

New mental wellbeing support for aged care workers in Ballarat

A new initiative will use an online monitoring and support system to improve the mental wellbeing of workers in residential aged care services in Ballarat Health Services (BHS).

Wellbeing Track and Change is a collaboration between mental health organisation Prevention United, Federation University Australia and Ballarat Health Services. The initiative was recently funded by WorkSafe Victoria as part of the *WorkWell Mental Health Improvement Fund* that aims to support programs and initiatives to improve mental health and wellbeing for vulnerable workers.

Wellbeing Track and Change involves project partners working collaboratively with staff and management at Ballarat Health Services (BHS) to identify workplace demands on mental wellbeing, and then use an online support system to aid decision-making about what actions need to be taken to better support worker mental wellbeing. The impacts of these actions on workforce mental wellbeing are then monitored to inform continued improvements over time.

Dr Lisa Clinnick, Director of Aged Care Services at Ballarat Health Services, said it was essential that greater support was provided to residential aged care workers.

“We need to care for the people caring for our oldest Australians. The nature of their role can place great pressures on their mental wellbeing. Workloads are high and demanding, changing rosters and shift work are disruptive to their life, and they’re confronted on a regular basis with many of the hardships that ageing can bring”.

Professor Britt Klein, Director of the Biopsychosocial and eHealth Research and Innovation (BeRI) Hub at Federation University Australia, added “When a worker’s mental wellbeing is being looked after, they’re better placed to provide high quality care to residents. So initiatives like this benefit workers, residents and their families”.

Prevention United Chair, Dr Stephen Carbone, described *Wellbeing Track and Change* as representing a shift in how we think about worker mental wellbeing, particularly in high demand settings like aged care services.

“The traditional approach is to look at ways to support an individual worker once they become unwell. But clearly, the smarter way to work is to prevent these

problems occurring in the first place by creating a working environment that supports mental wellbeing”, Dr Carbone said.

Wellbeing Track and Change will take place over 2019-2021 and be implemented across Ballarat Health Services ten residential aged care sites, benefiting over 500 staff. Its impact will be evaluated.

Key contact: TBC

Available for Interview:

Dr Stephen Carbone, Chair, Prevention United

Professor Britt Klein, Federation University Australia

Dr Lisa Clinnick, Director of Aged Care Services, Ballarat Health Service