



APRIL 7 MEDIA STATEMENT TO A CURRENT AFFAIR

MEDIA STATEMENT: A CURRENT AFFAIR

The passing of Mark Finlayson deeply saddened and affected staff from all corners of Dubbo Regional Council. To this day, Mark remains very much top of mind for staff who worked alongside him, and those who worked in Council at the same time as Mark. It is Mark Finlayson's legacy, and the ongoing work of his wife Thea and family, who have championed mental health awareness that drives and motivates us to not only better understand mental health issues, but how we as an organisation recognise, respond to and support those affected by mental health.

Since Mark's passing in August of 2018, Dubbo Regional Council has made significant organisational and policy changes to better equip, protect and support our most valuable asset – our people. Since early 2019, we've worked closely with mental health providers to develop and shape a mental health policy and framework from the ground up. The purpose of the strategy was to focus not only on the physical wellbeing of our people but also the mental, social and emotional wellbeing. We've introduced mental health training, a first for the organisation that

continues to rollout and is part of each and every employees training and development.

In October 2019, Council's Executive Leadership Team approved the implementation of the Mental Health Training Framework and partnered with Lifeline, as a recognised and reputable local organisation to deliver training.

During 2020, 32 workshops were delivered with 445 people attending; keeping in mind COVID-19 affected more/regular face-to-face workshops.

During COVID-19, Dubbo Regional Council developed a specific wellbeing support plan for staff providing practical ideas for staff on how to look after their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing during the pandemic. A corporate wellbeing specialist was engaged to facilitate four wellbeing webinars for all staff. The webinars were available to all staff and contained key information about 'recharging', sleep, social connection and holistic wellbeing strategies. Senior leaders at Dubbo Regional Council supported the wellbeing of their staff as well as themselves, by improving their connection with staff. Tool box resources were developed to build leader capability, so leaders could support their staff confidently during a difficult and uncertain time.

So far in 2021, we have hosted three mental health chat sessions with more than 50 people registering to attend.

Council also runs regular code of conduct and bullying and harassment training. Between 2019 to now, 468 people have completed code of conduct training (2019 [382], 2020 [83], 2021 [3]).

Council could not have achieved the significant changes to our mental health and wellbeing policies without the direct input from people such

as Mark's family, our mental health providers, the executive of Council who since Mark's passing have passionately supported and driven organisational change, and the important feedback from our own staff. That feedback required us to have honest and ongoing conversations about mental health and wellbeing, and how we can improve.

Council worked closely with Mark's family to construct an area along one of the riverside open space projects Mark designed to be a place of remembrance and reflection. Council planned every part of the area in line, and in close consultation with Mark's family. What Council didn't plan was the effect COVID-19 and Health Orders would have on restricting the size and scale Mark's family sought to have in that particular area to host an event that officially recognised the site. Council remains committed to seeing this family request through and wishes to apologise for any further anguish any delays have caused.

Our thoughts forever remain with the Finlayson family. We as an organisation and a community remain forever grateful for Mark's service and dedication in life; and in memory, his legacy has been our motivation to bring about urgent, ongoing and much-needed change to the mental health and wellbeing of our people.

Dean Frost

Chief Executive Officer, Dubbo Regional Council

BACKGROUND

The Dubbo Regional Council Wellbeing Strategy has six objectives:

Fit	To support our employees to be physically active and well
Balance	To assist our employees find balance in all aspects of their life
Culture	To be a diverse, inclusive and social organisation
Wellness	To help our employees be conscious of and improve their overall health
Build	To be an organisation where our employees are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to live (be resilient) in the ever changing world
Mind	To provide support and assistance to our employees to deal with mental health issues both inside and outside of the workplace

As part of on-going training and rollout, in January and February 2020, the Executive Leadership Team and People Culture and Safety attended ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills) training.

Here are the workshops and sessions for 2020:

Summary of programs delivered.

	Workshops	Participants
Applied Suicide Intervention Training (ASIST)	2	18
Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)	3	45
Wellbeing Advocate (WA)	5	60
Mental Health Chats (MHC)	16	232
Dealing with Aggressive Behaviour (AB)	6	90
Total	32	445

Programs delivered by dates with participant numbers

Date	ASIST	MHFA	WA	AB		MHC			Total
				AM	PM	AM	PM	Eve	
29/30-Jan	9								9
3/4-Feb	9								9
4-Feb				12	15				27
6-Feb				20	13				33
19/26-Feb		18							18
17-Jun			13						13
25-Jun						12	16		28
15-Jul			11						11
16-Jul						18	15		33
21/31-Jul		12							12
19-Aug			15						15
20-Aug						11	17		28
1-Sep				13	17				30
15/22-Sep		15							15
16-Sep						10	12		22
17-Sep						15	16		31
22-Sep								18	18
23-Sep			7						7
14-Oct						15	16		31
15-Oct						14	13		27
25-Nov			14						14
26-Nov						14			14
Total	18	45	60	45	45	109	105	18	445

Workshop Name	Overview	Acronym	Target Audience
Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training	Understand suicide and gain specialist skills to intervene when a person is experiencing a suicidal crisis.	ASIST	ELT
Mental Health First Aid (Standard)	Understand mental health and a range of mental illnesses and gain the skills to be able to support a person developing or living with a mental illness.	MHFA	SLT/Sup /Interested employees
Wellbeing Advocates Training	To increase people's alertness to the wellbeing of those around them and to notice when someone may becoming unwell and may be at risk of suicide and how to support them.	WA	Supervisors / Interested employees

Mental Health Chat	To build mental health awareness and literacy as well as acceptance and inclusivity across the organisation.	MHC	All employees
Dealing with Aggressive Behaviour	How to respond appropriately to aggressive behavior and de-escalate someone and manage the potential impact on yourself and other people.	AB	Frontline staff

The feedback that Lifeline collected and provided to Council has been overwhelmingly positive indicating the participants found the content useful and that they learned a great deal. For both the ASIST and Wellbeing Advocate feedback strong improvements were shown in participants self-rating from before and after the workshop.

Last Edited: 17 Jul 2023