



Build a healthy and wealthy business with WorkHealth

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When it comes to building a thriving business, I am a firm believer that having motivated and engaged employees is the key ingredient to success, particularly in service industries. Whether it's your waiters, kitchen hands, chefs, cooks, bar attendants or baristas, without a pool of talented people to operate your business, the Accommodation and Food Services industry would grind to a halt.

A Monash University report on more than 400,000 WorkHealth checks conducted across Victoria through WorkSafe Victoria's WorkHealth program reveals that one in four employees have a high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. I find these results particularly alarming and wonder what could be more important than supporting our workers' health – not only as a duty of care to employees but also for healthier, more productive businesses.

Every year, absenteeism due to injury and illness costs the Victorian economy and individual employers millions. Yet research shows that offering health and wellbeing programs for your employees can impact crucial areas like reducing absenteeism, boosting productivity and attracting motivated, committed staff to deliver strong results for your business – all of which are linked to the health of your workers.

Given the skills shortage in the industry, offering employees an opportunity to be healthy is all the more important and differentiates your business as an employer of choice. Research shows that employees are very appreciative of health and wellbeing programs – in fact, a WorkSafe survey found that nearly 60% of people would consider an employer's attitude to health and wellbeing when looking for a new job.

It makes sense that we use the workplace to influence health behaviours – after all, the average Victorian spends around a third of their day at work. There's a lot that you can do, and it needn't cost a fortune either. For example, the latest WorkHealth results for the Accommodation and Food Services industry shows that one in four men and one in five women smoke and only one in 17 workers eat enough fruit and vegetables. Simple, cost effective initiatives like providing support to quit smoking or organising fruit box deliveries are great ways to encourage healthy choices during the workday.

At the very least, I encourage all businesses to sign up for free WorkHealth checks available through WorkSafe as a simple starting point to help workers understand the state of their personal health. The checks are confidential, completely free, and take just 15 minutes, so why wouldn't you sign up?

WorkHealth checks help workers understand the risk factors associated with developing type 2 diabetes and heart disease, such as healthy eating, blood pressure, cholesterol and waistline, and the healthy lifestyle changes that can help reduce this risk.

For an industry where the median age is 26, the fact that WorkHealth checks are conveniently delivered in the workplace is particularly helpful for younger employees, who are less inclined to make the time to go to the doctor for a general check-up.

And for those workers who discover they have a few health issues to work on, help is available with the new, confidential WorkHealth Coach program, which provides personalised, ongoing support to develop better health habits.

WorkHealth checks have been delivered to more than 465,000 workers to date however fewer than 6,000 checks have been provided to the Accommodation and Food Services industry. I would like to see this figure improve and I urge all business owners to get on board with this unique opportunity.

I believe one of the best ways to support our growing hotel industry is for all employers to encourage a healthy and well workforce, in turn boosting productivity for your business and improving staff morale. In fact, 89% of workers who have had a WorkHealth check say it tells them their employer cares about their health and wellbeing. Best of all, it's all completely free!

AHA (Vic) members can sign up today at workhealth.vic.gov.au or call 1800 136 089 to find out more.

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