

## ***Empowering Employees Equals Lives Saved and Reduced Costs***

### **New Hope Group – West Moreton Operations**

#### **The Problem**

In 2015, the New Hope Coal (NHC) Health and Safety Team recognised the health culture at their West Moreton Operations (WMO) was disempowered, and this was manifesting in unsustainable incidence rates.

NHC's philosophy maintains that a healthy employee is a safe employee and any measures to address this have to be part of a holistic program, which employees feel they have ownership around its content and direction. Experience at NHC's Acland mine site has proven that employee ownership in any health and wellness program fostered empowerment because employees chose to make the changes for themselves.

As part of the decision to provide the Live Well, Work Well program at WMO, a survey was conducted of the employees to determine the tools they were looking for to improve their health and wellness.

The survey uncovered key areas of concern for the respondents –

1. 58% were struggling to know how to get moving more regularly, to understand what exercise is best for them and how to add it into their daily lives
2. 57% were struggling to know how to manage their stress, improve their sleep and deal with depression and/or anxiety symptoms
3. 53% were struggling with aches and pains and aching joints and wanted tools to help them address injury prevention
4. 49% were struggling to know how to eat well for daily energy and had poor focus and concentration
5. 48% were struggling with finding a work-life balance, and how to be financially 'fit'

#### **The Solution**

In September 2015, the Health and Safety Team started the Live Well, Work Well program at WMO. The vision for the program was to have employees who are empowered to be the healthiest and happiest version of themselves.

The objectives were:

1. Integrate West Moreton Operations workforce with NHC Health & Wellness program.
2. Provide individual consultations with employees to prevent onset of injury or disease.
3. Provide opportunities for all employees to thrive in their health, work & life

NHC engaged local provider Live Well Australia to coordinate the program, based on the 6 pillars of Health and Wellness depicted below.



The strategies included:

1. Establishing the WMO Health and Safety Committee, with volunteers from all departments and levels, to meet monthly and set the direction for the Program including:
  - a. Monthly health education sessions at Toolbox Talks delivered by a range of health and wellness professionals including Dietitian, Physiotherapist, Exercise Physiologist, Occupational Therapist, Financial Planner, General Practitioner
  - b. Completion of one annual site-wide Health Challenge
  - c. Creation of a WMO team to participate in a local fun run/walk
2. Encouraging all employees to get an annual health check

The measure of an empowered health culture is the number of employees demonstrating positive health behaviours, and those who have an understanding of choices that lead to a happy and healthy life.

The Program’s efficacy was to be measured by the intention to change behavior, reported changes in behavior, and participation rates. The Health and Safety Team also monitored the impact on WorkCover premium.

**Benefits/Effects**

It was expected that evidence of the shift toward a positive health culture could take up to 24 months. However within the first 6 months the intention to change reported by employees following monthly Toolbox presentations, was high.

Month	Topic	% intending to make changes	Examples of intended changes (“Preparation” or “Action” phase)
October 2015	The value of stretching	33%	Stretching, exercising and watching their posture

November 2015	Ergonomics	<b>19%</b>	Stretching more, stretching more effectively, strengthening and improving posture, improving lifting technique, improving sitting posture
December 2015	Nutrition for shift workers	<b>24%</b>	Reduced caffeine intake, green tea before bed, reduced sugar intake, wiser meal choices for shifts
February 2016	Sleep for shift workers	<b>35%</b>	Stop clock watching, improved diet, no TV at night and trying a green apple on night shift to increase alertness
March 2016	Beginning exercise	<b>46%</b>	More walking, regular exercise, more stretching and finding time to exercise including resistance training

The Health and Safety Committee led the following initiatives.

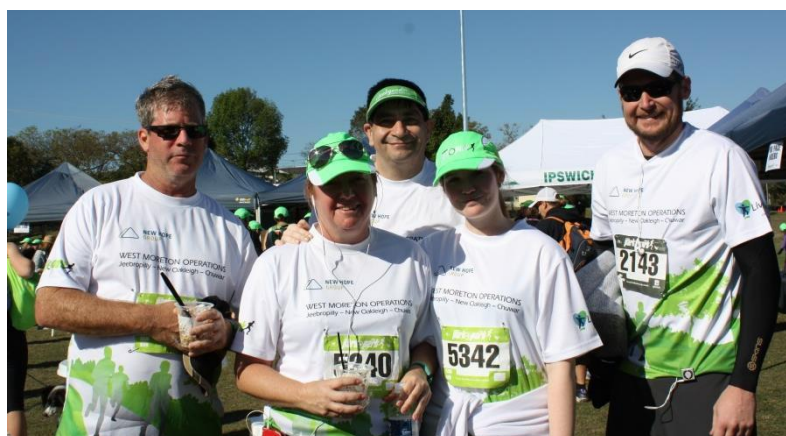
**Inaugural Weight Challenge:**

34% of the workforce signed up in January 2016 and at its completion in March, the participants had shed more than 160kgs combined.



**Inaugural WMO team for Ipswich Park to Park**

On Sunday 31 July 2016, WMO entered their first team in Ipswich's Park2Park event with 40 employees and their families choosing the 5km walk/run, 10km run or half marathon run.



### **First annual survey results:**

By the end of the first 12 months, the results of the first annual survey demonstrated a burgeoning empowered health culture. 50% of respondents indicated the Program had helped them to make positive changes to their health.

Other positive health behaviours demonstrated include;

- 79% stretching regularly at work
- 47% increased water intake
- 39% taken steps to reduce stress
- 38% healthy food swaps
- 31% improved sleeping habits
- 31% had a skin check within past 12 months
- 30% been proactive in pain management
- 24% started running or walking regularly
- 24% created a financial budget



### **Health leaders emerge across the site:**

As the site got used to the rhythm of monthly Toolbox Talks, and Committee members grew in knowledge, some members started to take ownership to lead their own health projects.

Following a drug education session in November 2015, one Committee member Jason Linke was motivated to share with his crew his personal battle with depression following his son's battle with ICE addiction.

The positive response Jason received from his colleagues emboldened him to use the Movember platform in November 2016 to raise awareness for key men's health issues such as mental health and prostate cancer across the site. Over the month, Jason delivered prestart awareness sessions to all crews, sharing his story and encouraging all employees to seek help. He also raised more than \$20,000 for Movember.

Prior to November 2016, 7 employees at WMO had gotten their prostate specific antigen (PSA) level checked. Six months after the Movember sessions, 14 additional employees reported they had gone to their GP to get their PSA number.

**And a life is saved!**

Following the Movember presentations, Committee member Jason Shard chose to go back to his GP for his PSA number. Through this process Jason discovered that he had oesophageal cancer and required immediate treatment. Jason states that if he had not been encouraged to get his PSA checked, his GP would never have found his cancer. Jason Shard is 40 years of age.

**Empowered health leaders share their story to encourage more change - M8 day 2017:**

18 months of the Live Well, Work Well program at WMO was celebrated on May 8, 2017 with M8 (Mate) day. All mine employees came together to listen to Jason Linke and Jason Shard share their message. Born out of a Committee meeting in January 2017, the idea was for these two health advocates to share their experiences with their colleagues and encourage them to: “Get checked and have a chat!”

Mine management is very proud of the impact of the Program, with mine manager Jeff Butler attributing it’s success to a strong sense of ownership in the Program: *“It has worked because we have a group of volunteers who are not doing it because they have to; they are doing it because they want to. And this is the key – people with the commitment to drive change and information flow.”*



## WorkCover ratio



When comparing the costs of WorkCover's Industry Average Ratio for Open Cut Coal Mining, WMO's ratio was almost twice the industry average in 2015/16. Since the Live Well, Work Well program has been in place, the 2016/2017 ratio is now equal to industry average, representing a cost saving of \$1980 per person.

## **Transferability**

A successful roll out of this Program from NHC's Acland site demonstrates its transferability, with New Hope Group now implementing the program at a total of 3 sites.

Successful transferability relies on commitment to;

1. Creation and support for a voluntary Health & Safety Committee;
2. Availability of Allied Health Services, face-to-face consultations on-site; and
3. Desire of a management team to create a positive health culture: a concept beyond simply providing health assessments.

In summary, the ultimate success factor that separates this program from all others is the tripartite partnership between; management, a dedicated Committee, and Allied Health Professionals. Implementing a Health and Wellness Program that relies solely on the use of an external Health Provider will eventually fail or become boring. For Health and Wellness to stay fresh, programs such as ours are continually changing and maturing to stay in step with the organisation's desire to encourage a positive health culture, so that their people can be happy and safe at home and at work.

## **Approximate Cost**

New Hope Group's investment for the WMO Live Well, Work Well program for 2017 is less than \$100/person/month. This cost represents value and can be directly offset against reduced WorkCover premiums of \$1980/person/year as compared to the previous year. New Hope Group sees investment in a health and wellness program as a currency, rather than a cost. This is supported by reductions in injuries, less absenteeism, and most of all active engagement and participation of employees and their families.