

Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy



If this report has raised any concerns for you or someone you know, please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14

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DISCLAIMER

This strategy does not constitute an industry or mental health and wellbeing standard.

Potential targets and potential actions included in this document have been developed based on information collected during each of the strategy design phases. As such, potential targets and actions are based on the input of a sample of stakeholders and may not represent the opinion of all individuals within the energy supply industry.

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Foreword



The rapid transformation of the energy sector creates opportunities and challenges for the industry. As customers embrace new technology and services, energy networks are enabling this new environment.

The men and women who help us deliver energy to almost every Australian home and business, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week are the key to this transformation. During this time of significant change, the mental health and wellbeing of our workforce and the broader community is a clear priority

Energy Networks Australia has developed this *Mental Health and Wellness Strategy* to provide a vision for the future of mental health for our sector and in our communities.

Supporting mental health and wellbeing is a community responsibility, and the workplace provides an important setting to influence the health of the workforce. We have an opportunity to pro-actively influence “healthy minds” in the way we lead, communicate, and live our values.

Recognising and strengthening the preventative side of the mental health outcomes is as important as being prepared to support those who are suffering from mental ill-health. This can be achieved by considering the principles contained within this strategy: building trust; focusing on the whole person (not simply the work they do); increasing awareness; and sharing ownership of the matter.

I encourage everyone in the energy industry to actively invest time to engage with colleagues and customers through conversation. Conversations provide an opportunity to learn from others and, where required, encourage people to seek out appropriate support.

I hope that this *Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* provokes thought and discussion which will challenge you to enhance existing approaches to the management of mental health and wellbeing in your organisation and your communities.

Nino Ficca

Chair, Energy Networks Australia

Background

The landscape for the Australian energy sector is changing. This represents exciting opportunities for our customers and our businesses, but it also places increased demands on our workforce.

This, combined with the unique characteristics of our businesses; the need to respond to natural disasters and emergencies, working in sometimes rural or remote areas and the nature of working with electricity and gas, presents a clear need to prioritise the way energy networks approach mental health and wellbeing.

In order to continue to support our workforce energy networks need to adapt and develop a strategic approach to provide positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes.

Increasing awareness of the importance of promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for the workplace has led Energy Networks Australian to develop this *Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* to better inform the policy direction and options available to create a healthy and supportive organisation – one that proactively supports its workforce in their mental health and wellbeing journey.

Given the role electricity and gas networks play in the community we also hope to positively contribute to our community through our commitment to mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

Mental health conditions can be thought of on a spectrum, with positive mental health and wellbeing at one end and mental illness at the other. During an individual's life they may move many times across the spectrum and experience various states of wellness or illness at different times. Almost half of all Australians will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime, andⁱ approximately one in five Australians will experience some form of mental illness this year.ⁱⁱ 54% of people with mental illness do not access any treatment.ⁱⁱⁱ

Energy Networks Australia members have prioritised the need for a clear vision and direction on the status of mental health and wellbeing across the industry. This strategy demonstrates our commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of individuals, and recognises the importance of mental health and wellbeing in all of our lives. This strategy aims to provide the framework that will allow energy networks to proactively invest in mental health and wellbeing as well as to access support to help those in need.





By working together, our member organisations can collectively create change in the workplace and impact the lives of those who are affected by poor mental health.

Recognising that some energy networks have mature mental health and wellbeing programs and that every workplace requires a tailored approach, the *Energy Networks Australia Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* is intended to provide general guidance and to be considered in conjunction with any existing program objectives, targets, and actions.

Experts in mental health and wellbeing place increasing importance on the role that leadership plays in setting the tone for mental health and wellbeing throughout an organisation. In leading by example, Energy Networks Australia hopes to set the tone for its member organisations and establish clear expectations for mental health and wellbeing for our sector.

We encourage the energy sector to use this strategy to promote wellbeing as a core part of their business. By promoting positive mental health and wellbeing in the energy industry, we can create a thriving and engaged workforce.

This strategy sets a vision for the future of mental health in our industry and communities. It provides clear mental health and wellbeing expectations for our members.

Journey and status of Mental Health & Wellbeing in the Australian energy networks sector

Energy Networks Australia is committed to the work, health and safety of the energy sector's workforce and to increasing the awareness of mental health and wellbeing in both our industry and community. Historically, the majority of our past efforts focused on the physical aspects of workplace health and safety.

Today, there is an increased understanding of the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing and the roles that industry and employers can play. Mental illness has a significant impact on individuals and communities. It can also impact businesses' workplace productivity, and contribute to an increase in healthcare and disability costs. If left unaddressed, this can also have an impact on rates of injury in the workplace, absenteeism, reduced employee engagement and talent retention.

While there has been an increased focus on mental health and wellbeing within our member organisations in recent years, in some cases more can be done to support employees on their mental health and wellbeing journey at work. This includes equipping our organisations with the tools and support they need to proactively manage workforce mental health and wellbeing.

The Energy Networks Australia *Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* has been developed in collaboration with energy network businesses across Australia, with contributions from front line workers through to executive management. We have asked what is important to our members and what positive mental health and wellbeing looks like to them, to guide us as we develop a united vision and objectives for the future.

In interviews and focus groups conducted to develop this mental health and wellbeing Strategy, network employees have told us that:

- Management needs to further develop relevant skills for it to properly identify and provide ongoing support for those with mental health and wellbeing difficulties.
- There is a perception that management of mental health and wellbeing can be more reactive than proactive, with identification of mental health and wellbeing issues sometimes not occurring early enough.
- The historical stigma associated with mental ill-health can make it difficult for people to ask for help. In addition, one of the largest challenges faced by the sector is the industry's male-dominated workforce. Statistically, this demographic is at higher risk of experiencing mental illnesses, such as depression.
- The nature of the industry is changing due to technological advancement, process engineering automation and the drive for efficiencies, which is creating an environment of uncertainty that could increase the impact on the mental health and wellbeing of our people.
- Supporting actions to address mental health and wellbeing with data or evidence is difficult as there is limited statistical information available.



What does the future look like?

The *Energy Networks Australia Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* has been developed to provide a collaborative and unified approach, to better position our industry and our workforce, to create a positive mental health and wellbeing environment both within our industry and communities.

A crucial element to implement an improved outlook for mental health and wellbeing in our industry is to provide a strategic approach to managing mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

By providing a mental health and wellbeing strategy, we are creating a forum for further discussion, to reduce stigma and provide a proactive path to supporting the workforce and to progress beyond reactive responses.

Our goal is to equip our sector with knowledge and tools to navigate the changing pace and nature of the working environment, to create positive change.

By supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our entire workforce there is an opportunity to foster a more engaged and productive workforce with a greater sense of meaning and purpose in and outside of the workplace.





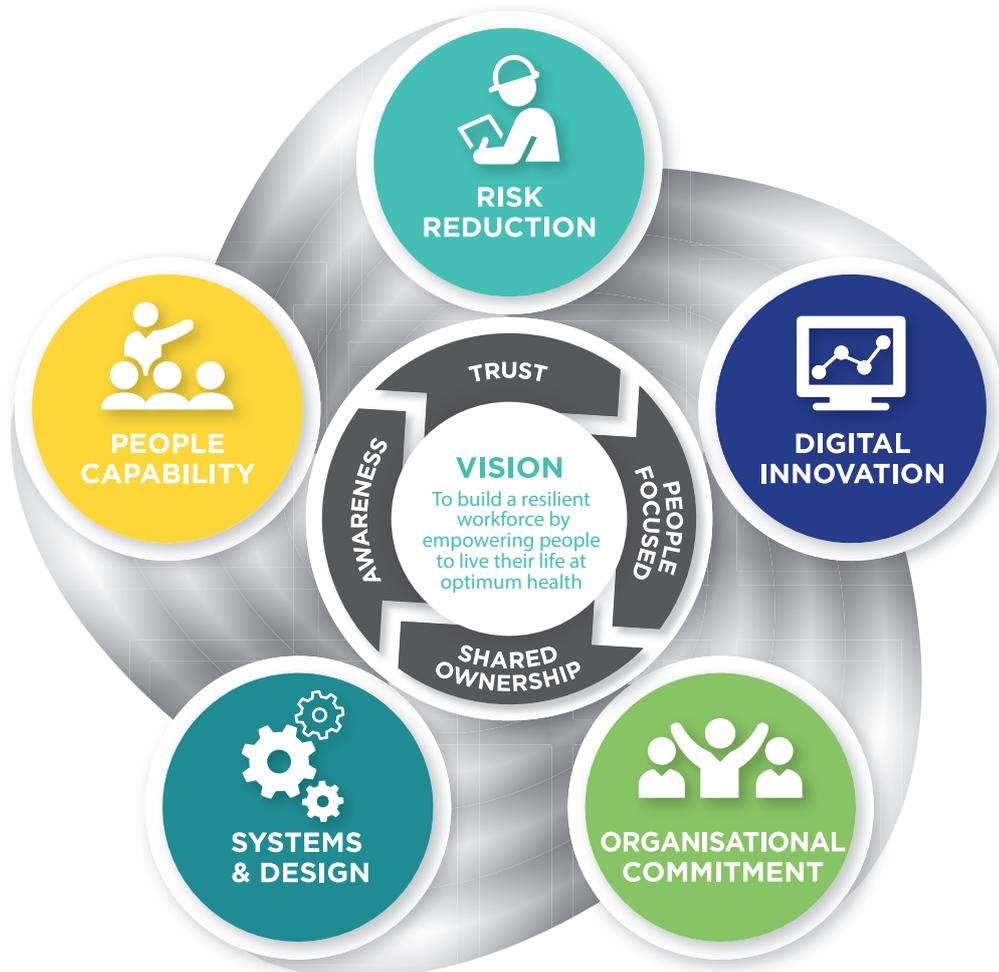
The Energy Networks Australia Mental Health & Wellbeing Model

The Energy Networks Australia Mental Health and Wellbeing Model shown below summarises the key elements of the *Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy*.

The model clearly demonstrates that:

- Our vision is at the core of all we do.
- The principles of trust, people-focused, shared ownership, and awareness are interconnected and frame this vision.
- The objectives are our key drivers for measuring positive change to deliver our vision.

Figure 1: The Energy Networks Australia Mental Health and Wellbeing Model



Our Vision

“To build a resilient workforce by empowering people to live their life at optimum health”

The Energy Networks Australia Mental Health and Wellbeing Model (Figure 1) provides a framework for promoting and furthering the positive mental health and wellbeing of our workforce. By implementing this strategy, we aim to build individual and organisational strength that assists our people on this journey.

Our people are at the centre of the vision. It focuses on how energy networks can assist each other to achieve our shared vision of a resilient workforce, whose people are empowered to live their life at optimum health.

The model is underpinned by four guiding principles and five strategic objectives that will support us in achieving our vision.

Our Principles

- Trust
- People focused
- Awareness
- Shared ownership

These principles guide our overall approach to mental health and wellbeing in the energy industry, inform our decisions and the way we will achieve our objectives.

Trust

Building trust is fundamental to the success of mental health and wellbeing strategies. This involves putting personal biases to one side and demonstrating our commitment through actions.

People focused

Our people are at the centre of our vision, extending from the employee to their families and the communities in which they live. This extends to treating people with dignity and respect, including protection of their confidentiality and respect for privacy.

Awareness

Increasing awareness of mental health and wellbeing is a key aspect of our vision as it will assist in reducing the stigma associated with mental ill-health. By increasing mental health and wellbeing literacy across the sector we will challenge the misconceptions that exist around poor mental health, encourage positive mental health and wellbeing conversations, and empower people to live at their optimum health.

Shared ownership

Our model emphasises our shared responsibility for the promotion and progress of mental health and wellbeing across energy networks. This includes adoption of mental health and wellbeing roadmaps by senior executives through to individuals taking control of their own mental health and wellbeing. We see the creation of a healthy organisation as a shared responsibility amongst all.

Strategic Objectives

Based on collaboration with energy network businesses, this strategy defines five strategic objectives that can be considered when determining appropriate actions to achieve our mental health and wellbeing vision.



Risk Reduction

In order to achieve the greatest improvements in mental health outcomes, mental health and wellbeing can be acknowledged at the forefront of corporate risk agendas.



Digital Innovation

Delivering best practice mental health and wellbeing outcomes involves utilising and embracing new technologies. This includes harnessing digital technology in conjunction with current service systems for a targeted, accessible and aligned mental health and wellbeing approach.



Organisational Commitment

We recognise that every member organisation is committed to advancing our industry's MH&W capacity. Commitment at the organisational level is critical to the success of the industry and its people.



Systems and Design

Transparent and consistent policies and shared approaches to support a positive mental health and wellbeing environment by articulating a strategic and meaningful approach.



People Capability

In order to support mental health and wellbeing, member organisations can nurture support services, including the strategies and pathways that underpin them.



Risk Reduction

Strategic objective

“ In order to achieve the greatest improvements in mental health outcomes, mental health and wellbeing should be acknowledged at the forefront of corporate risk agendas.”

What do we know?

We need to be aware of, reduce, and manage the impact of mental health and wellness risk factors that effect our workforce. This will involve strengthening protective measures and reducing work related risk factors. In addition, knowledge sharing between network businesses will improve the effectiveness of risk prevention programs.

Why is this important?

Success with this objective means our workforce will operate in a mentally healthy environment which can be achieved through the acknowledgment and management of mental health and wellness risk factors and stressors, with continual monitoring and assessment.

How will we achieve this?

Table 1 on the following page outlines several recommended targets and actions for achieving adequate risk reduction.

This *Potential Targets & Actions Toolbox* details targets and actions identified during consultation that represent good industry practice, or solutions that have worked for some businesses and may also work for others.

Table 1: Risk Reduction – Potential targets and actions toolbox

Potential Targets	Potential Actions
<p>A workforce with a clear understanding of mental health and wellbeing risks and controls relevant to their business.</p> <p>A reduced mental health and wellbeing risk profile of the organisation.</p> <p>Risk and mitigating controls are proactively and responsibly managed.</p> <p>Strengthened protective factors for mental health and wellbeing across the organisation</p> <p>Risk management framework including mental health and wellbeing risks developed and implemented.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop mental health and wellbeing risk profile involving key business stakeholders and include identified risks into the business risk register. • Assess the psychosocial risk climate (e.g. via a survey) to develop an understanding of the current state of mental health and wellbeing within the organisation. • Implement and validate evidence based programs to mitigate mental health and wellbeing risks. These may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop and implement early intervention and prevention programs – Increase understanding in lifestyle and financial management – Design and implement a mental health and wellbeing Critical Risk Program that identifies and implements key controls relating to mental health and wellbeing – Successful recovery from mental illness through implementation of effective return to work programs





Digital Innovation

Strategic objective

“ Delivering best practice mental health and wellbeing outcomes involves utilising and embracing new technologies. This includes harnessing digital technology in conjunction with current service systems for a targeted and aligned mental health and wellbeing approach.”

What do we know?

Digital technology is changing the way we operate. It can facilitate continuous improvements in mental health and wellness by monitoring risks and hazards, identifying hot spots, tracking performance, and reporting metrics. It also provides a wider platform for communication, allowing us to bridge gaps and ensure key messages reach all of our members.

Why is this important?

Digital technology presents an opportunity to be a catalyst in promoting and achieving greater mental health and wellness across our industry. It can also play a role in contributing to mental health and wellness issues, and as such needs to be used strategically. New technologies provide the platform for greater possibilities in data collection, data analysis, timely sharing of data and ideas, and facilitating collaboration across the industry.

How will we achieve this?

Table 2 on the following page outlines several recommended targets and actions for achieving digital innovation.

This *Potential Targets & Actions Toolbox* details targets and actions identified during consultation that represent good industry practice, or, solutions that have worked for some members and may also work for others.

Table 2: Digital Innovation – Potential targets and actions toolbox

Potential Targets	Potential Actions
<p>A culture of trust among the workforce, with the knowledge that data gathered through technology platforms will not prejudice or be used against them.</p> <p>Greater, faster, more accessible, and more accurate data collection concerning mental health and wellbeing .</p> <p>Fully utilised existing and future digital technology to aid work productivity.</p> <p>A workforce with better access to available mental health and wellbeing support services through technology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate mental health and wellbeing digital innovation within business plans or similar. • Incorporate commitment to confidentiality and data privacy into all relevant materials. • Develop and promote a centralised hub for existing and future mental health and wellbeing resources available for workers, including those available in the public domain. • Work towards incorporating technology into mental health and wellbeing outcomes, including tools for remote workers. • Utilise digital technology to identify risk hot spots in the organisation, such as business units exposed to high stress. • Where practical, support working environments where data and documents can be accessed outside of the office to promote flexible working arrangements and an improved work-life balance. • Consider development and rollout of a mobile digital technology based platform for reporting poor mental health incidents. • Identify the risk associated with reliance on digital technology and put controls in place to reduce these risks.





Organisational Commitment

Strategic objective

“ We recognise that energy network businesses are committed to advancing the capacity of our industry’s mental health and wellness. This commitment at the organisational level is critical to the success of the industry and its people.”

What do we know?

A whole-of-organisation commitment is required to introduce and embed mental health and wellness into everyday work situations. This includes reinforcing the shared responsibility of mental health and wellness across the organisational workforce, and ensuring there is an executive level commitment to the program.

Genuine and consistent mental health and wellness language should be adopted, underpinned by visible policies, procedures, and practices to demonstrate authentic commitment throughout the organisation.

Why is this important?

To provide an effective approach to *mental health and wellness* we need commitment across all layers and levels of our member organisations. By working together and embracing a commitment to *mental health and wellness*, our workforce will be supported to reduce the risk of mental ill-health.

How will we achieve this?

Table 3 on the following page outlines several recommended targets and actions for achieving organisational commitment.

This *Potential Targets & Actions Toolbox* details targets and actions identified during consultation that represent good industry practice, or, solutions that have worked for some members and may also work for others

Table 3: Organisational Commitment – Potential targets and actions toolbox

Potential Targets	Potential Actions
Ownership and promotion of mental health and wellbeing commitments by business leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider some form of Mental Health and Wellbeing Committee to oversee the management of key initiatives.
Visible policies and procedures that align with the desired culture and strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a mental health and wellbeing approach that is compliant and integrated with business WH&S management systems. Establish effective strategies to communicate requirements and assign clear accountabilities for implementation and monitoring.
Mental health and wellbeing adequately resourced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include key mental health and wellbeing measures in relevant business reporting and agendas.
Consistent mental health and wellbeing language embedded into everyday business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate executive attendance at mental health and wellbeing events.
Encourage a culture of reporting and managing mental health issues without prejudice or stigmatisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate resources (financial and human) to efficiently and effectively manage the execution of mental health and wellbeing programs and initiatives.
Increasingly engaged workforce e.g. increased participation rates in mental health and wellbeing action items.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage workers to actively participate in mental health and wellbeing programs and share benefits both in the workplace and at home.
Reduced absenteeism and presenteeism.	
Reduced stigma.	





Systems and Design

Strategic objective

“ Transparent and consistent policies and procedures to support a positive mental health and wellness environment by articulating a strategic and meaningful approach.”

What do we know?

Systems and structures are required to implement mental health and wellness policies and programs. This includes ensuring that mental health and wellness is effectively implemented and integrated into the business management systems, so that work is well designed, taking into account mental health and wellness policies.

Why is this important?

Clearly defined and capable systems are required for delivering positive mental health and wellness outcomes. Policies and procedures act as a guide for organisations, help establish expectations, and ensure that all facets of mental health and wellness are considered.

How will we achieve this?

Table 4 on the following page outlines several recommended targets and actions for achieving adequate systems and program design.

This *Potential Targets & Actions Toolbox* details targets and actions identified during consultation that represent good industry practice, or, solutions that have worked for some members and may also work for others.

Table 4: Systems and Design – Potential targets and actions toolbox

Potential Targets	Potential Actions
<p>A work environment and design conducive to positive mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>An effective health, safety and environment management system is in place, integrating mental health and wellbeing with clear linkages to health, safety and environment objectives and targets.</p> <p>A business that proactively responds to mental health and wellbeing concerns.</p> <p>Mental health and wellbeing appropriately integrated within business management systems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop key mental health and wellbeing goals and targets for the business. • Undertake a mental health and wellbeing self-assessment including identifying system and policy gaps and implementing actions for further improvement. • Include consideration of people’s mental health and wellbeing when designing or procuring work spaces. • Audit the effectiveness of mental health and wellbeing requirements and expectations with established management systems. • Consider employee workshops to gain employee feedback on effectiveness of existing systems or work environment. • Establish and maintain effective referral pathways and support mechanisms to uphold positive mental health and wellbeing (i.e., employee assistance programs).





People Capability

Strategic objective

“ In order to support mental health and wellness, energy network businesses can nurture support services, including the strategies and pathways that underpin them.”

What do we know?

Our workforce will require the knowledge and skills to implement mental health and wellbeing policies and programs, as well as to provide support to the workforce to deliver them. Developing our people capability includes developing people and leadership abilities, to help embed a workplace culture that supports positive mental health and wellbeing.

Why is this important?

Our people will have the skills and tools to manage their own mental health and wellbeing. Clear communication, support pathways, and structured training throughout their career, along with an increased understanding of mental health and wellbeing, will lead to a cultural shift in member organisations as well as reduced stigma.

How will we achieve this?

Table 5 on the following page outlines several recommended targets and actions for achieving people capability.

This *Potential Targets & Actions Toolbox* details targets and actions identified during consultation that represent good industry practice, or, solutions that have worked for some members and may also work for others.

Table 5: People Capability – Potential targets and actions toolbox

Potential Targets	Potential Actions
<p>Resilient workers who are equipped to withstand a changing work environment.</p> <p>A workplace culture that has reduced stigma and increased awareness towards mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>A workforce with adequate knowledge and awareness of mental health and wellbeing risks and controls for implementation.</p> <p>Effective mental health and wellbeing support services.</p> <p>Defined roles and responsibilities for mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Increased engagement and commitment to the mental health and wellbeing agenda by all layers of the workforce, including executives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and implement a training program in order to nurture and develop mental health and wellbeing literacy and capability within the workforce. • Identify key business mental health and wellbeing roles and support, and develop people to achieve role expectations. • Implement workplace education programs which address specific risk factors for workers. This may include preventative strategies such as training in early intervention and resilience. • Establish a leadership development program that provides knowledge on recognising and responding to individuals across the mental health and wellbeing continuum. • Contribute to an industry mental health and wellbeing collaborative forum to support wellbeing action items among businesses, share knowledge, and promote innovative and successful activities.



Implementing the Energy Networks Australia Mental Health Strategy

Energy Networks Australia is committed to working with energy network businesses to maximise the value of this Energy Networks Australia Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Acknowledging the differences in mental health and wellbeing maturity across the sector, the Energy Networks Australia Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is available to the industry as a possible baseline from which organisations can either start their journey or as a maintenance tool to check that existing mental health and wellbeing programs are in line with good practice.

We seek to encourage and support continuous improvement in mental health and wellbeing outcomes across the energy sector. As part of this commitment to mental health and wellbeing, we will facilitate collaboration across energy networks and provide guidance in order to drive positive change in our industry.

In addition to the mental health and wellbeing Strategy, Energy Networks Australia members can access our Mental Health and Wellbeing Assessment Tool'.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Assessment Tool

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Self-Assessment tool allows an energy network business to assess itself against 28 criteria of a mentally healthy workplace. Flexible by design, energy network businesses are able to assess and compare their mental health and wellbeing program with the industry average without meeting prescriptive requirements.

To assess the current state of the industry and progress against the strategy over time, Energy Networks Australia will facilitate voluntary sharing of assessment results as well as adoption of potential targets and actions recommended in this strategy.



Support Services

In addition to employee assistance programs provided by most energy network businesses, individuals can access a number of additional mental health and wellbeing resources.

These include;

- Beyondblue (mentally healthy workplace)
- Conversations matter
- Heads up
- Headspace
- Lifeline
- Men@Work
- MindSpot
- myCompass by the Black Dog Institute
- Suicide call back
- SPEAK UP! Stay ChatTY!



Endnotes

- i Australian Bureau of Statistics, National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 4326.0, 2007.
- ii Australian Bureau of Statistics, National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results, 4326.0, 2007.
- iii Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Australia's Health, 2014.



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