



Preventing staff burnout: Industry wide approaches and practices

This document identifies high-quality examples for managing burnout and mental health in organisations outside the aged care sector. These include healthcare, social workers, police officers, paramedics, other first responders, and the military. The context of COVID-19 has increased awareness and importance of self-identifying symptoms of burnout in the work force. Continuing to update these supportive resources targeted at preventing burnout to retain workforce will be important. There is a lot to learn from these organisations that could support aged care workers, and resources may be useful to inform managing staff burnout in the Australian aged care sector.

Australian Healthcare

Australian resources support employers to consider how organisational factors may contribute to healthcare employee burnout and recommend environments designed to reduce stress and the integration of wellbeing into organisational culture. The importance of healthcare professionals taking care of their own mental health to allow them to provide the best possible care for their clients is highlighted. Specific resources written by doctors, for doctors, identify the personal, emotional, and behavioural symptoms that may assist to detect burnout. Examples include regular rest, good nutrition, socialisation, and regular exercise to prevent burnout, as well as regular debriefing with mentor support.



Nursing staff were identified as a particularly vulnerable group, with remote health services acknowledging the importance of leadership, innovation, and strategic partnerships to support workload. Given the strain placed on healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, resources urge early psychological interventions, development of resilience, and coping strategies.

- Looking after your mental health as a health professional (Butterfly Foundation)
<https://butterfly.org.au/health-professionals/looking-after-your-mental-health-as-a-health-professional>
- Cynical and unenthusiastic? You may be suffering burnout (Avant Mutual)
<https://www.avant.org.au/member-benefits/doctors-health-and-wellbeing/your-health/physical-and-mental-wellbeing/dealing-with-burnout>
- How to avoid organisational factors resulting in healthcare employee burnout (Bayside Group)
<https://www.baysidegroup.com.au/employers/how-to-avoid-organisational-factors-resulting-in-healthcare-employee-burnout>
- Front-line nurses, burnt-out or on the brink (Rural and Remote Medical Services Ltd)
<https://www.ruralandremotehealth.org.au/post/front-line-nurses-burnt-out-or-on-the-brink>
- COVID-19 pandemic and wellbeing of critical care and other healthcare workers (NSW Government, Agency for Clinical Innovation)
https://aci.health.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/706010/Evidence-Check-COVID-19-pandemic-and-wellbeing-of-workers.pdf

Healthcare outside of Australia

Global resources present coping strategies such as: setting limits on a schedule; eating, drinking, and sleeping well; and maintaining firm boundaries with clients, colleagues, friends, and family members. These resources suggest that making time for self-care, participating in regular physical activity, and having someone to talk to, are all useful to assist social workers to 'let go' of traumatic issues encountered in a professional capacity. This approach may also be useful to integrate into other organisations.



- Social Worker Burnout: 8 Self Care Tips (College of Social Work)
<https://onlinemsw.fsu.edu/blog/social-worker-burnout>
- Managing Burnout as a Social Worker (Social Work Guide)
<https://www.socialworkguide.org/resources/managing-burnout>

Two comprehensive reports, written for a global multidisciplinary audience, call to protect the mental health of healthcare workers. One supported by technical guidance from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the other provides resources from the US Surgeon General's Office with advice on how to build a thriving health workforce and avoid health worker burnout.

- Our duty of care: A global call to action to protect the mental health of health and care workers (World Innovation Summit for Health/Qatar Foundation/WHO)
<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/our-duty-care-global-call-action-protect-mental-health-health-and-care-workers>
- Addressing Health Worker Burnout: The US Surgeon General's Advisory on building a Thriving Health Workforce.
<https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/health-worker-wellbeing-advisory.pdf>

First responders (Australian)

Different approaches have been used across Australia to prevent and support burnout for first responders. These resources may be useful to inform future approaches to prevent and manage burnout for the aged care workforce.



Resources were identified that considered the impacts of COVID-19 providing tips for coping and enhancing resilience during the pandemic. Sources of stress included an overarching fear of infection and spreading COVID-19 to family or colleagues; this was exacerbated by the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) available. To prevent burnout during this time, healthcare workers were advised to increase their sense of control by identifying issues causing them anxiety and working a way to problem-solve the issue. Healthcare workers with pre-existing mental health conditions were advised to monitor for burnout and seek professional help when indicated.

- The mental health, wellbeing, and work impacts of COVID-19 on first responders and frontline workers in Australia (Charles Sturt University)
https://esf.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/overall_summary_report_released_23_july.pdf
- Frontline workers and COVID-19: Tips for coping and enhancing resilience during the pandemic (Australian Psychological Society)
<https://psychology.org.au/getmedia/f5e27c20-98bb-4d66-a851-93e0289561d0/20aps-is-covid-19-frontline-workers.pdf>

Resources suggest that wellbeing has been a concern for the police force for a considerable time. Being regularly exposed to traumatic situations and expected to remain calm and take control in times of chaos, can cause burnout among police officers. A Managing Minds podcast provides an open discussion with support tips, and the 'Heads up' program is specific to support police officers and emergency services. Other resources specific to paramedics identified the need for provision of emergency medical attention in unsafe environments, such as exposure to violence. The importance of discussing overcommitment to work (the inability to have a healthy distance) is a major issue requiring support. Regular communication and discussion with others to be able to 'de-brief' from particularly stressful days as well as planning time for self-care and recuperation are priorities.

- Managing Burnout (Managing Minds podcasts)
<https://www.managingmindspodcast.com.au/1510618/8978196-episode-4-managing-burnout>
- Police and Emergency Services Program (Heads up)
<https://www.headsup.org.au/healthy-workplaces/for-police-and-emergency-services>
- Stress and Health in the Police: A Conceptual Framework (Australian Institute of Police Management)
<https://www.aipm.gov.au/stress-health-police>
- Burnout (Ambulance Victoria)
<https://www.ambulance.vic.gov.au/about-us/our-services/family-safe/looking-after-others/burnout>
- Self-care for paramedics (Paramedic Wellbeing) (CareSearch)
https://www.caresearch.com.au/Portals/20/Documents/About_Us/Engagement_Project/Self-care-for-paramedics_Winter2019-SG.pdf

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ARIIA was established as an independent, not-for-profit organisation, set up to lead the advancement of the aged care workforce capability by promoting and facilitating innovation and research to improve the quality of aged care for all Australians.

Military

For the Australian Defence Force and military organisations outside of Australia, burnout was a significant issue prior to COVID-19, indicated by the number of useful resources available.

Resources were aimed at increasing resilience to support personnel to deal with the demands of armed combat. Improving resilience was identified as a coping mechanism to improve performance and support mental health. The military approach promotes individuals to be able to psychologically adapt to stressful situations and manage their emotions to be able to work effectively and safely and identify the need for social support to prevent and treat military workers with burnout.



- Smart Soldier - Leader Burnout (The COVE)
<https://cove.army.gov.au/article/smart-soldier-leader-burnout>
- Resilience training in the Australian Defence Force (Australian Psychology Society)
<https://psychology.org.au/publications/inpsych/2010/april/cohn>
- Optimize your Performance to Prevent Burnout (US Army)
https://www.army.mil/article/256332/optimize_your_performance_to_prevent_burnout
- About resilience (Open Arms)
<https://www.openarms.gov.au/get-support/self-help-tools>
- Use social support to combat military burnout (Uniformed Services University)
<https://www.hprc-online.org/social-fitness/teams-leadership/use-social-support-combat-military-burnout>

Business

The world of business experiences different stressors to that of healthcare, first responders, and military personal. Long working hours and the demands of clients need to be met, often with short deadlines. Resources take a slightly different approach to those provided previously, as building a sustainable workforce who are satisfied with their roles is the focus. There are, however, similarities with other organisational approaches such as the need for self-reflection, self-care and resilience.



- Managing and Preventing Burnout in the Workplace (Australian Government Comcare)
<https://www.comcare.gov.au/about/forms-publications/transcriptions/managing-and-preventing-burnout-in-the-workplace>
- 3 Lessons to Sustain Workforce Resilience Through Disruption (Gartner)
<https://www.gartner.com/smarterwithgartner/3-lessons-to-sustain-workforce-resilience-through-disruption>
- How to build a sustainable workforce and improve job satisfaction (World Economic Forum)
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/02/how-to-build-sustainable-workforce-improve-job-satisfaction>

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