

Healthy Workers – Healthy Futures

Case Study:(New) Royal Adelaide Hospital

The new Royal Adelaide Hospital (new RAH) is the single largest infrastructure project in South Australia's history with over 1300 workers on site, increasing to over 1800 at the peak of construction. The HYLIC Healthy Workers Healthy Futures program recognises the stressful and complex nature of the workplace and supports a variety of activities to enhance the health and wellbeing of all.

The Approach

The design and construction of the new Royal Adelaide Hospital is managed by joint venture partners Hansen Yuncken and Leighton Contractors (HYLC). In recognising the importance of health and wellbeing in the workplace, HYLC has established a Healthy Workers Healthy Futures (HWHF) program that complements existing health and safety priorities within the workplace, and adopts health and wellbeing alongside employee safety and operational practices.

Led by the Communications Team across a stakeholder group of over 2000, a range of flexible and adaptable initiatives are to be implemented to meet the requirements and needs of the new RAH project and to address the chronic disease risk factors – smoking, poor nutrition, alcohol and physical inactivity. The wellbeing initiatives increase awareness about health issues and are designed to contribute to improving teamwork, morale, job satisfaction, stakeholder engagement and collaboration.

The most successful initiative has been the establishment of a healthy choice menu within the onsite Hard Hat Café. In response to feedback from workers' regarding diet, weight and the accessibility of healthy choices, the Communications Team has worked with the Café to significantly change the variety of food available. Having experimented over a 3 month period, the Café now offers a dedicated healthy options counter. Healthier foods are prominently displayed and point of sale promotions, posters and notice boards provide nutritional advice and healthy special offers. During the week of the launch, 40% of the total sales were derived from the healthy choice menu.

Initially sceptical of the change in food culture, and managing the expectations of workers, the café staff and broader workforce are now fully supportive. A new and smaller café has recently opened on the eastern side of the new RAH site that is dedicated to providing convenient, fresh and

healthy food to an additional 700 subcontractors.

Physical activity is also an important focus area. As well as encouraging sporting games and team participation in community events there has been a focus on cycling. Responding to the limited car parking available for workers HYLC set up specific bike parks making it easier to cycle to work. Ride to Work events, the Tour Down Under and informal riding groups are promoted. Cycling safety advice has been provided.

The Rationale

There are a number of drivers for the implementation of the wellbeing program.

Firstly, in building a new hospital it was considered important to align the corporate values of the project by promoting health and wellbeing. Secondly, construction spans over five years. The environment is complex, challenging and high risk.

HYLC felt it was important to support both the mental and physical wellbeing of the workforce and in doing so create a welcoming and socially sustainable culture. The support of the Healthy Worker Adviser (HWA) based at the CFMEU, has assisted in facilitating change.

Fit with organisational core values

HYLC corporate businesses have a commitment to their staff and the community¹. They recognise the importance of corporate social responsibility and work with community groups on a number of projects; many of the program initiatives involve fund raising in line with this commitment. The safety and health of employees is their number one value and they recognise their staff as the foundation of success. Their commitment to diversity and providing a flexible and supportive environment aims to encourage employees to live a balanced lifestyle, combining work and family responsibilities.

The Process

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union Healthy Worker Adviser (CFMEU HWA)² approached HYLC to offer support and advice to implement healthy workplace initiatives at the site.

Following discussions with CFMEU, a proposal was



submitted by the Communications Manager to the Development Director to implement a healthy workplace initiative. Using information from the SA Health HWHF Toolkit³ the proposal was endorsed and program launched in March 2013. Prior one-off events including the Healthy Lunch Box Challenge had good participation from workers. This proposal set out a longer-term strategic plan. The HWA assists with the implementation of different strategies.

Around three times a week the HWA gives a 15-minute talk on health and wellbeing as part of induction for new workers. Their health needs are also assessed by the HWA through a 10-question survey on health issues of interest and concern. The three biggest issues raised by workers are: smoking, diet and weight management and stress. Generally, around 70% of respondents indicate one or more of these areas.

A 12 month program review is planned for April, 2014. This will include a survey of both construction and office workers on the value of the program as a whole, as well as improvement to specific strategies.

Positives and Achievements

For the Communications Manager the environmental changes are major achievements. This includes changes to the food in the canteen as well as the creation of two bike parks on site. Good participation levels in events, bike riding to work and sales at the canteen all suggest worker satisfaction and support for the changes. The complexity of this workplace and number of organisations involved, as well as the scale of the intervention means it is not feasible to measure changes in health or business indicators such as absenteeism or productivity. Successfully implementing a program in such a complex environment is a real achievement.

Overcoming the Challenges

The biggest challenge was to obtain buy-in from a diverse stakeholder group including office personnel, sub contractors, consultants, suppliers and members of the community. Secondly,

managing the change process of adopting new initiatives within a traditional industry was difficult. Some people were sceptical, believing there were few reasons to change practice on building sites but the Communications Manager, the lead change agent, believed in the importance of setting a new standard for future projects and persevered. The strategic and on-the-ground assistance of the HWA was also critical.

Other challenges include time and resource constraints, making it difficult to enhance the program; prioritising strategies for implementation helps in this regard.

The Future

There is support for the continued roll out of the program and plans include a vegetable and herb garden, weight loss program, stress management, running a dry July campaign and improving promotion through social media. These strategies will be informed by the results of the forthcoming survey.

Duration and resources

The initiative was launched in March 2013 and is being managed within existing resources.

“You don’t need a large investment to receive significant gains. Positive benefits can be attained regardless of the amount a workplace has to spend on prevention. If an organisation cares, and can demonstrate care for the health and wellbeing of its employees, then that organisation stands to benefit considerably.”

“We work within a highly stressful and pressured industry. Our main focus on this project is to provide assistance, knowledge and guidance to our employees and workers to help manage both their physical and mental wellbeing whilst setting a new standard across the business.”

Sian Dodd, Communications Manager



¹ See <http://www.hansenyuncken.com.au/home> and <http://www.leightoncontractors.com.au/our-priorities/>

² CFMEU HWA (<http://www.cfmeu.asn.au/branch/sa>)

³ See <http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/healthyworkers>

Find out more about how you can create a healthy workplace, find a Healthy Worker Adviser for your sector, or submit your own case study:

Healthy Workers Healthy Futures Initiative
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