

PR15 0044 WOW Focus Area Videos – Wellbeing - Paula Brough
(Duration 3 min 43 sec)

What does Workplace Wellbeing research consider?

Workplace Wellbeing research considers the whole range of employees mental health in their workplace. So we look at how their mental health affects issues such as the attitudes to their job, their health at work and ultimately their productivity. We commonly access issues such as anxiety and depression, stress and strain, burn out, engagement and happiness of workers and we consider the ways in which their workplace may contribute to their feelings of mental ill health in the workplace or whether circumstances that happened to them outside of their work have contributed and they're bringing those issues into the work.

Why is wellbeing at work important?

Wellbeing at work is important because good mental health is a valuable commodity for all of us and it's not something that stops as soon as we enter our workplaces. Australia has health and safety legislation, which looks after both our physical health and our mental health in the workplaces, so employers have a legal obligation to ensure that their workplaces don't contribute to mental ill-health of their workers.

Finally the saying that a happy worker is a good worker also has a little bit of truth in it. So workers that are happy in their workplace, that are satisfied, and have high levels of wellbeing at work will be punctual, committed, work hard, and are more likely to stay in their work.

How does well being function at work?

So wellbeing functions at work primarily in two key ways. So there's the issue of job demands, that the demands that the worker has for their job aren't too high or too low. So a highly demanding job and an under-demanding or boring job are both quite stressful for a worker. The second issue is resources available to the worker to enable them to deal, to manage their work demands adequately. The research we do here is primarily more concerned with the content of the job, so as well as controlling for actual workload, work demands, which is very important, we also look at the content of the job. So for example, we know that jobs, which have regularly exposed workers to levels of danger, trauma, and violence, , obviously have an adverse effect on levels of wellbeing. So I'll give you an example: we're always going to need police officers, and police officers, as part of their job, are often regularly exposed to danger and violence in their workplace. The work that we do here at Griffith looks at how we can ensure that resources are available to help those officers deal with the difficult elements of their job. So that's for example, things like making sure there's enough training, and resources, counselling resources available to those officers if they need those. But also ensuring their work environment, like having an effective manager, and not being exposed to bullying colleagues in the workplace, also occurs.

What challenges does workplace wellbeing research address?

Workplace wellbeing research tries to address a number of challenges. So we know for example that workplace ill-health is currently costing the Australian economy up to \$15 billion per year. Some specific incidences, which cause ill-health at work, mental ill-health at work, such as harassment and bullying and pregnancy discrimination are actually increasing. Our ultimate challenge is to reduce these costs to the Australian economy and to improve levels of workplace wellbeing for most Australian workers.