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beyondblue launches landmark campaign as it says to business: “If you’re not investing in mental health you’re losing money”

beyondblue has launched an Australian-first national campaign in conjunction with the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance* to encourage Australia’s business leaders to take action on mental health.

It comes as a new PwC report reveals that Australian businesses will receive an average return of **\$2.30 for every \$1 they invest** in effective workplace mental health strategies.

The research, which looked at the impact of employees’ mental health conditions on productivity, participation and compensation claims, also found these conditions cost Australian employers **at least \$10.9 billion** a year.

beyondblue Chairman **The Hon Jeff Kennett AC** said the report, which can be downloaded [here](#), provides a compelling case for businesses to back *Heads Up*, a campaign to give big and small business alike practical advice about the importance of mental health in the workplace.

“One in five Australian workers are experiencing mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety right now, but sadly too many workplaces still do not realise the importance of their employees’ mental health,” he said. “This report shows that employers have a responsibility not only to their workers, but also to their businesses’ profitability, to tackle these conditions at work. *Heads Up* will provide them with a tailor-made Action Plan to do this and helps ensure that Australia’s 11.5 million workers receive the support they need to be mentally healthy and productive.”

PwC partner Jeremy Thorpe said the report reveals how investing in mental health benefits businesses of different sizes within different industries, with small business often benefitting the most.

“For example, small mining businesses that invest in effective mental health programs receive an average return on investment (ROI) of 15, meaning they get \$15 out of every \$1 they spend. Small essential service providers receive an average ROI of 14.5. This is because employee participation is vital in implementing a successful program. Any positive ROI is something business should strive for. This is why I would urge all employers, regardless of what industry you’re in or your business size, to read this report and learn what economic benefits you can gain from investing in mental health.”

Heads Up will target leaders across small, medium and large Australian businesses through major advertising and social media campaigns, and already it has the backing of some major companies.

Funded by the Department of Health, it has been launched as a growing body of evidence points to the urgent need for Australian businesses to start treating the mental health of their employees as seriously as they treat physical health and safety. The campaign’s centrepiece is the *Heads Up* website (www.headsup.org.au) where business leaders can find out why they are losing money if they are not investing in employees’ mental health and sign up to learn how to make their workplace more mentally healthy and profitable. In mid-June, a first-of-its kind Action Plan will be unveiled on the website to allow businesses to create tailor-made mental health plans to implement in their workplaces to ensure they are progressing towards workplaces that are as mentally healthy as possible.

beyondblue CEO **Georgie Harman** said *Heads Up* would have a long-lasting impact as it delivered benefits for employees and employers alike.

“Employers who are mindful of their employee’s wellbeing and introduce supporting policies promote greater worker satisfaction and deliver enormous productivity improvements, making it a truly win-win situation,” she said. “Too many business leaders, however, still don’t know how to help people who may be struggling with a mental health condition such as depression or anxiety. These people continue to face discrimination and do not receive the same support that people with physical conditions receive. Employers who do not promote good mental health miss out on the benefits that it can bring, but adopting *Heads Up* can help to change that. Creating mentally healthy workplaces is everyone’s responsibility, but employers need to take the lead. *Heads Up* is a cutting-edge campaign and I look forward to *beyondblue* assisting employers to realise that good mental health is just as important as good physical health and safety in the workplace.”

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Summary of PwC's Creating a mentally healthy workplace – return on investment analysis

- Employees' mental health conditions present substantial costs to organisations. However, by successfully introducing an effective action to create a mentally healthy workplace, organisations on average can expect a positive ROI of 2.3. **That is, for every dollar spent on implementing an appropriate action successfully, there is on average \$2.30 to be gained by the organisation.**
- Using the prevalence rates of mental health conditions across various industries, the PwC report also measured the cost to Australian workplaces of employees' mental health conditions and found this to be at least \$10.9 billion annually.
- This comprises \$4.7 billion in absenteeism, \$6.1 billion in presenteeism and \$146 million in compensation claims a year. This figure is a conservative estimate because it does not consider other factors arising from employees' poor mental health such as high staff turnover.
- This 2.3 ROI figure was calculated by investigating the cost of introducing seven workplace mental health actions such as worksite physical activity program and resilience training and measuring their subsequent impact on absenteeism, presenteeism (reduced productivity at work), and compensation claims.
- Implementing multiple targeted actions is likely to lead to further increases in ROI, noting that the cumulative benefits of multiple actions will be less than their sum as actions may apply to the same group of employees.
- The results of this analysis are conservative as they do not consider the full range of costs to an organisation caused by employees' untreated mental health conditions, such as high staff turnover. Also, estimates do not include the many intangible benefits of a mentally healthy workplace for all employees, such as improved morale.
- The ROI of 2.3 referred to in the PwC report is an average of the individual ROIs resulting from implementing appropriate actions in every combination of organisation size and industry. However, some actions are inappropriate to implement in particular organisations because the cost and effort outweigh the benefits. As such, actions are considered appropriate only if they have the potential to generate a 33% reduction in absenteeism, presenteeism (being at work, but not being productive) and compensation claims. In order to generate a final figure that incorporates actions that are likely to be implemented, PwC has considered only appropriate actions when calculating the ROI figure.
- However, a positive ROI will often be achieved where these elements are reduced by much less than this. To maximise the ROI, it is important for an organisation to identify appropriate actions based on its specific size and needs. In mid-June, to improve the mental health of their workforce, business leaders will be able to create a tailored action plan for their organisation via the *Heads Up* website.

*The founding members of the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance are:

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Australian Industry Group, Australian Psychological Society, *beyondblue*, The Black Dog Institute, Business Council of Australia, Comcare, Council of Small Business of Australia, Mental Health Council of Australia, National Mental Health Commission, Safe Work Australia, SANE and The University of NSW.