

# Staff health and wellbeing strategy 2023-2027



# Acknowledgement

**We acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which our students live and are educated throughout Western Australia.**

We acknowledge and understand that Elders, parents, families and communities are the first educators of their children and we recognise and value the cultures and strengths that Aboriginal children bring to the classroom. Aboriginal people have a long tradition of teaching and learning through sharing their connections with country, community, language and culture, and through their oral histories, stories and lived experiences that are passed from generation to generation.

We recognise and value the learning that Aboriginal children bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom.

The word Aboriginal is taken to mean Aboriginal, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Indigenous. When referring to individuals, use the term Aboriginal person.

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# Message from the Director General

**We live and work in dynamic and changing times, where being aware of our health and wellbeing and looking after ourselves and those around us is vital.**

That is why I am proud to release our Staff health and wellbeing strategy 2023–2027, which represents our commitment to building a wellbeing culture and strengthening the health and wellbeing of all staff in our schools and workplaces.

The strategy focuses on ensuring programs, supports and services are in place to empower staff to enhance their health and wellbeing across five dimensions: physical, psychological, social, spiritual and environmental. The priorities in the strategy are framed around five pillars spanning culture and leadership, connections and partnerships, learning and development, supportive systems and safe environments. This integrated approach embeds health and wellbeing into everything we do and reflects our unique work environments.

It is important that each of us builds the awareness, knowledge and skills to look after our health and wellbeing and contribute to a positive workplace culture through our behaviour and actions. This enables us to be our best and do our best to deliver quality teaching and learning for students.

Our Staff health and wellbeing strategy aligns with the range of health and wellbeing programs delivered through central and regional services. It also recognises the many successful staff and student initiatives implemented in our public schools and workplaces.

I am committed to ensuring that this strategy supports positive health and wellbeing outcomes for our staff and encourage your contribution as we work together to shape and achieve an inclusive wellbeing culture.



Lisa Rodgers  
Director General



# Our health and wellbeing vision

**Our vision is a wellbeing culture that connects, supports, develops, and empowers our staff to strengthen their health, safety and wellbeing and contribute to the wellbeing of others.**

The Staff health and wellbeing strategy is for all our staff: whatever their role and wherever they work in our schools and workplaces across Western Australia.

The strategy's development was informed by conversation forums across all staff cohorts and with stakeholders. Forum participants shared their views, perspectives and challenges about health and wellbeing, including individual, school, workplace and system.

## **Guiding principles**

- Health and wellbeing is an individual and shared responsibility.
- Individually and collectively we build and contribute to a wellbeing culture.
- Wellbeing needs are diverse and changing across our career and life stages.
- The quality of workplace culture and environments contributes significantly to wellbeing, particularly emotional wellbeing.

## **Our values**

The values in our Code of Conduct: **Integrity, Equity, Voice, Truth-telling, Teamwork, Care, and Learning**; underpin this strategy, reflecting how our behaviour and actions contribute to individual wellbeing and creating a wellbeing culture.

# The wellbeing approach

## What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing is dynamic and multifaceted. It is a way of being, doing and thinking: individually and in connection with others.

The World Health Organisation defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.<sup>1</sup>

Mental health is defined as “a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”.<sup>2</sup>

## The wellbeing continuum

The spectrum represents the mental health and wellbeing journey. There are distinct stages from ‘Well’ to ‘Unwell’. Each includes different approaches to address and support individual

needs in a range of ways. These stages involve job and life challenges and supports being in a ‘healthy’ balance – or off balance.

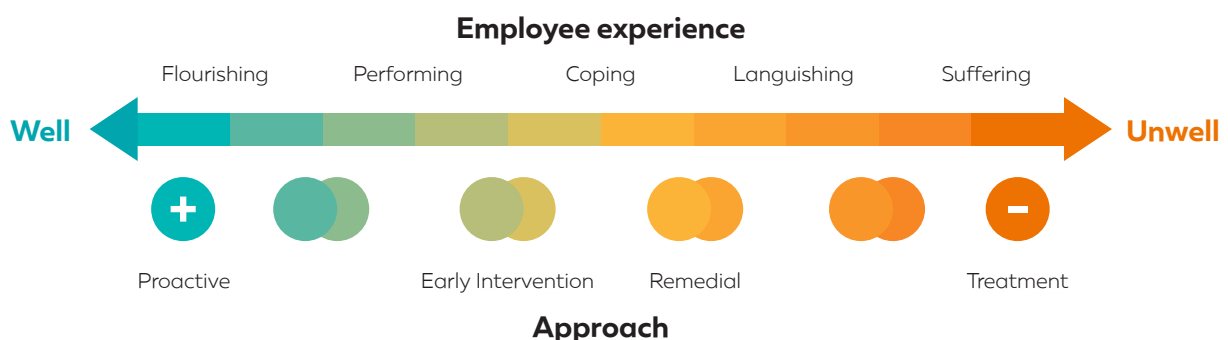
This strategy focuses on initiatives that build wellbeing awareness, knowledge, skills and capacity, supporting individual and collective wellbeing for our staff to thrive and succeed.

## Definitions of an individual’s experience

- **Flourishing** – an optimal state of wellbeing across all dimensions.
- **Performing** – a high state of wellbeing across most dimensions.
- **Coping** – a sense of wellbeing; while there may not be a feeling of being overwhelmed, there is likely a feeling of being overextended.
- **Languishing** – a low state of wellbeing; a feeling of being overwhelmed across multiple dimensions of wellbeing.
- **Suffering** – a debilitating state of poor wellbeing.

A ‘flourishing’ individual has ample supports to meet personal and professional challenges. As an individual moves across the continuum, the balance of challenges to supports tips in the opposite direction. At the ‘Unwell’ end of the continuum, challenges outweigh supports.

Figure 1. The Wellbeing Continuum<sup>3</sup>





# Dimensions of wellbeing

Well people pursue all the dimensions of wellbeing; physical, psychological, spiritual, social and environmental. They are able to integrate the dimensions across all areas of their life.

The dimensions are interconnected. For example, social wellbeing can foster psychological and spiritual wellbeing and physical wellbeing cultivates psychological wellbeing.

## Physical

Being physically safe and healthy. Ensuring our bodies are healthy through good nutrition, physical exercise, quality sleep, rest and renewal. Experiencing physical safety and security and being safe from injury and harm.

## Psychological

Our emotional and mental capacity and stability. It includes how we process information, judgments and decisions we make, how we deal with and express our emotions and our self-awareness. It also includes progressing towards goals, experiencing and achieving success and the ability to see our own potential.

## Social

Our sense of connection, belonging and support through positive interpersonal relationships. Its core elements include: social integration (quality relationships), acceptance (self-acceptance), contribution (what we bring to the world), actualisation (one's potential) and coherence (quality of our social world).

## Spiritual

This dimension is deeply personal, relating to our life purpose and meaning. It is shaped by beliefs, personal values, culture and spiritual and/or religious identity and connections. It recognises the importance and value of history, heritage and traditions.

## Environmental

The impact of our personal, professional and natural environment and how we interact and engage with it. Valuing the relationship between ourselves, our community and the environment, including the way we interact with nature and our personal environment. Environmental wellbeing encourages us to live in a manner that is respectful of our surroundings.



Figure 2. The five dimensions of wellbeing

# Our health and wellbeing model

## Each person is at the centre of the health and wellbeing model.

The model represents how individual wellbeing is directly connected to collective wellbeing, with both influenced and impacted by our dynamic work environments.

Our individual health and wellbeing includes five dimensions: physical, psychological, social, spiritual and environmental. It is impacted by the balance of challenges and supports and the way an individual's roles and responsibilities are designed and carried out.

Our collective wellbeing spans five pillars: culture and leadership, connection and partnerships, learning and development, supportive systems and safe environments, with our context as the work setting (with all its circumstances) in which we operate.

### Culture and leadership

Building culture and practice that models, prioritises, values and supports health and wellbeing at individual, school, workplace and system levels.

### Connections and partnerships

Enhancing, supporting and facilitating positive and constructive connections, collaborations and partnerships that value and enhance wellbeing. Cultural connections and inclusion are an integral part.

### Learning and development

Strengthening health and wellbeing awareness, knowledge and capability to support and enable staff to enhance their wellbeing and contribute to a wellbeing culture and positive wellbeing practice.

### Supportive systems

Embedding wellbeing into processes, systems and operations that enable, empower and support staff.

### Safe environments

Ensuring physical safety and psychological safety in schools and workplaces through protection, prevention and early intervention mechanisms, systems and supports.



**Figure 3.** The staff health and wellbeing model





# Our health and wellbeing priorities 2023-2027

The initiatives in this strategy focus on each pillar of the health and wellbeing model, underpinned by the five wellbeing dimensions, principles and values.

## **Culture and leadership – commitment through action**

Building culture and practice that models, prioritises, values and supports health and wellbeing at individual, school, workplace and system levels.

- Foster and facilitate a wellbeing culture through individual and collective action, modelling and supporting positive wellbeing practice and behaviour.
- Embed wellbeing into policies, processes and systems, ensuring it is an integral part of operations, practice and support.
- Report on staff health, safety and wellbeing through an integrated system informing continuous improvement across wellbeing metrics and practice.

## **Connections and partnerships – better together**

Enhancing, supporting and facilitating positive and constructive connections, collaborations and partnerships that value and enhance wellbeing. Cultural connections and inclusion are an integral part.

- Build a wellbeing community of practice through connection, collaboration and collegiate engagement and support.
- Work with stakeholders to inform health and wellbeing initiatives.

## **Learning and development – continuing to grow**

Strengthening health and wellbeing awareness, knowledge and capability to support and enable staff to enhance their wellbeing and contribute to a wellbeing culture and positive wellbeing practice.

- Enhance professional learning to build health, safety and wellbeing awareness, knowledge, capabilities and practice.
- Ensure health and wellbeing is an integral and integrated part of professional learning and development, with a strong focus on mental health.

## **Supportive systems – making it easier**

Embedding wellbeing into processes, systems and operations that enable, empower and support staff.

- Identify opportunities to enhance support systems, ensuring staff have access to relevant, timely and quality support.
- Assess and streamline systems, processes and administrative requirements to identify opportunities to reduce time and work effort.

## **Safe environments – safe places and spaces**

Ensuring physical and psychological safety in schools and workplaces through protection, prevention and early intervention mechanisms, systems and supports.

- Strengthen work health and safety governance, systems and supports aligned to the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020*.
- Build psychological safety and cultural safety.
- Address aggressive behaviour against staff and develop practices and supports that contribute to safety and wellbeing.
- Enhance physical environments to support wellbeing.

# Our health and wellbeing initiatives 2023-2025

These initiatives contribute to and complement existing staff health, safety and wellbeing programs delivered through central and regional services.

We recognise schools and workplaces implement a range of successful health and wellbeing initiatives tailored to staff needs and school community contexts. Professional associations also contribute to responding and supporting their colleagues through wellbeing programs.

## Culture and leadership – commitment through action

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**Foster and facilitate a wellbeing culture through individual and collective action, modelling and supporting positive wellbeing practice and behaviour.**

- Enhance recognition programs, acknowledging and celebrating individual, school and workplace achievements.

**Embed wellbeing into policies, processes and systems, ensuring it is an integral part of operations, practice and support.**

- Include wellbeing principles and practice into policies, guidelines and processes.
- Include wellbeing in job description forms for staff with line management responsibility.
- Performance management includes wellbeing goals.

**Report on staff health, safety and wellbeing through an integrated system informing continuous improvement across wellbeing metrics and practice.**

- Develop wellbeing metrics informing culture, engagement and wellbeing.

### What success looks like

- A wellbeing culture demonstrated and experienced by staff.
- Health and wellbeing considerations included in policies, processes, systems and support.
- Wellbeing metrics informs culture, engagement and wellbeing continuous improvement.

# Connections and partnerships – better together

**Build a wellbeing community of practice through connection, collaboration and collegiate engagement and support.**

- Enhance engagement with established formal and informal collegiate networks across staff cohorts to support wellbeing awareness, knowledge and practice.

**Work with stakeholders to inform health and wellbeing initiatives.**

- Engage with professional associations, unions and stakeholders to design wellbeing initiatives.

## **What success looks like**

- Our staff connect with each other to support health and wellbeing.
- Engagement and support initiatives enhance professional connections.
- Professional associations, unions and stakeholders contribute to wellbeing initiatives and activities.

# Learning and development – continuing to grow

**Enhance professional learning to build health, safety and wellbeing awareness, knowledge, capabilities and practice.**

- Implement a mental health and wellbeing self-care program.
- Implement a health and wellbeing online resource hub with information, support resources and toolkits to support staff wellbeing. This includes tailored information for individual staff cohorts, diversity groups and staff in regional and remote locations.
- Co-design culturally responsive wellbeing programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

**Ensure health and wellbeing is an integral and integrated part of professional learning and development, with a strong focus on mental health.**

- Health and wellbeing included in existing and new professional learning programs:
  - tailored to the needs of staff cohorts
  - for people working in regional and remote locations
  - for line managers, focused on supporting self-care and staff care.

## **What success looks like**

- Staff access and use information, professional learning, resources and support to enhance their health and wellbeing.
- Health and wellbeing awareness and knowledge applied to individual and collective practice.

# Supportive systems – making it easier

**Identify opportunities to enhance support systems ensuring staff have access to relevant, timely and quality support.**

- Enhance the employee assistance program to:
  - include culturally responsive support and support for staff in specialised roles
  - enable greater face-to-face access, particularly for staff in regional and remote locations.
- Review staff induction, including return to work programs, ensuring health, safety and wellbeing is embedded through information, professional learning and support.

**Assess systems, processes and administrative requirements to identify opportunities to reduce time and work effort, enabling staff to focus on improving and supporting teaching and learning.**

- Assess staff administrative requirements to identify opportunities to streamline systems and processes.
- Consult with staff in education support settings to better understand their health and wellbeing needs.

## What success looks like

- An improved employee assistance program.
- Induction programs address health, safety and wellbeing.
- Health and wellbeing needs of school psychologists supported.
- Systems and processes streamlined to support the work of staff.
- Initiatives developed to support the health, safety and wellbeing of education support staff.



# Safe environments – safe places and spaces

## **Strengthen work health and safety governance, systems and supports aligned to the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020*.**

- Implement a new work health and safety framework and training for senior managers.
- Implement targeted cohort occupational health and safety training with online resources.
- Review the injury management support model and services aligned to the Department's workers' compensation and injury management model.
- Trial a new injury management model, enhancing services and support to facilitate better return to work outcomes.

## **Build psychological and cultural safety.**

- Identify practice and support to address staff psychological safety and cultural safety, through initiatives that promote safe, respectful and supportive workplaces and behaviours. This includes work being undertaken in this area by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.

## **Address aggressive behaviour against staff in schools and develop practices and support that contribute to safety and wellbeing.**

- Review and update the Keeping our Workplaces Safe guidelines and resources.
- Work with professional associations, unions and stakeholders to progress initiatives related to addressing violence in schools.

## **Enhance physical environments to support wellbeing.**

- Explore opportunities to enhance school and workplace physical environments through:
  - continued inclusion of health, safety and wellbeing in school and workplace design
  - information and resources to assist schools and workplaces enhance their environment.

### **What success looks like**

- The new work health and safety framework enables effective legislative compliance and improved systems and supports.
- Schools and workplaces respond to initiatives to build psychological safety and cultural safety.
- Initiatives to address aggressive behaviours against staff developed and implemented.
- School and workplace environments enhanced.

# Implementing our strategy and measuring its impact

**The success of the Staff health and wellbeing strategy relies on our commitment, individually and collectively, to a wellbeing culture and actions that support and enhance ours and others health, safety and wellbeing.**

Department teams will work together on the development, implementation and evaluation of initiatives through collaborative partnerships and co-design processes with school leaders, staff groups and stakeholders. This will include support from:

- a health and wellbeing reference group guiding implementation, monitoring and reporting, ensuring a cycle of continuous improvement
- a work, health and safety advisory committee monitoring and reporting on implementation of the new work, health and safety framework
- relevant stakeholders will be informed during the development and implementation of initiatives as appropriate.

This strategy is a living document. Its implementation will evolve, adapt and be informed through listening to our staff and feedback from our staff.

The Department will seek to understand the impact of this strategy as it is delivered, and in its totality, following 2027.

## References

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**Shaping the future**