

Staff Recognition

Most employers include some form of 'staff recognition' program or activities in their workplace. However, even though this recognition or 'reward' program is understood to contribute to retention and attraction, often it does not receive the considered attention it deserves as an important component of organisational strategic planning.

The 'business case' for investing in a planned staff recognition program is strong – and the benefits for both employer and staff can be maximised by a more deliberate focus on the 'who, what, when, where, how and why'.

Why would you want to do it?

- Recognising staff for effort, improvement and achievement keeps people motivated, productive and innovative.
- Motivated staff stay with an organisation for longer, have fewer absences and put more effort into their work.
- Developing a structured approach to staff recognition is not only a valuable tool in performance management, but helps build an organisational culture of 'achievers'.
- This type of positive workplace culture not only increases the job satisfaction of current employees, but presents the organisation as an attractive option to potential recruits.

How would you go about it?

Staff Recognition can be achieved through a variety of means – financial and otherwise.

Some of the more common 'rewards' or 'recognition tools' are outlined overleaf and you'll find more detail on other Information Sheets in this series. However, not all options are appropriate for all staff and the first step in a strategic staff recognition program is about understanding the needs, wants and motivators of the people you intend to reward.

There are a number of documented theories about what motivates people in their jobs. Perhaps one of the easiest theoretical approaches to turn into practical application is McClelland's '*Theory of Needs*' (McClelland, D.C 1987 *Human Motivation*).

McClelland says staff are motivated by:

- **Need for achievement** – the need to excel, to achieve in relation to a set of standards, to strive to succeed
- **Need for Power** – the need to make others behave in a way they would not otherwise have behaved
- **Need for affiliation** – the desire for friendly and close personal relationships.

In Aged and Community Services, we know that staff are also motivated by the need to 'make a difference' in people's lives – and that feedback from clients and colleagues which says they are doing just that, is a valid reward.

However, if we accept that staff are generally also motivated by one or more of Mc Clelland's identified needs, it makes sense that a structured staff recognition program should include a mix of tools that meets one or more of those needs, for one or more groups of people.

Ideally, these 'reward' tools would form part of each employee's performance review process – as well as provide opportunity for wide-spread workforce recognition.

Initiatives you could consider

Consult staff about how they would prefer to be recognised

Various Information Sheets in this series have suggested Employee Surveys as a valuable input to organisational planning, including an *Employee Attitude Survey* to inform planned organisational culture change. This type of survey provides the perfect opportunity to ask employees about specific benefits they would like to see introduced and whether they would be prepared to trade any financial rewards to receive those benefits.

Alternatively, holding Focus Group meetings (either in a vertical slice of the organisation or in specific work areas) will unearth preferences and perhaps the challenges you may need to overcome to introduce the preferred rewards.

Develop a 'package of options'

The 'package' should include some actions which apply to everyone (such as a subsidised social event) and others which can meet specific needs – and should also include a mix of financial and non-financial rewards.

Apart from salary, financial rewards can include fringe benefits and salary sacrificing. Non-financial rewards may include higher status, more responsibility or 'little extras' to improve the quality of the working day (such as supplied tea, coffee and biscuits – or a more comfortable room for work breaks).

For staff who need 'achievement'

Offering relevant in-house and external training and allowing them to 'shadow' positions or relieve in roles to which they aspire will help these people to understand you recognise their effort, capabilities and talent.

However, not everyone who is an 'achiever' in their role seeks promotion. Identifying the components they like best about their job and giving them more opportunity to perform those aspects is a valid 'reward'.

For staff who need 'power'

Not everyone can be moved into supervisory or management positions – realistically, there are only so many in one organisation. However, sometimes staff can be recognised by allocating a special project to manage – perhaps even leading a small team of co-workers to achieve a specific goal.

For staff who need 'affiliation'

These employees need 'people-based' rewards which can be achieved by creating more opportunity for team-work, coordinating social activities and facilitating peer recognition (such as an article in a newsletter or an 'employee of the month' award).



Initiatives other organisations have successfully implemented

- The *City of Unley* has a well developed *Recognition Policy* for both 'service' and 'achievement'. Service Awards of certificates and gift vouchers are presented at specific milestones (starting at five years service) and on retirement – but the policy also clearly outlines opportunities for Managers to acknowledge individuals or teams for significant achievement or effort. Individuals receive a small gift such as flowers or chocolates and teams can be acknowledged with activities such as a dinner outing.
- The *Royal District Nursing Service of SA Inc (RDNS)* has various staff recognition and incentive schemes, including Annual Awards for: a Team Leader who demonstrates commitment to the organisation, its management and their team by the promotion of organisational values; a Nurse who has had a positive impact on the welfare of clients, staff and/or the wider community; and a staff member who goes beyond what could reasonably be expected and, in doing so, encourages others.
- *Resthaven* held a free 'movie day' with morning and evening sessions to allow all staff and volunteers to attend. The movie was preceded by nibbles and beverages, a lucky ticket draw and a speech from the CEO who acknowledged staff and volunteers for the 'wonderful work in the last twelve months'.

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Financial Rewards

Performance in the workplace is most commonly rewarded through remuneration – but this doesn't always mean just wages or salary.

'Packaging' financial rewards to better meet the needs of employees is becoming increasingly common in Australian workplaces.

Why would you want to do it?

- Aged and Community Care often competes for the same skilled and qualified staff as Acute Care facilities which offer a higher 'award' rate.
- In today's tight labour market, competition has also increased from industries outside Health and Community Services for the less skilled staff who once may have been attracted to 'entry level' positions in Aged and Community Care.
- Because of this pressure from other industries and other sectors, competition within the Aged and Community Care sector has also increased – between private and not-for-profit organisations and even among 'like' organisations.
- The high costs associated with recruiting and training replacement staff mean it is often less expensive to 'pay a little more up front' to existing employees – than enter the highly competitive race for new staff.
- ... and if forced into the recruitment contest, you'll be more competitive armed with one or two 'extras'.

How would you go about it?

Remuneration 'minimums' are taken care of – by legislation and sometimes by industry regulations, various awards, agreements and even individual contracts. However, employers always have discretion to pay 'above-award' and offer other financial incentives.

First steps in offering financial rewards above minimum requirements include:

- 1 Review all staff roles and evaluate the 'relative worth' each job has to the organisation. This may identify specific areas or positions where it could be cost effective to introduce financial incentives.
- 2 Benchmark your organisation's remuneration practices against similar employers to establish whether you're paying similar amounts for similar work.
- 3 Identify a pool of options for offering financial incentives – some that will be on-going and others that may be a once-only reward.
- 4 Decide which options will be 'across-the-board' – or whether you will reserve some for specific seniority levels, in specific areas or specific roles.
- 5 Seek advice on the ramifications of options you're considering, including how these additional financial benefits, if introduced, would be treated in Leave or termination payments – and whether there are any likely Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) liabilities.
- 6 When you're sure of what you can offer, consult with staff about their preferences.

Initiatives you could consider

- If you really can't move on your total workforce remuneration budget, whenever you have a vacancy consider whether you could redesign the job to ensure higher level rates are only paying for higher level tasks.

If you can make savings by re-designing and re-classifying two positions so that one falls into a lower rate, the savings can be redirected to incentive payments for other positions.

- Consider whether you can adapt ideas that are favoured in other industries.

For example, is there a way of applying the manufacturing industry's 'productivity bonus' in any work areas? Is there a way staff could share in cost savings in particular areas? One company in the mining industry pays penalty rates on Fridays to address absenteeism – can you increase the additional payment on shifts that are difficult to fill?

- Consider whether 'salary-sacrificing' is an option for you. This is often the best way of providing maximum benefits to staff at the least cost to you.

Benefits some employers have included in salary packaging arrangements include vehicle leases, private use of company vehicles, financial loans, accommodation, gym memberships, meals, entertainment and car parking.

However, entering the world of FBT can be a minefield for the uninitiated!

Exemptions – to a varying degree – exist for Public Benevolent Institutions (PBI) and public or not-for-profit hospital employers. Other employers may be able to provide benefits which are eligible for substantial rebates and there are some items which fall into a 'general exemption' category – although recent changes have restricted exemptions for items such as laptop computers, mobile phones and car phones to those used primarily for work.

It's important to obtain professional financial advice before introducing any salary sacrificing arrangements – and employees should be encouraged to fully investigate options before signing up.

It's also important to remember that – though the objective is maximum employee benefit, minimum organisational expense – it may be in your long-term interest to absorb some of the costs of a salary package that is more 'worthwhile' for valued employees.



Initiatives other organisations have successfully implemented

- The *Royal District Nursing Service of SA Inc (RDNS)* has a *Childcare Subsidy Scheme* which offers eligible employees the ability to claim for child-care expenses (including before and after school care) up to a set amount each quarter for children up to 15 years.
- The *City of Unley* offers staff the opportunity to enter into a novated lease arrangement for a vehicle, with the lease and all operating expenses such as fuel, insurance, registration and servicing included in a salary sacrifice arrangement so that payments are made pre-tax.
- *Whyalla Aged Care Inc* also offers staff the opportunity to enter a novated vehicle lease – and staff can also salary sacrifice to a Meal/Entertainment Card.
- *Aboriginal Home Care* provides staff with additional days paid leave during the break between Christmas and New Year to allow staff to take a longer holiday, without using their Annual Leave allowance. The office is closed, but remains monitored for messages.
- *ECH* offers financial benefits such as full salary packaging, access to novated leasing, recognition for years of service and a recognition scheme to acknowledge both individual and group exceptional achievements.

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Non-Financial Rewards

Other Information Sheets in the *Valuing Workers* series (*Staff Recognition and Financial Rewards*) have discussed the requirement for different types of rewards to meet the different needs of different people.

However, staff recognition and reward should be even more flexible than that – because people have different needs at different times.

Non-financial rewards can often be the best way of achieving this flexibility.

Why would you want to do it?

- Non-financial rewards can save the ‘double-dipping’ that sometimes occurs with financial incentives – they generally don’t need to be taken into account when preparing Leave and termination payments.
- Since non-financial rewards are often more generalised across the workforce, they can often add more to a positive workplace culture.
- Because of the nature of some non-financial rewards – such as social functions – they can often contribute more to team cohesiveness.
- Non-financial rewards can be ‘instantaneous’ and therefore more responsive to staff needs at any given time.
- Non-financial rewards have a specific value in managing a multigenerational or multicultural workplace – simply because they often ‘bring people together on common ground’.

How would you go about it?

- The first step in developing a program of non-financial rewards is to allocate a budget to it! Just because the reward to the staff member is not a ‘financial’ benefit doesn’t mean it’s always cost-free to you.
- How much you need to allocate will depend in part on how many ‘partners’ you are able to engage in the process. Many organisations in Aged and Community Care are able to involve suppliers and other community businesses in providing or subsidising recognition rewards for staff.
- Make sure it’s a clear part of someone’s job! Everyone’s so busy in their roles that the ‘little things’ like looking after each other can fall by the wayside. Although staff recognition should be a key component in every leadership role, ensuring it’s a defined KPI means it will receive the attention it deserves.
- Involve staff in the decision-making process. Social Committees are the most common way for this to occur, but you can also employ the surveys and focus group communication tools discussed in other Information Sheets.
- Make sure the program is inclusive! While it’s true that not all staff will be recognised in all reward options, it’s important to ensure you’re not continually excluding a specific group of people. One organisation regularly rewarded staff with sponsored dinners and subsidised tickets to special ‘shows’ which were enjoyed by all who attended. However, for one group of employees (young mums) even the subsidised cost was beyond their reach and additional childcare requirements were a burden.

Initiatives you could consider

Employee gifts

Because of the multicultural nature of today's workforce, care needs to be taken with the 'traditional' workplace gifts at Christmas or Easter. Alternatives you might consider include a 'pamper pack' for all staff following a challenging change management program or for individuals on their birthdays.

Tickets to a 'special event', movie passes or massage vouchers can show 'you care' about staff's life away from work. Gifts kept under specific values (\$100-\$300) don't usually attract tax implications.

Coordinating 'bulk-buy' concessions

Coordinating discounts for staff members with suppliers or other enterprises in your business network needn't be admin-intensive. Using your 'bulk-buy' purchasing power can negotiate discounts for a range of goods and services that staff need only show a pay-slip or other workplace identification to access.

Subsidised memberships

Subsidising membership to Fitness Centres can have additional benefits in terms of staff health and well-being, but you will need to take specific advice about tax implications.

Subsidised non-work-related courses

Subsidising the cost of non-work-related courses can show employees you care about their personal development as well as their on-the-job skills – and having 'external' interests and activities again supports staff health and well-being.

Attention to the work-break environment

Creating comfortable indoor and outdoor areas for staff to eat meals or take rest breaks acknowledges that they work hard and deserve comfort in their time off. Small things like providing individual lockers for their personal effects, taking magazine subscriptions, providing tea/coffee/biscuits or fruit all make clear statements about valuing staff.

Work-based rewards

Don't overlook the fact that non-financial rewards don't necessarily have to come 'on top of' the work role – but can be found within it.

Giving positive feedback; extending more responsibility; and designating 'special projects' have all been mentioned on other Information Sheets. However, even a change in 'title' can be a reward for work well done. For example, an employee who has put extra effort into suggesting improvements in client care or staff conditions may earn the title of 'Quality Officer' and time to investigate, develop or implement some of the suggested improvements.

Other work-based rewards include workplace flexibilities that accommodate work/life balance.



Initiatives other organisations have successfully implemented

- One Queensland-based mining company introduced a novel way of rewarding employees and concurrently increasing communication flow in the organisation – once a fortnight the CEO took staff who had had a birthday in the previous two weeks out to a 'nice lunch' (whether that was one person or ten). The meal not only told staff they were valued, but provided them a rare opportunity to discuss ideas with top level management (and the CEO to develop a better understanding of 'grass-roots' issues).
- Because of the relationship the *Royal District Nursing Service of SA Inc (RDNS)* has with its banking facility, it has been able to negotiate discounts for staff on a number of financial services including interest rate concessions and fee waivers on some Home Lending products; discounts on various insurance products; and fee waivers and bonus interest on Day-to-Day banking. One sponsorship arrangement the RDNS has negotiated with a retail pharmacy includes providing the sponsor's Staff Discount Card to RDNS staff.
- At *Carers SA* every member of staff receives a hand-written card from the CEO at Christmas – with a personalised message to the recipient – so all staff know their contribution throughout the year has been individually noted and highly valued.
- *Aboriginal Home Care* is a relatively new organisation and its longest serving employees are only just now achieving five years of service. Gift vouchers are presented for the milestone – but personally tailored to the recipient. Examples include dinner vouchers at exclusive restaurants and Gold Class movie packs.

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Re-thinking Job Design

Why would you want to do it?

Re-thinking the design of specific jobs across Aged and Community Care occurs commonly for reasons such as:

- Occupational Health, Safety & Welfare
- Saving costs
- Increasing productivity
- Improving client care etc.

However, reviewing job design is also an important part of workforce planning, because it's an excellent means of:

- Increasing job satisfaction
- Increasing work effectiveness
- Reducing absenteeism
- Reducing staff turnover.

How would you go about it?

One approach to job re-design as a workforce management tool was developed by J. Richard Hackman and Greg R. Oldman (Work Redesign, 1980) who identified five core job characteristics:

- Skill Variety
- Task Variety
- Task Significance
- Autonomy
- Feedback from the Job

and argued that enhancing these characteristics would lead to 'critical psychological states' which were required for internal motivation, work effectiveness and job satisfaction – and consequently reduced absenteeism and increased retention rates.

According to Hackman and Oldman, 'Skill Variety', 'Task Variety' and 'Task Significance' contribute to employees' sense of 'meaningfulness' about their work; 'Autonomy' develops a feeling of 'responsibility' for outcomes; and 'Feedback' gives knowledge about actual results.

The model acknowledges that these 'feelings' occur among other factors such as Knowledge & Skills, Job Context and Individual Growth Needs – but promotes job design as the key to job satisfaction. Given we know people cite 'job satisfaction' as their major reason for working in Aged and Community Care, it makes sense to seek ways of applying this model.

Skill Variety and **Task Variety** can be increased by:

- Job rotation
- Job enrichment (perhaps by re-distributing tasks to give a better balance of menial and 'interesting' tasks in each job).

Task Significance can be emphasised by:

- Including staff in decision-making processes
- Recognising and promoting the value of the job role internally
- Inviting feedback from 'the customers' of the job role – other staff members affected by the work and clients or their families.

Autonomy can be introduced by:

- Allowing decision-making in regard to certain tasks within a job role
- Adopting a 'no-blame' approach when these decisions don't quite work out
- Progressively reducing the amount of intervention from Supervisors
- Setting goals that staff need to use their own initiative to achieve.

Feedback needs to be both formal and informal:

- As part of regular performance and development reviews
- Immediate on-the-job responses to a task 'well-done'.

Initiatives other organisations have successfully implemented

DutchCare Ltd and its 'Polder' Model:

DutchCare Ltd in Victoria began a job re-design program in 1997 that eventually led to the organisation achieving the '2006 Excellence in Ageing Services Award' from the *International Association of Homes and Services for the Ageing*.

Why they did it

Faced with the generic challenge of a nursing shortage in Aged Care, DutchCare also had a more specific issue in the reducing number of Dutch-speaking staff. They wanted to find a way to respond to RN/Division 1 Nurses who felt overloaded with tasks they weren't trained for – such as operational management and financial issues.

How it works

The 'Polder Model' – named after Holland's tradition of reclaiming land through cooperative employment of dikes and drainage – is based on the *Eden Alternative* philosophy which uses a tight cooperation between staff members, residents and family members.

The model divides the residential facility into 'households' with individual names and individualised 'decoration' – each with 15-20 residents. The administrative and clinical functions of the RN/Division 1 Nurse are then separated – so that administrative tasks are undertaken by Team Leaders and Unit Managers, while the Nurse becomes the *Personal Care Coordinator* for the 'households'.

Household 'teams' include a Team Leader, Enrolled Nurse Division 2 (if possible), Personal Careworkers and Homemakers (a combined kitchen assistant/cleaner role) and this team cares for the same residents every time they work. Family members and residents are considered part of this team and can be more involved in decision-making because there is one consistent group of people doing everything for the household – personal care, medications, cleaning and activities.

The RN/Division1 staff are on call 24/7 – but only on duty when required – and undertake a *Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment* so they are able to coach members of the household team to competence in their tasks.

Other internal and external service providers also work with the household teams as required. Internal providers include maintenance, central kitchen, senior management, laundry, administration, volunteers, lifestyle specialists and a Social Worker – while external providers include the GP, Physiotherapist, Dietician, Podiatrist, etc.

Outcomes

Apart from obvious benefits for residents – including the re-introduction of companionship because the model allows all members of the household to know each other well – the model empowers staff.

Staff absenteeism reduced significantly, with the usage of agency staff down by 200%! Other outcomes include increases in staff retention, staff skill levels and family contact visits, with enhanced community involvement and an improved public profile.

DutchCare says the model has been successful in attracting and retaining Nurses because it allows them to be clinical specialists – it gives them time to spend with each high care resident, review clinical variances, follow-up on Doctors' visits, liaise with the Pharmacy and be involved in family conferences.



Where you can find more information

- *DutchCare Ltd* is very willing to share information about its Polder Model and detailed information is available on the organisation's website. Go to www.dutchcare.com.au and click on the conference presentations link in its Welcome Page text, then The DutchCare Model for a pdf copy of a presentation discussing the development, implementation and outcomes of the job redesign.
- *Disability Services Queensland* used the Hackman and Oldman model discussed overleaf to develop the Job Design component of a Tool Kit prepared as part of a Workforce Planning project. Go to www.disability.qld.gov.au → *Support and Services For Service Providers Workforce Planning Project* Designing Work.

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The Physical Work Environment

Employers in Aged and Community Care are continually asked to focus attention on the safety and wellbeing aspects of the physical workplace – by legislation, accreditation requirements, WorkCover and internal risk management strategies.

However, that's not what this Information Sheet is about.

This document has been included in the 'Valuing Workers' group of the series because enhancing the physical work environment has impacts well beyond OHS&W.

Why would you want to do it?

- A workplace is a very tangible expression of organisational culture. It reflects and reinforces the values held by an organisation – surroundings that are vibrant, positive, creative and contemporary make a firm statement about what an organisation 'stands for'.
- The physical environment in which people are asked to work therefore plays an important role in reflecting and reinforcing the behaviours and attitudes that are expected of staff.
- It also presents another opportunity to recognise the value of staff and reward their contribution.
- In much the same way as job design, the physical work environment impacts on job satisfaction – thereby having the potential to increase work effectiveness, reduce absenteeism and restrict staff turnover.
- Making changes in the physical work environment can create 'a sense of community' that has an additional positive impact on workplace culture.
- All this means any cost involved in improving the physical work environment for staff becomes a solid investment.

How would you go about it?

- Management and staff in Aged and Community Care are used to looking at the work environment in terms of physical hazards, but often attention to 'psychological' impacts is considered only from the client's perspective. Encourage team leaders and staff to 'speak up' about any risks of this nature that they see for themselves as well.
- Often the decision-makers in Aged and Community Care organisations can be cocooned away from where all the action takes place – and even CEOs who make a point of having a presence in client-care areas rarely eat lunch with the rest of the staff; or need to store their personal effects in multi-access lockers; or drive in the cars used for home-care visits; or work in open-plan offices. The traditional CEO walk-through – from a staff perspective rather than a client perspective – can be very revealing. Talk to people as you go about their 'wish-list' for improvements.
- Use Staff Surveys and Focus Groups to get a better understanding of what physical changes staff feel would improve their work experience.
- Pay special attention to the needs of mature-age staff. The ageing workforce is a reality. What makes them bend or reach more than they need to? What can be done to relieve their physical load?

Initiatives you could consider

It's 'safe,' but is it 'pleasant'?

Take a fresh look at your OHS&W checklist – but this time rate physical aspects according to whether they're 'pleasing'. Is there anything that could improve the lay-out of workstations; improve lighting; minimise glare; minimise noise levels; or reduce postural demands? The contemporary move to job-sharing has its benefits, but how do staff cope who need to share a desk or work area? Is there anything that can be done to allow staff more 'personal space' under these arrangements? The optimum room temperature for relatively inactive older people may not be the most comfortable for people working – is there any opportunity to adjust this in specific areas?

Initiatives you could consider *continued*

Using space to create a 'sense of community'

Is your staff lunch room as comfortable as your residents' dining room? Is there a comfortable outdoor communal area for staff? Do you provide greenery in this area – to 'lift the senses' – in the way you do for residents? If your organisation is community-based, is there an area that encourages staff to 'chat over coffee' when collecting or returning vehicles? If staff use their own vehicles and training sessions are the only time people 'get together', do you ensure facilities are comfortable enough to encourage additional 'bonding time' before and after the session?

Using space to say their study is important

Not all staff have a 'quiet space and facilities' to study at home. Although workplace space is often at premium usage – whether the organisation is residential or community based – allocating a small area with an internet-connected computer and a small library of appropriate reference books speaks volumes about how highly you value their professional development.

Reflecting and celebrating cultural diversity

Organisations that support clients with culturally diverse backgrounds often reflect that in decor and on-site displays. It makes sense that multicultural staff and volunteers would also appreciate items that bring that same sense of familiarity.

Little things can say so much!

Is there room for a foot-stool and 'comfy' chair to use in the lunch room on breaks instead of only upright chairs and a table? Will supplying biscuits really break the budget? How would staff feel if you occasionally replaced the biscuits with muffins? Small appliances in staff lunch rooms – microwaves and coffee facilities etc – are reasonably common-place. However, what would it say to staff if the coffee-making facilities used 'real' coffee? A coffee grinder and dripolator presents a relatively inexpensive option, but for those employers prepared to have high pressure steam on site, there are firms who hire Espresso and Cappuccino machines; maintain them; and stock them with product. If all this sounds like 'over-the-top' luxuries, return to the 'Why you would want to do it' section overleaf.

The physical environment and volunteers

The voluntary workforce is often overlooked in planning the work environment. Volunteers are asked to behave in a professional manner while performing their duties and therefore need to be treated as professionals, with an appropriate workspace and the tools and equipment required to do their job well.



Initiatives other organisations have successfully implemented

- During 2008 the *ACH Group* used a 'physical environment' to recognise the importance of continuous learning for all sectors of the workforce by refurbishing an historic building as a Learning Centre. This new 'space' is now a central meeting place for sharing and learning – and the process of learning and achievements of team members are reinforced through photographic displays.
- *Eldercare* has found a very simple and effective way to use physical space to recognise the value of staff and reinforce team-building. A cathedral mural painted on one of the walls in the entrance foyer by a volunteer is used to display photographs of staff and their 'favourite sayings' in a 'Quote of the Week' section. The site fundraises for various charities and the wall is also used to display information about which charity is currently being supported, activities and progress. The wall – managed by a *Cathedral Builders* group which meets monthly – has become a favourite 'pausing place' for staff, residents and visitors.
- *Aboriginal Home Care* found its open-plan office layout great for team networking, but failed to offer staff members any 'personal space'. Movable panels to partition the space into compartments has enabled the interaction to continue, while also creating effective work stations.

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Leadership and Coaching

As a sector, Aged and Community Care has recognised the need to move from a 'problem-solving' management technique to one where contemporary styles of leadership create vision and goals – and effective coaching motivates and supports the workforce to implement the actions required to achieve that vision and those goals.

However, a key area of concern for employers across the sector is the actuality of providing staff with appropriate training in the 'craft' of leadership – while concurrently meeting operational needs.

The purpose of this Information Sheet is principally to be 'thought-provoking' – in terms of alternative ways of providing the training – by giving examples of how 'others have done it'.

Why would you want to do it?

- The debate about the worth of various leadership styles is endless – and there is no attempt to enter it here. However, it is almost universally agreed that – with the 'right' leadership and coaching – there are care benefits for clients; career development benefits for staff; and recruitment/retention benefits for employers.
- Successful goal achievement in any organisation depends to a very large extent on the ability of its leaders to make effective and timely decisions – and to build effective, collaborative, internal relationships.
- Research has told us that good leadership behaviour in any organisation is essential to good team-work behaviour – and that people must have leadership they respect before they will give their best.
- Research has also told us – across many industries – that there is truth in the adage, 'People join companies and leave managers'.
- Yet, many staff in Aged and Community Care hold leadership roles because they were good at their profession or previous position – not because they had well-developed leadership skills!

How would you go about it?

- The first step in implementing an effective leadership and coaching development program is to recognise that most people in your organisation will need to participate in it to some extent. Careworkers will sometimes lead or coach volunteers or other Careworkers; ENs will sometimes lead or coach Careworkers; RNs will sometimes lead or coach ENs... Similar leadership hierarchies exist in non-clinical roles.
- The second step is to develop or access leadership development tools appropriate for each level of the organisation – and to use a range of tools within each level. Formal courses such as a *Certificate IV in Frontline Management* can be appropriate for some staff in some situations – but so can mentoring; networking groups; seminars; workshops; relevant work-based or community-based special projects; and on-line leadership modules.
- Tailoring the development tools specifically to Aged and Community Care is important – many people undertaking generic leadership development feel some components don't apply to their workplace – 'because of the nature of the work' or 'because it's too busy'.
- This has relevance to the fourth step – which is to ensure practical application of the learning. Even if the training or development is being offered to someone 'early' to accommodate succession planning, it's important to provide opportunities so that the training is practical, relevant and interactive as soon as possible.
- Feedback on performance could be considered the final step – except that leadership development is on-going. The initiatives shown overleaf range from entry-level coordinators and team leaders to CEOs of major companies.



Initiatives other organisations have successfully implemented

- *Royal Freemasons' Homes of Victoria (RFHV)* have developed an Assistant Care Manager Program which supports Community Careworkers to undertake some management tasks while Care Managers are on leave. Careworkers apply to join the program and are mentored by Care Managers prior to working temporarily in the role for practical experience.
- *Coastal Accommodation Support Service Incorporated (CASSI)* developed an in-house formal development program for Team Leaders. Each fortnight all Team Leaders meet together for a two-hour development session with the Director and Assistant Director. Each session covers specific topics and the Team Leaders are then asked to apply specific elements in the workplace. The whole group is involved in feedback on the workplace applications during the subsequent session. Outcomes have included positive feedback from clients about staff; positive feedback from staff about role clarity; and positive feedback from the Team Leaders who feel it has helped to overcome a sense of isolation in community-based care.
- *Murray Mallee Aged Care* was keen to provide Frontline Management training to a number of staff, but was challenged firstly by the organisation's rural location and also by the fact many of the staff members had 'not studied for years' and didn't feel confident in their ability to complete the course. The organisation sourced a self-paced on-line program which incorporated several face-to-face in-house workshops. Participants were encouraged to work on their assignments together as a team and to set aside work time to help each other. Two other trained staff acted as mentors for the study group. All staff successfully and quickly completed the course; enjoyed the study process; now actively promote it to co-workers; and have offered to assist with mentoring newcomers to the program. One member of the group has gone on to complete other short courses and another has recently been promoted.
- *Clayton Church Homes* delivers in-house accredited training to all supervisors (*Certificate IV in Frontline Management*) and managers (*Associate Diploma in Management*). Additional in-house training reinforces personal development and leadership practices are fostered by members of the leadership team.
- When *Centacare Queensland* identified a need for development of leadership skills in middle managers, the organisation engaged a consultant to develop specific training modules compatible with Centacare's values, policies and procedures. Each of the five developed modules was designed to take five or six hours to complete and participants were able to progress at their own pace through the program.
- The South Australian Division of *Local Government Managers Australia (LGMASA)* runs an annual *Emerging Leaders Program (ELP)* which takes 24 people through an experiential leadership program – based on specific local government issues, rather than a generic training approach. Participants from all levels, working at different organisations, and in different professions, network as a group and have a mix of 'expert' input and practical experience. The ELP has a two-day residential forum to begin, followed by eight monthly one-day workshops, three of which participants develop themselves.
- *LG Pro*, which is the Victorian equivalent of the LGMASA, runs a program for first-time supervisors, team leaders and coordinators called *Ignite*. The program comprises a series of workshops and practical sessions, including two one-hour individual coaching sessions to reinforce positive habits on the job and a 'scenario' practice unique to local government.
- *Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA)* runs an annual *Management Challenge* which involves teams from various Councils participating in an event that asks them to apply leadership skills to a series of tasks common in Local Government Management. Skills development occurs not only during the event, but in the preceding preparation for it (based on a Mentor's Kit) and the feedback that follows their competition performance. The LGMA has also developed '*strategies for the future*' which include seeking government funding for a scholarship program *Leadership in Regional Workforce Development* and a virtual *Local Government Leadership Centre* which would showcase leadership initiatives and include templates and tool-kits.
- *The Leaders Institute of South Australia Governors' Leadership Foundation Program* provides high-end development for key people in organisations throughout South Australia. Its goal is to produce State leaders for the next decade and the program is designed to broaden, enhance and accelerate leadership capability through an experiential focus which includes case-study work in small groups and one-on-one coaching sessions. The selection process for candidates is rigorous and the program fee for 2009 is \$7500, but there are some scholarships available.

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Employee Assistance Programs

Employers in Aged and Community Care recognise that the way staff feel and behave at work can be affected by a wide range of issues they need to manage – either work related or linked to personal and family matters. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) not only can help staff to address these issues, but also promote psychological health and wellbeing.

Although EAPs are only recently developed at some organisations, others have had a program in place for some years – yet this significant staff support option is not accessed as widely or as often as perhaps it could be.

This Information Sheet is about improving the accessibility of Employee Assistance Programs.

Why would you want to do it?

Ensuring the safety, health and wellbeing of clients and staff is the obvious and over-riding reason to take all possible steps to ensure staff are accessing EAPs when there's a need.

However, there's also a strong 'financial business case':

- The potential for staff working in health sectors to need to cope with 'stress' is well recognised. *SafeWork SA*, for example, lists 'Stress' in its *'Generic Hazards Register for the Aged Care Industry'*.
- Psychological injury claims (stress, exposure to a traumatic event, workplace grief and loss etc) are a significant driver of Workers' Compensation premiums.
- While the number of claims for psychological injury is generally only a small proportion of all Workers' Compensation claims, the actual costs associated with the claims are often extraordinarily high in comparison – because they tend to involve longer periods of time away from work and higher medical, legal and other claim payments.

- The direct costs associated with the actual claim are often compounded by other 'hidden' costs – perhaps episodes of absenteeism over an extended period of time leading up to the claim; workplace conflict and impacts on culture because the 'psychological injury' is not so apparent or 'real' to the rest of the workforce as physical injuries; and the impacts on the psychological and physical wellbeing of clients.
- Employers can influence these costs through a focus on prevention and early rehabilitation assistance.

How would you go about it?

- Most commonly, establishing an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) involves making arrangements for a counselling service which is provided free to staff – with discussions during the counselling held confidential between the counsellor and staff member.
- Some organisations restrict the number of paid counselling sessions (commonly to three), but others will accept a counsellor's recommendation to extend the service.
- Some organisations restrict the counselling to work-related incidents – such as Grief and Loss Counselling or following a traumatic workplace incident.
- Increasingly, organisations are recognising that issues external to the work environment also affect staff during work hours – and encourage staff to access the EAP for both personal and work issues.
- Some organisations have taken this one step further and provide the EAP to close family members experiencing difficulties – realising that this is actually a significant support to staff.
- Whatever structure is in place, communication across the workforce about the EAP is critical. This is important not only to ensure those who need it will access it – but also to ensure others recognise and understand the need as valid; and encourage and support use of the program.

Aspects of Employee Assistance Programs to consider

What type of issues can be helped through an EAP?

Work related: Conflict with colleagues; coping with change; coping with the death of clients; dealing with general workplace issues; dealing with physical injury; coping with anxiety or workplace stress.

Personal issues: Relationship issues; physical health problems; bereavement; family crisis; drug or alcohol use; gambling issues; financial or legal problems.

What causes work-related stress?

Common causes of work-related stress include: Communication difficulties between staff and management; bullying, harassment or intimidation; work overload; job insecurity; too much change in the structure of a workplace and the way work is organised; poor work organisation; lack of control over how work is done; excessive performance monitoring; understaffing; inadequate resources; unresolved health and safety issues; insufficient training; long, irregular or unusual hours; and difficulties dealing with clients or their families.

What are the warning signs that staff may need to access the EAP?

Increased rate of unplanned absences: Most people who make a 'stress' claim have a history of trying to manage the issue themselves by tapping into various leave allowances. Look for people who have absences two to four times the rate of co-workers.

Increased incidence of physical injuries: Apart from the fact stress can actually lead to physical injuries through muscular tension, some staff may claim a physical injury as 'a cover' because they feel a stigma attached to having others know they are suffering from stress. Look for a series of different incidents.

Increased conflict in the workplace: Look for an increase in using grievance procedures – either by co-workers or the staff member you're concerned about. While mild interpersonal conflicts are common, repeat incidences in a team or escalating claims can point to a stress issue as an underlying cause.

Reduced performance: People under stress don't always 'fire up'. Look for signs of people 'disengaging' – either with clients, co-workers or their work role.

Continual 'dissatisfaction' feedback: People who complain about workloads, lack of control, lack of support, the efforts of others etc, are sometimes labelled 'troublemakers' when they're really feeling stress.

How do you encourage staff to access an EAP?

Gently. Use workshops, signage, bulletin boards and other communication tools to remind staff about the importance of maintaining psychological health and wellbeing; the signs of stress; and the fact there is no stigma attached to accessing help to 'smooth out the bumps'.

Ensure staff understand the EAP is available to everyone – not only nurses and carers – and (if your policy allows it) that accessing the EAP for personal or family issues is important too.

Although it could occasionally be appropriate for a manager to suggest an employee may benefit from talking to an EAP counsellor, the decision to access the service must rest with the staff member.



Initiatives other organisations have successfully implemented

- The *ACH Group* promotes its EAP by word of mouth, posters, pamphlets and fridge magnets. Promotion of the program has increased staff comfort with it – and an average of three staff use the service each month. ACH Group's WellBeing Program (including the EAP) was used as a case study in a 2008 *Australian Institute for Social Research* report: 'Achieving effective return-to-work in the SA aged care industry', prepared for WorkCover SA.
- The *Royal District Nursing Service of SA Inc (RDNS)* promotes its EAP strongly during the Induction program for new staff, but continual promotion also occurs through articles in newsletters and a full information package accessible through the RDNS intranet. The intranet package includes a 'Frequently Asked Questions' section which addresses any potential concerns about cost, confidentiality and how to access the program. Training sessions and individual sessions are held with team leaders to reinforce the importance of the EAP in ensuring staff health and well-being, while staff are also made aware of the available support during any performance management discussions.

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