

MEDIA ALERT

Friday, APRIL 27, 2018

EXPERT PANEL: Workers' mental health and wellbeing is in crisis in Australia.

Every year poor mental health costs Australian workplaces \$10.6 billion in lost productivity, absenteeism and compensation. SafeWork Australia estimates that annually nearly half a billion dollars is paid out in workers' compensation claims related to mental health and time off work is nearly three times as long compared to all other claims.

The true cost is likely much higher, as workers bear the toil of work-related anxiety, depression and burnout, says an expert panel due to present at the Unions NSW Safety and Workers' Compensation Conference on Friday.

Dr Carlo Caponecchia, an expert in mental health in the workplace, will join Lachlan O'Neill from SafeWork NSW and Nicole Cini, a legal and human resources expert, to examine why employers need to fundamentally shift the way they think about mental health risks in the workplace so that they can move to prevention.

Dr Carlo Caponecchia is a lecturer at the University of NSW's School of Aviation and is an expert on the risk of workplace stress and health. Dr Caponecchia has provided expert witness testimony, particularly regarding workplace bullying and harassment, to NSW parliamentary inquiries.

Lachlan O'Neill works in the psycho-social services team at SafeWork NSW. With close to a decade's experience examining risk in workplaces and health and safety law, he has seen the real cost mentally unhealthy workplaces have on workers.

Nicole Cini is a qualified lawyer, employee relations specialist and academic researcher with a background in law, policy, research and campaigns. She is currently a doctoral candidate at University of Sydney, working on an employment relations thesis examining burnout, job design and skills.

Costs of poor mental health to Australian workplaces each year:

- \$480 million a year in workers' compensation

- 14.8 weeks off work, compared to the average 5.3 weeks for all claims

- typical compensation payment per claim was \$23,600 compared to \$8,700 for all claims
- typical time off work was 14.8 weeks compared to 5.3 weeks for all claims
- 39 per cent of claims caused by harassment, bullying or exposure to violence
- 90 per cent of claims attributed to mental stress
- 65 per cent of claims awarded to workers aged 40 and over.

(Figures from SafeWork Australia)

Morning session covering mentally healthy workplaces begins at 0900 on Friday April 27.

Sydney Trades Hall (auditorium)

377 Sussex Street

Sydney, NSW 2000

For more information, please contact Suze Metherell 0412 867 084