

Hudson Institute recognised for its commitment to workplace health and wellbeing

The Hudson Institute of Medical Research has received Victorian Government recognition for all health areas within the Healthy Workplaces Achievement Program.

The Healthy Workplaces Achievement Program is centred around five key health areas including healthy eating, physical activity, mental health and wellbeing, smoking, and alcohol and other drugs. Each health area has a set of targets to achieve, which results in healthy changes.

Hudson Institute, with a rich 60-year history, is a not-for-profit medical research institute employing over 300 staff and hosting 180 postgraduate students. Belinda Pelle, HR Advisor, said Hudson Institute decided to join the Achievement Program in 2018 to embed its commitment to workplace health and wellbeing.

Pelle notes “we’ve always had a great wellbeing culture at Hudson Institute, and we believed the Achievement Program was a great option to further build upon our work. It also demonstrated our dedication to supporting the health and wellbeing of our employees.”

Hudson Institute Director, Professor Elizabeth Hartland believes taking part in the Achievement Program has been an enriching and rewarding experience that has delivered many positive outcomes and adds “we’ve seen a shift in our employees’ health awareness and been appreciative of the healthy options now catered for at our regular scientific seminars and other events. Anecdotally, staff have felt more supported by each other and are having more open conversations about their own mental health.”



On-site, Hudson Institute provides showers, change rooms and lockers to promote active transport and physical activity during the day. Staff also enjoy seasonal fruit box deliveries and healthy morning teas to mark special health awareness days such as R U Ok? Day. The Institute also supports a student netball team led by a very active Hudson Institute Student Society.

Another key change to underpin all the great health and wellbeing efforts has been the development of new policies. The policies have led to changes such as healthy catering, the introduction of mental health and wellbeing support services and the promotion of movement throughout the working day.

Hudson Institute is proving that it's committed to workplace health and wellbeing notwithstanding the challenges of COVID-19. Most recently, the Institute's Culture and Engagement Committee has rallied to introduce new wellbeing initiatives to support its staff during the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Culture and Engagement Committee Chair Dr Simon Chu advises "we knew that our staff would be uniquely impacted by the health pandemic and we wanted to do everything we could to support their health and wellbeing."

An approach to strengthen support was increased communications from the HR team to staff and students, which Pelle believes everyone appreciated.

“We sent out regular emails on important announcements, support services and resources, and shared relevant, trusted news articles and wellbeing tips in our weekly newsletter to staff.

“We also encouraged staff to continue practising healthy lifestyles. One way we supported this was through a physical activity challenge. We created a workplace team on the physical activity app Strava, where staff could record and engage with each other’s activities such as walking, running or riding.”



The Committee also developed a challenge program with an activity for each week of the Melbourne lockdown. This included fun activities for all staff and students such as a MasterChef challenge and a Hudson’s Got Talent online activity.

Before the health pandemic arrived, Hudson Institute provided a range of engaging initiatives staff could participate in, which gave them an opportunity to connect with others from across the organisation and be part of community activities.

Pelle added “each year more than 100 of us participate in Run Melbourne. The event provides an opportunity to fundraise and support the medical research we all believe in, whilst also creating a buzz around the office in the lead up to it.”

Hudson Institute will keep prioritising workplace health and wellbeing and is steaming ahead with new initiatives including Mental Health First Aid training for staff and the establishment of Mental Health First Aid stations in each tearoom.

Image top L-R: Penny Whiley and Ellen Menkhorst taking part in 2019 Run Melbourne; image centre 'HISS and Her's' netball team; and image above Professor Elizabeth Hartland. Images courtesy of [The Hudson Institute](#)

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