

National communications charter

action guide for organisations

The *National communications charter (the Charter)* is an evidence-informed document to help guide the way mental health and suicide prevention sectors, governments, businesses, communities and individuals communicate about mental health and wellbeing, mental health concerns and suicide.

Below are some practical examples of how the seven principles can be implemented by organisations:

The Charter principles

Example activities

1
We will make communicating about mental health, social and emotional wellbeing and suicide prevention a priority.

- Prioritise mental health and suicide prevention training for staff.
- Encourage open and supported conversations between staff and managers to reduce stigma and discrimination.
- Create a [mentally healthy workplace](#).
- Provide resources to staff about mental health and wellbeing and suicide prevention.

2
We will respect the diversity of, and our actions will be guided by, people with lived and living experiences of mental health concerns and suicide.

- Include people who have a lived or diverse experiences to guide mental health initiatives and policies within the workplace.
- Provide opportunities for people with lived experience to sit on organisational boards or committees.
- Consider staff who may be at increased risk of experiencing distress or mental health concerns and provide additional support as needed.
- Support staff to stay at work, or provide return to work programs that may include modified job, schedule or duties.

3

We will listen to and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and be guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions, to strengthen social and emotional wellbeing.

- Make sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are included in all decisions which are impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and provide opportunities for these voices to be heard.
- Use culturally safe terminology. For example, promote strength-based (rather than deficit-focused) language, and ask Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about their preferred language, such as whether they prefer the term, 'social and emotional wellbeing'.
- Actively engage in NAIDOC week and other significant cultural celebrations, as well as anti-racism events. Avoid contributing to cultural load by ensuring that it is not always Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are leading these events.
- Recognise the influence of culture on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, and encourage practices that promote connections to Country, culture, spirituality and community.

4

We will base our communication on clear, consistent and evidence-informed messages.

- Use evidence-based resources as a guide to increase all communications and staff confidence when it comes to communicating about mental health concerns and suicide.
- Provide avenues for staff to have input into safe communication practices and information sharing.
- Update organisational policies and procedures (e.g. social media policy) to ensure they align with key messages from the Charter.
- Consider the development of a postvention response plan to support communication and action in a postvention situation.

5

We will use appropriate, respectful and person-centred communication.

- Be familiar with preferred and non-preferred language and be mindful of your own language, as well as the language of those around you. Please refer to these [language guides](#).
- Respond with compassion and care when communicating with people experiencing mental health concerns or who may be impacted by suicide.
- Provide resources to all staff partners that support strength-based messaging, and break down common stereotypes about mental health concerns and suicide.
- Include training about safe and respectful language as part of the staff onboarding process.

6

We will work together to combine our efforts and support change.

- Promote the Charter and its principles within the organisation by displaying a signed copy of the Charter or having a **banner** in staff email signatures.
- Collaborate with others to action and support workplace mental health and wellbeing initiatives, and track progress.
- Encourage partnering organisations to become signatories of the Charter.
- Provide opportunities for staff to attend mental health and suicide prevention training and/or community-based awareness activities.

7

We will provide and promote access to the appropriate supports and services for people and communities.

- Provide internal and external mental health support pathways (e.g. EAP, HR, peer support program, GP mental health treatment plan), promote the confidentiality of these programs and ensure the pathway to accessing support is clear.
- Ensure all your communications about mental health and suicide contain help-seeking information.
- Develop capabilities of management and staff by offering mental health and suicide prevention training.
- Develop appropriate policies to respond to traumatic incidents that may arise in and outside of workplace environments.