



Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Group Employee Health and Wellbeing Policy and Procedures

Why we have this policy

At OPBG, we are committed to ensuring our team maintains good health and wellbeing while working with us. To help support our team members, we have made several resources available to you.

We want our workplace to have a positive and healthy culture. To achieve that, our workplace policies, practices, and environments are designed with your health and wellbeing in mind.

This policy applies to all employees at our workplace.

Mental health and wellbeing

“Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes 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.” (World Health Organization)

Our workplace has a role in promoting, protecting and supporting our employees' mental health and wellbeing.

We recognize the experience of mental distress is common and that anyone can be affected at any stage of their lives. We are committed to supporting any employees experiencing mental distress.

If you are experiencing distress, we will do as much as we can to help you to stay at work and/or support your return to work when you are ready. Any health conditions or disabilities will be treated in confidence. We will never share any information about you unless you have agreed to it, and only to ensure your wellbeing and safety and that of those around you.

How we will promote good mental health and wellbeing

We will manage you in ways that promote your mental wellbeing.

As your employer, we will do the following:

- Encourage a culture of openness – you can speak up about any concerns at any time and know you will be heard.
- Make sure you feel supported to seek help for any issues or distress, including using our conflict resolution processes.

- Make sure you understand what is expected of you at work – in your work tasks and acceptable behaviour.
- Check in with you at agreed times to ensure your workload is manageable, and to discuss any issues.
- Offer flexible work practices wherever possible and/or legally required.
- Support opportunities for professional skills development and growth.
- Employ and promote you based on your abilities, rather than any perceived disabilities.
- Not tolerate bullying, harassment, or discriminatory behaviour.

Our expectations of you

You can do a lot to protect your own mental wellbeing at work.

As our employee, we expect you to:

- treat everyone with respect and civility
- speak up if you need help or support
- speak up about any bullying, harassment, or discriminatory behaviour you notice happening in our workplace
- take your own steps to stay mentally healthy at work (e.g. taking rest breaks, speaking up if stressed)
- support workmates to speak up if they need help for anything affecting their mental health
- access support if you need it – see the [Help finding support](#) section in this policy
- ask about options (e.g. flexible working arrangements, special leave) if you feel you need time away from work to manage your mental health.

Encouraging positive actions

To maintain a mentally healthy workplace we will:

- consult with you and other staff about what workplace wellbeing means to you, and what initiatives you might like
- provide contact details for support services you can access easily and discreetly
- encourage you to take breaks, both to rest and to connect with others
- if you need a break from the stress of work or a few days to decompress from anything else causing poor mental health, you may take annual leave, sick leave or leave without pay
- poor mental health is as detrimental to your overall health as physical ailments, so please feel comfortable using sick leave for this purpose. After all, the brain is a major part of your body.

Sun Smart

As your employer we are required to protect you from workplace risks.

Because exposure to solar ultraviolet (UV) radiation can cause cancer, we will take steps to minimize your exposure during work hours.

We will:

- check UV levels each day
- encourage you to work in shade as much as possible
- provide sunscreen
- try to move tasks inside if shade isn't possible
- rotate tasks among employees so you are not constantly in the sun.

As our employee we expect you to:

- speak up if you are concerned about your sun exposure and/or have suggestions on how we can better keep you safe
- check your own skin for changes that could indicate melanoma or non-melanoma skin cancers
- regularly drink water to stay hydrated.

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

You must wear clothing and sunscreen (applied to uncovered skin every day when UV levels are dangerous) to protect you from the sun when working outside.

As necessary, this PPE could include:

- long-sleeved shirts with collars, long trousers or knee-length skirts or shorts that are preferably light-weight but still close-weaved, keep out UV radiation while allowing your skin to breathe, and have an Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) of at least 30
- a hat/hard hat/helmet with a wide-brim/peak/flap that protects your head, face, ears and neck
- sunglasses that fit closely to your face and meet UV protection standards, AS/NZS 1336:2014
- if required, sunglasses and spectacles must also meet the safety glasses standard, AS/NZS 1337:2010
- sunscreen, which must be water-resistant, broad-spectrum, at least SPF30, and meets standard AS/NZS 2604:2012. Sunscreen should be applied 20 minutes before going outside and reapplied every two hours, especially if you are sweating and/or working in water, and stored below 30 degrees, as high temperatures (such as from being left in a vehicle's glove box) can stop it being effective.

Help finding support

Mental health

There may be times you need support to deal with difficult issues or to help someone close to you deal with theirs.

If you need support, we will:

Encourage you to ask for help as early as possible to reduce the chances of problems growing - all disclosures will be treated confidentially.

Do what we can to help you find the support you need.

Allow you time off work to deal with issues, as set out in the sick leave section of your employment agreement.

Managers are always available and happy to lend an ear if there is anything at or outside work causing you stress. Simply getting worries off your chest is often a big relief and grabbing a cup of coffee with the boss can help do that, as well as address any underlying issues in the operation that may be causing that stress.

We have engaged the services of two counsellors. If you feel you need some support in an anonymous and confidential setting, be it work related or private, please feel free to access this counselling service by contacting one of the counsellors and give them the reference OPBG. OPBG will pay for an initial four sessions and up to two additional sessions if required.

Both counsellors have been given a purchase order number, they will invoice OPBG for your sessions without referring to your name or situation.

The counsellors are:

Maria Bowden

027 4877 289

maria@555george.co.nz

Stephanie Roddick

027 4777 090

steff.roddick@otagotherapy.nz

You could also find support by:

- talking to your manager or a colleague for advice and support
- going to see your doctor or another health professional
- calling or texting 1737 to talk to a trained counsellor. This service is completely free and available 24/7.
- calling 111 if there is an immediate crisis.

Stay at work/return to work

We understand there are many reasons why you may need support coming back to work after time away from the workplace.

We also understand there may be times when some extra support or flexibility from us could help you stay at work during these times.

If you are away from work for any reason, we will check in with you.

We will talk to you in ways you are comfortable and will work alongside your support people and health professionals (where appropriate) to see what changes we can make to help you come back to work or to stay at work.

What we agree will be supported by a return-to-work/stay-at-work plan.

When you are back at work

When you have returned to work, we will continue to talk to make sure the plan is working for both of us.

All details will be treated in confidence. We would share your information only after discussions with you, only with your consent, and only to ensure the wellbeing and safety of you and those around you.

Sun smart

Given your exposure to sun in the field, we encourage you to have an annual skin check. We will reimburse the cost of undergoing a skin test at Waverly Health (\$70) or your usual general practitioner.

Approved by the Otago Peninsula Biodiversity Trust Board: 13/2/23