

2. Human Resources

2a.7 Mental Health Policy

This policy must be read in conjunction with Riverina Conservatorium of Music (RCM) Human Resources Policies General Outline, Definitions and Relevant Legislations.

1. Purpose

- a. The RCM aims to facilitate and promote positive mental health among staff by providing a safe and supportive work environment and encouraging staff to take responsibility for their own mental health and wellbeing.

2. Additional Definitions

- a. **EAP:** Employee Assistance Program as outlined in Policy 2a.8 Work Health and Safety.

3. Application of Policy

- a. This policy applies to all employees of The RCM (whether full-time, part-time or casual) and all persons performing work at the direction of, or on behalf of the RCM.
- b. This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or contract for services.

4. Details

4.1. Positive Mental Health

- a. Positive mental health is characterised by feeling good and functioning well. According to the World Health Organisation, mental health is a state of well-being in which a person can:
 - i. cope with the normal stresses of life;
 - ii. work productively and fruitfully;
 - iii. realise their potential; and
 - iv. contribute to the community.
- b. Your mental health is as important as your physical health. Research has shown that you can help to build and maintain your mental health by taking some simple steps, including:
 - i. socialising with your friends, family and others in the community;
 - ii. engaging in regular exercise, eating a healthy diet, avoiding excess alcohol or other drugs, and going for regular check-ups with your doctor;

- iii. identifying your strengths and using them to help others or contribute to the community;
 - iv. engaging in meaningful work, including volunteering, helping a neighbour or performing small acts of kindness; and
 - v. taking time to relax and do the things you really enjoy.
- c. If you are interested in other ways for building and maintaining positive mental health, we recommend that you see your doctor or a mental health professional.

4.2 Mental Illness

- a. A mental illness is a medical condition that impacts a person's thoughts, feelings or behaviour. Common examples of mental illness include depression, anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. It is estimated that nearly half of all Australians will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime.
- b. You may be at risk of a mental illness if you are experience one or more of the following:
- i. feeling depressed or unhappy for an extended period;
 - ii. losing motivation or interest in a favourite hobby;
 - iii. prolonged anxiety, including heart palpitations, shortness of breath, headache, restlessness, diarrhoea or a racing mind;
 - iv. sudden and dramatic changes in mood, such as extreme distress or anger;
 - v. changing sleep patterns or getting too much or too little sleep;
 - vi. fluctuating weight or rapid weight loss;
 - vii. being quiet or withdrawn or refusing to join in social activities;
 - viii. excessive use of alcohol or other drugs;
 - ix. feeling guilty, worthless or consistently criticising oneself;
 - x. changes in behaviour or feelings, including where you don't seem "quite right".
- c. If you think you might have a mental illness, you should seek help from a health professional. The sooner you seek help, the sooner you can start to recover.

4.3 Seeking Help

- a. When seeking help regarding a mental health issue, a general practitioner (GP) doctor is usually the best starting point. A GP will be able to:
- i. make a diagnosis;
 - ii. check for any physical health problem or medication that may be contributing to any mental health conditions;
 - iii. provide information and discuss available treatments;
 - iv. provide support and counselling;

- v. prescribe medication;
 - vi. refer you to a mental health specialist such as a psychologist or psychiatrist; and/or
 - vii. schedule regular appointments to check on your progress.
- b. You can also seek help via our Employee Assistance Program as outlined in Policy 2a.8 Work Health and Safety.
- c. As a part of the RCM EAP, information regarding a number of organisations in Australia who can provide free support and education for people who are experiencing mental health issues, is available. The table below sets out some of the key support organisations and their contact details:

Beyond Blue	Support for people experiencing depression and anxiety	1300 224 636
The MindSpot Clinic	Support for people experiencing stress, anxiety, low mood or depression	1800 614 434
eheadspace	Mental health support for people under 25	1800 650 890
MensLine Australia	Mental health support for men	1300 789 978
Qlife	Mental health support for LBGTIQ+ people	1800 184 527
Lifeline	Crisis support and suicide prevention	13 11 14
Suicide Call Back Service	Support for people feeling suicidal	1300 659 467
SANE Australia	Support, training and education for people with a mental illness	1800 187 263

- d. The RCM aims to provide an environment where employees feel comfortable raising and discussing concerns about mental health. If you have any concerns about your own mental health, or the mental health of a co-worker, we welcome you to contact our Staff Support Officer, your Head of Department, the Deputy Director/s or The Director (CEO).
- e. The RCM appreciates that any information regarding your health is sensitive information and should be treated accordingly.

5. Variations

- a. If a worker is unsure about any matter covered by this Policy, they should seek the assistance of the Executive Team Member(s).

- b. The RCM reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.*

Policy version and revision information

Policy drafted by: Kathleen Lancaster
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