcome

Rehab Management introduced the digital CheckInToday screening process as a standard component of an initial needs assessment (INA) for all APS employees. The participant completes a digital wellbeing screen, results are triaged, and a tailored wellness coaching program is developed. The tool uses the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and a 14-item scale that ranges from 'very low' to 'above average' and can identify basic daily needs not being met. Unlike many other screening tools there is no diagnostic cut-off. The tool also helps someone with an existing psychological injury to identify and address additional barriers and significantly increases the likelihood of a safe, sustainable return to work.

Rehab Management now specifically assess psychological wellbeing, such as feeling confident about the future or motivation to work, as part of the INA. The screening tool improves mental health outcomes and psychosocial issues, including isolation and uncertainty through linking workers with community resources, promotes health benefits of work and social connectedness. The health coaching function also promotes healthy lifestyles such as exercising and diet. The screening program includes a suite of online digital services and health interventions and helps consultants identify diverse barriers across the physical/psychological spectrum at the outset.

Key achievements

- An initial wellbeing pilot of 90 APS employees showed that workers in the APS often start from a base of low wellbeing. After completing the early intervention, Rehab Management saw 100 per cent of employees show improvements based on their wellbeing score.
- The participants who completed the coaching program saw their wellbeing scores increase from an average of 37 to 46.8, where an improvement of three or more is regarded clinically significant.

Category Three: Recovery at and Return to Work Award

The Recovery at and Return to Work Award recognises excellence in recovery at and return to work programs/systems for ill or injured employees.



WINNER

Early Matched Care at Australia Post (EMCAP) Australia Post

About Australia Post

As Australia's leading logistics and integrated services business, Australia Post connects Australian communities to each other and the world, supporting customers to grow and thrive and creating products that people trust. The in-house rehabilitation team manages occupational rehabilitation services for 34,000 employees nationally.

The problem and/or challenge

Examination of rehabilitation cases with long recovery duration and/or high degrees of complexity revealed an emerging trend of workers sustaining a work-related physical injury and developing secondary psychosocial risk factors. As a result, the business was being impacted by lost productivity and increasing workers' compensation costs. Australia Post established the Early Matched Care at Australia Post (EMCAP) program to:

- Identify workers at risk of delayed recovery and disability within the first week(s) of injury and provide support to them prior to escalation into a more serious claim or a prolonged absence from work
- Reduce the burden of secondary psychological risk factors on recovery and early return to work
- Develop an industry leading practice, evidence-based model of intervention
- Contribute to the scheme by developing a scalable and accessible protocol that delivers both economic and health outcomes
- Assist operational managers in the early detection and management of secondary psychological risk factors.

Category Three: Recovery at and Return to Work Award

The approach and outcome

In consultation with the University of Sydney, the Australia Post Group (APG) undertook a 12-month controlled trial of early identification and intervention for injured workers at risk of delayed recovery and disability as a result of their work-related injury. A key consideration for this study was the ability to integrate the protocol into the existing injury management system upon completion. This required the protocol to be scalable, cost effective and available nationally. An extensive period of consultation with key stakeholders including senior and operational management, allied health professionals and the Union was undertaken during the study development phase and an education campaign rolled out to ensure support and commitment.

The EMCAP study recruited APG workers from new compensation claims and each participant was screened for inclusion in the study at their initial assessment with their Workplace Rehabilitation Provider (WRP), using the Orebro Musculoskeletal pain screening questionnaire (OMPQ SF). As part of the intervention group, workers were offered up to six sessions with an EAP practitioner, where return to work barriers were identified and discussed. These practitioners had a background or interest in occupational rehabilitation and were offered extensive training and support to participate in the program. The practitioners were not referred to as counsellors or psychologists to encourage buy-in from participants. The WRPs maintained contact with the counsellor and GP to support workers early recovery and return to work.

Key achievements

- High participation rates for those consenting to be screened and in the utilisation of the counselling program with significantly improved return to work outcomes (e.g. pre-injury hours), reducing incapacity costs.
- Early identification and management of unhelpful thoughts relating to injury and recovery and reduced incidence of psychological distress.
- Greater collaboration with all allied health professionals involved in the care of the individual, during the initial stages of injury, with positive feedback from internal and external stakeholders.
- Participants in the intervention group have returned to pre-injury hours on average 51 days more quickly than those in the control group resulting in a positive impact on their families and communities.

Category Three: Recovery at and Return to Work Award



FINALIST

Nadja Kolundzic
Hearing Australia

About Hearing Australia

Hearing Australia is the largest provider of government-funded hearing services. With over 600 locations across the country, Hearing Australia delivers world leading research and hearing solutions, ensuring all Australians experience the power and wonder of sound.

The problem and/or challenge

Nadja inherited several long-standing and complex workers compensation claims and in a short time, managed and coordinated the successful return to work or re-deployment (for different employer claims) of five workers compensation claims with Hearing Australia, with three returning to pre-injury duties within 12 weeks (above industry average performance). Most notably, once of the biggest problems that Hearing Australia faced was a claimant that had a primary physical condition and an unidentified pre-existing psychological condition that was impacting their return to work and ability to sustain suitable duties.

The case was further complicated by an internal report of workplace bullying resulting in fear avoidant behaviour and reluctance to return to work. Nadja immediately established rapport and commenced injury management for this worker, coordinating a workplace assessment, and collaborating with Comcare, the GP and Occupational Physician to identify immediate potential and real barriers to return to work. Nadja immediately prioritised a medical case conference, following the workplace assessment, and facilitated a referral to a psychologist for urgent treatment to address the most pressing barriers.

Category Three: Recovery at and Return to Work Award

The approach and outcome

Nadja arranged work practice modifications which included ergonomic equipment and a modification in reporting lines until mediation was conducted. Through mediation, Nadja proactively addressed the internal bullying claim and the claimant reached resolve, moving forward in a mutually positive manner. The provision of suitable duties and re-building of rapport and trust with the worker ensured a well-supported graded return to work, which included resilience-based vocational training, and regular medical case conferencing to ensure a consultative and cohesive approach and the clinical reasoning behind the return to work plan.

This multidisciplinary and solution-focused approach enabled a safe return to work from a psychological and physical perspective. Nadja identified a gap in Hearing Australia's injury management process and was then given the opportunity to formalise a best-practice approach, collaborating with rehabilitation providers, and providing staff with clear guidelines and documentation on effectively managing claims. Her goal was to specifically outline the importance of a hands-on, client-focused approach, as well as increase safety hazard identification training across managers, HSR's, and staff working in remote locations.

Key achievements

- A 20 per cent improvement in the 2019/20 premium pool with the premium rate at 0.59 per cent (down from 1.06 per cent).
- Nadja was nominated for Best New Employee Award 2018/2019.
- Nadja has successfully contributed to a successful re-accreditation and compliance with two external BSI Audits in 2020, relating to WHS Management Systems, encompassing injury and rehabilitation management processes.

Category Three: Recovery at and Return to Work Award



FINALIST

ACTG and EML Claims Model EML

About EML

EML is a Personal Injury Claims Service Provider supporting Australians to return to life and work, and in 2019, EML partnered with the ACT Government (ACTG) to support their self-insurance program.

The problem and/or challenge

The ACT Government had a clear vision to tailor a claims model for their 25,000 ACT employees while also developing their internal rehabilitation function to deliver scheme-leading claims outcomes. As the largest transition from Comcare, the program required a comprehensive plan to transfer 1500 claims while maintaining service standards and key performance indicators. In order to deliver the performance targets that were implemented to improve the claims experience and outcomes, activity commenced prior to transition with a focus on supporting injured workers through the change and enabling innovative claims service delivery to commence from day one of licence.

During the design process EML worked closely with key stakeholders including ACTG employees, employers, injured workers and union groups to adapt claims processes to ensure the focus was on returning to work and supporting all parties through the claims process. EML remained conscious that a change in case manager and claims processes could pose a risk of disengagement from the workplace and increased return to work barriers. The engagement strategy during transition ensured that every worker was contacted and supported through the move to EML and provided an opportunity for injured workers to share valuable feedback to inform the model.

Category Three: Recovery at and Return to Work Award

The approach and outcome

A key feature of EML's early intervention approach is the 'preliminary treatment' program which enables access to treatment prior to a liability decision being made to best support the recovery journey. The EML and ACTG case managers work in partnership to create the best experience for the injured worker. The partnership approach includes a joint training calendar and regular connect as a team, with a focus to deliver fast, fair, and effective decisions to support the injured worker and deliver best practice claims outcomes.

EML also remain committed to providing early access to treatment following the lodgement of a claim under the ACT Government's Preliminary Treatment initiative. Coupled with EML's pursuit of early and correct initial liability, this means that injured workers are receiving fast access to treatment with reduced waiting times on initial claim decision. EML and ACTG have had a successful first year of partnership with a significant increase in sustainable return to work outcomes.

Key achievements

- Demonstrated results against 12- and 26-week continuance rates where EML achieved 28.5 per cent against a historical trend of 36.5 per cent, and 13.9 per cent against a historical trend of 22.4 per cent respectively.
- EML's pursuit of early and correct initial liability means that injured workers are receiving fast access to treatment with reduced waiting times on initial claim decision.
- The majority of claims are being determined with 5 business days.
- EML have remained focused on meaningful connection with injured workers with surveys demonstrating a net promoter score (NPS) of +60.

Category Four: Individual Contribution Award

The Individual Contribution Award recognises individuals whose contributions have made an exceptional difference to their workplace, exceeding their normal work duties.



WINNER

Angus Becsi
Australia Post

About Angus Becsi

Angus Becsi is the Head of Operations in Western Australia who has worked for Australia Post for over 30 years. Inspired by a personal serious safety incident, he successfully transformed employee engagement, safety culture and leadership at the Perth mail and parcel centres.

The problem and/or challenge

The centres which house over 600 employees, were consistently reporting operational underperformance, with low staff engagement and unacceptable safety outcomes. Senior Executive identified the need for a strong leader to drive immediate change, implement a positive safety culture, as well as a completely overhaul the management and supervisor roles. Angus believed that the empowerment of leaders would need to cascade to operational staff to truly drive change, where people would take safety personally.

Angus moved rapidly following his appointment to identify site leaders who would be capable and willing to join him on this safety transformation. This involved some difficult decisions to part ways with long term leaders who were not prepared to adjust entrenched beliefs and ways of working. Whilst this process was challenging, ultimately it demonstrated that Angus was genuinely committed to improving safety outcomes for his people, leading to increased levels of trust and empowerment.

Throughout the process, Angus also engaged with executive leadership to obtain their sustained support and investment; workers and contractors to help them understand why and how they must adapt their behaviours; and union representatives who would play a key role in successful change.

Category Four: Individual Contribution Award

The approach and outcome

Angus was pivotal in appointing and developing high performing leaders with a focus on safety. In addition to the operational improvements, Angus identified three critical pillars of focus to drive improvement: leadership and engagement; critical risk; and manual handling. Angus implemented programs including:

- Assessment and Development Centres: to diagnose specific leadership challenges and implement individual development needs and plans.
- Leadership Expectations: defined and implemented agreed leader behavioural expectations in consultation with Team Leaders.
- Manual Handling program: Appointment of onsite exercise physiologists, Exercise Movement Professionals (EMP) in 2019. EMP's manual handling program enables constructive safety conversations, improved lifting behaviour, management of niggles/sore muscles and prevention of manual handling injuries.
- Feedback Focus: regular assessment of employee feedback through surveys conducted by EMP.
- Critical Risk Leadership: in recognition of the fact that loading dock management is an area of critical risk at processing facilities, Dock Supervisor roles were introduced with specific accountability for improving dock safety outcomes.

Throughout Angus' 30-year career at Australia Post, his first and foremost priority has always been that staff are happy and safe at work.

Key achievements

- Assessment and Development Centres launched by Angus have resulted in a national leadership program being rolled out across Australia.
- Leadership Expectation Program has been extended to 89 Australia Post sites.
- In Angus' first year, the total recordable injuries reduced by 29 per cent.
- Angus was selected from a business of approximately 20,000 employees and awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award at the Australia Post COO Conference in 2020.

Category Four: Individual Contribution Award



HIGH COMMENDATION

May Webster
APM WorkCare

About May Webster

May Webster is a devoted Rehabilitation Counsellor and Provisional Psychologist, well respected by her team, peers and management due to her hard work, great outcomes, commitment to continuous improvement and passion for mentoring and developing others.

The problem and/or challenge

May is regularly sought after by customers to manage complex cases, most notably a highly complex case of a client suffering from anxiety associated with workplace bullying and harassment where the work environment had deteriorated across multiple levels. There was a complete relationship breakdown between the client and perpetrator, however they were required to work alongside one another, further raising additional trust, complexity and industrial issues.

Using her experience and innovation, May created 'possibility thinking' with key stakeholders to generate an environment that accommodated each stakeholder's needs and managed each of their significantly differing expectations. May fostered a platform of trust by listening and working with the client to develop solutions. This took a lot of time, patience and problem solving to achieve. This was replicated with the GP, union representative and Team Leader, and by demonstrating her expertise, care for the client and understanding of business needs, each stakeholder felt their interests and needs were recognised.

Category Four: Individual Contribution Award

The approach and outcome

May worked above and beyond with the client to complete exposure exercises and developed and implemented a structured training and support plan to support the client in successfully learning the new service delivery plan, despite their anxiety, ADHD and reservations. Despite the complexities, a full and successful return to work was completed to pre-injury hours and duties.

May remained proactive and solution focused with the daily issues that would arise, and always delivered on what she said she was going to do. In her current role, May also regularly delivers development programs for junior consultants, including nation-wide training on vocational assessments, suicide risk assessments and intervention. She works collaboratively with two local universities, sharing her expertise on a professional masters panel, as well as hosting student placements and mentoring. She is known for relying on her 'human connection' approach to her clients and believes in being transparent ultimately helps her achieve her client's goals.

Key achievements

- May now has the ability to educate and practically apply the Health Benefits of Good Work.
- May has engaged the Union positively in a successful return to work program.
- Working closely with the client utilising exposure exercises to decrease anxiety May has increased confidence and resilience in her client to return to the workplace.
- May demonstrates the significance and benefits of workplace rehabilitation.

Category Four: Individual Contribution Award



FINALIST

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Deacon
Department of Defence

About Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Deacon

Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Deacon was posted to the Deputy Director Defence Response Unit (DRU) within the Australian Defence Force (ADF) Headquarters in January 2018 and accepted the additional role of Work Health Safety Officer at a time where the size of the DRU grew by over 200 percent.

The problem and/or challenge

Following on from the work of the Defence Abuse Response Task Force (DART) and the Child Abuse Royal Commission, the DRU was formed to act as the Department's operational interface and information source for the Defence Force Ombudsman and the National Redress Scheme to deal with reports of historic abuse by members of the ADF, including serious sexual abuse. The DRU's work involved evaluation of sensitive and often disturbing physical and sexual abuse allegations, as well as supporting the personal engagement of survivors of abuse with senior ADF members through restorative engagement activities.

As a consequence of this work and the psychological stressors, Andrew identified that the members of the DRU were at high risk of vicarious trauma. There were indications that some members of the DRU, and its predecessor organisation, had heightened mental health issues, and it was assessed that there was an urgent need to manage this clear work health safety risk.

Category Four: Individual Contribution Award

The approach and outcome

Andrew researched best practice and developed the DRU's mental health safety framework specifically targeting vicarious trauma. He did this while also managing the expansion of staff numbers, procedures and case load in the DRU. He developed the framework by engaging broadly with external organisations such as the Defence Force Ombudsman and Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia to better understand the risk of vicarious trauma and how it can be managed in the workplace.

The framework encompasses enduring training, counselling and a system for safer management of vicarious trauma exposure through active visible workplace practices, including rotation of duties within the unit, enforced breaks, no-alone protocols, and physical fitness and wellness activities. The framework is well-developed, simple, person-centric and actively manages the risk of vicarious trauma at both the unit and individual level through practical and engaging measures. There is also a well-supported ongoing assessment and improvement program. Since the roll-out of the framework in 2019 the incidences of mental health injury within the DRU have been zero and most importantly, a culture of self-care and openness around trauma has become very evident.

Key achievements

- There is now annual formal vicarious trauma training by an expert provider, vicarious trauma supervision, including self-care planning every six months and peer and manager de-briefs every month.
- The use of vicarious trauma self-care days has been implemented to ensure self-care activities are undertaken to offset the unique and challenging work undertaken by the DRU.
- Andrew worked hard to normalise vicarious trauma to reduce any potential stigma through regular workplace discussions, team meetings, and leading by example in sharing his own vulnerabilities and risk identifications across his leadership cohort.
- The framework has been recognised as best practice and the methodology adopted for two other Federal Government Departments through the sharing of information and training to other agencies working on the same lines of enquiry.

Contacts

For further information about the 2021 Comcare National Work Health and Safety Awards, contact:



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