

Appendix A: Submissions and comments

We have consulted with the Department of Health, Austin Health, Barwon Health, Central Gippsland Health and WorkSafe Victoria, and we considered their views when reaching our audit conclusions. As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, we gave a draft copy of this report, or relevant extracts, to those agencies and asked for their submissions and comments.

Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of those comments rests solely with the agency head.

Responses received

Agency	Page
Department of Health	A-2
Austin Health	A-5
Barwon Health	A-7
Central Gippsland Health	A-10

Response provided by the Acting Secretary, Department of Health



Secretary

Department of Health

50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
Telephone: 1300 650 172
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne Victoria 3001
www.health.vic.gov.au
DX 210081

BAC-CO-40466

Mr Dave Barry
Acting Auditor-General
Victorian Auditor-General's Office
Via e-mail: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Barry

Proposed Audit Report: *Employee Health and Wellbeing in Victorian Public Hospitals*

Thank you for your letter of 5 October 2023 providing the Department of Health with an opportunity to respond to the proposed recommendations and to make submissions and comments to be included in the final report, *Employee Health and Wellbeing in Victorian Public Hospitals*.

I accept the recommendations in the Proposed Audit Report and attach the department's action plan in response to those recommendations.

The wellbeing of Victorian public hospital workers is a key priority for the department. Your report notes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on healthcare workers, and I would like to further emphasise the challenges experienced by our workforce throughout the pandemic, and the consequences for mental health and wellbeing.

The department's *Strategic Plan 2023-27* acknowledges that health, wellbeing and care workers are the backbone of the health system and deserve a first-rate employee experience. As noted in the attached action plan, measures in the department's Priority Outcomes Framework and Victorian Health Services Performance Monitoring Framework 2023-24 will support the department in its role as system steward, providing system-level visibility and enabling the department to continue to hold services accountable for the wellbeing of their employees.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to these recommendations. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Genevieve Frisby, Director, Health Workforce Investment and Safety on [REDACTED] or via email [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Acting Secretary
18/10/2023



Response provided by the Acting Secretary, Department of Health – *continued*

Department of Health action plan to address recommendations from *Employee Health and Wellbeing in Victorian Public Hospitals*

No.	VAGO recommendation	Acceptance	Agreed management actions	Target completion date
1	Recommendation to the Department of Health: Develop and implement a framework to monitor and report on hospital employees' mental health and wellbeing. The framework should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a comprehensive set of performance measures, including measures on fatigue and occupational violence and aggression, that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ are based on both survey and non-survey data (for example, data from human resources and workers compensation claims) ○ make good use of data that the Department of Health or other agencies (such as the Victorian Agency for Health Information and WorkSafe Victoria) already collect • regular monitoring to assess hospitals' performance against the measures through quarterly reports 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input type="checkbox"/> In principle	<p>The Department of Health supports this recommendation and proposes that it will be acquitted through implementation of the department's Priority Outcomes Framework. The Priority Outcomes Framework has already been developed, and includes three healthcare workforce measures of wellbeing, which are also present in the department's new Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes and Performance Framework.</p> <p>The measures are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce satisfaction with current work (all healthcare sector) • Current level of work-related stress • Workforce having skills and knowledge to confidently perform their job. <p>The Victorian health services 2023-24 Performance Monitoring Framework has been updated (in response to the VAGO Audit Preliminary Report) to include the following new Worker Wellbeing indicators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of workers reporting nil or low/mild work-related stress • Percentage of workers not experiencing occupational violence and aggression • Percentage of workers not reporting symptoms of fatigue. 	31 October 2024 <p>The Department of Health Priority Outcomes Framework was released as part of the Strategic Plan on 31 August 2023. Available results will be published as part of the Annual Report 2023-24.</p> <p>The Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes and Performance Framework will be released by the end of 2023, and reported on annually, with the first report covering 2023-24.</p> <p>The new Worker Wellbeing indicators have already been incorporated into the Department 2023-24 Health Services</p>

OFFICIAL

Response provided by the Acting Secretary, Department of Health – *continued*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual public reporting on the measures (see Section 3) 		Performance Monitoring Framework.
2	<p>Recommendation to the Department of Health:</p> <p>Develop and implement a framework to monitor, evaluate and report on the outcomes of the programs it funds to support hospital employees' mental health and wellbeing. The framework should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify relevant outcome performance measures and targets • set up a process to collect data/results, including baseline data to assess impact (see Section 3). 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In principle	<p>The department supports this recommendation in principle, noting that:</p> <p>(a) the impact of the Healthcare Worker Wellbeing Centre during 2022-23 is being externally evaluated, with evaluation expected to be available in February 2024.</p> <p>(b) the department agrees that, if the department were to centrally run health and wellbeing programs in the future, the department would establish mechanisms to monitor any such program.</p> <p>(c) while programs run by health services themselves will not be monitored by the department, the department will continue to monitor health services' People Matter Survey results, along with other performance measures (which may include complaints/correspondence received by the department, and workforce retention and vacancy rates) which provide an overview of the impact of work done by health services to support healthcare worker wellbeing.</p> <p>The Impact of the Healthcare Worker Wellbeing Centre during 2022-23 is being externally evaluated, with evaluation expected to be available in February 2024.</p> <p>The department will continue to undertake ongoing regular performance monitoring through business-as-usual mechanisms.</p>

OFFICIAL

Response provided by the Chief Executive Officer, Austin Health



20 October 2023

Mr Andrew Greaves
Auditor General
Victorian Auditor-General's Office
Level 31, 35 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Mr Greaves

Austin Health response: Proposed Performance Audit Report Employee Health and Wellbeing in Victorian Public Hospitals

Austin Health acknowledges the findings and recommendations of the report, and is committed to ongoing improvement to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of the Austin Health workforce.

Austin Health accepts, in principle, the recommendations as outlined in Table 1 and commits to completing the response actions within the prescribed timeframes as practicable. It should be noted that the Austin Health responses outlined in Table 1 presume Department of Health endorsement and support as per Recommendation 1.

Table 1: Austin Health response to Recommendation 3: *"Audited hospitals, in consultation with the Department of Health, develop and implement a comprehensive framework for their hospital. The framework should:"*

No.	VAGO recommendation	Acceptance	Agreed management actions	Target completion date
1	Identify the psychosocial hazards that impact employees' mental health and wellbeing in the workplace	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input type="checkbox"/> In principle	Austin Health will incorporate into the HSW operational risk register an outline of psychosocial hazards prevalent across Austin Health workplaces.	June 2024
2	Have a better-practice process to manage fatigue and occupational violence and aggression risks	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In principle	Austin Health will undertake an assessment of the fatigue risk management system to identify system improvement opportunities. Austin Health will instigate a process of evaluation of the OVA action plan for its effectiveness and continued improvement.	Oct 2024

P. 03 9496 5000
F. 03 9458 4779
austin.org.au

145 Studley Road
Heidelberg
Victoria 3084

PO Box 5555
Heidelberg
Victoria 3084



Response provided by the Chief Executive Officer, Austin Health – *continued*

			Austin Health will investigate opportunities for improvement in the OHS incident reporting process and system with a view to better capture and analysis of causative factors.	
3	Identify relevant qualitative and quantitative performance measures (including lead and lag fatigue indicators that draw on WorkSafe Victoria's guidance)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In principle	Austin Health will identify opportunities for additional measures for performance reporting.	June 2024
4	Have a process to collect data to monitor these measures and regularly report the results to the hospital's board and executive management (including reporting the number of fatigue and stress incidents to the hospital's occupational health and safety governance committee)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In principle	As per above. Note that these measures are contingent on system functionality improvement. The data will be incorporated into existing reporting arrangements.	April 2025
5	Include guidance to educate staff about reporting fatigue in the hospital's incident management system to raise awareness and make reporting more consistent.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In principle	Austin Health will evaluate and improve current guidance and education offerings for staff regarding fatigue risk management and sleep hygiene.	April 2025

Yours sincerely,



Adam Horsburgh

Chief Executive Officer
Austin Health

Response provided by the Board Chair, Barwon Health

Mr. Dave Barry
Acting Auditor-General
Victorian Auditor General's Office
Level 31/35 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

19 October 2023



Corporate Office

Ryrie Street
Geelong, VIC 3220
PO Box 281
Geelong, VIC 3220
T 03 4215 0000
ABN 45 877 249 165

Dear Mr. Barry,

Thank you for your letter dated 5 October 2023 and the provision of the proposed performance audit report on *Employee Health and Wellbeing in Victorian Public Hospitals*.

I am pleased to provide Barwon Health's response to the recommendation made by your office and the actions Barwon Health intends to take in relation to this recommendation.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank your team for their efforts throughout this process and for working with Barwon Health staff so productively.

I appreciate the report of your acquittal against the feedback provided by Barwon Health. I note and appreciate the inclusion of our feedback in the final report.

Barwon Health has reviewed the report and accepts the report and the recommendation for audited hospitals.

Yours sincerely,

The Hon. Lisa Neville
Board Chair
Barwon Health

Enclosed: Attachment 1 – Barwon Health Action Plan



OUR VALUES / RESPECT / COMPASSION / COMMITMENT / ACCOUNTABILITY / INNOVATION

Response provided by the Board Chair, Barwon Health – *continued*

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Barwon Health action plan to address recommendations from Employee Health and Wellbeing in Victorian Public Hospitals

No.	VAGO recommendation	Acceptance	Agreed management actions	Target completion date
1	In consultation with the Department of Health, develop and implement a comprehensive framework for their hospital. The framework should: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify the psychosocial hazards that impact employees' mental health and wellbeing in the workplace• have a better-practice process to manage fatigue and occupational violence and aggression risks• identify relevant qualitative and quantitative performance measures (including lead and lag fatigue indicators that draw on WorkSafe Victoria's guidance)• have a process to collect data to monitor these measures and regularly report the results to the hospital's board and executive management (including reporting the number of fatigue and stress incidents to the hospital's occupational health and safety governance committee)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input type="checkbox"/> In principle	<p>In consultation with the Department of Health, Barwon Health will develop and implement a comprehensive framework.</p> <p>Barwon Health will undertake a review of a number of best practice resources to identify the psychosocial hazards that impact employees' mental health and wellbeing in the workplace</p> <p>Barwon Health has recently completed a fatigue management pilot. Barwon Health will develop a plan to manage fatigue and occupational violence and aggression risks and implement across the organisation.</p> <p>Barwon Health will undertake a review of a number of best practice resources to identify relevant qualitative and quantitative performance measures</p> <p>Barwon Health will consult with the Department of Health in regards to improving functionality for reporting psychosocial risks, including fatigue, via its incident reporting system, Riskman.</p> <p>Barwon Health will commence reporting data relating to psychosocial hazards and incidents to its executive and board.</p> <p>Barwon Health is currently implementing Optima as its rostering system, which will allow for greater oversight</p>	31 December 2024 31 December 2024 30 June 2024 31 December 2024 31 December 2024 31 December 2024

Response provided by the Board Chair, Barwon Health – *continued*

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

No.	VAGO recommendation	Acceptance	Agreed management actions	Target completion date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • include guidance to educate staff about reporting fatigue in the hospital's incident management system to raise awareness and make reporting more consistent (see Section 3). 		<p>and better management of organisational rostering practices. This project will be implemented across the entire organisation by 31 December 2024.</p> <p>Roll out organisational training and awareness to all staff regarding appropriate reporting of fatigue in Riskman.</p>	31 December 2024

Response provided by the Chair, Central Gippsland Health

Ref: k:\exec\board of directors\correspondence\2023\response to vago audit - october 2023.docx



23 October 2023

Mr. Andrew Greaves
Auditor General
Victorian Auditor General's Office
Level 31, 35 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VICTORIA 3000

Dear Mr. Greaves

Thank you for your letter dated 5 October 2023, and provision of the proposed report on the performance audit of *Employee Health and Wellbeing in Victorian Public Hospitals*.

We welcome this opportunity to provide Central Gippsland Health Service's (CGHS) response to the recommendations made by your office. I am also pleased to provide you with advice regarding the actions CGHS is already taking, and intends to take, in relation to the recommendations made by your office.

I would like to thank your team for working with our staff so productively, and appreciate the report of your acquittal against the feedback provided by CGHS. I note and appreciate the inclusion of our feedback in the draft final report.

CGHS has reviewed the report and accepts the report and recommendations as outlined. Implementation of some of the recommendations has already commenced, and CGHS is actively exploring the options identified in our response to further address the issues raised in the proposed report.

Please find attached CGHS's Action Plan addressing the recommendations made by your office.

Yours sincerely



Jim Vivian
Chair, Board of Directors

Encl. Attachment 1 - CGHS Action Plan

Better Together.

cghs.com.au

Maffra Hospital | Sale Hospital | Heyfield Hospital | Stretton Park Aged Care | Wilson Lodge Nursing Home | McDonald Wing Nursing Home | Laurina Lodge Nursing Home
Community Rehabilitation / Allied Health | Home Support Services | Dental Services | Loch Sport Community Health | Rosedale Community Health

Response provided by the Chair, Central Gippsland Health – *continued*

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

Central Gippsland Health action plan to address recommendations from Employee Health and Wellbeing in Victorian Public Hospitals

No.	VAGO recommendation	Acceptance	Agreed management actions	Target completion date
1	In consultation with the Department of Health, develop and implement a comprehensive framework for their hospital. The framework should: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify the psychosocial hazards that impact employees' mental health and wellbeing in the workplace• have a better-practice process to manage fatigue and occupational violence and aggression risks• identify relevant qualitative and quantitative performance measures (including lead and lag fatigue indicators that draw on WorkSafe Victoria's guidance)• have a process to collect data to monitor these measures and regularly report the results to the hospital's board and executive management (including reporting the number of fatigue and stress incidents to the hospital's occupational health and safety governance committee)• include guidance to educate staff about reporting fatigue in the hospital's incident management system to raise	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> In part <input type="checkbox"/> In principle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CGH shall work with the department to develop and implement a Psychological Safety framework. The framework shall detail: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Measures to be reported and monitored including staff feedback methods ○ Better-practice fatigue management processes ○ Reporting schedule ○ Strengthen a culture for reporting stress, fatigue and occupational violence incidents ○ Report completion rates of OVA training and include reporting in education • CGH Occupational Violence and Aggression Review Committee has commenced work to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review all Code Black incidents since December 2022 ○ Review all Code Black incidents ongoing ○ Review all Code Grey incidents from 1 September 2023 ongoing ○ Provide draft recommendations for improvements to Executive Committee in December 2023 ○ Provide report on trends, analysis and improvement activities to the Business Governance Committee with appropriate 	June 2024 December 2023

Response provided by the Chair, Central Gippsland Health – *continued*

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

awareness and make reporting more consistent (see Section 3).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Escalations to the Executive Committee and Board as required. ◦ Establish a regular reporting schedule including identified key metrics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed Psychological Hazard inspection elements into existing Hazard Inspection practices starting with pilot in one high risk department: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Complete a job task analysis for each position in the designated department ◦ Complete a psychological hazard risk analysis for each role ◦ Report findings to OHS Committee for consideration and discussion ◦ Report findings and recommendations to the Business Governance Committee with relevant escalations to Executive Committee and Board ◦ Consider findings of pilot and adapt where appropriate for implementation elsewhere within the organisation in 2024 	<p>February 2024</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR Department shall commence a review of Fatigue Management with support of Work Health Safety Manager, beginning with a key department or staff group based on risk assessment: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Plot roster structuring ◦ Analyse time and attendance data and cross reference with roster ◦ Develop SWOT analysis 	<p>April 2024</p>

Response provided by the Chair, Central Gippsland Health – *continued*

OFFICIAL: Sensitive

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Identify key measures based on Department of Health requirements○ Report measures and recommendations through the Business Governance Committee with appropriate escalations to the executive and Board according to scheduled implementation plan (to be developed)