Prepared by

Screen Well

Supported by

Netflix, Prime Video, BBC Studios Australia
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May

2026



MENTAL HEALTH
ACTION PLAN

The Australian Screen Industry's

MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN

A comprehensive evidence-based strategy and implementation plan to improve mental health, reduce risk and support more sustainable working practices across the Australian screen industry.

ScreenWell

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which this Mental Health Action Plan was developed, who have told stories of these lands, waters, and skies for thousands of generations. We offer our deepest respects to elders past and present and extend that respect to all First Nations people who share their stories with us, and from whom we are privileged to learn.

This Mental Health Action Plan wouldn't exist without the immense generosity and passion of our screen community. We want to extend a massive thank you to the over 100 industry leaders, dedicated individuals and organisations who generously participated in our roundtables and consultation process, and for providing high-level feedback on the drafts of this plan. Your sharp eyes, candid notes, and insights were absolutely invaluable in bringing this roadmap to life.

We want to extend our deepest gratitude to Margo Lydon who has been with us every step of this journey – from the initial summit, to expertly co-facilitating the roundtables, right through to providing high-level expert reviews of drafts. Your guidance, wisdom, and steady hand have been invaluable.

A huge thank you to Georgie Harman, CEO of Beyond Blue, for her support and for providing the foreword to this plan. We are also incredibly grateful to the wider team at Beyond Blue for reviewing and providing feedback on drafts of this plan.

A special shout-out goes to Peter Hegedus, Bobbi-Lea Dionysius and Griffith University for producing the Pressure Point Report and for our ongoing work together; the ABC for co-hosting Mental Health Matters: A Screen Leaders' Summit and kickstarting this process in January 2025; the UK Film and TV Charity for their trailblazing work and our ongoing partnership; and Mates in Construction for sharing their leading-practice frameworks and insights with us.

Finally, our sincere gratitude goes to our supporting partners—Netflix, Prime Video, BBC Studios Australia, and Disney Studios Australia—thank you for believing in the importance of this work and financially backing this initiative.

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FOREWORD: GEORGIE HARMAN AO

Beyond Blue is proud to support Screen Well and the Australian Screen Industry's Mental Health Action Plan 2026.

The screen industry plays a vital role in Australian life. Through storytelling, creativity and shared experiences, screen work informs, entertains and connects us. It shapes our culture, reflects our diversity and helps people make sense of themselves and the world around them.

The people who create this work enrich our lives immeasurably, and they need working environments that value and protect their mental health and wellbeing. The screen industry agrees, which is why we've all worked together to find a way forward.

The Australian Screen Industry's Mental Health Action Plan 2026 recognises the unique challenges of screen work and responds with a coordinated, practical guide that can help organisations create safe and mentally healthy workplaces where people feel supported, respected and able to do their best creative work.

The Plan was developed in response to the findings of Griffith University's Australian Screen Industry Pressure Point Report (2025), which paints a picture of an industry struggling under the weight of long hours, project-based insecurity and intense pressure. One quarter of screen workers plan to leave the industry within six months, almost half have experienced bullying in the past year and 72% felt the industry was not a mentally healthy place to work.

The case for action is clear.

The Plan has been shaped in close collaboration with industry leaders and stakeholders to reflect the current landscape and the challenges and opportunities ahead. It brings together proven strategies and evidence based workplace mental health resources, tailored specifically for the screen industry, with a clear pathway for implementation. Importantly, it is designed to evolve over time through ongoing research and continuous improvement.

Beyond Blue commends the leadership shown by Screen Well and the broader screen industry in addressing this important issue. By investing in mental health, the industry is investing in its people, its stories and its future. Beyond Blue remains committed to supporting the industry to create working environments that provide everyone with the opportunity to achieve their best possible mental health.

Georgie Harman AO
Chief Executive Officer, Beyond Blue





FOREWORD: JONATHON DUTTON & BEN STEEL

To our colleagues, friends, and collaborators across the Australian screen sector,

Our industry is powered by people—by their creativity, skill, and passion. Yet for too long, too many of our colleagues have paid a high personal price for the way we work.

This is why Screen Well was founded—because we recognised a significant gap exists in our industry. While many organisations care deeply about mental health and want to see improvements made, there was no central organisation working specifically to coordinate those efforts and improve outcomes, like the Film and TV Charity does in the UK. Given the scale of the issue and the challenges we face as an industry, we felt an organisation focused on championing mentally healthy workplaces was needed.

What we've learned doing this work is that leadership is absolutely crucial, and why we partnered with the ABC to host Mental Health Matters: A Screen Leaders Summit, in January 2025. At the Summit, the sobering findings of Griffith University's Pressure Point Report (2025) were released to the industry, proving what many of us already knew intuitively: our people are struggling and we have to find a way to work together to improve these outcomes.

That's why we welcomed the recent changes to Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws across the country. Suddenly, there was a legal imperative for screen workplaces to proactively consider and address psychosocial safety, rather than respond reactively, which we know is not effective. We were pleased to learn that roundtable participants also felt this was important, and why proactive psychosocial risk mitigation sits at the heart of this Mental Health Action Plan (MHAP) – because it pushes us to be proactive about identifying and minimising the risk of harm.

Creating this plan has been a significant undertaking and wouldn't have been possible without the generosity of our funders and to all those who contributed to and attended the Summit, participated in roundtables, consulted with us, reviewed drafts and shared their expertise. This Mental Health Action Plan was a truly collaborative effort and we are grateful to everyone who contributed.

We invite you to read this plan and ask yourself the question: How can I/we contribute? Can we adopt the ACT NOW recommendations? Can we show our support for this plan and encourage others to adopt these recommendations? And if not, why not? We believe the time to come together and to act is now. By playing your part and working together, we can lay a solid foundation for a sustainable future where creativity can thrive without compromising mental health.

Jonathon Dutton and Ben Steel
Managing Partners, Screen Well

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Australian screen industry has reached a critical juncture. Griffith University's Pressure Point Report (2025) paints a picture that demands a coordinated response. It revealed a workforce experiencing high levels of burnout: 57% feel worn out at the end of the day, and a quarter plan to leave the industry within six months. Compounding this, 48% of workers have experienced bullying in the past year, and nearly three-quarters have needed mental health support specifically because of their work. Crucially, 72% reported that the industry was not a mentally healthy place to work and that psychological wellbeing was not a priority for their organisation [1].

These findings represent more than just a workplace issue; they are a threat to the sustainability of our careers and our industry [1]. The reasons behind these findings are complex and deeply rooted in systemic and structural issues, such as project-based work, long working hours, unmanageable workloads, budgetary pressures and job insecurity [1,2]. However, while the challenges are significant, they are not insurmountable—and there are actions the industry can and should be taking.

This Mental Health Action Plan (MHAP) is our industry's collective response. It is the culmination of a highly consultative and participatory process involving over 100 stakeholders, including industry leaders, production companies, guilds, networks, streamers, and workers from across the sector. It acknowledges that while awareness is growing, our current efforts are fragmented, and if we are to improve outcomes, we need a coordinated and sustained approach.

The MHAP is underpinned by the evidence-based 'Integrated Approach' to workplace mental health and has been designed to move the industry from reactive management to proactive prevention by outlining a clear and phased approach:

- **Phase 1: ACT NOW Recommended Actions:** A foundational baseline of immediate, realistically achievable actions that workplaces of all sizes can adopt today to manage baseline risks and provide visible support.

- **Phases 2 & 3: Building a Sustainable Future:** A medium-to-long-term roadmap encouraging action on the systemic issues, while building the shared infrastructure our industry needs to ensure all workplaces can adopt better practices. This includes creating tools, resources and training to support screen workplaces adopting the ACT NOW recommendations; closing leadership and people management skills gaps; increasing mental health support; resourcing a central industry body to drive coordination; and ongoing research and evaluation to inform continuous improvement.

The goal of the MHAP is simple: to make mentally healthy and safe workplaces the norm, much like physical safety is today. By aligning our efforts, we can accelerate prevention, reduce harm, avoid duplication of effort, and ensure that Australia remains a world-class destination for screen excellence—one where people can thrive, not just survive.

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INTRODUCTION

The Australian screen industry is undergoing significant and rapid changes [3] and the pressures on our workforce are only increasing. The Pressure Point Report (2025) highlights what many working in our industry feel everyday: the long-term sustainability of our workforce is at significant risk [1].

Inconsistent efforts are no longer sufficient. They are ineffective in addressing the issues and expose productions and organisations to unnecessary regulatory and reputational risks [4], as well as financial risks such as workers' compensation claims, legal costs, fines and productivity losses [5,6]. Conversely, research by PwC demonstrates that for every dollar spent on creating mentally healthy workplaces, there is a positive return on investment (ROI) through increased productivity, higher retention, and reduced absenteeism [6].

Beyond the business risks, there is a legal duty. Under Australia's Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws, all workplaces are required to proactively manage psychosocial risks [7]. This plan is designed to help every production and workplace meet these obligations effectively, moving us from reacting to proactive prevention.

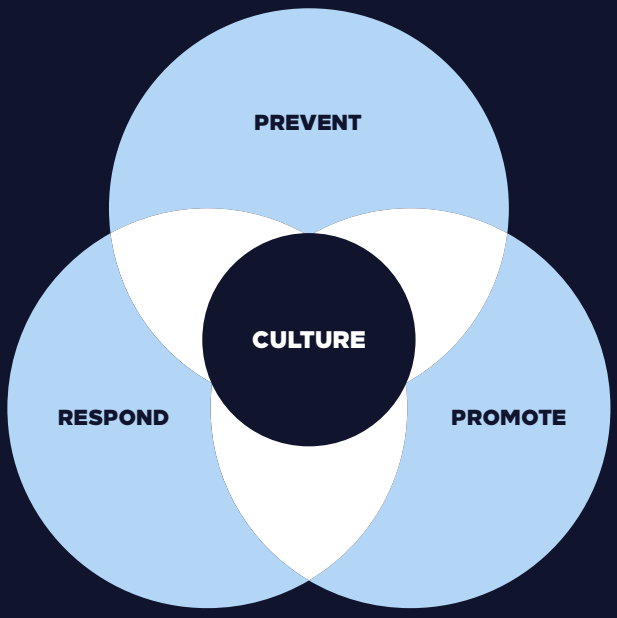
We have a strong history of evolving to meet new needs from the rise of HR professionals to the introduction of safety roles like Intimacy Coordinators. Now, we must evolve again. Integrating mentally healthy practices should no longer be 'nice to have', but foundational to the way we work and this plan is our industry's roadmap to achieve this.

AN EVIDENCE-INFORMED APPROACH

This plan is not guesswork. It is built on the Integrated Approach to Workplace Mental Health, an evidence-based framework widely used across Australian industries [8]. At its core are three pillars:

- **Prevent:** Protecting mental health by proactively identifying and reducing work-related risk factors.
- **Promote:** Enhancing the positives aspects of work in our industry and equipping people with the skills to create supportive environments.
- **Respond:** Ensuring accessible and effective support is there when people need it.

MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN: THREE PILLARS



HOW THIS PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

The MHAP consisted of the following extensive consultation process, informed by over 100 industry leaders, subject matter experts and industry workers.

- **Mental Health Matters: A Screen Leaders' Summit (January 2025):** The initial direction was set during the facilitated workshop session of the Summit presented by the ABC and Screen Well in January 2025.
- **Exploratory roundtables (May – June 2025)**: A series of six roundtables were facilitated deep dives into key areas informed by models and strategies from overseas and other industries (e.g., UK Film and TV Charity, Mates in Construction).
- **Development of recommendations:** Recommendations were then developed, followed by a period of industry consultation, before being presented back and refined during a second set of roundtables (Oct – Nov 2025).
- **Draft finalisation:** The final draft of the MHAP was developed and shared amongst roundtable participants, mental health experts and key industry stakeholders, including Beyond Blue. All feedback was considered for incorporation, before endorsement of the plan was sought.

Participants included representatives from the ABC, AFTRS, Ausfilm, Australian Cinematographers Society, BBC Studios Australia, Creative Workplaces, CrewHQ, Dreamchaser, Matchbox Pictures, Netflix, Network Ten, Princess Pictures, SaCSA, the UK Film and TV Charity, Screen Producers Australia, Wildbear Entertainment and Warner Brothers Discovery, as well as several independent executives and producers.

LIMITATIONS

We acknowledge that capturing the full diversity of experiences across our workforce is a challenge. The Pressure Point Report found that First Nations people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people living with disability or who are neurodivergent often experience poorer outcomes [1]. While we sought to capture these voices, representation was limited, but we are committed to continuing our engagement to ensure these perspectives remain central as the MHAP evolves.

Additionally, while our ambition was for the MHAP to be fully co-designed, time and resources meant this plan is a synthesis of industry feedback rather than a document fully co-authored by every participant. Due to the size and scope of the MHAP, individual participants were not exposed to all recommendations; however, every recommendation was evaluated and discussed across the roundtables.

LEARNING FROM GLOBAL LEADERS

We are not starting from a blank page. The MHAP roadmap follows a similar path the UK screen industry took. Following the UK's first Looking Glass Survey in 2017 (comparable to the Pressure Point Report), the UK Film and TV Charity developed a comprehensive set of tools, resources and recommendations to help create mentally healthier productions, known as the Whole Picture Toolkit [9], which has proven to be effective. The Looking Glass Survey (2024) found that the percentage of respondents who felt the industry is a mentally healthy place to work doubled (from 12% to 25%) if they worked on a production that utilised the Whole Picture Toolkit [10]. Most recently, The UK Film and TV Charity released a co-designed set of mental health principles, all of which provides a valuable model for Australia to follow.

By learning from their experience and adapting existing resources for the Australian context, we can accelerate our progress and avoid reinventing the wheel. This plan leverages those international insights to deliver a faster, more effective response for Australian workers.

HOW WE MOVE FORWARD: A ROADMAP FOR AUSTRALIA

Informed by the evidence-based pillars [8], the MHAP is both a strategic plan and an implementation roadmap that sets out:

- **Phase 1 -** ACT NOW Recommended Actions: Immediate, achievable steps for all screen workplaces to adopt today (outlined in the following section).
- **Phase 2 -** Building a Sustainable Future (0-3 years): Developing the industry-wide tools, training, and resources needed to make these changes sustainable.
- **Phase 3 -** Systemic Change (3+ years): The long-term vision to embed, measure, and continuously improve the industry's response, while encouraging sustained action on the deeper, systemic issues that require the industry's ongoing attention.

This plan is a roadmap for establishing new norms. It invites every screen workplace—big or small—to take immediate action.

HOW TO USE THE MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN

Achieving the overarching goal of establishing and embedding new industry norms requires an active commitment from key screen industry stakeholder groups, including:

- **Screen Workplaces & Productions:** Your priority should be the phase one 'ACT NOW Recommended Actions'. These are the foundations of immediate change.
- **Commissioners, Funders & Agencies:** Your support is critical for phase two 'Building a Sustainable Future', providing the investment needed for tools and training.
- **Guilds, Unions & Industry Bodies:** Your leadership will drive adoption now and facilitate the coordination needed for long-term success.
- **Education & Training Institutions:** You are essential for building capability; developing the skills our workforce needs for the future.

VISIBLE COMMITMENTS – PLAYING YOUR PART

Visible leadership will drive the adoption of this MHAP and culture change. If your workplace or production is adopting these recommendations, make it known. Tell your cast, crew, and partners. Use the MHAP Supporter Pack to signal your commitment. This simple act helps normalise the conversation and encourages others to follow suit.



AUSTRALIA'S ROADMAP

The three phases of the Mental Health Action Plan

PHASE 1: ACT NOW

- Assess Risks & Implement Mitigation Strategies
- Increase General Awareness, Peer Supports & Feedback
- Drive Visible Communication & Advocacy

PHASE 2: BUILD & EMBED

- Create Essential Tools & Resources
- Enhance Capability & Training
- Strengthen Support Pathways
- Industry Coordination, Policy & Research

PHASE 3: SYSTEMIC CHANGE

- Tackle Systemic Issues Affecting Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Commit to Continuous Improvement

02

PHASE 1: ACT NOW RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

OVERVIEW

These recommended actions have been designed to be realistically achievable for screen workplaces of all sizes. They provide a foundational baseline to improve industry outcomes immediately, while enabling important cultural changes. Following the high-level summary is a more detailed explanation of each of the actions, including a brief explanation as to why they matter.

ACTION AREAS 1-3

Should be considered essential for all screen workplaces

ACTION AREAS 4-5

Should be considered if workplaces have the budget, resources and capacity to action them.

In some cases, interim resources have been created to support these recommendations, but the proposed MHAP resource hub (a crucial Phase 2 recommendation) will further enable these recommendations by providing detailed guidance, resources and supporting information.

SUMMARY OF ACT NOW RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The following action areas should be considered essential for all screen workplaces.

ACTION AREA 1: MANAGING RISK & SAFETY		
Recommended Actions	**All Workplaces**	**Productions**
1.1) Conduct Psychosocial Risk Assessment and address findings	X	X
1.2) Budget for Psychosocial Safety	X	X
1.3) Hold a Leadership Meeting: Embedding Psychosocial Safety	X	X
ACTION AREA 2: CREATING A RESPECTFUL CULTURE		
Recommended Actions	**All Workplaces**	**Productions**
2.1) Adopt the Australian Screen Industry Code of Practice	X	X
2.2) Identify and Promote ‘Contact People’	X	X
2.3) Provide ‘Respect at Work’ Training	X	X
2.4) Celebrate the Positive	X	X
ACTION AREA 3: PROVIDING AND COMMUNICATING SUPPORT		
Recommended Actions	**All Workplaces**	**Productions**
3.1) Identify and Promote a Peer Support Network	X	X
3.2) Make Support Visible	X	X
3.4) Implement a Wellbeing Communication Plan	X	X
3.5) Set the Tone Early with an all of Cast and Crew ‘Town Hall’		X

SUMMARY OF ACT NOW RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The following action areas are recommended and should be considered if workplaces have the budget, resources and capacity to action them.

ACTION AREA 4: BUILDING CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY		
Recommended Actions	**All Workplaces**	**Productions**
4.1) Mental Health General Awareness Training	X	X
4.2) Training for Contact People	X	X
4.3) Peer Supporter Training to meet minimum expectations	X	X
4.4) People Management, Compliance and Leadership Skills Development	X	X
4.5) Leverage the Location Offset to improve local capacity		X
ACTION AREA 5: LISTENING & LEARNING		
Recommended Actions	**All Workplaces**	**Productions**
5.1) End-of-Production Surveys		X
5.2) Mid-Production Surveys		X
5.3) Workplace Surveys	X	

SUCCESS TIP

If your workplace or production is adopting these recommendations, make it known. Tell your cast, crew, and partners. Use the MHAP Supporter Pack to signal your commitment. This simple act helps normalise the conversation and encourages others to follow suit.

Legal Disclaimer:

This Mental Health Action Plan and its recommendations do not constitute legal or professional Work Health and Safety (WHS) advice. Under Australian WHS legislation, the primary duty of care to eliminate or minimise psychosocial risks rests strictly with the Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU), such as the production company or screen business.

Screen Well accepts no liability for any loss, damage, or legal breach arising from the use of or reliance on this document. While implementing the ACT NOW recommendations is a vital step toward creating a safer industry, it does not automatically discharge a workplace's legal obligations. It is the sole responsibility of individual screen workplaces to ensure their specific actions, policies, and control measures comply with all relevant legislation and are appropriate and effective for their unique workplace environment.

ACTION AREA 1

MANAGING RISK & SAFETY

Why it matters: Under WHS laws, all screen workplaces have a duty to manage psychosocial risks—such as high job demands, poor support, or exposure to traumatic content—just as they would physical risks. These obligations are detailed in the 'Safe Work Australia Model Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work', which provides the regulatory framework for compliance [11]. Prevention is the most effective way to protect our workforce and identifying risks early ensures mitigation strategies can be properly budgeted for, while leadership alignment ensures clear accountability when we get busy.

To meet obligations and build a safe foundation, producers and business leaders should:

1.1 Conduct a Psychosocial Risk Assessment and address findings

All screen workplaces should complete a psychosocial risk assessment to identify hazards and risks. Productions should conduct this as early as possible, and no later than greenlight. This involves identifying potential hazards and stressors specific to the workplace or production (e.g., long commutes, sensitive content) and documenting how you will mitigate the risk of harm. It should be treated as a 'living document', reviewed and updated as key elements like scripts and project teams are confirmed. Most importantly, this involves implementing strategies to eliminate or minimise the hazards that are likely to cause harms. Below are some helpful resources to enable you to do this easily and effectively.

- **Resource:** Screen Well's Psychosocial Risk Assessment Guide and templates.
- **Resource:** Screen Well's Psychosocial Safety Online Course provides an overview of psychosocial safety and has been designed specifically for business owners, producers and all people managers.

1.2 Budget for Psychosocial Safety

Ensure the budget includes a specific allowance for psychosocial risk mitigation, if required. This might cover additional resources to manage workload, specific training, or additional supports based on the risks identified. As some mitigation strategies will incur costs, it is important that commissioners and funders recognise psychosocial risk mitigation as a valid budget line item to prevent the financial burden falling on production companies.

1.3 Hold a Leadership Meeting: Embedding Psychosocial Safety

Before production begins, convene the senior team to discuss the identified risks. Agree on mitigation strategies, assign clear responsibilities, and decide how safety will be communicated to the wider crew. This should occur before or very early in pre-production.

SPOTLIGHT ON DEDICATED SUPPORT WORKERS

For productions that identify high risks following a risk assessment (e.g., overly challenging working conditions, night shoots, remote locations, 6-day weeks, or distressing content), a dedicated support worker should be considered as part of the risk mitigation strategy.

- **Implementation:** A dedicated support worker is an appropriately trained HR professional or wellbeing professional. This role can be full-time or part-time (e.g., two days per week, or during high-risk periods).
- **Funding:** As engaging a dedicated support worker will incur costs, it is important that commissioners and funders recognise this cost as a valid budget line item to prevent the financial burden falling on production companies.
- **Alternative:** If budgets don't allow for this, productions should ensure there are production leaders with the time, space, and training to handle wellbeing issues, working in consultation with Peer Supporters. However, this should be considered a last resort given the inherent power imbalances that can exist.

ACTION AREA 2

CREATING A RESPECTFUL CULTURE

Why it matters: The Pressure Point Report found that nearly half of our workforce experienced bullying in the past year [1]. A culture of respect is not accidental; it must be designed, communicated and reinforced through consistent actions. This means establishing a shared understanding of acceptable behaviour, providing safe, clearly defined pathways for reporting issues, and actively celebrating team successes to ensure workers feel valued.

To foster a respectful environment:

2.1 Adopt the Australian Screen Industry Code of Practice
All workplaces and productions should fully comply with their Work Health and Safety (WHS) positive duty obligations to prevent high-risk psychosocial hazards, including bullying, harassment and discrimination. These actions should align with best practice principles outlined in industry-specific resources, such as the Australian Screen Industry Code of Practice, which is inconsistently applied across the sector.

- **Resource:** Australian Screen Industry Code of Practice.

2.2 Identify and Promote 'Contact People':
Contact People are the first point of contact for any issues relating to bullying, harassment and discrimination. On productions, this role is usually an extra duty for existing crew members, not a standalone role, and their function is to provide initial support and options for next steps. All screen workplaces should ensure they have identified at least one trained Contact Person (ideally three people) that are clearly signposted. To encourage people to speak up and reduce power imbalances, trained Contact People from different departments and seniority is recommended. However, Contact People can also be HR professionals, senior leaders, managers, etc.

2.3 Provide 'Respect at Work' Training:
Every production and workplace should Identify people who have completed 'Respect at Work' training in the last two years and provide this training to those who haven't. There are many forms of this training, including SPA's 'Respectful Workplaces'.

- **Resource:** SPA's Respectful Workplaces is a short online course (free for SPA members)

2.4 Celebrate the Positive: Actively look for ways to acknowledge team wins (small and large), creative successes, and inclusive behaviors. Recognising the positive is a protective factor that builds morale and fosters a positive and respectful workplace culture.

ACTION AREA 3

PROVIDING AND COMMUNICATING SUPPORT

Why it matters: When prevention isn't enough, accessible support is the safety net. The Pressure Point Report found that 72% of workers reported they needed help specifically because of their work [1], so to reduce the practical barriers to help-seeking, support pathways must be highly visible, culturally relevant, and clearly and repeatedly communicated by leadership from day one.

To ensure workers are supported:

3.1 Identify and Promote a Peer Support Network: Identify and promote trained Peer Supporters (staff or crew trained in Mental Health First Aid, Accidential Counsellor training, ASSIST training) willing to be identified. Evidence from the World Health Organization demonstrates that peer support models are highly effective in reducing stigma and ensuring early warning signs are identified [12]. Ensure their names, roles and agreed contact details are listed on the Wellbeing Contact Sheet so colleagues can connect with someone they trust on the ground.

3.2 Make Support Visible: Create a Wellbeing Contact Sheet listing all supports (Dedicated Support Workers, Contact People, Peer Supporters, Reporting Pathways). Attach this to the daily call sheet and ensure it's visible in physical workspaces/offices.

3.3 Promote the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline: Actively promote this free, 24/7, helpline. It offers specialised pathways for First Nations, LGBTQIA+, people managers, and anyone who has been impacted by bullying, harassment and discrimination. Some companies offer access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), but consultation revealed concerns about efficacy and uptake – as privacy concerns can be a barrier. Therefore, even if an EAP is in place, the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline should still be promoted as an alternative support avenue.

3.4 Implement a Wellbeing Communication Plan: Don't just mention wellbeing once. Plan when and how you will remind teams about available supports throughout the production (e.g., as part of onboarding, during safety briefings).

3.5 Set the Tone Early with an all of Cast and Crew 'Town Hall': Set the cultural tone before production by holding an all-cast-and-crew meeting. Use this time to explicitly state identified risks and mitigation strategies, reporting pathways and all available supports. This meeting can create a sense of meaning and purpose, and signal what leadership values (refer to the 'Spotlight on pre-production 'Town Hall' meeting' below for an example).

SPOTLIGHT ON PRE-PRODUCTION 'TOWN HALL' MEETING

To set the cultural tone before production, Producer Andy Walker runs a 'Town Hall' meeting just before principal photography. This session involves the entire cast and crew gathering for 1–2 hours to align on both the creative vision and workplace expectations. Key aspects of this meeting, include:

- **Creative Alignment:** Outlining the creative vision of the show to everyone, from HODs to junior crew. Understanding the 'why' behind the work fosters deeper engagement and ensures every team member feels invested in the project.
- **Recognition:** Acknowledgement of the challenges of working in our industry, and the importance of every single role on the production.
- **Cast and crew welfare:** Discussion about the schedule and locations, including potential wellbeing risks (e.g., heat stress, fatigue, driving hazards). Sharing of resources available for support and the 'wellbeing leaders' of the production (including Producers, Lead Cast, Director, Safety Supervisor, Unit Nurse, Cultural Advisor) are introduced to talk about their role in establishing a workplace where everyone can feel safe, supported and valued.
- **Humanising Policy:** Ensure awareness of the zero-tolerance policy for bullying, discrimination, victimisation, and harassment. It clarifies the production's safety framework across three pillars: physical, psychological, and cultural, noting that every individual shares the responsibility to maintain these standards.

ACTION AREA 4

BUILDING CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY

Why it matters: Many leaders in our industry are 'accidental managers'—promoted for creative or technical skill but given little training and support in managing and leading people [2]. Research shows that a lack of management skills directly impacts worker wellbeing [8,13] and that skills-based mental health and leadership training is highly cost effective [4,8]. Beyond leadership, we must also normalise mental health conversations across the entire workforce, empowering crew to recognise early warning signs and ensure designated support people have the competence to handle sensitive disclosures safely.

The following training is recommended for workplaces and productions that have the resources to provide it. As providing training incurs costs, it is important that commissioners and funders recognise training costs as valid budget line items to prevent the financial burden falling on production companies.

To invest in workforce capacity and capability:

4.1 **Mental Health General Awareness Training:** Offer short (15–20 min) mental health awareness sessions for all cast and crew during pre-production. If this is not possible, workplaces should provide essential mental health information during onboarding/inductions, or as part of a cast and crew production briefing (see recommendation 3.5). The purpose of this is to normalise conversations about mental health, highlight common signs and symptoms, reduce stigma and ensure both internal and external support pathways are known [4].

4.2 **Training for Contact People:** All Contact People should be trained to ensure they understand policies and appropriate pathways, their own boundaries, and they have the competence to handle sensitive disclosures. SPA offers Contact Officer Training for their members, so all nominated Contact People should complete this or another form of this training.

- **Resource:** SPA's Contact Officer training

4.3 **Peer Support Training to meet minimum expectations:** All workplaces should have a minimum of three current Peer Supporters. On productions, this should be a ratio of at least 1 for every 20-40 cast and crew, depending on the level of risk. For smaller workplaces (20 or less), a minimum of two Peer Supporters is recommended, or an external support service is made available (e.g., Support Act Wellbeing Helpline) for teams less than 5. This is essential to provide choice of support, confidentiality, and to alleviate pressure on one person only performing this role. To meet these minimum levels, if time and resources allow it, it is recommended a training provider is engaged to provide group training or training for individuals is paid for by the production.

- **Resource:** Mental Health First Aid Training

4.4 **People Management, Compliance and Leadership Skills Development:** Consider providing people managers with skills-based training to better manage complex people-related issues (e.g., conflict management, psychosocial safety, effective communication, how/when to escalate issues, managing workers who are isolated or working remotely). This is especially important for those stepping up into management/leadership roles early in their career or for the first time.

- **Resource:** Training Providers

4.5 **Leverage the Location Offset to improve local capacity:** The Location Offset is a tax incentive for international productions filming in Australia, which includes a training expenditure requirement that can be directed toward mental health and safety capability building [14]. Eligible productions are encouraged to leverage international production spend and direct expenditure toward improving mental health and safety within the Australian screen industry.





ACTION AREA 5

LISTENING & LEARNING

Why it matters: Currently, few screen workplaces use surveys to understand the real-time experience of their workforce or to learn from past projects. Without this insight, it can result in blind spots, preventable costs and leave production leaders without the insights needed to respond proactively or evolve when planning future projects. For traditional workplaces, surveying workers provides a structured opportunity to consult with staff – a crucial aspect of psychosocial risk management [12]. However, feedback without action is demotivating; therefore, any survey data should be tied to a genuine commitment to respond and act where reasonably practical.

To drive continuous improvement, consider:

5.1 **End-of-Production Surveys:** Productions should consider using anonymous end-of-production surveys to capture insights and identify areas for improvement on future projects.

5.2 **Mid-Production Surveys:** Productions should consider conducting brief, anonymous surveys ('pulse checks'). These checks can help identify emerging issues and in-the-moment risks (e.g., during high-risk periods like night/away shoots), and should supplement, not replace, existing pathways for crew members to raise concerns at any time.

5.3 **Workplace Surveys:** Workplace surveys provide workers with an opportunity to reflect and share their thoughts, providing an avenue for workplaces to consult with staff, a crucial aspect of psychosocial risk management.

SPOTLIGHT ON A PRODUCTION INCORPORATING SURVEYS

In 2025 a production piloted a series of surveys (start, mid, and end of production) to measure crew confidence and sentiment in real-time. The trial saw good uptake across the three surveys, with an average completion rate of approx. 25% (40+ responses per survey).

The value of mid-production surveys was the ability to identify emerging risks in real-time and implement immediate adjustments as needed. For example, when mid-production survey data showed a decline in morale, producers were able to acknowledge the challenges and make tangible changes to improve conditions.

The end of production survey provided valuable insight into the trends from the first two surveys and for future productions, including insights about what worked well and what could be improved or could benefit from more attention next time as a leadership group.

03

PHASE 2 & 3: BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

ENABLERS

The evidence is explicitly clear that all organisations have an important, preventative role to play in creating safe and mentally healthy workplaces [8] and the ACT NOW Recommended Actions in the previous section provide a pathway for workplaces to do so. However, to make these recommendations accessible across the industry, the necessary infrastructure must be built to support and encourage adoption, with smaller businesses and independent productions requiring more support than others.

The following recommendations are based on the data and insights available today, they are anchored in the evidence-informed Integrated Approach and were discussed extensively during the industry roundtables. This is a living plan and as the MHAP is rolled out, we fully expect these recommendations will evolve as we learn more about what works best for our workforce and as new gaps arise.

The following strategic enablers include recommendations categorised into the following time horizons, designed to embed psychosocial safety into the DNA of the industry:

ST SHORT TERM (Highest priority, within 12 months)

MT MEDIUM TERM (1 – 3 years)

LT LONG TERM (3 + years)

ENABLER 1: ESSENTIAL TOOLS & RESOURCES

The Goal: To ensure every production, regardless of size or budget, and every individual wanting to upskill, have access to standardised, high-quality resources and tools.

ST 1 **The MHAP Resource Hub:** A priority recommendation is the adaptation of the UK's Whole Picture Toolkit for the Australian context. It is recommended that a central digital hub be created to house the tools, resources and templates to make the ACT NOW recommended actions accessible to every production. For example, this hub would contain a comprehensive survey toolkit, as well as resources that enable productions to conduct psychosocial risk assessments and put in place mitigation strategies confidently and effectively.

LT 1 **Leadership Resource Hub:** In the screen sector, individuals are often promoted based on their creative or technical expertise, rather than their people-management experience. Additionally, the project-based nature of work makes it difficult for individuals to access training. To bridge this gap, it is recommended that a dedicated Leadership Resource Hub be established. Developed in collaboration with training providers and tertiary institutions, this hub would enable managers to proactively upskill between jobs. It should offer flexible, self-led education (such as videos and podcasts) and diagnostic tools to help leaders assess their own development needs.

SPOTLIGHT ON EXISTING RESOURCES & SUPPORT PATHWAYS

Providing accessible and effective support is essential if we are to improve outcomes. Two free and underutilised services are the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline and Beyond Blue's NewAccess mental health coaching program for small business owners and sole traders. These two services can play a key role in strengthening the support available for all screen industry workers. The Support Act Wellbeing Helpline offers immediate, confidential support for everyone in the screen industry. In addition to providing wellbeing support and up to 12 free counselling sessions, it also has specific pathways for LGBTQIA+, First Nations, managers, and anyone who has experienced bullying, harassment and discrimination.



ENABLER 2: WORKFORCE CAPABILITY & TRAINING

The Goal: To build a workforce that is skilled, resilient, and confident in managing mental health and safety.

ST 2 **Create Psychosocial Risk Assessment Training:** Training should be created for internal roles (e.g., Business Owners, Producers, Line Producers, Safety Supervisors, ESG specialists, Wellbeing Coordinators), so they can confidently and effectively conduct psychosocial risk assessments.

ST 3 **Create accessible Mental Health General Awareness Training (GAT):** To improve accessibility and uptake of GAT, provide industry supported free or subsidised Mental Health General Awareness Training module (approx. 15–20 mins) to be used during inductions by productions of all sizes

LT 2 **Develop industry-specific peer support training:** Following an evaluation of existing peer support training (e.g., the effectiveness of Mental Health First Aid Training in screen workplaces), findings should be used to inform the development of an industry-specific training program and/or 'top-up' modules to supplement existing training. This would leverage the evidenced impact of the Mates in Construction peer support model to benefit the screen industry.

LT 3 **Closing the Skills Gap:** An industry working group of learning specialists should be established to conduct a skills and competency audit, with a focus on leadership, people management and compliance. This analysis should identify what training is most effective and recommend training for key groups (e.g., all staff, managers/HODs, senior leaders), including why it's required, potential collaborators/ providers, ideal timing, and a funding strategy.

LT 4 **Competency Recognition Platform:** The industry should assess the viability of a centralised Competency Recognition Platform. This would allow productions to easily check who has completed training and if they're current (i.e., completed within two years), while reducing training repetition for crews.

SPOTLIGHT ON BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY

The lack of industry-specific leadership and people management training programs that extend beyond a couple of hours, or a single day is a noticeable training gap in our industry. The Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) however, is currently developing a multi-day program designed to blend theoretical leadership concepts with hands-on training for the industry. This program should be embraced to ensure its accessibility and longevity, considering financial barriers have historically prevented high-quality programs from being realised to address this gap.

ENABLER 3: STRENGTHENING SUPPORT PATHWAYS

The Goal: To ensure accessible, professional, and effective human support is available when prevention isn't enough.

ST 4 **Wellbeing Coordinators (Pilot & Training):** To continue building an evidence base for the Wellbeing Coordinator role (refer to the 'Spotlight on piloting Wellbeing Coordinator' below), it is recommended that Wellbeing Coordinators are evaluated across multiple Australian productions. This evaluation will help define the role's scope and inform the development of a standardised training curriculum. The industry should also investigate new funding pathways for these roles to encourage uptake. For example, the British Film Institute (BFI) fund Wellbeing Facilitators in addition to providing production funding [15].

MT 1 **Centralised Expert Database:** Finding the right support people is currently a barrier for many productions. It is recommended that a centralised, vetted database of mental health experts, safety/cultural consultants, and dedicated support workers be developed (or an existing database be expanded) to ensure productions can easily find qualified support. For ease of access, this could be combined with LT 4 (Competency Recognition Platform).

MT 2 **Support for the Supporters:** Determine the need and scope for a supervision and debriefing program for people in high-contact safety roles (e.g., Contact People, Peer Supporters, Intimacy Coordinators, Access Coordinators, Cultural Safety Consultants, Wellbeing Coordinators) to maintain standards and prevent burnout.

LT 5 **Return to Work & Case Management:** Guidelines should be developed to support workers returning after mental ill-health and the industry should investigate the viability of an industry-funded case management model (similar to Mates in Construction) to help freelancers navigate recovery and complex challenges between contracts.

SPOTLIGHT ON PILOTING THE WELLBEING COORDINATOR IN AUSTRALIA

A recent pilot program conducted by Screen Well on a scripted television series aimed to pilot the Wellbeing Coordinator (WC) role and evaluate the effectiveness of it in Australia. The role was informed by consultation and training from the USA and the UK (Wellbeing Facilitators are now commonplace in the UK) but tailored specifically for the Australian screen industry. The pilot demonstrated significant engagement and impact:

- **High engagement:** The WC conducted 174 confidential interactions with around 25% of the 274 cast and crew who reached out for support on the series.
- **Triage and advocacy**: The WC served as a trusted, neutral third party, successfully triaging issues by connecting individuals to appropriate external supports, such as psychologists or the remote HR support (also trialled as part of the pilot) and in some cases, trained peer supporters on the production.
- **Positive outcomes:** Leadership described the service as a "really vital asset" for maintaining consistency when they were busy. Crew members consistently acknowledged the value of the on-the-ground support in the final production survey, with several examples of effective support referred to.

The pilot highlighted that dedicated supports are most effective when embedded within productions early, rather than being introduced reactively. These findings were consistent with an evaluation of the Wellbeing Facilitator role's effectiveness out of Wales by BECTU.

ENABLER 4: INDUSTRY COORDINATION, POLICY & RESEARCH

The Goal: To move from fragmented efforts to a unified, industry-led response that tackles systemic issues.

ST 5 **Establish or Resource an Industry Body to drive the MHAP:** The success of this plan requires centralised coordination to encourage industry-wide buy-in, while driving the development of priority recommendations, such as the MHAP Resource Hub. Ideally, this organisation would be guided by an Advisory Group composed of key industry stakeholders and decision-makers, subject matter experts and people with lived experience. One of the roundtables discussed the core functions of the organisation driving the response, which has been captured in 'Spotlight on the role of a Central Coordinating Body' at the end of this section.

ST 6 **Budgeting and Funding Conditions:** Psychosocial Safety line items should be included in all standard budgeting software and templates. It is also recommended that financial supports or subsidies be explored to help smaller productions implement these safety measures, alongside investigating linking production funding conditions to psychosocial safety compliance.

MT 3 **Data, Research & Evaluation:** The industry should commit to ongoing longitudinal research (every 2-4 years) to track progress against the Pressure Point Report baseline. A centralised data aggregation function should also be established to collate de-identified safety data from production surveys, identifying trends and blind spots. Furthermore, partnerships with reputable academic institutions should be established to rigorously evaluate the effectiveness of the ACT NOW recommendations, with a specific focus on determining best practice models tailored to productions of varying sizes and budgets.

MT 4 **Industrial Agreements to recognise additional duties:** It is recommended SPA and MEAA formally recognise Peer Supporters and Contact People in industrial agreements. This should outline their function, key considerations, as well as recommend an additional fee or allowance to recognise their contribution.

LT 6 **Measuring and Celebrating Success:** A key aspect of promoting mental health is identifying and enhancing what is being done well, so it is recommended that standardised 'thriving workplace measures' be developed to capture positive elements like a sense of belonging, pride in work, and confidence in supports and leadership. These questions could be integrated into standardised production surveys to help companies understand how they are performing and integrated into high-profile industry events, such as the SPA or AACTA Awards to publicly acknowledge standout leadership and workplace success.

LT 7 **Strengthening Reporting Pathways:** Industry roundtables revealed that responses to bullying and harassment are often inadequate and can be undermined by power imbalances and a lack of workplace resources. To build on existing preventative measures, two steps are recommended. First, industry bodies and guilds should coordinate a mapping of existing support and accountability pathways to address current disparities. Second, larger commissioners and broadcasters should consider opening their anonymous reporting hotlines to smaller independent productions, ensuring freelancers on under-resourced sets have a safe, arm's-length mechanism to raise concerns. This shared infrastructure will provide a trusted alternative avenue for freelancers to report issues without fear of reprisal, directly addressing the inherent power imbalances and lack of dedicated HR resources that aren't generally available on smaller productions.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ROLE OF A CENTRAL COORDINATING BODY

The effectiveness and sustainability of this MHAP rely on establishing a trusted industry body or funding an existing organisation to provide centralised coordination and oversight of key recommendations. The function and responsibilities of this organisation was discussed at length during one of the roundtables, which determined the role and responsibilities of this organisation should include:

LEADERSHIP, STRATEGY & GOVERNANCE

Create and maintain a clear governance structure, including an Advisory Group (AG) composed of diverse key industry stakeholders and decision-makers, subject matter experts and people with lived experience (who may become a formal board).

- Secure and manage long-term funding (including advocating for funding from external to industry sources) and a sustainable business model to ensure the continuity of core support services, while maintaining independence.
- Drive and coordinate the implementation of the MHAP recommendations in consultation with industry, ensuring effective execution across the three integrated pillars (Prevent, Promote, Respond), while reporting back to industry on progress.

INDUSTRY RESPONSE COORDINATION

Australian tools and resources:

- Create and maintain resources for the Australian screen industry (second phase of the MHAP), such as adapting the UK's Whole Picture Toolkit, including standardised tools and frameworks for crucial areas like psychosocial risk assessments and fit-for-purpose mitigation strategies.
- Oversee the development and adoption of standardised, anonymous survey tools.

Capacity & support:

- Oversee and advise on core mental health training programs in consultation with training providers, including bespoke training specifically for industry roles where certified training is lacking (e.g., Wellbeing Coordinator training).
- Provide direct support and community for support workers (e.g., Wellbeing Coordinators, Contact People, Peer Supporters) and expand reach and tailored support offered to all aspects of the screen industry (e.g., Games).

Industry Standards:

- Lead the third phase of the MHAP (3-5 years): the development and adoption of industry-wide mental health standards.

Research and Development:

- Work alongside a reputable university to evaluate and communicate the effectiveness of MHAP recommendations, and support ongoing mental health data collection, as well as other relevant research initiatives.
- Develop a secure and centralised transparent data aggregation function, enabling industry reporting to drive actionable interventions and continuous improvement.

ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATIONS

- Stay abreast of and communicate global trends, research, technology solutions and best practice by maintaining international and cross-sector relationships and partnerships.
- Promote the adoption of best practice across the industry; advocate for systemic and structural changes to address the root causes of poor mental health; and promote the positive actions that improve mental health and safety.
- Maintain relationships with government bodies and advocate for the service enhancement and continuity of core support services, such as the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline and Beyond Blue's NewAccess Program, as well as other services that may support the screen industry.



ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC ISSUES AFFECTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The MHAP outlines actionable steps to mitigate the risk of harm and improve mental health outcomes across the screen sector. However, it is critical to acknowledge that improving the sustainability of our industry also requires addressing deeper systemic and structural issues.

The Pressure Point Report clearly illustrates that the industry's mental health crisis is largely driven by entrenched structural issues, including long working days, unmanageable workloads, job insecurity, and persistent budgetary pressures [1,2]. If these fundamental stressors are not ultimately addressed, support initiatives run the risk of being perceived as a 'band-aid'.

To address these root causes, the industry should commit to sustained action in the following areas:

LT 8 **Working Hours and Fatigue:** The industry should be supported in addressing working hours and fatigue. Efforts should focus on advocating for, encouraging, and shining a spotlight on research, innovation, and the piloting of alternative work models to promote more sustainable ways of working (refer to 'Spotlight on Alternative Production Models' for an example of this).

LT 9 **Workload Management and Budgetary Pressures:** It is recommended that the industry support the embedding of mechanisms into production planning, scheduling, and budgeting to mitigate unmanageable workloads and unreasonable deadlines. This includes promoting frameworks that ensure production budgets and schedules adequately meet creative ambitions without resulting in excessive pressure on individuals and teams.

LT 10 **Industry Culture and Harmful Working Practices:** Acknowledge and advocate for cultural change within the industry, with a focus on improving overall psychological safety in screen workplaces.

SPOTLIGHT ON ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTION MODELS

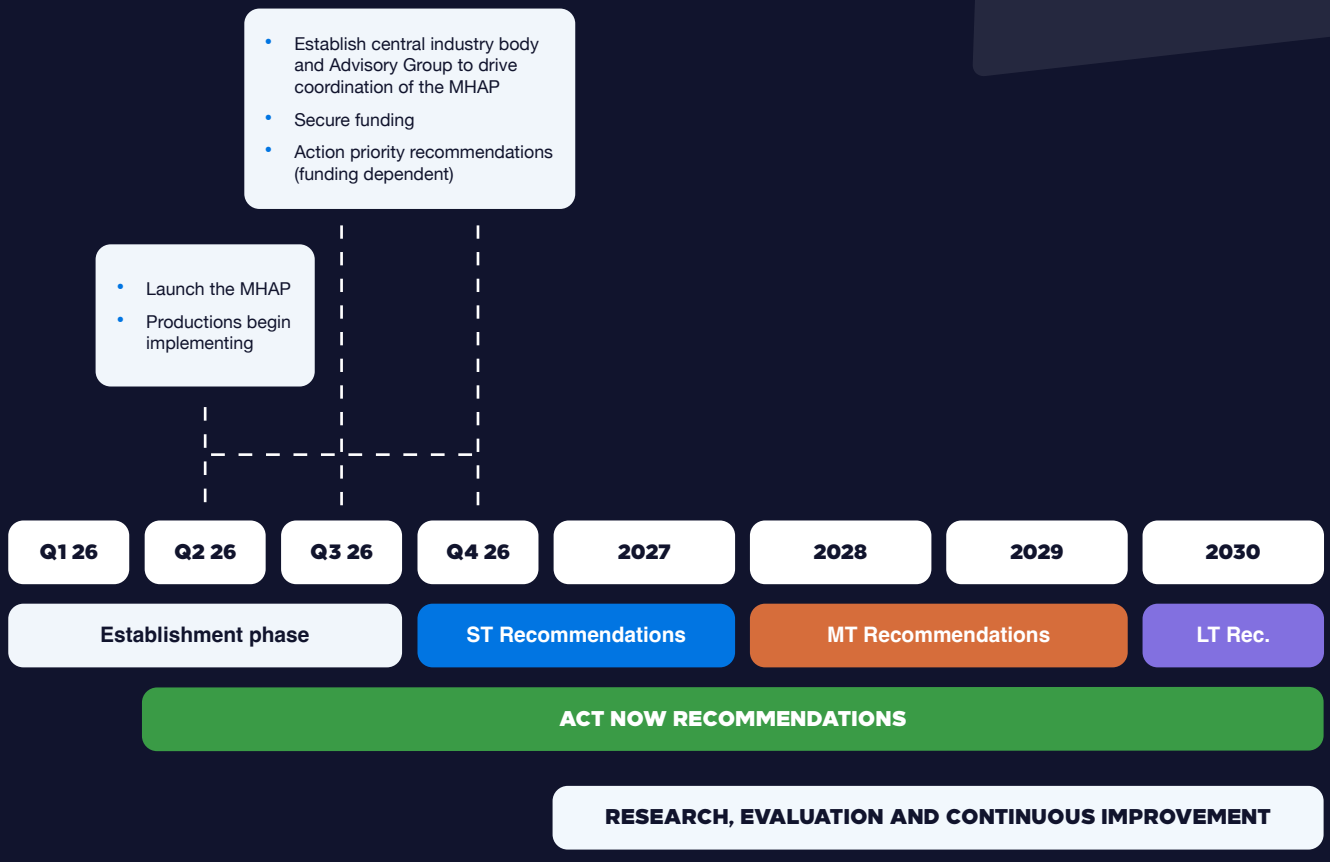
To address systemic issues like long hours, poor work-life balance and talent retention, Screen Australia's Gender Matters Taskforce commissioned a budget modelling exercise to compare three alternative models against the standard 50-hour week on a high-end 6 x 1hr scripted drama series called 'Scene Change' (available on Screen Australia's website). The investigation found that the alternative models resulted in a budget increase of less than 2.5% across all scenarios, which challenges the assumption that changing the standard 10-hour day is cost-prohibitive. The cost variations by model are as follows:

- A strict 8-hour day (for all crew) saw a +2.30% overall budget increase.
- A 9-day fortnight (for all crew) resulted in a +1.23% overall budget increase.
- Job-sharing (across 19% of roles) had the least impact at just +0.34% overall budget increase.

Beyond immediate costs, these models offer significant potential for improved working conditions, increased diversity, and the safeguarding of existing talent. While findings are promising, the report strongly recommends a pilot program to confirm feasibility across various production realities, including feature films.

DELIVERY TIMELINE

This Mental Health Action Plan relies on a phased approach. While the ‘ACT NOW Recommended Actions’ are designed for immediate implementation, building the long-term infrastructure will require time, coordination, and investment. It is estimated that developing the core infrastructure and resources (the short and medium-term) will cost approximately $2m.



ENABLERS OF SUCCESS

Moving from a fragmented approach to a coordinated, prevention-led industry response requires more than just a list of recommendations. For this plan to succeed and achieve meaningful outcomes, the following enablers must be present:

Immediate Adoption by Workplaces

The foundational enabler of this entire plan is the immediate and widespread adoption of the 'ACT NOW Recommended Actions' by screen workplaces and productions. Building future infrastructure is vital, but those long-term tools won't be utilised if companies do not take proactive steps to manage baseline risks, provide support, and establish respectful cultures.

Funding and Resourcing

Securing sustainable, long-term funding is arguably the biggest challenge to achieving this plan's goals. This will require a combination of industry co-investment and the establishment of new funding pathways, including advocating for external (outside of the screen industry) and government support.

Industry Leadership and Coordination

Success depends on an active, industry-wide response involving production businesses, commissioners, screen agencies, guilds, and unions. Crucially, it relies on establishing or funding a central industry body to provide oversight and coordination.

Data and Continuous Improvement

An evidence-informed and data-driven strategy is fundamental for tracking progress, measuring the effectiveness of interventions, and allowing the plan to continuously evolve. This means committing to ongoing longitudinal research and evaluating the effectiveness of the interventions proposed.

Partnerships and Collaboration

The screen sector cannot do this in isolation. Success depends on leveraging external expertise, collaborating with academic partners for evaluation, working with training providers, and integrating global best practices (such as the UK's frameworks) to progress faster and avoid costly mistakes.

IN SUMMARY

This Mental Health Action Plan presents a pivotal opportunity for the Australian screen industry to address the complex and costly mental health challenges faced by our workforce.

Our current approach is fragmented and inconsistent. If we continue as is, we will perpetuate avoidable harm to workers and expose productions and organisations to unnecessary regulatory, financial, and reputational risks [4,5,6]. Instead, there is a smarter path—one that leverages the collective strength of the industry to deliver coordinated, cost-effective, and impactful solutions.

By working collaboratively across the industry, we have identified practical and proactive steps to be taken now to lay a solid foundation for a sustainable future where workplace safety and wellbeing is a cornerstone of how work is conducted and experienced. While building a sustainable future will require investment, adopting this phased approach will accelerate prevention, reduce duplication, and strengthen our capacity to create safe workplaces for everyone.

The time to act is now. We call on all industry stakeholders to actively support this Mental Health Action Plan. By playing your part and working together, we can embed mentally healthy practices across the Australian screen industry—and unlock lasting social and economic benefits for us all.

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