



Campfire provides a solution-focused community
for farmers and fishers to improve work systems
and support mentally healthy workplaces



Supported by





What is Campfire?

Campfire has been developed by the Primary Producer Knowledge Network (PPKN) and provides an engaging, solution-focused community for farmers and fishers to proactively improve their systems of work in support of mentally healthy workplaces. Campfire serves farmers and fishers through:

- interaction with experts and peer networks
- practical tools and resources
- solution focused stories that address work-related challenges.

The online Campfires will be lit Tuesday – Thursday evenings from 7.30pm where primary producers come together to discuss work-related challenges. Bonfire events will be held fortnightly on Wednesday evenings from 7.30pm. Primary producers can hear from topic experts, ask questions, access resources and find solutions to work-related challenges.

Read more: www.farmerhealth.org.au/campfire

Be part of the Campfire Roadshow

The PPKN team are hitting the road to help spread the word about Campfire.

We are seeking nominations from existing primary producer groups (e.g. dairy discussion groups, BestWool BestLamb, Landcare, CFA) to host a visit from the team for a Campfire demonstration.

To express your interest visit:
www.farmerhealth.org.au/campfire/get-involved

Campfire and the Primary Producer Knowledge Network are led by the National Centre for Farmer Health in collaboration with primary producers, industry stakeholders and researchers from Griffith University, the University of South Australia and Cath Cosgrave Consulting. Campfire is funded by the Victorian Government's WorkSafe WorkWell Mental Health Improvement Fund.



Taking action to make your workplace mentally healthy

Work-related risk factors

Factors in the design or management of work that can positively or negatively affect an employee's mental health

High work demands

Work demands relate to the physical, mental and emotional effort required to do the work. Long hours, excessive workloads and unreasonable time pressure can impact mental health. The very nature of primary production is one where work has to be flexible depending on the seasons and market forces. This includes high work demands relating to

- busy farming periods (e.g. harvest)
- limited timeframes for achieving tasks (e.g. fishing quotas).

Action you can take to make a difference

- Plan ahead for any additional worker needs.
- Identify high priority tasks.
- Make sure everyone is aware of deadlines and why these are important to meet.
- Don't set unachievable deadlines.
- Schedule regular breaks, and make sure everyone takes breaks, eats well and keeps hydrated.
- Give workers some control over how tasks are completed (e.g. work pace and order of tasks) – just because you do a task in a certain way, doesn't mean it can't be done differently and achieve the same goal.
- Avoid high-risk tasks (e.g. operating machinery) during the early hours of the morning (1am–6am), due to increased fatigue.
- Provide practical help for workers involved in challenging tasks (e.g. the right tools, a second person to assist when needed, opportunity to talk things through and problem solve).
- Make sure the person assigned the task is well trained and physically capable of doing the job.

Low levels of control

While we can't control the weather or the global influence on prices for our product, we can improve the sense of control people have in our workplace.

- Get everyone in your team involved in making decisions and assigning tasks.
- Encourage everyone to make suggestions for improvements and to give feedback on decisions.
- Make sure tasks suit people's physical capabilities, skills and level of training.

Poor workplace support

Mentally healthy workplaces need emotional and practical support from supervisors and peers/family members, the right kind of information and training, and the right tools, equipment and resources to do the job.

- Make sure everyone knows who they are accountable to and where they can go for assistance.
- Be willing to help out when things are challenging.
- Provide new workers with an induction to the business including establishing they have the right skills/training, understand safety procedures and location of safety equipment, have the correct personal protective equipment for tasks (e.g. applying chemicals, high noise environments), know location of workplace facilities, know procedures for reporting incidents, and know who to ask questions.
- Hold regular work-related meetings to raise problems (and discuss how these should be tackled) and celebrate what is going well.
- Make sure everyone has enough information to do their jobs well and safely (particularly when people may not be familiar with a task).
- Provide and ask for helpful feedback.

Poor organisational change management

Change is an everyday part of life in primary production (from smaller things such as a new piece of equipment, to big changes such as business succession), and it can lead to high levels of stress when it is not managed well.

- Communication is a huge part of successful change. Talk to the people in your business about proposed changes, why they are happening and what the expected outcomes and timeframes are.
- Have regular meetings to talk through what is changing, how this is progressing, and let people ask questions and raise concerns.
- Bring in outside help to work through difficult changes – seek expert information and resources to help.
- Once the change happens, make sure people in the business continue to be clear about their role and receive any additional training/support they need to complete new tasks/roles.

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Poor organisational justice

Mentally healthy workplaces need a positive and fair working environment. This leads to higher levels of trust, satisfaction and loyalty and can help people cope with work-related challenges.

Low role clarity

Knowing what tasks are expected, what tasks are most important, how these tasks should be done, and how one task fits into the bigger picture are all important in a mentally healthy workplace.

Role conflict

Setting tasks that are realistic, and don't go against expectations and values are important when developing a mentally healthy workplace.

Poor workplace relationships

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Poor environmental conditions

Eliminating or managing exposure to noise, dust, chemicals, extreme heat or cold have an important role in creating a healthy workplace—both physically and mentally.

Action you can take to make a difference

- Encourage a workplace where respect, fairness and openness are valued, and lead by example.
- Make sure workplace policies are clear and well communicated (e.g. safety plans, maintenance schedules, holiday/sick leave).
- Create ways for people in the business to have a say in decisions that affect them.
- Explain why decisions are made – people are more likely to accept decisions (even if they don't like them) if they can understand the reason and purpose.
- Make sure everyone has a clear position description (even when working with family) so that everyone is clear on their roles and responsibilities.
- When there is a conflict, make sure everyone has an equal chance to respond and everyone is treated respectfully.

- Make sure everyone knows and understands their role in your team and that this is written down in a position description.
- Give regular feedback on jobs well done and any areas for improvement.
- Make sure people know who to speak to if they have a problem or need help.
- Avoid making workers accountable to more than one person.

- Make sure people get clear messages about what tasks they should be doing.
- Make sure tasks and instructions given aren't conflicting (e.g. don't follow up instructions about operating machinery safely with a request to use the old tractor without roll over protection).
- Don't ask people to do tasks that go against their values.

- Encourage communication, creative thinking and problem solving before conflict becomes a problem.
- Schedule regular meetings to talk about pressures and challenges and encourage everyone to be included in finding solutions.
- Give regular feedback – recognise when people have done tasks well and provide practical help with areas that need improving.
- Develop a team (or family) charter to set out values and explain in detail how problems are solved.
- Deal with conflict early.
- Don't forget that differences in ideas/opinions can lead to positive and creative outcomes.
- Promote a culture of respect and trust and encourage people to be their best.
- If you work alone or have a very small team, find opportunities to connect with other like-minded producers (e.g. special interest groups, volunteer organisations).

- Identify hazards that can be eliminated e.g. equipment without recommended safety features, incorrectly stored chemicals.
- Plan tasks to suit the weather conditions (e.g. avoid working outside in the middle of the day on high heat days).
- Provide suitable personal and protective equipment (PPE) (e.g. correctly fitted masks, gloves, spray suits and goggles when applying chemicals, hearing protection when in noisy environments).
- Display a list of required PPE to be worn for particular tasks (e.g. when riding motorbikes, working with livestock, applying chemicals, baiting hooks/pots).