



CICA – Vic / Tas Branch Crane Safety Bulletin #342 August 2024



Greetings all. Today's Bulletin is about the mental health impact of working away from home.

Whether it's for a couple of nights or a couple of weeks, being away from one's family and usual support networks takes its toll.

Missing out on the everyday moments, the little things can start to wear people down.

Missing birthdays, anniversaries, a child's first steps or their school play—can make one feel disconnected from the life they've built, or like they're living in two different worlds.

Relationships can take a hit too.

Trying to maintain a connection with loved ones through phone calls and video chats isn't the same as being there in person. The distance can sometimes create misunderstandings and stress, potentially putting a strain on relationships.

Depression and anxiety are all too common. The stress of being away from one's support system, combined with the pressures of the job, can feel overwhelming.

If living on-site, work becomes one's entire world. Some end up working longer hours, pushing through exhaustion, because what else is there to do?

This relentless grind can lead to burnout, leaving workers feeling drained and empty.

And then there's the challenge of readjusting when at home.

Some people turn to alcohol or drugs as a way to cope, seeking an escape from the constant stress and loneliness. But these quick fixes only lead to more problems down the line.

Sleep issues can also impact a person's well-being. The changing shifts and different environments can affect sleep patterns. Without proper rest, everything feels ten times harder.

Limited access to mental health resources or reluctance to seek help while away can also exacerbate existing issues.

So, what can we do if we are away for work or if we are supporting those who work away?

It starts with talking about these issues openly.

Employers that provide regular check-ins, mental health training, and resources can help workers stay well and connected with their families.

A check-in call, ideally done by a manager might include some of the following questions:

- Tell me about the work you are doing at the moment?
- Do you have too much/too little to do?
- What can I do to support you while you are working away from home?
- How is your physical health at the moment?
- What are you doing to stay physically active?
- How is the rest of your family?
- How are you emotionally? Are you feeling worried or sad?
- Do you have someone you can talk to?

Other ways to offer support:

Acknowledge the difficulties that exist.

Recognise the work that has been performed and provide positive feedback.

Encourage employees to take breaks to step away from their work to stretch or take a lunch break.

Also encourage [physical activity](#) - going for a walk or to the gym are ways to reduce stress, improve mental health and sleep quality.

There are a number of resources available, to build skills to deal with the impact of mental health at work.

[CICA Members and their staff](#) have free access to [Telus Health](#), an EAP with the tools to be proactive about our own mental health and wellbeing, as well as those we work with or manage.

Telus Health offer:

- Workplace Support programs
- Complex Mental Health Support
- Critical Incident Support
- Health Coaching

Flexibility, access to counselling, and support can make a world of difference to someone feeling isolated or lonely.

Sometimes, just knowing that someone is there to talk or help if needed, can really help when days seem long or tough.



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Share the load [with Bluehat](#).

Or access [Incolink's wellbeing and support services](#).

For Incolink Counselling service call 1300 000 129.

[MATES in Construction](#) also has some excellent resources for those working away and their [managers](#).

The MATES Helpline is 1300 642 111

There are also several workshops / courses available that proactively teach workers how to handle the challenges of working away.

[Aveling](#)

[Mental Health Management](#)

[Tap into Safety](#)

For anyone out there feeling the weight of these struggles, know that you're not alone.

Reach out to someone, and share what you're going through.

Sometimes, just knowing someone else understands can be a huge relief.

Let's keep the conversation going and make mental health a priority in the crane industry.

Your well-being matters.

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