Wellbeing and Burnout in the PMES

Why is wellbeing in the workplace important?

Wellbeing is associated with employee engagement and performance, as well as workplace health and safety. Poor psychological and physical wellbeing comes at a cost to the employee and organisation.

Research shows that issues associated with workload, poor work-life balance, work-home conflict, and workplace culture impact employee wellbeing. Understanding these wellbeing risk factors helps organisations to support employee wellbeing.

What is burnout?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), burnout is an occupational phenomenon. It is driven a chronic imbalance between **job demands** (e.g., workload pressure and poor working environment) and **job resources** (e.g., job autonomy and supportive work relationships).

Burnout is characterised by three dimensions:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
- reduced professional efficacy.

The WHO also notes that burnout refers specifically to phenomena in the *occupational context* and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.

How is burnout measured in the PMES?

Since 2022, the survey has included a question on burnout: *I feel burned out by my work*. This question provides the opportunity to analyse burnout within the sector and its relationship to other experiences in the workplace.

Why has a question on burnout been included?

In today's fast paced and rapidly evolving environment, workplace burnout has emerged as a critical concern affecting employees worldwide. The changing work environment has amplified the risk of burnout, leading to detrimental effects on individuals and organisations.

Including a question on burnout in the PMES equips the sector to understand the potential for burnout and the relationship with wellbeing, engagement and other workplace factors.

Burnout is more likely when people continually strive for high performance levels but struggle to maintain a high level of wellbeing. Understanding where there is a risk of burning out will help organisations take action to improve wellbeing and retain a healthy productive workforce.

How do I interpret the burnout results in the survey?

This question is negatively worded and differs in interpretation from other questions because disagreement is considered a positive response. When interpreting these results, note that 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' responses are considered favourable. There is a clear note regarding this interpretation within the reports.

Within the interactive survey results dashboard, burnout is reported separately on its own page along with organisational risk factors that impact burnout. These are aspects within a work environment that contribute to an increased risk of burnout as indicated by research. Addressing these areas can help organisations create a more supportive and conducive work environment that reduces the risk of burnout, creating a healthier and more sustainable workplace.

What actions can I take to reduce the risk of burnout?

Addressing burnout involves implementing targeted strategies to mitigate the identified risk factors and create a healthier work environment. We recommend taking a two-tiered approach to address burnout effectively.

1. **Universal key drivers of burnout – time, resources, and support**

    Our analyses have identified three key drivers of burnout that remain constant and relevant across all organisational units and demographic groups. These drivers, supported by research, provide a foundation and a good starting point for addressing burnout comprehensively. Review the factsheet on the key drivers of burnout for the NSW public sector for strategies to address the universal key drivers.

2. **Tailored organisational risk factors**

    In addition to the universal drivers, we have identified specific survey items that align with the organisational risk factors for burnout. Review these risk factors in the PMES dashboard and refer to the organisational risk factors for burnout guide for mitigation strategies and action planning guidance.

    Within the PMES dashboard, risk factors are ranked based on their correlation with burnout, with the strongest correlating items displaying first. This is one way to prioritise which risk factors to

focus on to effectively address burnout. As you explore various organisational units or demographic groups, the ordering of these risk factors may vary. This variation provides invaluable insights into the unique challenges faced by different segments of your organisation. This approach recognises that a one-size-fits-all strategy may not be suitable and enables you to tailor interventions accordingly.

This two-tiered approach combines the universality of key drivers with the flexibility of tailored risk factors, offering a comprehensive strategy to address burnout effectively.

Remember to also engage in open conversations with employees and teams to gain qualitative insights and identify 2-3 critical areas to focus on. The PSC provides the following resources to assist with action planning:

- Organisational Risk Factors for Burnout guide – provides guidance on taking action to address burnout risk factors.
- PMES action planning guide – provides general design principles on how to effectively conduct action planning.