



MEDIA RELEASE

MATES in Construction welcomes \$6 million in funding for FIFO/DIDO mental health and suicide prevention program

Leading industry suicide prevention charity MATES in Construction is the sole recipient of a \$6 million Australian Government Dept. of Health grant, targeting FIFO (fly-in-fly-out)/DIDO (drive-in-drive-out) workers. The grant aims to improve the mental health and suicide prevention of workers within industries with a high male presence such as mining and construction.

Over the span of two years, the 'Mental Health and Suicide Prevention - Support for FIFO and DIDO Workers Grant' will enable MATES in Construction and its MATES in Mining division to deliver increased specialised mental health support and suicide prevention services; in addition to early access to mental health treatments for workers.

The opportunity was driven by research from the Education and Health Standing Committee (2015) on FIFO mental health and concerns raised by families, found that FIFO workers are at greater risk of mental illness.

- FIFO workers experience higher levels of psychological distress (including anxiety and depression) when compared to a comparison group and was significantly higher in males over the age of 16 years.
- One third of FIFO workers (33%) reported experiencing 'high' or 'very high' psychological distress.
- Many workers reported feeling worse when transitioning to site and felt better when transitioning home, suggesting that more interventions need to be undertaken within the workplace

Minister for Health and Aged Care, Greg Hunt said, "Australian FIFO workers spend great amounts of time away from family, friends and loved ones throughout their working lives, which can cause mental health concerns,"

"Our government recognises the strain FIFO and DIDO work can cause and we are committed to working with groups like MATES in Construction to ensure these workers have access to the support they need."

MATES in Construction National CEO Chris Lockwood said he welcomed the grant and the opportunity for the charity to focus further on this demographic of workers at risk.

"FIFO/DIDO workers face unique challenges and associated mental health and wellbeing implications that accompany this lifestyle. We know our workers have higher than average rates of anxiety and depression, experience higher rates of suicidal intent, and are more likely to have poor mental health.

"Our evidence also highlights the "two faces" of FIFO/DIDO work, impacting workers and their families as well as the "host" communities in which they work," he said.

"We are well placed to build on our existing work around the issues facing FIFO/DIDO workers. We have the experience and a well-established footprint in this space. We'll be creating positive, long-term solutions for our workers, their communities and workplaces going forward."

The funding opportunity will allow MATES in Construction and its MATES in Mining division to:

- increase FIFO and DIDO workers' access to mental health treatments and reduce psychological distress;
- build the capacity of workers to raise awareness of mental health and suicide prevention issues, reduce stigma and encourage help seeking and help offering;
- the opportunity for assessment, triage and referral of workers to appropriate psychosocial support services;
- provide ongoing 24/7 support to FIFO/DIDO workers;
- provide mental health and suicide prevention awareness and training for mining and construction industries' leaders and managers;
- work with employers to integrate mental health and suicide prevention awareness education during on-boarding of staff; and
- provide specialised mental health and suicide prevention training for counsellors to ensure the provision of targeted tailored services.

If you need support MATES 24/7 Helpline on 1300 642 111 or Lifeline on 131114