Healthy Workers – Healthy Futures

Case Study: BAE Systems

Creating a co-ordinated approach to health and wellbeing in a large and diverse workplace

BAE Systems is a defence and security company that provides products and services to air, land and naval forces as well as advanced electronics, security information and technology. For this national company with headquarters in South Australia, up to 3500 workers and 18 sites, a co-ordinated health and wellbeing approach was timely.

The Rationale
In 2016, the company recognised that a focus on a co-ordinated health approach was required to equably improve health and wellbeing of staff, increase staff awareness of opportunities and increase workplace participation.

An Occupational Health Advisor was appointed and a Health and Wellbeing committee established. This Committee focussed on developing a health and wellbeing plan and mental health strategy.

The Process
‘One of the initial challenges we faced was developing an approach and plan suited to all sites and needs.’ The Healthy Workers Healthy Futures Advisor from Defence Teaming Centre supported the initial needs assessment process through a worksite ‘Healthy People, Healthy Places and Healthy Vision’ audit, from the SA Health ‘Implementing a Health and Wellbeing program Toolkit’ and focus groups were held by a Health and Wellbeing Champion to determine needs and wishes of workers. Past activities and programs were also reviewed.

The program thus far....

BAE Systems have well established health and wellbeing activities: an Employee Assistance Program, flu vaccinations, fresh fruit and healthier catering, weight loss management programs, participation in a Heart Foundation walking program, and bike and shower facilities.

Following the audit and establishment of the committee, a more co-ordinated approach has been developed. Significant changes to the workplace environment have ensued including improved facilities for eating lunch and conducting training and toolbox talks, increasing satisfaction with accommodation/ welfare facilities.

Unsurprisingly, these changes also resulted in an increase in the range of activities to include; healthy canteen options and a portion control review, increased participation in skin checks and flu vaccinations. More employees now run or walk in their lunch breaks and sit-stand desks are increasing in popularity.

BAE Systems has also implemented a flexible work arrangements approach to create an agile workplace anywhere, anytime from a secure device.
Business Outcomes

At a leadership level, health and wellbeing is now part of the Culture and Engagement strategy within the Health, Safety and Environment Vision for BAE Systems. This strategy governs any actions and demonstrates a commitment to worker safety, health and engagement. Putting health, visibly, on everyone’s agenda allows managers and employees the opportunity to participate through leading or suggesting improvements. These pathways include through direct line management, lodging a request through the intranet, local health and safety committee meetings or through the company’s ‘Bright Ideas’ program. Employees with a particular interest are encouraged to join the Health and Wellbeing committee, further cementing ideas. Further, BAE Systems has a reward-recognition scheme to encourage staff participation and creative input into ‘how we do things’. The Health and Wellbeing approach is an engaging platform to increase participation and innovation.

It’s challenging implementing a new program of any sort in a large workplace, especially with security compliance priorities. However, it has been encouraging to see, hear and feel the dedication and commitment to the creation of opportunities in health and wellbeing all the way from leaders to workers.

Key successes so far include leadership participation and acknowledgement of the importance of worker health and wellbeing.

Our last annual ‘employee satisfaction survey, which includes health and wellbeing, showed that 73% of employees felt the business supports their efforts to balance work and personal responsibilities’.

This program was implemented through the SA Health Healthy Workers Healthy Futures initiative, supported by the Defence Teaming Centre Healthy Workers project.