



Appeal to employers on mental health

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EMPLLOYERS should address the mental health issues of their staff to improve productivity within the workplace and to save billions of dollars each year in mental health costs.

Recent increases in the number of mental health compensation claims and mental health-related absenteeism and "presenteeism", whereby employees are present at work but not fully functioning due to illness or injury, have prompted Converge International to appeal to employers about their role in maintaining their employees' mental health and wellbeing.

According to reports by Medibank Private and The University of Queensland (WORC project), workplace stress, depression, mental health compensation claims and mental health-related absenteeism cost employers billions of dollars each year.

Research by The University of Queensland (WORC project) revealed that almost 303,000 employees in Australia are struggling with a mental health illness but are not getting effective treatment.

According to the report this equates to almost \$4.3 billion in lost productivity due to undiagnosed depression.

Employers need to recognise just how much mental health affects their business.

The sheer cost of lost productivity due to mental health issues should be enough to motivate employers to promote good mental health.

While compensation claims have fallen significantly in recent years, the number of stress-related claims has doubled.

Unlike physical health, mental health is not always visible. As a result, it can be difficult for employers to deal with mental health issues with their staff.

Poor mental health encompasses issues including stress-related illness, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, alcohol and drug-use disorders and depression, which have the potential to lead to suicidal behaviour.

Stress can lead to physical and mental health issues including anxiety and depression.

A recent report by Medibank Private noted that stress-related presenteeism and absenteeism are costing employers up to \$10.11 billion a year.

According to the Medibank Private report, 47 per cent of Australians report being extremely stressed, with one in four attributing their stress to work.

Consequently, the workplace has a significant impact on employees' mental wellbeing, which may also be influenced by the type of industry an employee works in.

Research by the University of Queensland (WORC project) has shown that depression varies within the industries; people working in communication, government and finance are the most likely to suffer from depression.

Research consistently shows that certain industries are more prone to mental health problems.

In response to this, employers within those industries need to be proactive in addressing this problem - not only for their staff's wellbeing, but also for the bottom line of their company.

In order to cope with mental health issues, Converge International recommends that employers have preventive measures in place. Some strategies involve the use of an Employee Assistance Program, which provides counselling to employees to help them manage their health and wellbeing.