

Work Well Awards 2023

Queensland
Good jobs
Better services
Great lifestyle

Example entry

Category five – Best commitment to work health and wellbeing

1: Describe how work health and wellbeing is embedded into your organisations system and culture.

Established in 1824, Australian Agricultural Company (AACo) is Australia's largest integrated cattle and beef producer and is the oldest continuously operating company in Australia. Today, AACo owns and operates 24 properties, feedlots and farms comprising around seven million hectares of land in Queensland and NT.

Our WHS strategy has a strong focus on Mental Health & Well being – Healthy Body, Healthy Mind, Healthy Place. (WHS Strategy attached)

AACo strongly promote psychological safety, mental health and well being for their people, who are valued for their work alongside an injury prevention strategy. A review of the previous EAP included valuable feedback from employees – reporting less than 3% of employees were accessing sessions and a need was identified for a more rural-centered regional provider.

AACo consulted with Strive Occupational Rehabilitation for a 'tailor made' Employee Support mental health support program for 430 employees across Qld and NT which offers:

- Employee Support – one to one coaching service for all employees, with over 8 psychologists, OT's, physio's who support our physical injury rehabilitation and return to work programs as a holistic approach
- Manager Support – coaching for Managers to prepare for difficult conversations, support their employees during and outside work hours, or debrief following incidents
- Critical incident response
- Support for family members extending to younger children/teens as well
- A communication and marketing plan was established to capture all areas and levels of the business including:
- A dedicated hotline 1300 AACO ES and text line for younger staff
- Various flyers and materials were created for distribution - both online and paper form for display on sites
- Strive Consultants are allocated regions to build an ongoing relationship with employees and staff bios were created to 'put faces to names'
- Station visits were undertaken to launch the program in September 2021.



Safer, healthier workplaces
for everyone, every day



Work Well Awards 2023

Queensland
Good jobs
Better services
Great lifestyle

Over the first 8 months of the Employee Support Program the uptake and utilisation has exceeded expectations with over 10% of the workforce engaging. Over 130 support sessions have been accessed and 12 trips to various stations/feedlots/farms - an ongoing commitment to roll out the program across the vast locations.

Strive provide feedback with common 'themes' & whether stressors are personal or work which allows AACo to provide additional support to employee's through coaching, mentoring and future training programs.

The WHS team dedicate a role for an Injury Management Coordinator, with ownership of this strategy and a clear and measurable goal to increase the access & uptake of these employee support sessions.

The AACo board and executive team have a direct interest into our health & well being programs and are regularly updated on the success and implementation of this program. Senior leadership, inclusive of our CEO regularly promote company wide communications their personal and financial commitment to support of the programs.

Anecdotal feedback from one long term remote employee on a Qld station who accessed the program: "I can't describe the session I had, I felt like a bush cockatoo and couldn't stop talking. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Everything was brilliant, and I think it was very good for me. Thank you."

2: Describe how your organisation implements work health and wellbeing into everyday operation.

Mental health has been a focal point of AACo's Health & Safety Policy, Strategy & Rehabilitation and Return to Work Programs.

Our frontline leaders and operational employees have participated in mental health training and they support all of our employees to access this program, we also offer 'manager support' sessions which they openly access themselves as a tool for their continuous improvement in their roles.

AACo firmly believe employees need the appropriate support and access to a rural based mental health provider which directly links in with our Physical Safety Strategy of 'Switch On' as a behavioural based safety program - which was also rolled out across the business, part of this was preparing employee's to be in the right mindset before they start work each day.



Safer, healthier workplaces
for everyone, every day



Work Well Awards 2023

In reviewing AACo's risk factors for employee's psychological safety and well being it was identified that there were a number of hazards and areas for improvement.

Risks for employees include:

- Isolation on properties - it is often the first-time young adults had left home
- During the Covid pandemic travel home was often not possible, which was often interstate
- Limited Wi-Fi and telephone reception is poor or non-existent
- Workload pressures, long hours and physically demanding work with motorbikes, horses and cattle handling
- Living and working with people 24 hours per day on station can lead to interpersonal challenges
- AACo's previous EAP provider had a very low uptake over the previous 12 months period:
 - 11 staff had accessed EAP from September 2020 to August 2021
 - 2.43% utilisation rate over 12 months (the year prior utilisation rate was 1.2%)
 - Support was very reactionary when used and private referrals to psychologist's were requested from GP's and employees in preference to EAP service, which were non-existent or lengthy wait times for appointments.

AACo also invested in training Mental Health First Aiders who have the tools to support co-worker's that may be experiencing a mental health problem which is fundamental to ensuring our workforce understands "AACo Cares".

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Skilled Workplace Program awarded GOLD level recognition to AACo in 2021. To achieve this, they had to invest in developing mental health first aid skills in our people, but also show a strong commitment to embedding the program into our culture; through actions like senior leadership support, relevant policies, supporting Mental Health First Aid Officers and continuous improvement.

Strive Occupational Rehabilitation are a regional service with consultants from various disciplines - Occupational Therapist's, psychologists, physiotherapist and they are also the preferred provider for injury management of physical injuries through WorkCover Qld so they know what a bore runner, station hand and feed truck driver does on a daily basis.

The Strive employee support program has been welcomed by the various station/feedlot/farm sites - some sessions are taken whilst the employee completes their work task - doing a bore run/at the social club in the evening after work or during a quiet

Work Well Awards 2023

chat in the garden, the managers offer their residences for privacy and allow employees to access these sessions using internet connections if required.

3: Describe how work health and wellbeing is evaluated and monitored for continual improvement.

AACo is currently undertaking a review of its workplace risks with hazard profiles for psychological safety.

Return to Work is influenced by psychological factors - early intervention, focus on RTW and resilience.

AACo's sustainable RTW programs are also supported by Strive as preferred provider. AACo have reduced employee's time lost from work following an injury - with a 10% decrease to the lost time injury frequency rate over the past year and increased the engagement of workers to remain at work on meaningful suitable duties.

At the current utilisation rate the Employee Support Program should exceed 15% over the 12-month period, over 12 times the uptake of two years ago. With the success of the program to date, AACo yearly budget has increased to continue the engagement rate and the focus on early intervention. The buy in on this program from the Executive level and Board members is exceptional as they fully support this initiative and are given regular updates from the WHS Manager regarding the uptake of the Strive program in the regional areas & across the business as a whole sustainability of people has become a focus not only of land and cattle.

Critical to success of the program are station visits to regions which ensures the program remains rural focused. Strive and AACo have planned travel over the next three months to visit 5 new stations.

Our Corporate employees are also supported and highlighted as a risk factor for general health and well being. AACo have also engaged Strive to provide an office ergonomics program with an OT reviewing office workstations which supports physical injury prevention, we also host Strive consultants in Skyring Head Office in Brisbane to support our corporate team.

An injury management coordinator in the WHS Team regularly travels to our locations to promote and educate our employee's about the access to mental health support and looking out for their mates/co-workers as well.

Work Well Awards 2023

Queensland
Good jobs
Better services
Great lifestyle

Promotional material is displayed around all AACo common areas where employees can make direct confidential contact with Strive via facetime, text, email or in person support. We also communicate this program through our online WorkPlace portal, regular safety meetings, toolbox talks, our 'musters' which cover our pastoral & supply chain locations. As additional family support AACo has close ties to Dolly's Dream, which is committed to changing teen culture by addressing the impact of bullying, mental health, and youth suicide through education and support to our young people and families through Strive we offer a dedicated child psychology resource for AACo staff.

(attached a message from Kate & Meg Everett to AACo on #Do It For Dolly Day)
We also hosted Dolly's Dream Long Lunch as our major fundraiser this year and our regional properties also hosted on station/feedlot/farm activities to raise awareness and promote the cause.

Discussions are in progress with AACo, Strive and WorkCover Queensland about how a similar program may be replicated across the Rural industry, our goal is to increase the support to all of our people on a daily basis.



**Safer, healthier workplaces
for everyone, every day**

