September 2015

Get the Support you need

In this months issue:

- FIFO - good or bad for your Mental Health?
- October Business Month
- CORP Public Workshop Calendar

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In our last edition we briefly touched on the HeadsUp program with beyondblue and new studies in the field; linking Depression and other mental illnesses to FIFO. Which raises the question, is FIFO good or bad for your mental health?

Australian Medical Association (AMA) members reported widespread abuse of alcohol and drugs, along with obesity and many other factors which are “detrimental to health”. Pharmacists have reported that when the practice of FIFO became common there was also a compatible increase in the use of medication for depression and anxiety.

A study from Edith Cowan University found that FIFO workers have twice the rates of depression compared to other Australians, with 28% of the 629 FIFO workers who participated in the study showing marked symptoms of depression, compared to 13% of the general population.

Along with depression, FIFO workers suffer from higher rates of anxiety and stress compared to the general Australian population, as do members of the mining industry who are located in remote areas and are not employed under a FIFO contract.

The lead researcher of the study, Phillipa Vojnovic said the figures have justified long-standing concerns about FIFO, and the impact on the mental health of employees. “There have been anecdotal reports that the rates of suicide are higher among FIFO workers,” she said, and went on to say that while there are not currently statistics available on suicide rates in the sector, depression is a risk factor for suicide.

Interestingly, some groups have a heightened vulnerability when it comes to depression and FIFO work, and both education levels and age play a strong role. Younger workers between the ages of 18 and 29 were 50% more likely to suffer from depression than older workers, and those with a university degree were half as likely to be affected. Those who didn’t have children and partners at home were also more likely to suffer.

Vojnovic says her work isn’t about blaming the resource companies.
She is instead hoping that her research will help to draw attention to providing greater support for FIFO workers.

Unfortunately FIFO workers are currently even more reluctant to seek help for any mental health problems due to job losses, in the current mining downturn. The fear around loss of their jobs has created massive stress and strain for workers, and the “tough guy” culture also makes it less likely for workers to talk about their problems.

Now that there is fresh research coming from a range of industry bodies and experts pointing to the fact that FIFO workers are at a higher risk of mental health issues, companies have a responsibility to focus on, and invest in good mental health policies and practices.

*beyondblue* recently visited mining camps, sites and communities in the Pilbara, and spoke about where employees could get support and help, the importance of good mental health, and also answered questions about suicide prevention. This allowed *beyondblue* to engage with FIFO workers and their managers, and learn more about their experience as they listened to their personal stories, giving them a deeper understanding of the risk factors when it comes to developing mental health conditions.

**Company Programs working towards a solution**

There are a number of mining companies who are taking the lead in terms of addressing mental health concerns amongst their staff, and implementing programs to ensure better health and wellbeing amongst their FIFO workers.

- **BHP Billiton Iron Ore** – released a “Mental Wellness Standard” which was created to guide their strategy in enhancing awareness and pro-active management of mental well-being.

- **Rio Tinto Iron Ore** – developed a mental health strategy, delivered a number of mental health education programs and have developed a community based “Resilience Program” to support people beyond the gates of their workplace, helping them to build connections and raise awareness around mental health issues.

- **Sodexo** – operates mining community services and infrastructure, launched the “I Hear You Campaign” to raise awareness of mental health and suicide across its workforce and is working with clients in FIFO camps to include their workers.

*If you are a FIFO worker and struggling with mental health issues, we encourage you to reach out your employer or contact your EAP Service Provider for assistance.*

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**OCTOBER BUSINESS MONTH CALENDAR NOW OPEN!**

165 opportunities for professional development and networking
Public Workshop Calendar

Darwin & Alice Springs

September—October 2015

Emotional Intelligence: Part 1
Wednesday - 2 Sept 2015
(Half Day)

The Neuroscience of Leadership
CORP Talk!
Wednesday - 9 Sept 2015
(One Hour Session)

Mindfulness and Managing Stress:
1 Day Retreat, Rydges Resort
Wednesday - 23 Sept 2015
(Full Day)

Mediation and Facilitation Skills for Management
Wednesday - 30 Sept 2015
(Full Day)

Discover 7 Strategies for Pain free Change
CORP Talk!
Wednesday - 7 Oct 2015
(One Hour Session)

Alcohol Withdrawal & Brief Intervention
Thursday - 8 Oct 2015
(Full Day)

Difference and Diversity
Working in a mixed team effectively
Friday - 16 Oct 2015
(Half Day)

Appropriate Workplace Behaviours
Creating a Safe Workplace for all
Wednesday - 21 Oct 2015
(Half Day)

Appropriate Workplace Behaviours
Creating a Safe Workplace for all
Thursday - 29 Oct 2015
(One Hour Session)

Locations:
Level 2 Highway Arcade,
47 Stuart Highway
Stuart Park NT

Jock Nelson Building
10/16 Hartley Street
Alice Springs NT

Don’t miss out on this great opportunity!
To make a booking visit www.corp.org.au
or contact us on 08 8941 5661