

The logo for OZHELP, with 'OZ' in white and 'HELP' in blue, set against a dark blue background with a yellow line graphic on the left.

OZHELP

Health & Wellbeing at Work

Let's talk about...
Workplace wellbeing

2021-2022
PRE-BUDGET
SUBMISSION

JANUARY 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

OzHelp is pleased to provide a submission for the 2021-22 Federal Budget. OzHelp is a national not-for-profit organisation providing evidence-based workplace health and wellbeing programs designed to maximise wellbeing and reduce risk of suicide in male dominated industries. In the nineteen years of operation, OzHelp has developed and implemented a model that has proven to be effective for working with “at risk populations” in construction, mining and more recently, transport, farming and agriculture industries.

OzHelp is proposing that the Australian Government provide \$200,000 funding over three years to enable an independent evaluation of the scaling up and expansion of “Health in Gear”, a health and wellbeing program for truck drivers which builds on the work that OzHelp has already commenced in collaboration with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. Note, this is separate to the existing funding received under the National Suicide Prevention Leadership and Support Program (NSPLSP).

This project will make a significant impact on an “at risk population” who currently have poor health outcomes and are at a heightened risk of suicide, a priority area for government. We have also provided some background information about OzHelp relevant to this submission along with a letter of support from the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator.

INTRODUCTION

OzHelp Foundation was established in 2001 in the ACT to develop and implement programs and services that would reduce the incidence of suicide in men regarded as a high-risk group for suicide. Since then, it has become a national not-for-profit organisation and leading provider of mental health and wellbeing programs targeting “**at risk people**” with a **heightened risk of suicide**. This is demonstrated by a nineteen-year track record in successfully delivering **evidence-based suicide prevention workplace training and support programs** designed to reduce the incidence of suicide and mental ill-health and promote positive wellbeing. This has been predominately in the building, construction, and mining industries and, in more recent years applied to other largely male-dominated industry settings including transport, farming and agriculture industries.

Over the years since OzHelp has been established, it has developed a model that is effective in providing accessible, non-stigmatising, responsive and holistic services to employees in industries that have poor health outcomes and generally, poor help seeking behaviour. OzHelp has provided programs and services to approximately 300 organisations and over 40,000 participants per year.

The work of OzHelp contributes to the implementation of some of the key priorities outlined in the Productivity Commission’s Report on Mental Health¹ and the Interim Advice Report of the Mental Health Commissioner². In particular, the focus on person centred care, prevention and early intervention, mentally healthy workplaces and stigma reduction are all aligned with the vision and mission of OzHelp in improving health outcomes for those working in high-risk industries which are typically male dominated.

¹ Mental Health. Productivity Commission Inquiry Report Vol 1. No.95, 30 June 2020

² Interim Advice Report: Towards a national whole-of-government approach to suicide prevention in Australia. Australian Government, August 2020

PROPOSAL

Evaluation of the "Health In Gear" Health and Wellbeing Program for Truck Drivers of Heavy Vehicles

Summary

Phase One of the "Health In Gear" program was funded by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator's Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative and designed in collaboration with the University of Wollongong.

It is a health and wellbeing program for truck drivers and has been co-designed with truck drivers, their families, industry, and associations relating to the heavy vehicle industry. The program considers the many challenges faced by Australian drivers and offers simple, evidence-based actions designed to support drivers in achieving optimal wellness. The initial phase of the project completed a literature review addressing mental health and wellbeing of truck drivers, established a website covering a range of topics from sleep, diet and exercise to mental health and wellbeing, a phone line (support and referral service) and a Truckies Tune up program adapted from the existing Tradies Tune up program.

OzHelp is planning Phase Two of the project which will involve rolling out the "Truckies Tune Up" nationally as well as providing supplementary counselling and support services alongside the website and phone line to provide a comprehensive prevention and early identification program for truckies. The planned implementation will be in a staged process over three years. OzHelp will collaborate with the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) and Healthy Heads in Trucks and Sheds (HHTS) which is a not-for-profit organisation created by Industry to promote the prevention and understanding of mental health issues across the transport and logistics industry. It is an umbrella organisation which works in partnership with key organisations, of which OzHelp is one. OzHelp receives advocacy and promotional support from HHTS and now sits on the inaugural Advisory Board. In partnership with the NHVR and HHTS, the project will aim to scale up and expand services to maximise the reach across the transport industry with a view to proving the preventive benefits of taking mental health services to truck drivers in their workplace, that being key roadside stops and distribution centres nationally.

The overall cost of this next phase is circa \$1.5 million which is anticipated to be funded through the NHVR Grants Scheme and Industry contributions through HHTS. OzHelp is seeking funding of \$200,000 over a three-year period from the Australian Government to undertake an external evaluation of the program and to increase capacity at OzHelp to develop data systems that will assist ongoing evaluation and research. The aims of the evaluation will be to assess and evaluate the efficacy of the program in enhancing wellbeing in truck drivers thereby reducing the impacts of ill-health on health outcomes as well as articulating the benefits and outcomes of the program for the industry.

Overall Project Cost: \$200,000 ex GST over 3 years

FY 2021-2022	FY 2022-2023	FY 2023-2024
\$70,000	\$80,000	\$50,000

Why is it needed?

In the first phase, OzHelp authored a Literature Review³ which highlighted the health impacts of the sedentary nature of truck driving, combined with poor diet and a lack of exercise.

These included:

- higher risk of obesity and developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, mental-ill health, and cardiovascular health issues,
- high risk of depression, anxiety and sleeping disorders due to constant time pressures, long shifts, tight deadlines, long periods of isolation and unfavourable working conditions.

Nationally, truck drivers represent the second highest occupational group, after construction workers, at risk of suicide. Australian truck drivers work 49 hours per work compared to the average working week of Australians, which was 32.2 hours in 2019. Long work hours have an adverse impact on social connections, which also impacts on mental health outcomes. "Mental health was the second highest disability claim for the industry in 2018 and 2019 and 44.8% of workers experience a mental health condition."⁴

When depressed, men are more likely to externalise their symptoms through substance use, risk taking behaviour, anger, irritability, and low mood. Some of these symptoms do not align with standard diagnostic criteria for depression and may prevent diagnosis and treatment. Truck drivers with depression are "seven times more likely to be involved in road crashes".⁵ The mental health of truck drivers is important not only for the individual and the industry; it has broader repercussions for society, including road safety.

How does it align with Mental Health Reform Agenda?

The health and wellbeing of heavy vehicle drivers is an issue of vital importance to all Australians. Ensuring drivers are healthy is not only important to them, but also an issue that impacts their families and friends, everyone else on Australian roads and the nation's economy more broadly.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, drivers have played a critical role in keeping the national supply chain operating which keeps supermarket shelves stocked and other essential goods moving to where they are needed. It has demonstrated how reliant we are on the road freight industry and underscores the need to prioritise the health of the drivers that keep Australia moving.

The Productivity Commission report highlighted the need for a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention to stem the tide of mental ill health and suicide. OzHelp's programs focus on strengthening and maintaining wellbeing and identifying risk factors so that early intervention can be activated. Truck drivers are regarded as an "at risk" group for both physical and mental health issues as well as "hard to reach", in that they do not readily access mainstream health services.

Place-based health and person-centred care are also priorities in the broader health reform agenda and OzHelp's model is focussed on providing people with the education, information, and services where they are most accessible and taking the services to them, rather than making them go to services. The research shows that it is vital in male dominated cohorts to take the service to them, in their time, and on their terms in order to be effective.

³ Mental Health and Wellbeing of Heavy Vehicle Drivers in the Road Transport industry: Risks, Issues and Impacts, OzHelp, 2020

⁴ <https://www.healthyheads.org.au/physical>

⁵ <https://www.healthyheads.org.au/physical>

Project Description

This project would be for a three-year period. In this next phase of "Health in Gear", OzHelp is proposing to establish an "on the road" presence in a staged approach over the three-year period. The "on the road" team will consist of a mental health trained OzHelp Support Worker and a Nurse who will attend targeted locations throughout Australia and provide face-to-face health and wellbeing checks with truck drivers using the Truckie Tune Up format. Truckies will also have access to the "Health in Gear" website and resources for additional information and the help line for support and counselling.

Aims and Objectives of the External Evaluation

The external evaluation is an essential component to the national rollout of the program. It will inform any future implementation of this program in Australia as well as determine the potential impacts of the program on truck driver's health outcomes.

Aims

The aims of the evaluation are to:

- provide an assessment of the program's relevance, receptiveness, and accessibility to the target population,
- assess its effectiveness in enhancing wellbeing and providing early intervention services and support to those with identified risk factors,
- build internal research capability within OzHelp to enable data collection systems to be established and maintained, and
- inform any further implementation of the program and a sustainable business and delivery model.

Objectives

The objectives of the evaluation are:

- to evaluate all components of the program in terms of reach, access, participation, relevance, and benefits,
- to assess the effectiveness of the program in improving health outcomes of heavy vehicle truck drivers in Australia,
- identify which components of the program are regarded as most helpful to truck drivers,
- measure the immediate and short-term impacts of the program on health outcomes including physical, mental, and social risk factors,
- identify strengths and weaknesses of the program and make recommendations for future implementation, and
- to assess the scalability of further implementation of the program across Australia.

It would be expected that the evaluation team that undertake the evaluation will use both quantitative and qualitative methods including the development and implementation of a measure of health indicators to assess impact based on current or existing measures.

Year 1 Priorities and Deliverables (FY 2021-2022)

- Establish a small Evaluation Advisory Group consisting of representatives of the funding bodies, OzHelp and Industry,
- Draft a Statement of Requirement for recruiting an external evaluator which would outline aims and objectives, scope and required deliverables,
- Recruit an evaluator through either an open or select tender process,
- Engage the evaluator,
- Evaluation Plan which is developed by Evaluator in collaboration with Evaluation Advisory Group and approved by funder and includes methodology, scope, capacity to undertake the task and approach,
- Identify evaluation tools and measures,
- Establish data collection processes and reporting,
- Gain ethics approval and other required consents,
- Develop a communication and information strategy regarding the evaluation to intending participants of the program,
- Commence evaluation.

Year 1 Cost: \$70,000

Year 2 Priorities and Deliverables (FY 2022-2023)

- Regular meetings of the Evaluation Advisory Group as required for decisions, advice, assistance,
- Ongoing evaluation by the Evaluator as per Evaluation Plan,
- Interim Report outlining progress so far, issues to be considered and discussed and emerging themes.

Year 2 Cost: \$80,000

Year 3 Priorities and Deliverables (FY 2023-2024)

- Ongoing meetings of the Evaluation Advisory Group as required for decisions, advice, assistance,
- Discuss content and structure of final report and associated document for funding bodies,
- Draft Final Report for consultation and review,
- Provide Final Report.

Year 3 Cost: \$50,000

Project Benefits

The key benefits of an external evaluation are:

- evidence to support the efficacy of the programs,
- the ability to demonstrate how the program is impacting on the health outcomes of the target population,
- to inform future implementation and sustainability models,
- to support evaluation as an integral component of the program,
- to add to the body of knowledge (i.e. increase the evidence base) on effective prevention and early intervention programs for male dominated "at risk" populations.

ABOUT OZHELP

Our Model and Way of Working

OzHelp receives its core funding through the Australian Government Department of Health as part of the National Suicide Prevention Leadership and Support Program. The focus of our programs and services is on mental health and wellbeing and take a holistic approach through addressing physical, mental, and social wellbeing. The industries focussed on have been traditionally male-dominated in which there are high rates of suicide and mental health issues, poor health outcomes and poor help-seeking behaviour. The OzHelp Foundation gateway to identifying those at risk of suicide is **workplaces** as there is a natural synergy between wellbeing and workplace productivity, safety, and culture.



1 in 5 Australian employees will be working with a mental health condition, most notably anxiety and depression.



45% of Australians will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime.



On average **8 Australians**, 5 of whom are men, are taking their own lives each day.



The highest rates of suicide are recorded in blue collar, male dominated industries.

TNS (2014). State of Workplace Mental Health in Australia. Melbourne: Beyond Blue. 3303.0 ABS Cause of Death, Australia, 2017 (2018). Preliminary data. Suicide (Australia).

Our approach to employee health and wellbeing is not just about training programs. It is a multidimensional and multi-tiered approach that incorporates training and education, workplace health screening, support and counselling and is evidence-based. Our programs utilise a program content structure that can be customised to suit the needs of specific organisations and industries. Programs include Tradies Tune up (face-to-face, onsite health screen), Workplace Tune Up (online health screen), Wellbeing at Work, Wellbeing Empowerment Program, Workplace Supporter Program (gatekeeper training) and Applied Suicide Intervention Training (ASIST). The programs can be packaged differently according to the needs of the Industry and specific cohorts within it.

Through our experience we, have identified the following critical success factors in working with an “at risk population cohort” which could be transferable to other “at risk” populations.

- **Partnering with Industry**

Underpinning the workplace-based training and support program model is a partnership approach. We have developed expertise and demonstrated efficacy in engaging with male dominated workplaces such as Ampcontrol, PBS Building, Heyday Group, Consolidated Pastoral Company, and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator for example.

- **Co-Design**

We have developed a suite of programs as well as a strategic approach to working with partners that enables them to identify the needs of their workforce and then co-design the most effective implementation strategy using OzHelp, internal and other external resources, to provide an integrated approach.

- **Customisation to Suit Specific Industry/Organisational Needs**

We provide a flexible approach to delivering our programs and services to meet the specific needs of the organisation or industry we are working with. Programs have been developed using a content framework that can be customised to suit specific needs.

- **Use of 'Peer' Workforce**

We have developed a Workplace Supporter Program which delivers gatekeeper training to people in the industry or organisation to support the organisation's implementation of mental health and suicide prevention programs. Once trained, the "workplace supporters" provide an important liaison role between the organisation and OzHelp and provide support and a contact point for their colleagues.

OzHelp's own peer workforce makes up the bulk of the service delivery team and are people with lived experience of working in the industry, not necessarily lived experience of mental health issues. This enables trust and rapport to be built rapidly, thus connecting with those who are otherwise "hard to reach". They provide an important liaison role between the organisation and OzHelp and provide a contact point for employees.

- **Use of Local Resources/Networks**

The workplace programs are built on work that the organisation is already undertaking and links in to support services that may be available locally (for example, specialist Allied Health Professionals and Employee Assistance Programs). OzHelp has its own counselling resources in the ACT.

- **Referral to Other Services**

In taking a holistic approach, some employees may need to be referred to assistance from organisations outside of health such as financial counselling, housing support, and other government assistance. OzHelp works with the individual employee to direct them to the services they need.

This model has proved effective and the following examples demonstrate the effectiveness of the approach.

Case Examples

OzHelp and Heyday Group

OzHelp and Heyday Group have partnered for over six years to ensure staff have access to timely and accessible wellbeing support. Heyday Group provides electrical design, construction and maintenance services across ACT and NSW, in both metropolitan and regional communities. While mental health is important for everyone, Heyday have acknowledged that construction industry employees, can be at heightened risk for mental ill health and other wellbeing and safety challenges.

Since 2014, OzHelp has cemented its ongoing support of Heyday Group's employees' year-on-year. This has included Tradie Tune Ups at various worksites, confidential counselling services and training and education courses for the general workforce and identified workplace peer supporters. These services have complemented the company's own resources and commitment to health and wellbeing.

Heyday Group has a diverse range of employees, but the majority of staff fall within the 25-to-35-year age bracket. Not only does the construction industry represent a higher risk cohort, but suicide more broadly remains a leading cause of death for men under the age of 45 years (ABS, 2018). To this purpose, Heyday Group have highlighted the value of having all their Project Managers and Site Foremen trained to recognise the signs that a colleague might be having problems and to have the confidence and skills to act on this.

OzHelp and Ampcontrol

Ampcontrol – one of Australia's largest and most successful engineering and manufacturing companies in the resources, infrastructure, and energy solutions industries – is a testament to how internal resources can work effectively alongside OzHelp programs.

Since mid-2018, OzHelp has been providing flexible, packaged support to Ampcontrol – reaching upward of 1,000 employees, across 30 sites. These sites are geographically dispersed and diverse in terms of staff needs – from small communities like Emerald, QLD, regional hubs like Newcastle, NSW, to metropolitan locations like Perth, WA.

The people of Ampcontrol work in an industry that can be categorised as high risk for safety and well-being concerns. Alongside common mental ill-health challenges (family and relationship struggles, financial stressors and mental illnesses) some people in their more remote locations are tackling community-based issues such as drought and lack of access to services.

Since its induction, the program has seen 33 health and well-being training sessions, 12 supporter workshops and 434 Workplace Tune Up health screenings - engaging up to 80% of current employees. A great indicator of the program's success is the year-on-year increase in staff peer-to-peer volunteer interest – generating positive informal care networks within the organisation.

"For a person experiencing a tough time, sometimes work is the best place for them to be – it's where their friends are, and for some, it may be the only place that they can access much-needed support. We aim for all our people to have a safe place to access wellbeing support when they need it." ⁶

OzHelp and National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR)

OzHelp has been funded by the NHVR to develop a health and wellbeing program for owner truck drivers. This is known as the "Health in Gear" project. It has been developed in collaboration with truck drivers, for the heavy vehicle driver community. Co-design sessions were held with owner drivers and partners of owner drivers as a first step, followed by a co-design workshop with the Project Steering Committee to identify needs and develop an intervention strategy.

As a result of the co-design workshops, OzHelp in collaboration with subject matter experts has developed evidence-based wellness topics and an integrated health check "Truckie Tune Up" (mobile health checks

⁶ www.ozhelp.org.au

that offer support, counselling, and referral to other health related services) in response to these priority areas. Central to the program is the “Health in Gear” website, where drivers can find practical resources, tips and referrals and a phone line that provides support and referrals to more specialist services. The program is being evaluated by the University of Wollongong.

Due to the program’s success, OzHelp will be applying for additional funding through the NHVR Grants Program and industry contribution through Healthy Heads in Trucks and Sheds to expand the program and support a national staged rollout of this program over the next three years.

How our work aligns with the Australian Government Mental Health Reform Agenda

We believe that the work of OzHelp supports the Australian Government’s mental health reform agenda and addresses several of the key priorities articulated in the recently released Productivity Commission Report on Mental Health. These include:

Prevention and Early Intervention

The report identifies the need for much greater investment and focus on prevention as well as early intervention, both early in life and early in the illness. Our programs and services are focussed on wellbeing and promotion of good mental health as well as early identification of risk in those with heightened risk factors for suicide and mental ill-health. They are aimed at raising awareness of mental health issues and suicide prevention, identifying early signs and symptoms of mental ill-health, enhancing help-seeking behaviours, and supporting individuals to connect with, and navigate, the health system. More importantly the programs are delivered in a non-stigmatising context and in a way that is relevant and appropriate to male dominated industries. OzHelp tackles the “cultural and social barriers to improving mental health and wellbeing”⁷ as outlined in the report and aims to reduce the incidence of suicide.

Mentally Healthy Workplaces

The context for OzHelp’s work is through workplaces as this is the most accessible way to reach this cohort of employees who generally do not speak about mental health issues or seek help through general practice or community health services. The report identifies that “workforce mental health and productivity would be improved by making psychological health and safety as important as physical health and safety.”⁸ The workplace for many of these male dominated industries is the most accessible for mental health and suicide awareness and education. As stigma contributes to reluctance of people to seek help, using workplaces as a vehicle for mental health and suicide prevention awareness and education also aims to increase help-seeking for those identified as “at risk”.

Person-centred Care

Person-centred care is at the forefront of an effective mental health system where ideally the person will receive the services they need when they need them and where they need them. OzHelp takes a holistic approach to the person by addressing physical, mental, and social wellbeing. Through our place-based services in workplaces, OzHelp aims to strengthen the wellbeing of workers and identify any risk factors for both physical and psychological wellbeing.

⁷ Mental Health. Productivity Commission Inquiry Report Vol 1. No.95, 30 June 2020

⁸ Mental Health. Productivity Commission Inquiry Report Vol 1. No.95, 30 June 2020

Collaboration and Partnership

OzHelp is committed to working in partnership with industry and this is demonstrated by the number of partners we are currently working with. The collaborative approach ensures that the OzHelp resources and programs are integrated with existing internal and external resources and provide a value-added component. OzHelp receives funding from a diverse set of funders including government (Australian and ACT) industry partners (NHVR), philanthropy (Perpetual), and other donations and fundraising initiatives. A key focus of the next phase of our work will be to integrate our programs and services into mainstream health services thereby making them more accessible and sustainable long-term.

CONCLUSION

The health and wellbeing of heavy vehicle drivers is an issue of vital importance to all Australians. Ensuring drivers are healthy is not only important to them, but also an issue that impacts their families and friends, everyone else on Australian roads and the nation's economy more broadly.

This project will make a significant impact on an "at risk population" who currently have poor health outcomes and are at a heightened risk of suicide.

We commend this submission to you and would welcome an opportunity to elaborate further on our recommendations.

Contact:

Mr. Darren Black
Chief Executive Officer
Email: ceo@ozhelp.org.au
Phone: 02 6251 4166

Attachment A

Letter of Support - National Heavy Vehicle Regulator

29 January 2021

Our Reference: CCF/858/DOC21/4194

Darren Black
Chief Executive Officer
OzHelp Foundation
PO Box 1130
FYSHWICK ACT 2609

Dear Mr Black

Letter of Support

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) understands that the OzHelp Foundation is submitting a Pre-Budget Submission to the Department of Treasury for the 2021-22 financial year seeking additional funding to undertake an independent external evaluation over a three-year period.

OzHelp is a national not-for-profit organisation providing evidence-based workplace health and wellbeing programs designed to maximise wellbeing and reduce the risk of suicide in male dominated industries.

OzHelp has developed a health and wellness program for owner driver truck drivers, in collaboration with truck drivers for the heavy vehicle driver community. The Health in Gear program considers the many challenges faced by Australian drivers and offers simple, evidence-based actions designed to support drivers in achieving optimal wellness. Phase one of the project was funded by the Commonwealth Heavy Vehicle Safety Initiative.

The initial phase of the Health in Gear project:

- compiled a literature review addressing the mental health and wellbeing of truck drivers
- launched a website covering a range of topics from sleep, diet and exercise to mental health and wellbeing
- set up a phone line (support and referral service)
- established the "Truckies Tune Up" program, a mobile health check that offers support, counselling, and referrals to other health related services.

Phase two of the Health in Gear program will involve a national rollout of the "Truckies Tune Up" program as well as providing supplementary counselling and support services to provide a comprehensive prevention and early detection program for truck drivers.

The health and wellbeing of heavy vehicle drivers is an issue of vital importance to all Australians. Ensuring drivers are healthy is not only important to them, but also an issue that impacts their families and friends, everyone else on Australian roads and the nation's economy more broadly.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, drivers have played a critical role in keeping the national supply chain operating, which keeps supermarket shelves stocked and other essential goods moving to where they are needed. It has demonstrated how reliant we are on the road freight industry and underscores the need to prioritise the health of the drivers that keep Australia moving.

The NHVR supports OzHelp's business model and approach that will involve continuing work with industry specific stakeholders, associations and truck drivers to continue delivering a program that will make a

significant impact on an “at risk population” who currently have poor health outcomes and are at a heightened risk of suicide which is a priority area for government.

If OzHelp are successful in securing more funding from the Federal Government, Healthy Heads in Trucks and Sheds would continue to work and support OzHelp and the Health in Gear program at a national level.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Gilbert", with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Gilbert, OAM
Manager Industry Engagement and Customer Experience



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