

Protecting Tasmanian Workers' Health and Wellbeing

The Minister for Workplace Relations, David O'Byrne, today launched an innovative new program to help Tasmanian workers stay fit and healthy, as well as boosting productivity for businesses.

The Health and Wellbeing Advisory Service will be delivered by WorkCover Tasmania over the next two years.

"Tasmanian workplaces should be healthier, happier and more productive because of this service," Mr O'Byrne said.

"Given the amount of time Tasmanians spend at work, it has a huge influence on how we feel, eat and exercise.

"More than ever, busy workers need advice and support to make the best choices about their health and wellbeing," he said.

The Health and Wellbeing Advisory Service has two dedicated advisors. They'll provide a free service visiting workplaces to identify practical ways of boosting health and wellbeing.

As examples, those projects could include:

- Educating workers about healthy eating alternatives;
- Introducing a workplace fruit or vegetable plate, and having a refrigerator so workers are not feeling the need to "eat out" all the time;
- Providing a work environment that encourages walking and physical activity (the national guidelines recommend at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day);
- Developing a health and wellbeing program, and identifying activities that are well-suited to each workplace;
- And, putting workers and employers in contact with community health organisations and providers.

"This service isn't just a personal boost for workers. It's also an economic one for Tasmania," Mr O'Byrne said.

"A healthy work life can help reduce sick leave and staff turnover, and boost productivity. As the old saying goes - happy staff are productive staff.

"Businesses that support workers to eat well and stay fit end up reaping the rewards. This program is about helping busy employers in providing that support," he said.

A recent study by Medibank Private showed the healthiest Australian workers are almost three times more productive than the least healthy.

Despite those figures, in 2007-08, seven out of 10 Tasmanians aged 15 years and over were classified as sedentary or having low exercise levels.

The Health and Wellbeing Advisory Service is part of a joint Australian and Tasmanian Government initiative under the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health.

WorkCover Tasmania has partnered with the Department of Health and Human Services to deliver the local service.

To book a visit from a WorkCover Health and Wellbeing Advisor, phone the WorkCover Helpline on 1300 776 572, visit www.workcover.tas.gov.au, or email workcoveradvisors@justice.tas.gov.au.