



# SUPPORTING LEADERS WITH DISPLACED & REMOTE WORKERS

Managing people,  
performance &  
wellbeing over distance

## AN UNPRECEDENTED LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE

Never before, on a mass scale, has it been paramount for leaders to show supportive leadership behaviours and organisational preparedness – considering what Australians have faced and are facing in 2020 with natural disasters and COVID-19. Leaders are confronted with a changing, ambiguous, uncertain and demanding time. Good communication, organisation and coping skills will be necessary and critical – extending over a long period of time. Leader burnout is a risk.



In these trying work conditions, organisations and leaders need to be making good decisions about their peoples' performance, engagement, and wellbeing. Furthermore, emotions will continue to escalate in individuals who are usually 'emotionally secure' as COVID-19 continues, let alone people who may be prone to anxiety or at risk.

## PRACTICAL & SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS

There are practical things that can be done to support leaders and help manage the pressures of complex and wicked problems affecting people and workforces.

**Controlled communication** – Executive level and all leaders should lead factual, composed, consistent, controlled and regular communications about how the organisation is responding and supporting people and work. This includes leave and salary arrangements. A rolling and controlled plan for leaders to follow is essential. Include positive messages and ways to encourage solution-focused and opportunity-finding mindsets.

**Team engagement** – Whether its' part of BAU, working from home, remote workforce leadership, self-isolation, or long-term leave, it is important to have a plan to maintain connectedness/belongingness, monitor wellbeing and, clarify directions/expectations. How do you do this (as appropriate and based on case-by-case factors):

- *Regular check-in conversations* (leader to team-member). Ask your people how they are going, what they need, what they're concerns are and what you/they can do about it that's within your control. Leaders should prepare for identifying signs and symptoms of mental stress and how to have an empathic conversations that shows understanding of normal human worries, frustrations and concerns.
- *Routine group teleconferences* (as a strong preference) or email contact can assist in staying connected. Perhaps hold virtual morning teas and Friday afternoon drinks to maintain connections.
- *Collaborate and involve the team* in how they want to maintain connection and focus – things like buddy-systems and peer-led small-group coaching/catch-ups may help take the load of managers who have larger numbers of direct reports.

**Proactive wellbeing support for individuals** – each person should prepare for the reality of living in isolation and plan usual management strategies – exercise at home, fresh food access, electronic social interactions, forward planning access to necessary medications (particularly mental health medications for the purposes of this email).

Each individual should have access to a hard or soft fact sheet that directs self-assessment of wellbeing (one thing provided by social interactions, which is often not recognised is objective feedback on wellbeing). Online Wellbeing / Mindfulness resources (accessible from home) and grounding exercises like yoga, gym work and physical activity can help people to be grounded and settled during stressful times. People should be encouraged to recall the good things, positives and the big-picture. Experts advise that focusing on facts from the Health Department and limiting time spent on social media may help.

**Reactive wellbeing support for individuals** – each individual should be aware of the 24/7 telephone counselling support; they should know that they can keep regular contact with a counsellor via phone.

*Individual wellbeing plans* could be initiated where each employee records their coping strategies, strengths, guiding values, good things in life, support network, current personal concerns and how to deal with those concerns. Return to work should be planned with appropriate approvals.

## LEADERSHIP SUPPORT & SELF-CARE

**Leadership team support, debriefing and coaching** – At times like these, when leaders are already under the pump, it can advantageous to engage experts to provide support, coaching, group-debriefs and training to leaders, managers and supervisors. This reduces leadership anxiety, promotes leadership resilience and preparedness and has a flow on effect of providing a 'sense of support and containment' to the workforce.

**Leadership compassion** – All leaders, as with all workers, will at some point have a reaction and needs some sort of advice, support or encouragement. This is normal and to be expected. Each individual will be affected differently, and some will have multiple layers of concern or risk. Ask "what can I do as your leader to help and support you?". NOW is the time to be human, patient and compassionate – with yourself.

**Leadership wellbeing** - Leaders should engage in proactive self-care routines that facilitate energy, focus and wellbeing, enabling them to be present and responsive to team needs. Activities include peer-discussions to calibrate expectations, regular power-breaks to relax and refocus, mindfulness/meditation exercises, physical exercise, good nutrition and good sleep hygiene (spending at least 30 minutes, without devices, winding down before sleep).

## PROACTIVELY SEEK EXPERT ADVICE

For advice on services that may support your leaders and workplace, please contact our team at [service@yespsychology.com.au](mailto:service@yespsychology.com.au) or 1300 ASK YES (1300 275 937).

MORE ways to help: <https://www.yespsychology.com.au/126/supporting-workplaces-impacted-by-covid-19>