

Queensland Mental Health Commission Cross-sector Wellbeing Capacity Building Project

Positive mental health and wellbeing matters

Positive mental health and wellbeing is an important foundation to good physical, social and emotional vitality, and our effective community and economic participation. It is a vital resource for everyday living, supporting our ability to function well, and manage life challenges. Positive mental health is associated with increased creativity, learning and work performance, better physical functioning and longevity, positive interpersonal relationships, community cohesion and social capital.

Our mental health and wellbeing is influenced by our predisposition, our environments, and our experiences. Evidence demonstrates there are foundational mental health building blocks that we can individually and collectively enhance and maintain. Governments investing in positive mental health and wellbeing are estimated to save up to \$4.70 for every \$1 spent through reduced absenteeism, increased workforce and education participation, and reduced need for hospital services¹.

Wellbeing Capacity Building Project

The Queensland Mental Health Commission (QMHC) Wellbeing Capacity Building (WCB) Project was designed to build systems, organisational and individual capacity to improve and support positive mental health and wellbeing. 'Train the trainer' and 'peer to peer learning' approaches were used to share information, and build skills, knowledge and practice.

Participants attended workshops and trialled wellbeing strategies personally before sharing their learnings within their sectors, networks and organisations. They also frequently shared strategies with family and friends. The WCB Project attracted participants from the education, community, government and health sectors. Participants tailored strategies and resources to their unique setting and integrated activities into day to day practice. They used evidence-based tools and a simple conceptual framework (the Wheel of Wellbeing) to do this.

The Wheel of Wellbeing (WoW) is made up of six elements that contribute to positive mental health and wellbeing: Body – be active; Mind – keep learning; Spirit – give; People – connect; Place – take notice; and Planet – care.



The Wheel of Wellbeing

From workshops to ripple effects

- WoW workshops provided simple evidence and a clear structure to share positive mental health and wellbeing strategies
- Workshop participants were encouraged to flexibly adapt key messages and activities to suit their local settings, organisations, networks and populations
- People who attended local WoW activities subsequently shared information informally with their broader systems, networks, and communities, resulting in a ripple effect touching many thousands of people

WoW WORKSHOPS: More than 300 people completed initial workshops.

LOCAL WoW TRAINING: Workshop participants completed more than 750 follow up one day training activities with people locally.

WoW ACTIVITIES: Training participants shared more than 2,250 individual wellbeing activities with communities, networks, families and friends.

WoW RIPPLE EFFECTS: Thousands of additional people received positive mental health and wellbeing messages and activities through informal conversations.

¹ Mental Health Australia & KPMG (2018). Investing to Save – The Economic Benefits for Australia of Investment in Mental Health Reform. (https://mhaustralia.org/sites/default/files/docs/investing_to_save_may_2018_-_kpmg_mental_health_australia.pdf)

What we learned

An independent evaluation of the WCB Project was conducted by Lirata Consulting during 2020-2021. Key findings are outlined below.

- The simple WoW tool and evidence-based resources facilitated engagement
- Participants' own perceived improvements to personal mental health and wellbeing was an important contributor to sharing strategies with others
- Changes in awareness and practice were evident across all systems and settings
- Flexible adaptation of WoW resources facilitated uptake in different settings and with different population groups
- Support from local leaders and advocates was important to implementation
- The online WoW Program improved uptake in rural and regional settings, and during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Barriers included resource constraints, turnover of WoW workshop trainers, the COVID-19 pandemic and geographic distances in regional areas

Increased awareness and engagement



In total, more than 75% of workshop participants reported increases in awareness related to positive mental health and wellbeing across their systems and networks, organisationally, and personally



WoW provides a simple and flexible way of raising awareness backed by strong evidence

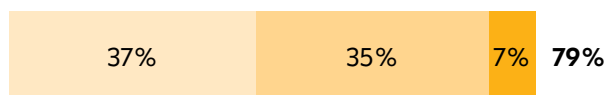


Participants highlighted that awareness raising was an important precursor for later practice and behavior change

SYSTEMS/NETWORKS/COMMUNITY



ORGANISATIONS



INDIVIDUALS



Moderate increase Large increase Very large increase

Figure 1: Reported changes in awareness about positive mental health and wellbeing (WoW workshop participants)

Changes in practice and systems



In total, more than 75% of individuals reported practice and behaviour changes following participation in the Project



Changes at systems and organisational levels were commonly reported, including the development of new policies, practices and processes. The WoW was also used as a collaborative planning and delivery tool bringing together distinct sectors and settings.



Individual level changes included increased use of simple psychological and physical health strategies like mindfulness and yoga, and increased interest in maintaining positive relationships and community engagement

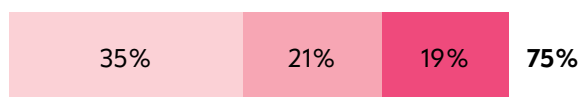
SYSTEMS/NETWORKS/COMMUNITY



ORGANISATIONS



INDIVIDUALS



Moderate increase Large increase Very large increase

Figure 2: Reported changes in practice and behaviour related to positive mental health and wellbeing (WoW workshop participants)

Sharing knowledge and practice



Program flexibility was a key enabler to sharing information more broadly. Workshop participants adapted resources to their workplaces and local community contexts, making them accessible and understandable



The capacity to draw on existing evidence-based resources and integrate them into local contexts is a cost effective way to deliver positive mental health and wellbeing strategies to entire communities

"WoW has created a language for people to talk about wellbeing in the workplace."

"I lead over 200 staff... we implemented WoW strategies across our workforce including workshops for staff, workshops incorporated into our induction program, a WoW group who coordinate activities and people undertaking the WoW lite program...the cultural shifts organisationally have been noticeable."

"In a couple of schools... they've incorporated it into lots of policies and procedures – they even turned it towards staff to help their wellbeing and morale... we have wellbeing on the agenda at each staff meeting now, we use the WoW to check in."

Both intentional and organic sharing was commonly reported



Intentional sharing occurred by adapting training to specific settings, for example embedding positive mental health and wellbeing concepts into structured organisational activities, adopting the WoW as a framework for wellbeing days, or as a standing agenda item in meetings. Community-wide planning and service coordination activities facilitated transmission across organisations and sectors.



Organic and informal sharing occurred through individual interactions with family, friends, colleagues and in social groups. This was considered especially valuable as information was being shared by someone trusted and close, and was identified to increase uptake of information and strategies.



Conclusion

The WCB Project facilitated widespread exposure to positive mental health and wellbeing thinking and practice through its flexible and practical approach using the WoW. Qualitative data demonstrated improvements in health and wellbeing for individuals who participated. Given the number of individuals engaged, it is likely the WCB Project provided value for money. Positive mental health and wellbeing accrues economic and social benefits across a wide range of education, employment, health, welfare, housing and other sectors and settings.



Next steps

- Continue advocating for the benefits of positive mental health and wellbeing information sharing and activities
- Build whole of government commitment to, and investment in positive mental health and wellbeing. Fund activities by drawing contributions from multiple sectors
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for enhancing community and individual positive mental health and wellbeing across different levels of government and across departments

Further information

For further information or to get in touch, visit the Queensland Mental Health Commission website at www.qmhc.qld.gov.au.