23 January, 2019

Make a mentally healthy workplace your 2019 New Year's Resolution!

Forget the typical New Year's resolution to get fit, lose weight, eat well or take up a hobby.

SA Mental Health Commissioner Chris Burns says a new goal for 2019 should be creating mentally healthy work places across South Australia.

With most South Australians now back at work, Commissioner Burns says it's an ideal time for employers to set goals for a supportive and happier, healthier workplace.

And while South Australian organisations are at "vastly different levels" of readiness and action in relation to workplace mental health, he urges leaders not to be overwhelmed by the task.

"The social, moral and economic case for investing in the good mental health and wellbeing of Australians couldn't be clearer.

"Investing in a mentally healthy workplace is a win-win for employers, workers, the economy and the State. We can't ignore the fact that one in five workers will take time off this year because they don't feel mentally well enough to go to work.

"We know that mentally healthy workplaces produce a positive return on investment – including reduced absenteeism, boosted productivity, better staff retention and recruitment and fewer injury claims."

For employers, the New Year is an opportunity to think beyond goals, targets and KPIs and appreciate the value and contribution of their staff. Start the conversation – your workers will have some great ideas!

For employees, be prepared to contribute to improved mental health and wellbeing by sharing your ideas or doing something as simple as asking a fellow worker how they're going or why they seem to be a bit flat.

"Many organisations simply don't know where to begin, but I encourage them to be genuine, start small and don't be overwhelmed by the task," he said.

Commissioner Burns said managing the workplace and making sure it's mentally healthy is about so much more than ticking the compliance box – good leaders know it's a moral and ethical imperative.

A handy Go-To Guide on mental health and wellbeing resources is available on the Commission's website. The guide is the work of the SA Workplace Mental Health Collaboration Group, comprising *beyondblue*, Business SA, Return to Work SA, SA Health, the Office of the Small Business Commissioner, SA Unions, SafeWork SA, the Australian Industry Group and the Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment. The guide can be downloaded at samentalhealthcommission.com.au.

The Commission will also continue to promote mentally healthy workplaces by growing its online workplace resources for South Australians.

"In 2019, let's all work to achieve the State's vision to be a resilient, compassionate and connected community focused on building, sustaining and strengthening the mental health and wellbeing of South Australians in order to grow the State's mental wealth," Commissioner Burns said.

TOP TIPS

- o   Check out the Go-To Guide for Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing Resources and reach out to these organisations for advice and support. Link is here **samentalhealthcommission.com.au**
- o   Show leadership and engage the workforce to create a mentally healthy workplace –employees will have great ideas.
- o   Co-design a workplace wellbeing program to identify hazards and risk factors such as poor workplace relationships or high job demand.
- o   Train workplace mental health first aiders – mental health is as important as physical health. https://mhfa.com.au/courses/public
- o   Learn how to raise awareness and increase mental health literacy to eliminate discrimination as well as ways to responsibly and safely address a co-worker's mental health concerns.
- o   Reduce stigma in the workplace www.sane.org/

For more information, contact Communications Adviser Joan Atkinson on 0422 916 496.