

A photograph of AFL players in a huddle, viewed from behind, with a blue color overlay. The players are wearing white jerseys with dark numbers and white shorts. One player's jersey number '20' is clearly visible. The background shows a stadium setting.

AFL Industry Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy

Protecting the health
and future of our people
and our game

2020-2022



“
The mental health and wellbeing of everyone involved in our game is a key focus, we know it is one of the biggest issues facing the industry.

” - Gillon McLachlan

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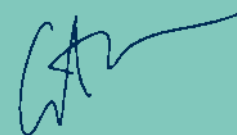
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Foreword

The game of Australian Football is privileged to be at the forefront of community life across Australia. More than 1.7 million participants were part of our game at some level in 2019, while the senior AFL and AFLW competitions provide both inspiration and aspiration for those seeking to compete at an elite level. We are fortunate that our game is embedded in metropolitan and regional communities across the country and, as custodians of the game, we must continue to ensure our game retains its inclusive nature to bring people together.

As modern society imposes more demands and challenges, particularly on young people, the AFL is committed to being a social leader. In 2019, a major long-term decision for the game was made around the welfare of our people, which remains foremost in our minds. We have sought here in this document to produce a step change in how we acknowledge the mental health of those within our game. The appointments of Dr Kate Hall as the AFL's Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing, and Dr Ranjit Menon as the AFL's Chief Psychiatrist, following a comprehensive review into mental health, are dedicated towards improving the overall industry's support of mental health and wellbeing for current and past male and female players, umpires, coaches and more than 3000 staff in administrative roles.

Our game thrives because of the investment of people into Australian Football, and it is our role and duty to invest into transforming the management of mental health and wellbeing for our industry, a pivotal emerging issue in modern society.



Gillon McLachlan
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Football League

Introduction

An Industry Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy helps protect the health and future of our people and our game.

Why an Industry Mental Health Strategy is needed?

An industry's most valuable asset is its people. Without them, it cannot succeed or grow. In the AFL, taking care of our people's health and wellbeing is essential to the future of our game. As our most valuable asset, our people need to be supported so they can continue to grow in order to meet the challenges of our ever-changing and competitive environment. If we can provide a strong foundation of positive health and wellbeing as an industry, we can ensure *our people are mentally fit and ready to work as one team, to protect their health and the future of our game.*

Being healthy means more than just physical wellness. In an environment of increasing community and industry awareness of mental health, we know that mental health matters. The AFL Industry Mental Health Strategy 2020-2022 (The Strategy) is the first aligned strategic framework to guide an industry-wide approach to the mental health and wellbeing of all employees, umpires, coaches and players across the AFL ecosystem. It aims to guide the planning and implementation of wellbeing initiatives, mental health promotion and prevention programs and mental healthcare services delivered across the AFL industry.

The Strategy has a vision to ensure all our people are mentally fit and ready to thrive and support each other. Through policy and culture reform The Strategy will lay a foundation for the industry that reduces vulnerability to mental health problems and increases protective factors that promote mental fitness.

The Strategy will guide education and workforce development activities that increase our people's capacity to cope with life transitions and stresses.

The Strategy ensures mental health and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility, and the workplace is a key platform for the promotion of mental health. The Strategy commits the AFL Industry to work as one team to create mentally healthy workplaces across the ecosystem.

The Core

An overview of our principles and strategies for navigating the Mental Health & Wellbeing of our people.

OUR PURPOSE

To support the health and wellbeing of our people, to ensure the health and future of the game.

OUR VISION

All our people are mentally fit and ready to thrive and support each other.

This vision will be achieved by the five strategic objectives.

They will guide the overall approach to mental health and wellbeing within the AFL ecosystem.

OUR STRATEGY

WHAT

All our people are mentally fit and ready to thrive and support each other.

WHY

Supporting the health and wellbeing of our people to ensure the health and future of the game.

HOW

1. Alignment

Work as one industry and strengthen mental health and wellbeing partnerships.

2. Culture

Build a thriving culture and mentally healthy workplaces.

3. Promotion

Promote and grow mental health, wellbeing and mental fitness.

4. Responsive

Respond with safe, effective and coordinated mental healthcare.

5. Data

Build the evidence and ensure continual evaluation and improvement.

What is Mental Health?

What is mental health?

The World Health Organisation has defined mental health as:

“a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her {their} own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his, her {their} community”.

Definitions of mental health used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians offers an important holistic perspective. Indigenous players and staff, as the First Peoples of Australia, have deep connections to land, language, ceremony, kinship systems, and cultural knowledge and practices that contribute to social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB). SEWB recognises that these connections have important impacts on wellbeing. It also recognises that an Indigenous person's social and emotional wellbeing is influenced by social policies, racism and discrimination.

National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing (2017-2023).

Both these definitions recognise that mental health is about wellness, not just the absence of illness, and includes many domains such as a person's capacity to thrive socially and emotionally and contribute meaningfully to their community and culture.

Why is mental health and wellbeing important?

Having good mental health and wellbeing is important for physical health, as well as our personal and work relationships. It is also important in achieving our goals and building organisational capacity.

In our high-performance environment of professional sport, there is an inevitable focus on physical health, but we acknowledge the strong link between physical and mental health and the importance of both to performance and success. By taking a holistic view of the individual and their environment and understanding the important role that mental health and wellbeing play in overall health, we can help prevent mental health issues from developing, and mitigate their impacts when they do occur.

Our work environment has unique challenges associated with increasing public scrutiny, a highly-competitive market and our high performance culture that can impact mental health and wellbeing. These contributing factors – whether public, organisational or industry – interact in different ways with every individual's personal qualities and cause varying degrees of impact on wellbeing. Maintaining good mental health can be further made difficult due to common barriers that prevent people seeking or getting help early when stress is high.

Barriers such as stigma, discrimination, low levels of mental health literacy and awareness, and low help-seeking rates, in combination with individual, social or cultural attitude, can mean that individuals do not get the support or help they need at the earliest stage. Without appropriate support, symptoms can become worse resulting in poorer health, social and occupational outcomes.

That's why core principles of good workplace mental health strategies include reducing stigma, identifying signs early and promoting help seeking. The Strategy promotes getting help early – early in life and early along the mental health continuum.



Mental Health: A state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his, her {their} community.

World Health Organisation; 2004



The Mental Health Continuum

Everyone has experiences that can impact their mental health and wellbeing. For some people, these may be temporary reactions from which they recover quickly and with informal support. Others, however, may develop more lasting or more severe conditions, and require professional help to recover.

The development of mental health conditions is often described as a complex interplay of biological, psychological, environmental, cultural, structural and social factors, some of which are beyond an individual's control.

A useful way to understand the different aspects of mental health is by using the Mental Health and Wellbeing Continuum. It represents the idea that mental health changes over time in response to different stressors and experiences, and that people can move in either direction on the continuum, from healthy functioning at one end to crisis and severe symptoms of mental ill-health at the other.

In the green area, people are mentally healthy and functioning well. As they move into the yellow, they may experience some/mild symptoms or difficulties with their mental health. In the orange section, symptoms have increased in severity and people have difficulty coping. At the red end people may be in crisis and are likely to be experiencing severe symptoms of mental ill-health.

In this version of the continuum, the blue end reflects 'mental fitness' - high levels of self-management and elite mental skills that ensure people thrive in elite sport, highly scrutinised and competitive environments or during times of extreme change and stress.

Most of us will move between the green and yellow areas in response to the normal ups and

downs of daily life. We can develop skills to help us manage symptoms and impacts and increase the likelihood that we will stay in the green area.

What does mental fitness look like?

Mental fitness can be described as practising and growing a set of social and emotional skills that build resilience and maintain wellbeing. Mental fitness, like physical fitness, is a proactive and preventative strategy to support higher levels of mental health, requiring continual effort and motivation over time, based on regular activities and practices.



Mental fitness: The modifiable capacity to utilise resources and skills to flexibly adapt to challenges or advantages, enabling thriving.

Robinson, Oades & Caputi, 2015

This definition suggests that a mentally-fit person has a reserve of psychological resources and skills that can be called upon in times of opportunity or adversity to increase the probability of successfully navigating life events. Mental fitness includes having high self-awareness and self-regulation so psychologically flexible responses maximise resilience and thriving, regardless of the context. Like mental fitness, resilience is directly linked to positive mental health and wellbeing and refers to one's ability to cope and adapt in the face of challenges or new situations. Even after setbacks, those with high levels of resilience can adapt and continue to work towards their goals. Mental fitness equips people specifically for times of stress and enables people to thrive, in spite of challenges and change.

Mental fitness	Healthy	Reacting	Injured	Illness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Superior emotional and social functioning » Ready for and energised by challenges » Mood resilient to acute stressors » Strong impulse control » Aware of emotions » Consistent sleep patterns » Motivational drive high » Leading others to achieve outstanding results » Anxiety control » Energised by work » Superior focus, problem solving and memory » Self aware and able to reflect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » High social and emotional functioning » Mood recovers quickly from stress » Manages anxiety » Good impulse control » Normal sleep patterns » Physically well, full of energy » Consistent performance » Socially active » Ready and able to face work challenges » Enjoying work » Responsive to others » Patient » Flexible » Focus, memory and problem solving are high » Self aware 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Impacted social and emotional functioning » Reactive to anxiety » Nervousness » Irritability » Sadness » Trouble sleeping » Physically tired » Low motivation and energy » Muscle tension, headaches » Procrastination » Indecisiveness » Decreased social activity » Lowered resilience to daily stressors » Reactive to others » Some impulse control difficulties » Problem solving, focus and memory changeable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Impaired social and emotional functioning » Uncontrolled anxiety, anger » Pervasive sadness, hopelessness » Disturbed sleep » Physical fatigue, low pain threshold, aches and pains » Impaired problem solving, unable to focus, memory disruption » Decreased work performance » No enjoyment from work or hobbies » Social avoidance or withdrawal » Impulsive » Reactive or disinhibited » Using alcohol to cope » Self aware limited when distressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Social and emotional dysfunction. Unable to function » Excessive anxiety, depressed mood » Thoughts of self-harm or of hurting others » Blunt, numb or highly-reactive moods » Unable to fall or stay asleep » Exhaustion, physical illness » Unable to perform duties, absenteeism » Impaired cognitive functioning » Social isolation, avoiding others » Abuse of alcohol » Limited self awareness or insight
Actions to take at each phase of the continuum				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Promotion of mental fitness » Self-management and skill building in mental fitness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Self management strategies work and lifestyle » Prevention activities » Reduction in mental health risk factors » Promotion of protective factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Early identification of signs and symptoms of stress and distress » Self-management strategies to recover » Early intervention by health professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Mental healthcare » Reasonable adjustments made to complete work duties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Mental healthcare » Management plan at work » Recovery plan

How common are mental health issues?

According to Beyond Blue, approximately 1 in 2 people will develop a mental health condition in their lifetime, and approximately 1 in 5 in any given year (Black Dog), with the most common conditions being depression, anxiety and substance use.

In any given year around three million people in Australia experience the most common mental health conditions of anxiety or depression.

While 1 in 20 experience substance related or addictive disorders such as abuse of alcohol, problem gambling and abuse of prescription or illicit drugs. Every day an average of eight people take their own lives. People who live with a mental health condition often experience significant levels of stigma and discrimination which can lead to delayed access to support and treatment and impede recovery.

Mental health conditions have more successful treatment outcomes when help is sought early, though it is never too late to seek treatment.

There are many social and cultural contributors to mental health and wellbeing. Disadvantage, poverty, racism and discrimination are social risk factors for poor mental health and wellbeing. Workplace bullying or harassment, stress and burnout are also contributors.

Did you know...

- » 1 in 5 Australians are currently experiencing high or very high psychological distress
- » Indigenous Australians are nearly 3 times more likely to be psychologically distressed than non-Indigenous Australians
- » Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, men and those from the LGBTQI+ communities have higher rates of suicide
- » Over 75% of mental health conditions occur before the age of 25
- » Suicide is the leading cause of death of young Australians
- » Men are less likely to seek help than women
- » Less than half those with a condition seek professional help

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Everyone should feel comfortable speaking openly about mental health...

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Mental Health & Wellbeing in the AFL

The prevalence of mental health issues and conditions across the AFL ecosystem has not been well established. In the context of increasing community, industry, and organisational awareness of mental health, the need for a clearer understanding of the status of mental health within the AFL is paramount.

There are almost 3000 people working full time, part time or casually within the AFL industry. Additionally, there are approximately 1480 total players across the AFL, AFLW, VFLW and state league teams.

Indigenous peoples and people from culturally diverse backgrounds bring unique strengths to the ecosystem and add to the diversity and richness of the AFL. The AFL is proud of the fact that 10.5% of our male and 5.7% of our female players identify as being Indigenous.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander players come from many different countries/language groups across Australia and with that comes different cultural practices and meaning around mental health and wellbeing. The proportion of players with a culturally diverse background is 18%, who are either born overseas or have at least one parent born overseas.

An AFL player list includes both rookie and senior players. These players will average around 112 games across approximately seven seasons. Of the 817 male AFL players in 2020, the average age was 24. However, the AFL Players Association finds that less than 20% of players will play 100 games, with less than a third of players drafted playing 50 games. The high turnover rate of players is also of concern, with approximately 100 players entering and 100 players leaving the workforce every year.

For the 2020 AFLW playing group, the average age was 24 and 10% are from a culturally diverse background.

Because the women's competition has only existed for four seasons, the ability to estimate average career length is limited. However, the expansion of six teams in two seasons means that players are staying in the competition for longer.

A snapshot of players' Mental Health and Wellbeing

Key areas of identified mental health risk in the men's competition through a 2015 prevalence study, 'The Mental Health, Wellbeing and Substance Use of Australian Football League Players Report', OYH, were:

1. Rates of depression, anxiety and substance abuse are comparable to the general population. However, a significant minority (17 per cent) of AFL players reported problematic levels of depression, anxiety and psychological distress.
2. Psychological distress at a moderate to very high level was reported in 23 per cent of the playing group.
3. Players with a history of mental health issues were three times more likely to indicate psychological distress, and players who had sustained multiple concussions were two times more likely to report psychological distress.
4. One in five players are experiencing mental health problems at a level that would warrant treatment by a health professional.
5. 29 per cent of the playing group indicated a likelihood to seek help from a mental health professional, however one in 10 said they would not seek help from anyone.

Awareness raising and efforts to reduce stigma led by the AFLPA, clubs and players across the AFL ecosystem have contributed to a significant increase in players seeking help from the AFLPA network of mental health and wellbeing providers over the past three years.

According to AFLPA mental health and wellbeing service statistics, the most common reasons for seeking a wellbeing consultation in 2019 were relationships, anxiety and adjustment [to life stressors] in AFL players.

Similarly, in 2019, the most common reasons AFLW players sought a wellbeing consultation were anxiety, medical illness or injury and adjustment [to life stressors].

Past AFL and AFLW players also accessed help from the AFLPA for relationships, anxiety, adjustment and career transition.



One in five players are experiencing mental health problems at a level that would warrant treatment by a health professional

What is a mentally healthy workplace?

Organisations play an important role in supporting and maintaining the mental health and wellbeing of their people. In addition to considering individual factors, any mental health and wellbeing strategy must also consider the systems and environments in which we live and work, and the importance of the health of those systems. A mental health strategy also ensures organisations are meeting legal responsibilities to provide environments that are physically and psychologically safe. Mental health holds different meanings depending on cultural identity and background and intersects with other sociocultural factors.

Beyond Blue defines a mentally healthy workplace as:

“people at all levels have a shared vision of, and commitment to, positive mental health. Work demands are realistic in a way that balances the needs of the staff and the employer and do not pose an unreasonable risk to the mental health of individuals. Everyone in the workplace feels comfortable to speak openly about mental health and mental health conditions, without fear of stigma or discrimination. This creates a culture of respect and inclusivity.”

They identify that mentally healthy workplaces are ones that have the following in common:

- » A positive culture
- » A place where stress and other mental health risks are managed
- » Where those with mental health conditions are supported
- » A zero-tolerance approach to racism and discrimination

Benefits of a mentally healthy workplace include reduced absenteeism, improved productivity, increased engagement and motivation, reduced financial costs/return on investment, and improved attraction and retention of good employees.

Work is good for health. A healthy workplace is a safe, positive and inclusive workplace that is free from discrimination, bullying and harassment. A healthy workplace can encourage and support participation for those with non-work-related mental health conditions and can reduce the likelihood of work-related conditions developing. Cultural competence and safety in a workplace are critical to an inclusive workplace that contributes positively to the wellbeing of people from non-dominant cultures, people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and people with disability.

Mentally Healthy Workplace

Core principles of good workplace mental health strategies

Reduce Stigma

Early Identification

Promote Help Seeking

Some steps to help guide through these principles include:

Know the facts

Educate yourself about mental ill-health. Be aware of your attitudes and behaviour. Examine your own judgemental thinking.

Choose your words carefully

The way we speak can affect the attitudes of others

Educate others

Pass on facts and positive attitudes; challenge myths and stereotypes.

Focus on the positive

Mental ill-health, including addictions, are only part of anyone's larger picture.

Support people

Treat everyone with dignity and respect; offer support and encouragement to seek help.

Recognition

Recognise and respond to people displaying early signs and symptoms of mental ill-health and encourage early intervention.

Our Focus

The Strategy focuses on five key areas of policy and system reform.

These focus areas were determined by the key findings of the Mental Health Industry Review (MHIR), 2018, commissioned by the Industry Governance Committee (IGC).

The MHIR was conducted to assess how the AFL Industry could best approach the mental health of players and staff by developing best practice frameworks and identifying focus areas for action. The MHIR identified the clubs as the primary environment to support, resource and build capacity to improve mental health outcomes for players, coaches and club staff.

The Strategy's focus areas were also informed by the prevalence study, 'The Mental Health, Wellbeing and Substance Use of Australian Football League Players Report', OYH, 2015.

The focus areas help prioritise resource and have been endorsed after consultation with stakeholders across the AFL ecosystem, including but not restricted to staff, players, club representatives and the AFLPA.

Focus Area 1: Culture, Policy and System Reform

Creating a mentally healthy workplace is everyone's responsibility. We drive policy reform, establish and uphold industry-wide best practice standards and establish good governance to ensure all our people receive the highest-quality mental health care.

Focus Area 2: Mental Health Literacy, Destigmatisation and Suicide Prevention

All our people have a role in creating a culture that reduces stigma, promotes awareness and understanding of mental health, and encourages help-seeking behaviours.

Focus Area 3: Equality, Inclusivity and Responding to Diversity

Everyone is educated to respect and celebrate diversity. All our people contribute to an equal and inclusive workplace and work to reduce discrimination and bullying. For Indigenous players and staff, as the First Peoples of Australia, it is acknowledged that the deep connections to land, language, ceremony, kinship systems, and cultural knowledge and practices are intrinsic to wellbeing.

Focus Area 4: Prevention of Anxiety, Depression and Addictive Behaviours

We prioritise the prevention of anxiety, depression and addictive behaviours (alcohol and other substance misuse, problem gambling) by mitigating known risks to mental health and wellbeing and promoting our peoples' mental fitness and resilience.

Focus Area 5: Research and Evaluation

We build the evidence base nationally to lead responses to mental health in players, coaches, umpires and all our people. We ensure continuous quality and improvement of all mental health and wellbeing initiatives through ongoing evaluation.

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The focus areas help prioritise resource and have been endorsed after consultation with stakeholders across the AFL ecosystem.



Our Strategy

The Strategy and its objectives are guided by five core mental health principles, which underpin our Model.

OUR PURPOSE

To support the health and wellbeing of our people, to ensure the health and future of the game.

OUR VISION

All our people are mentally fit and ready to thrive and support each other.

PRINCIPLE 1	PRINCIPLE 2
A Person Centred, Family and Life Cycle Approach	The Mental Health Continuum
<p>A lifecycle approach takes into account that people are unique individuals who have different needs at different times in their lives.</p> <p>Being responsive to mental health and wellbeing requires an understanding of the individual's needs from commencement in the industry through to transition out of the industry and beyond. It also acknowledges the necessity for growth across different life stages (e.g. adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood and later life) and the critical role of family.</p>	<p>The Mental Health and Wellbeing Continuum is a way to understand the dynamic nature of mental health, its symptoms and its impacts, and the way individuals can move in either direction in response to different challenges.</p> <p>Understanding mental health as being on a continuum can help to improve understanding and reduce stigma. It also considers both the positive, thriving end of wellbeing as well as the ill and injured aspects of mental health.</p>

PRINCIPLE 3	PRINCIPLE 4	PRINCIPLE 5
A Shared Responsibility	From Prevention to Recovery	Modify Risks and Promote Protective Factors
<p>Achieving positive mental health and wellbeing for our people is based on everyone working as one team – a shared responsibility. This acknowledges that we all have a part to play in maintaining and managing our own mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>We all have a role in helping others to seek help early when problems arise.</p> <p>We all contribute to an inclusive culture that reduces stigma, promotes awareness and understanding of mental health.</p>	<p>The stepped care model of Prevention » Early Intervention » Recovery describes the approaches used at various stages of the mental health continuum to encourage wellbeing and reduce the likelihood of mental ill-health and its negative impacts.</p> <p>Primary prevention refers to preventing the emergence or onset of conditions; early intervention aims to prevent progression of a mental health condition through early identification and treatment at the first signs of mental health problems; and recovery involves the delivery of effective and safe interventions by appropriately qualified professionals and engaging peer and family support systems.</p>	<p>An understanding of risk and protective factors helps us to modify those factors to better support mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Risk factors are those that increase the likelihood of a condition emerging or increasing its impact or severity, while protective factors are those that work to mitigate or reduce the likelihood and impacts.</p> <p>Reducing risk factors and strengthening protective factors aid in the overall reduction of risks to mental health and wellbeing.</p>

Strategic Objectives

1. Alignment

Work as one industry and strengthen mental health and wellbeing partnerships.

No one entity can improve the mental health and wellbeing of our people. As an industry we play as one team and collaborate to achieve our vision. Partnerships allow for innovation and growth.

2. Culture

Build a thriving culture and mentally healthy workplaces.

As an industry we promote a culture that supports mental health and wellbeing. Healthy workplaces play a critical role in the larger support system for mental health and wellbeing.

3. Promotion

Promote and grow mental health, wellbeing and mental fitness

As an industry we promote awareness of mental health for our people and our football communities. All our people should have access to the knowledge and resources to build their skills in mental health, wellbeing and mental fitness.

4. Responsive

Respond with safe, effective and coordinated mental healthcare.

Regulate the delivery of mental healthcare to ensure quality and safety for all our people. Initiatives and interventions are effective, based on the best available evidence and relevant to the individual.

5. Data

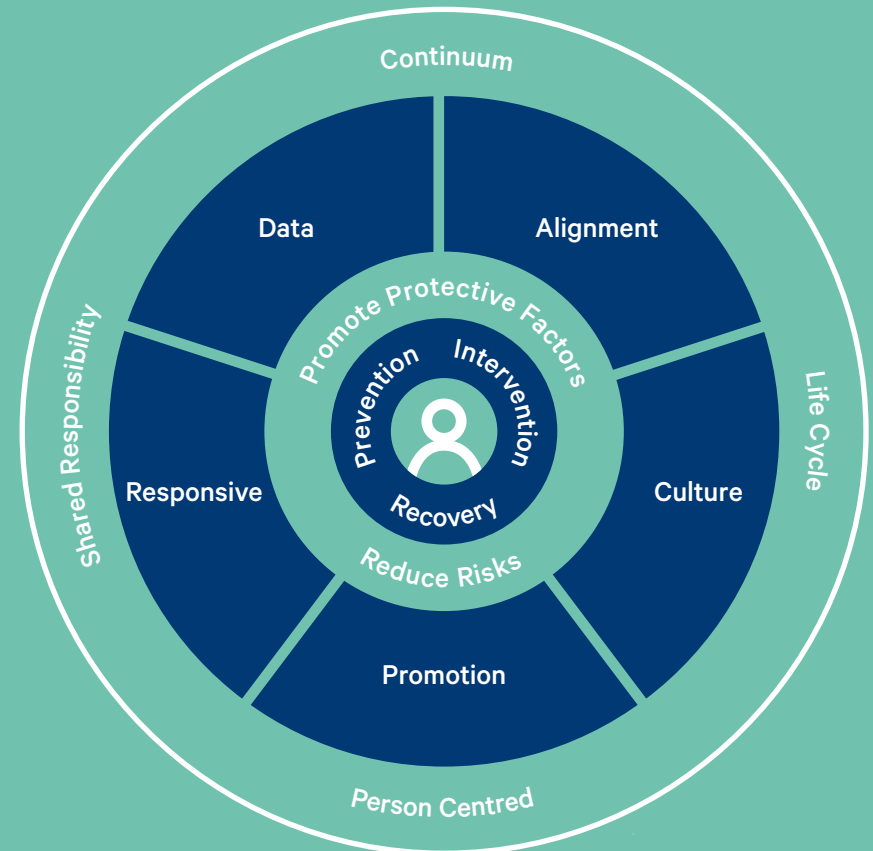
Build the evidence and ensure continual evaluation and improvement

We identify any modifiable risks to the mental health of our people and work to mitigate them. As an industry we establish a culture of evaluation and continuous improvement.



Our Model brings together our five objectives and the principles that guide us.

The Model





Definitions

Mental Fitness

The modifiable capacity to utilise resources and skills to flexibly adapt to challenges or advantages, enabling thriving.

Modifiable Protective Factors

Factors associated with a decreased likelihood of mental disorders or distress, and which can be promoted at individual, workplace and community levels. Examples of modifiable protective factors include peer support, positive peer group norms and positive workplace culture.

Modifiable Risk Factors

Factors associated with an increased likelihood of mental disorder or distress, and which can be addressed through individual, workplace or community actions (as opposed to genetic or pre-determined risk factors such as age or gender). Examples of modifiable risk factors are workplace stressors, family conflict and low community attachment.

Prevention Science

A multidisciplinary field devoted to the scientific study of the theory, research, and practice related to the prevention of social, physical and mental health problems.

Psychological Safety

Psychological Safety refers to a climate in which people are comfortable being (and expressing) themselves.

SEWB

Social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) recognises that connection to land, culture, spirituality, family, and community have important impacts on wellbeing. It also recognises that an Indigenous person's social and emotional wellbeing is influenced by social policies, racism and discrimination.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The AFL would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

The AFL Mental Health Strategy is committed to making a positive contribution to the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by providing mental health and wellbeing services that are culturally appropriate and inclusive.

Developed by

Dr Kate Hall, Head of Mental Health, AFL; Megan Dodge, and Dr Alex West, Melbourne, 2020. With contributions from Dr Ranjit Menon, AFL Chief Psychiatrist; Dr Graham Gee and Nicky Couston.

Indigenous Artwork

"Together Chasing Dreams"
by Kirby Bentley
Kirby is a Noongar woman from Ballardong-Whadjuk country.



Our mental health partners

