



Improving Health Workforce Wellbeing

A strong health workforce is critical to meeting the health needs of the Gippsland community.

Workforce wellbeing is one of the five dimensions of the **Institute for Healthcare Improvement's Quintuple Aim** and is recognised as essential for improving healthcare outcomes.

The mental, physical, and emotional health of clinicians is directly linked to patient safety, care quality, and organisational sustainability.



What is workforce wellbeing?

Australian Health Professionals describe workforce wellbeing as:

“...the overall physical, mental, and emotional health of those working in healthcare settings. It extends beyond the absence of illness to include job satisfaction, manageable stress levels, supportive work environments, and access to resources that enable healthcare workers to perform their roles effectively.”

WorkSafe Victoria describe a person's level of wellbeing as a combination of:

- Inner life** - personality and how they think about life, such as motivations, psychological needs
- Outer life** - factors outside of work, including family, financial, health
- Work life** - including workplace relationships, work culture, job demands

High workforce wellbeing promotes

Improved patient experience

- Healthcare workers have greater empathy

Improved safety and care quality

- Clinicians maintain their attention and make fewer medical errors

Sustainability and retention

- A more stable workforce
- Reduced costs for recruitment, training and sick leave
- Improved productivity

Workforce engagement and morale

- Higher job satisfaction and sense of professional meaning
- Increased motivation and commitment to organisational goals

Stronger teams and collaboration

- More effective multidisciplinary teamwork
- Psychological safety that supports learning, help seeking and innovation
- Improved peer support and supervision

Capacity for improvement and innovation

- Greater readiness to engage in service redesign, quality improvement and digital transformation
- Increased clinician participation in leadership, teaching and mentoring roles

Organisational reputation and system performance

- More attractive workplaces for recruitment

Low workforce wellbeing can lead to

Burnout

- An occupational phenomenon included in the **11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases**
- Results from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed
- Characterised by three dimensions:
 - Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
 - Increased mental distance from one's job
 - Reduced professional efficacy

Mental illness

- Is the leading cause of absence and long-term work incapacity in Australia
- More workers are absent due to stress and anxiety than flu, physical illnesses or injuries
- The **Productivity Commission Mental Health Inquiry of 2020** estimated the direct economic costs at between A\$43 and A\$70 billion
- Most mental illness seen in the workforce is treatable, and possibly preventable

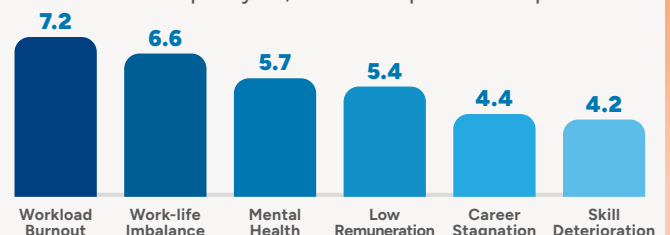


18% of GPs experienced racism from a patient in 2025

Impact of workforce wellbeing in healthcare

The **Australian Skills Priority List 2023 report** shows more than **82% of health professional occupations were in shortage**

According to the **Victorian Rural Health Workforce Census 2024**, 38% of health professionals considered leaving the rural workforce in the past year, with the top reasons reported:



The **top challenges reported as impacting health workforce recruitment in rural areas:**



67% access to suitable accommodation



55% relocation costs



51% availability of childcare



33% opportunities for professional development



28% supervision



25% regulation

In **Gippsland**, the healthcare and social assistance sector is the largest industry of employment, accounting for 19.5% of the total workforce in November 2025, an increase from 16.4% in November 2024.

In **December 2025**, top occupations among online job advertisements in Gippsland included:

- Registered nurses with (114)
- Aged and disability carers (66)
- General practitioners and resident medical officers (61)

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- In February 2024, the Health and Social Assistance sector in Gippsland was made up of:

- ◊ 74% females
- ◊ 56% part-time employees
- ◊ A median age of 45 years

Insights from Gippsland PHN engagement (2024–2025):

There are persistent reports of challenges related to health workforce shortages:

- Difficulties recruiting GPs, clinic nurses and allied health professionals with the greatest impact in East Gippsland
- Widespread practitioner wellbeing concerns due to high workload, especially in rural and regional areas

“ Less overworked and stressed staff means better health outcomes for patients
- Community member ”

“ [We need to] support more skilled people to move to and stay in Gippsland for long periods of time
- Professional ”

Gippsland PHN services and supports



- Innovative workforce models and support for reform initiatives, including **Community Led Integrated Health Care**
- Scholarships for students studying allied health and other priority pathways
- Partnering with Allied Health for Stronger Primary Care**
- Development of the **Lived and Living Experience workforce**
- Education and training program**
- Institute for Healthcare Improvement, **Workforce Well-being and Joy in Work** promoted
- Workforce wellbeing monitoring incorporated into provider agreements
- Support for provider networks, including practice managers

Resources and tools

- Safer Care Victoria, **Workforce wellbeing** supports for Victorian healthcare workers
- Victorian Department of Health **Improving the Employees Experience Guide**
- Mini-Z burnout survey** – Utilised by Safer Care Victoria
- The Professional Quality of Life Scale – 5 (ProQOL)**
- WorkSafe **Risk management for psychosocial hazards**
- WorkSafe **Mentally healthy workplaces toolkit**
- Australian Government, National Mental Health Commission. **Measuring mentally healthy-workplaces – A practical guide for medium to large organisations**
- WorkSafe **Compliance code: Psychological health - Part 2 - Understanding psychosocial hazards**

Access more Gippsland PHN publications here



How can we improve workforce wellbeing in healthcare?

Build on existing strengths within systems, teams, and individuals, and by designing a workplace that enable clinicians to do their best work. When organisational systems align with professional values and clinical expertise, wellbeing, retention, and quality of care improve.

Strategies may include:



Manage clinician workload and focus on patient care

- Reduce unnecessary administrative burden
- Tailor appointment times to patient needs
- Delegate appropriate administrative tasks



Build strong, connected teams

- Implement multidisciplinary team-based models
- All professions working to scope of practice
- Foster collaboration through regular huddles, case conferencing, and shared care plans



Invest in digital systems that support excellence

- Co-designed digital systems can reduce duplication and support clinical decision making
- Consider use of tools such as AI scribes and Electronic Medical Records, with appropriate governance and privacy safeguards
- Provide training and technical support



Grow compassionate and effective leadership

- Build a healthy culture that values staff and ensures psychological safety through respect, trust, inclusion and support
- Provide freedom from stigma, bullying and discrimination
- Empower teams, support innovation and reinforce a shared purpose



Nurture growth, learning, and career pathways

- Continuous learning, including through local networks, mentoring, supervision and professional development
- Support clear career pathways which enable clinicians to grow and adapt



Design and implement workforce wellbeing initiatives

- Free in-house counselling and Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Staff-led and co-designed initiatives help build connections
- Normalise help-seeking, debriefing, reflection and peer support
- Assess and manage psychosocial hazards (for example, strategic approaches to patient agitation and aggression)



Improve systems to support workforce and patient outcomes

- Models with clear referral pathways and collaboration with hospitals, specialists and community services
- Support for clinicians to build long-term therapeutic relationships
- Reward quality and collaboration (for example, through improvement activities)
- Involve everyone in organisational change



Fair remuneration and employment conditions

- Pay that reflects workload, complexity, expertise and employment arrangements
- Flexible work arrangements (part-time, job share, hybrid roles)

“ ...an inspiring, motivated and caring leadership style has been associated with enhanced mental wellbeing
- Black Dog Institute ”

