What is Campfire?

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

Listen to our Campfire Conversations podcast series with topic and farming experts on a wide range of issues that impact your workplace. Hear action-oriented, solution-focused stories that address relevant work related risk factors.
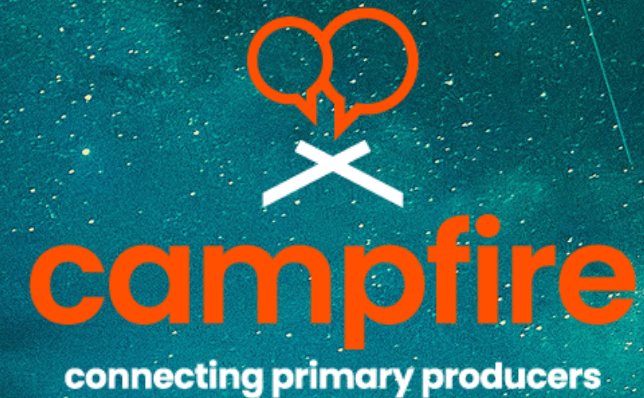
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1. Working Effectively in a Family Business
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4. Communication: It's more than words
5. Strengthening your support team: Rural Financial Counselling Service
6. Practical tips to prevent stress on the farm
7. Mentally preparing for fire season
8. Healthy ageing on the farm
9. Preventing bullying in farm workplaces
10. Overcoming isolation on farm
11. Disaster Preparedness and Rural Resilience
12. Don't let your bias limit your farming potential
13. Farm Security and Preventing Farm Crime

New Campfire Conversations are released every fortnight, available via the 'National Centre for Farmer Health' channel on Spotify, Apple Podcasts and Anchor. Don't forget to subscribe so you never miss an episode.

You can also listen to the podcast or read our regular blogs about building better workplaces at www.farmerhealth.org.au/campfire.

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campfire
connecting primary producers

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

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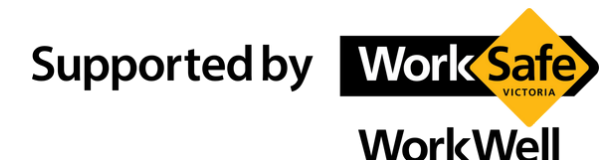
Taking action to build a mentally healthy workplace

Work-related risk factors
Factors in the design or management of work that can positively or negatively affect an employee's mental health

Actions to take to make a difference

High work demands
Work has to be flexible depending on the seasons and market forces. This includes high work demands relating to busy periods, like harvest.

- Plan ahead for any additional worker needs.
- Identify high priority tasks.
- Set achievable deadlines, and make sure everyone understands them
- Manage fatigue - take regular breaks, eat well, keep hydrated, and avoid high-risk tasks (e.g. operating machinery) during the early hours of the morning
- Provide practical help for workers involved in challenging tasks

Low levels of control
Influencing the weather or global commodity prices is impossible, but improving the sense of control people have in the workplace is achievable

- Get everyone in your team involved in making decisions and assigning tasks.
- Encourage suggestions for improvements and efficiencies
- Give workers some control over how tasks are completed
- Match tasks to people's physical capabilities, skills and 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 and ask for helpful feedback
- Induction of new workers must include establishing that they have the right skills/training, understand safety procedures and location of safety equipment, have the correct personal protective equipment (PPE), know the location of workplace facilities, and know procedures for reporting incidents
- Hold regular team meetings to raise problems, discuss solutions and celebrate what is going well
- Make sure everyone has enough information to do their jobs well and safely

Poor organisational change management
Change is an everyday part of farming and it can lead to high levels of stress when it is not managed well

- Communication is critical to implementing successful change
- Talk to the whole team about proposed changes, why they are happening, what the expected outcomes and time frames are
- Have regular meetings to talk through change and how it is progressing, and let people ask questions and raise concerns
- Bring in outside help to work through difficult changes
- Once the change happens, make sure people are clear about their role and receive any additional training/support they need to complete new tasks/roles

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

- Make sure people get clear messages about what tasks they should be doing.
- Make sure tasks and instructions given aren't conflicting
- Don't ask people to do tasks that go against their values.

Work-related risk factors

Actions to take to make a difference

Poor organisational justice
A positive and fair working environment improves trust, satisfaction and loyalty and can help people cope with work-related challenges

- 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 if they can understand the reason and purpose.
- Ensure that each team member (including family) has a clear position description 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.

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.

- 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.

Poor workplace relationships
Managing relationships, dealing with conflict and encouraging success through teamwork all contribute to a mentally healthy workplace

- Promote a culture of respect and trust and encourage people to be their best
- Develop a team/family charter to set out workplace values and spell out how problems are solved
- Avoid conflict by scheduling regular team meetings to encourage communication, creative thinking and problem solving
- Give regular feedback - recognise when people have done tasks well and provide prqactical help with areas that need improving
- Deal with any conflict or bullying early and call out bad behaviour

Poor environmental conditions
Eliminating or managing exposure to noise, dust, chemicals, extreme heat or cold help to create a healthy workplace - both physically and mentally

- Do a regular safety audit and actively foster a positive farm safety culture
- Provide safety training and review regularly
- Plan tasks to suit the weather conditions
- Provide suitable PPE for each worker, and ensure they know how and when to use it
- Display a list of required PPE to be worn for particular tasks

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