



OZHELP TASMANIA FOUNDATION

UPDATE JUNE 2010

*"The Queensland Centre for Mental Health Research... reports that on average, each employee with depression symptoms will cost their employer on average **\$9,665 per year**"*

CEO Welcome

Welcome to the third OzHelp Tasmania Foundation update.

The last 12 months for OzHelp Tasmania has been a time of growth, refocusing of activities and expansion as we move towards sustainability and develop our identity in Tasmania.

Critically OzHelp Tasmania has focused not only on the issue of suicide prevention and resilience building but has recognised the need by the industry for general mental health and wellbeing training and support.

Whilst there is still some way to reaching total building and construction industry coverage through workplace involvement we have recently been awarded a contract to provide four of the sixteen components of our Workplace Life Skills Tool Box to all apprentices (including the building and construction industry) within the Skills Institute. This training is backed up by a support service to apprentices.

This type of training and support is a first for any tertiary (TAFE equivalent) institution and it has come about through a combination of the vision of the Tasmanian building and construction industry to bring OzHelp to Tasmania in 2007 and the successful implementation of the OzHelp Tasmania Program by its small, but dedicated staff.

Recent external evaluations undertaken by the University of Tasmania with employers who use OzHelp's training and support services indicate that their partnership with OzHelp has been extremely positive and successful. At the same time suggestions for improvements from employers and the evaluation have been incorporated into operating procedures, such as a shorter and more workplace focused Life Skills program for apprentices and young trainees and a program for supervisors.

Training activities continue to grow with over 300 apprentices undertaking the Workplace Life Skills Tool Box including 105 apprentices that completed the program in the last 12 months. As future leading hands and job supervisors they will carry the skills they have learnt forward and pass these onto the next generation of workers in the industry. Over the same period 58 supervisors have undertaken the Supervisor / Mentor Skills training program and there is a pleasing increase in demand for this training as word spreads of this necessary and successful course.

On the support front there continues to be a strong demand for our services. OzHelp Tasmania has directly supported 363 clients and provided information and assistance to a further 297 over the last 12 months. However whilst statistics are important, and they provide a benchmark on which to measure outcomes they do not convey the complete message. At the high end of the scale over the last 12 months OzHelp has been involved with twelve suicide related interventions. Whilst this is an increase on last year it is important to note that OzHelp was available and that all the interventions have been successful. The primary age group range has been from late teen to early 20's several of the cases have been in the 25 – 40 year old bracket.

The biggest challenge for the future is securing ongoing funding and developing sustainability through fee for service activities. In this regard June 2011 marks the end of the current round of funding from the Department of Health and Ageing and whilst the success of the OzHelp Tasmania program to date bodes well for future support, this support cannot be guaranteed.

I would therefore like to urge participants of the OzHelp program and services to support the transition to the fee for service activities and regard the costs as a sound investment for the future of their company and industry workforce.

Last but not least OzHelp Tasmania now has its own website and I would encourage you to visit the website and pass the word around – www.ozhelptasmania.org.au

In closing my welcome I would like to thank the many supporters of OzHelp Tasmania for their contribution to the ongoing success of OzHelp.

Training

The Workplace Life Skills Toolbox

Following feedback from employers and external evaluation of the 'six day' Life Skills Tool Box program OzHelp trialled a 'three day' *workplace* life skills version last year. The positive feedback from both employers and participants has now seen the formal introduction and implementation of the new *Workplace Life Skills Tool Box Program* – a three day program focusing on 'life skills' that support the critical transition from school into the workplace (often the most difficult part of an apprenticeship).

External evaluation has also shown that the Workplace Life Skills Tool Box Program has improved the social capacity and resilience of apprentices across a range of measures including help seeking behaviour, financial literacy, social competence and health related issues. In particular significant

improvements have been seen in workplace relations, communication in the workplace, conflict resolution and social connectedness.

In this regard employers are now recognising the significance of the training investment with more productive and well rounded apprentices who are able to confidently face life's challenges and seek appropriate help when required.

As highlighted earlier the success of the program in the building and construction industry has resulted in four of the components of the program being provided to all apprentices attending the Skills Institute in the coming year. This hopefully is the first small step to getting the full program run within the Skills Institute in years to come.

Supervisor and Mentor Training – A New Program

As highlighted in the last update industry feedback identified a *management skills* shortfall at the supervisor level. Primarily this related to difficulties supervisors and mentors were having connecting with their workforces, especially young workers, in a support capacity.

This initiated the development and piloting of a *Supervisor / Mentor Skills Training Program* designed to facilitate the professional development of mentors and supervisors within industry workplaces in order to provide improved support to workers, apprentices and trainees in the workplace. This package is a practical hands on program providing 'the skills required' rather than 'the theory of' how to support workers in their role as either a supervisor or mentor.

This program is currently being rolled out to workplaces both within and outside the building and construction industry with considerable success. Once again the building and construction industry has led the way.

The Tasmanian Building and Construction Industry Leads the Way - Expansion into Other Industries

Last year OzHelp Tasmania completed pilot Workplace Life Skills Programs with three other Tasmanian industries keen to replicate the positive difference that the industry / OzHelp partnership has created. These were - apprentice chefs in the hospitality industry (through the Federal Group), apprentice mechanics in the motor trade industry (through the (TACC) Tasmanian Automobile Chamber of Commerce) and young road workers in the civil industry (through Roadways). To date the Federal Group has continued with the program, Roadways is in the process of further implementation of the program and the TACC is developing ways to incorporate the training for their apprentices.

Whilst we are continuing to develop these partnerships other industries including Rio Tinto are also looking at incorporating aspects of the OzHelp Tasmania Program.

Support Services

Industry Driven Change

Support services for OzHelp comprises various forms of support which range from pastoral type care, site visits, case management, mental health promotion and counselling to all workers in the building and construction industry.

In the last update I mentioned that response to the support service had been twofold. On one level it was viewed as a 'foreign process' and as 'a little touchy feely' and unnecessary to employers.

However whilst there are still pockets of this attitude there has been a noticeable shift towards 'a general acceptance of' and 'support for' the 'mental health and wellbeing' of industry workers as a key issue for workforce development. Whilst there is still some way to go before it is incorporated in all workplaces, the industry can take credit for leading the way within Tasmania.

'A New Mindset' A Framework for Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing

One of the difficulties that OzHelp Tasmania has encountered in encouraging the implementation of mental health, wellbeing and suicide intervention activities within workplaces is the lack of information and policies and procedures around '*workplace mental health and wellbeing*'. This is stark contrast to OH&S and physical health policies.

To overcome this barrier OzHelp Tasmania is currently developing a resource designed to assist employers develop simple, yet practical, policies and procedures for mental health and wellbeing promotion, prevention and early intervention within their workplaces.

Entitled 'A New Mindset' it is being developed in conjunction with Graduates of the 2009 Tasmanian Leaders Program recognising that any process needed to be workplace friendly, cost effective and simple to implement.

It is hoped to have this up and running by July 2010 and will be featured on the OzHelp Tasmania Website once it is completed.

Governance Board

At the OzHelp Tasmania 2009 AGM the following Board was elected:

Chairman	Royce Fairbrother	Fairbrother Pty
Vice Chairman	Tony Benson	CFMEU
Secretary	Fred Lijauco	TBCITB
Treasurer	Phil Sidney	Roadways
Committee Members	Gary Knight	BGas
	Dicky Post	CBus
	Jon Schwaiger	Hazell Bros
	Tony Cook	CCF

Sustainability 2010 and beyond

Currently the ability for OzHelp Tasmania to deliver its training and support services has been as a direct result of Federal funding from the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA)- under the National Suicide Prevention Strategy Grant Program - combined with financial and 'in kind' support from within the industry. Current DoHA funding (350,000 a year) is due to finish in June 2011 and at this stage there are no guarantees that we will continue to receive funding beyond then. However we are hopeful that the Foundation's successes, expansion into other industries and innovative products will place us in a favourable position to receive further support. At the same time we are currently waiting for confirmation of new financial support from the State Government of \$100,000 a year for two years.

As highlighted in the last update OzHelp Tasmania was in the process of moving toward a 'fee for service' model for its training services. This has now been implemented and should now form a sound basis to reduce full reliance on grant income.

Overall the Foundation is in a sound position for the next twelve months and we are confident of increasing our sustainability beyond Jun 2011.

The Future

Whilst the immediate focus for the Foundation is sustainability beyond 2011 OzHelp Tasmania also remains focused on its reason for being – suicide prevention - "providing workplace mental health and wellbeing promotion, prevention and early intervention services incorporating suicide prevention and social capacity building programs".

It is our vision that Tasmania will have resilient, resourceful and productive workforces that are able to confidently face life's challenges and provide measureable benefits throughout the Tasmanian workplaces and the community. However we cannot do this alone and to this end the Foundation will build on its successful reputation and move towards developing mutually beneficial relationships with other likeminded organisations.

Thank-You

In closing I would like to take the opportunity to thank the members for supporting the OzHelp Tasmania partnership and developing a highly regarded and well recognised workplace suicide prevention model that also develops a resilient and robust workforce.

I would also like to thank the many supporters of OzHelp for their financial contribution and in kind support. Your commitment has saved lives and assisted workers cope with life's difficulties.

Whilst there is still some way to achieving all the goals and future sustainability of the OzHelp Tasmania Foundation we are on the right track and we look forward to your continued support.

Doug Vautier
CEO