

Feeling Deadly, *Working Deadly*



NCETA
Australia's National Research Centre
on AOD Workforce Development



S3. RECOGNISING AND REWARDING DEADLY WORKERS

Theory Into Practice (TIP) sheet for managers/supervisors

This TIP sheet is intended for supervisors and managers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander¹ alcohol and other drug (AOD) workers. It is part of a suite of resources that has been produced by the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction (NCETA) at Flinders University to enhance Indigenous worker wellbeing and reduce work-related stress.

The resources were developed following a review of relevant literature; and an extensive consultation process involving public submissions, a national on-line survey, interviews and focus groups. Quotations from the consultations appear in italics in the TIP sheets.

Introduction

Rewards and recognition for good work and effort are very important. They are essential for worker satisfaction and motivation. But this is often overlooked or misunderstood.

Workers want to be appreciated and recognised for the work that they do and expect a fair balance between what they do for the organisation (e.g., skills, knowledge, effort) and the rewards they get in return (e.g., pay, promotion, support, recognition). If workers feel their efforts go under-recognised, or that they are receiving insufficient rewards, this can lead to them leaving the organisation.

Ensuring that workers are fully and appropriately recognised and rewarded for their work is not only a matter of fairness and equity it is also good for workers' health and wellbeing. It can also reduce stress. This is particularly important for Indigenous AOD workers whose work can be difficult, demanding and stressful.

"...the greatest issue is disparity of salary across NGOs, community and government. For example, government salaries have incremental increases allowing for promotional opportunities but NGOs are not able to provide these incentives." (Indigenous manager)

¹ The terms Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous are used interchangeably throughout this document. We understand that some people have a preference for using one term over the other and we have used the terms interchangeably to be sensitive to these differing perspectives.

Recognising and rewarding deadly Indigenous AOD workers

The rewards that workers value are often different to what might be expected.

Developing reward systems based on workers' needs and preferences is likely to be most effective. What one person may find rewarding may not appeal to another. Always ask the "experts" – the workers themselves.

For many workers, the rewards that they value most are not necessarily monetary. Nevertheless, it is essential that all workers receive fair and appropriate salaries and financial recognition for their work. Some organisations can also give financial rewards such as bonuses or pay rises, but for many organisations financial rewards are not an option.

Non-Financial Rewards

Non-financial rewards might include:

- Acknowledgement of extra effort or dealing with difficult situations. This might be done in private between a worker and supervisor, or more publicly
- Public recognition of effort and contribution: this could be within the team, the organisation or at the sector level or beyond
- Award certificates or plaques to note a major achievement or milestone
- Celebrations to recognise important achievements: BBQs, morning teas
- Chances to work on favourite work activities (and/or have a break from tasks they don't like)
- Additional time off, flexi-time or extra leave in recognition of a specific achievement

- Support for professional development activities (e.g., paying for or giving paid time off)
- A chance to act in higher duties
- Attending workshops/conferences
- Celebrations for good work.

"...people get burnt out because no-one gives them the congratulations." (Indigenous worker)

Performance appraisals are also good opportunities to recognise good work and contributions to the organisation. This also helps ensure a clear link between performance and effort and rewards. The appraisal interview can also be used to support workers by discussing barriers and challenges and ways they can be overcome.

When developing recognition and reward practices for workers also think about:

- Whether workers' roles are too hard and may lead to frustration and a sense of failure
- Rewarding progress towards longer-term or more difficult goals (i.e., rewarding achieving short-term objectives). Providing rewards for making progress towards a goal can help to keep effort levels up and avoid feelings of anger and disappointment.

Reward systems need to be fair to all workers and be seen to be fair. Workers will decide if they think the reward system is fair based on:

- Whether what needs to be achieved to receive the reward is realistic
- The importance of the work they have done
- The importance of their work compared to the work of others
- Whether all workers are rewarded consistently.



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Copies of resources developed as part of the 'Feeling Deadly, Working Deadly' Resource Kit are available for download from the NCETA website: www.nceta.flinders.edu.au