

Customer Profile

Celebrating ResolutionsRTK partnership with Southern Health

Anna Vagias
General Manager Assist

Profile of Southern Health

Southern Health is the largest health service in Victoria, uniquely providing comprehensive primary, secondary and tertiary health care services to the people of south-east Melbourne, with a wider specialist referral role for Melbourne and statewide. Southern Health provides health care across the entire human lifespan – from pre-birth to palliative care. The comprehensive services range from prevention, early intervention and primary care to highly complex, acute, aged care and mental health services.

Southern Health employs more than 12,000 staff and provides services to a population of more than 750,000. The primary catchment areas are the Shire of Cardinia and the Cities of Casey, Greater Dandenong, Kingston and Monash. Southern Health also provides specialist services to a rural catchment including Gippsland.

In recognition of Southern Health's commitment to overall employee and organisational health, Southern Health has been awarded the AHRI Excellence in People Management for two consecutive years.

Southern Health and ResolutionsRTK

From 1 July 2008, Southern Health embarked on a partnership with ResolutionsRTK to offer comprehensive Employee Support Services (ESS), under the Healthy Opportunities Program. The Healthy Opportunities Program is Southern Health's unique integrated employee and organisational health and well-being initiative, driven by the vision of 'Better Health and Wellbeing for our People'. Designed to identify, promote and provide improved access to a wide range of initiatives to employees, it has six key objectives:

- o Opportunities to optimise employee effectiveness
- o A healthy balance between work and life style
- o A safe and healthy working environment
- o Rehabilitation and return to work strategies
- o Opportunities to maintain optimal health levels
- o Staff access to timely health and medical attention



In partnership with Southern Health, ResolutionsRTK **assist** deliver two key service programs under this initiative.

People Assist Program

Four distinct streams of confidential, short-term and solutions oriented assistance.

- o Employee Assist
- o Manager Assist
- o Career Assist, and
- o Conflict Assist



Critical Stress Management Debriefing

Accessible to managers for employees involved in critical events.

The launch of the People Assist Program has been a phenomenal success, reflected in uptake levels and positive feedback received across all major sites and programs. In recognition of the great commitment and success of the Healthy Opportunities Program, Bev Munro, Director Workforce Health and Safety and Gaynor Henderson, Healthy Opportunities Coordinator have been interviewed for this special WorkSafe Week edition of our ezine.

Q&A with Southern Health

If you had to identify a single contributing factor to your people management success over the past two years, what would it be?

It would have to be put down to enthusiasm. In thinking about what we have achieved it is the enthusiasm, commitment and dedication of the people involved. This enthusiasm has also led to the engagement of others whether it be at an executive level or otherwise.

To what degree is this success a reflection of the Healthy Opportunities framework?

We would have to say that Healthy Opportunities is a result of the enthusiasm of key people to improve employee health and wellbeing.

How did the Healthy Opportunities model develop?

Healthy Opportunities was developed through key stakeholders from different areas within the organisation who had a passion to improve access to health and wellbeing opportunities for employees. The three main aims identified by this group were access to health services whilst at work, access to health promotion activities and access to stress coping services such as Critical Incident Stress Management and Employee Assistance Programs.

What approach did you take to convince key executive stakeholders in the importance of investing in a strategy such as Healthy Opportunities?

The Executive Management Team had endorsed the idea of a health and wellbeing strategy as far back as 2005 but a co-ordinated program was not put in place at that stage. That occurred at a time when Southern Health was looking at cost reduction issues and one focus was the cost of unscheduled absenteeism. A project called 'Building Positive Attendance' was developed to reduce the cost of sick leave. Building Positive Attendance was implemented in the broader organisational health framework, and at this stage it became clear that a co-ordinated program and strategy was required.

Do Southern Health have 'people outcomes benchmarks' in place to measure the success of your strategies, such as Healthy Opportunities?

We evaluate specific programs that are promoted and form part of Healthy Opportunities. We also monitor sick leave statistics and gain generic organisational feedback from employees which may highlight our health and wellbeing initiatives. However a comprehensive set of key performance indicators is part of the strategy improvement program for 2009.

Can you identify any key outcomes of the Healthy Opportunities strategy at an organisational level?

The Healthy Opportunities Strategy has 6 elements and we have achieved key outcomes in each of these. In Employee Support we looked at what the organisation could do to add value to the services we provides such as the Employee Assistance Program and the Critical Incident Stress Program. The framework arising from that process led to us entering into a contract for our current People Assist program which provides a broader and more effective range of services. In Access Health we have commenced a trial employee clinic at our Clayton site. In Work/Lifestyle we have run, for the last 3 years, a series of Better Money Management seminars conducted by our partners. In the area of well-being Southern Health was also the forerunner in the introduction of a WeightWatchers at Work program. In relation to Wellbeing we have gyms on a number of sites which can be accessed by all Southern Health employees. We were also involved this year in the Global Corporate Challenge which saw 30 teams representing 210 employees participating. Southern Health as a company was ranked 4th globally with regard to average number of steps per day. The Building Positive Attendance continues as an initiative to assist and support managers and employees to work together to reduce the cost of sick leave to the organisation.



Southern Health's Puffin Muffins stride it out during the Global Corporate Challenge, including Bev Munroe (far left) and Gaynor Henderson (second from right).

What sort of results would employees identify with, at an individual level?

Southern Health has a number of work sites, some with only a minimum number of employees so it is the opportunity for employees to be involved in health and wellbeing initiatives no matter what site they are based at. We offer a range of services/supports at an individual level that employees have the opportunity to participate in or take advantage of. All of our staff can access People Assist, information seminars, and fitness programs. We recognise life is busy and the aim is to assist employees whilst at work to make better health and wellbeing choices, that will improve their lives.

WorkSafe Week is coming up. What do you have planned? What place does WorkSafe Week play in the Healthy Opportunities framework?

Southern Health has a number of activities around the same time as WorkSafe week. There is 'Southern Celebrates' and we hold an OHS week either before or after the official WorkSafe week. This year we organised three forums to be run at three of our major sites. The topics presented covered updates on the new Chemical Management System, Smartmove! (our manual handling injury reduction strategy), Occupational Violence and Aggression and our new Occupational Health and Safety Management System.

Employers, HR and OHS professionals alike are becoming increasingly aware of the risk - and cost - of unmitigated exposure to psychological harm. Southern Health conducted a pilot project on 'Stress Awareness and Management' in 2007. What recommendations or approaches, if any, from the final report (published August 2007) have been built into the Healthy Opportunities framework?

The Pilot program identified what sort of components of a program could be effective. These are now being considered and being built into another project conducted in two new areas within Southern Health.

It also identified some key stressors such as conflict management which the organisation is conducting some work around and the introduction of People Assist Program also responds to identified needs of employees.

Many thanks to Bev and Gaynor for participating.