



BUILDING ON MEN'S HEALTH

Men's Health Week spans June 11-17, with this year's theme being 'Men and families: making healthy connections'. Master Builders director Michael McLean explains why it is relevant to the building industry.

WITH about 140,000 people employed in the state's building industry, most of them male, it is important that they remain fit and healthy from both a work and personal perspective.

Master Builders established a Health Alliance more than 10 years ago to raise awareness amongst builders, tradies, apprentices and their families about relevant health issues and to improve their life expectancy. Some of the dedicated organisations committed to improving men's health in the building industry include:

- Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia (www.prostate.org.au)
- SunSmart (www.sunsmart.com.au)
- Holyoake (www.holyoake.org.au)
- MATES in Construction (www.matesinconstruction.org.au)
- Healthier Workplace WA (www.healthierworkplacewa.com.au)
- Perth Wellness Centre (www.perthwellness.com.au)
- Reflections Through Reality (www.reflections.org.au)

There are lots of benefits to having a healthier workplace, and it's not that difficult or expensive. A healthy workplace is more likely to boost workplace productivity, reduce sick days and lead to happier, healthier workers.

The building and construction industry still has some way to go to effectively tackle men's health issues. It is encouraging that some builders now include health as part of their focus on safety, but much more needs to be done to raise awareness amongst our male-dominated workforce to seek help, take precautions and undertake regular checks to keep fit and healthy in our industry.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a major cause of death in Australia, with 43,963 deaths attributed to CVD in Australia in 2016. Cardiovascular disease kills one Australian every 12 minutes. Healthy eating and regular physical exercise, for example, are two important factors to reduce the risk of chronic disease and to maintain good health.

Research indicates that over 3.5 million Australians are seriously and negatively affected by alcohol and drugs. Holyoake offers life-changing counselling and support to help people who are impacted by substance

misuse – directly and indirectly.

Prostate Cancer is the most common cancer in Australian males and is the second greatest cause of male cancer deaths in Australia. Over 3000 men die of prostate cancer in Australia each year; meaning one man dies every three hours. More men now die of prostate cancer than women die of breast cancer. Men aged 40 years and older are recommended to have regular prostate checks with their doctor.

Each year in Australia, about 200 melanomas and 34,000 non-melanoma skin cancers are caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation at work. Outdoor workers can receive five to 10 times more UV than indoor workers, putting them at greater risk. The good news is skin cancer is largely preventable. Protecting yourself from UV radiation is key.

While mesothelioma is a relatively rare cancer, on average one person dies every 12 hours in Australia from its effects. Asbestos exposure is the only cause of mesothelioma. You can protect yourself by ensuring that safe work practices are adopted at all times.

Silica dust is commonly found on construction sites. Although 100 times smaller than a grain of sand, it causes one lung cancer diagnosis every 36 hours. Breathing in large amounts over a long time can increase your risk. Adequate controls are required; protection is more than wearing a dust mask.

Did you know workers in the building industry are six times more likely to die from suicide than a work-place accident? MATES in Construction is the industry's very own suicide prevention and awareness-raising charity. To access support for yourself, a mate or immediate family member, call the MATES 24/7 helpline on 1300 642 111.

Men's Health Week recognises the contribution men make to the well-being of our economy and society. Unfortunately, health and well-being are not often talked about in male-oriented industries, but they should be. If you have the opportunity to raise awareness about a health issue with a male in your family during Men's Health Week, please do so. I'm sure he will thank you for doing so in his own special way.

Visit www.menshealthweek.org.au to see what's happening in your area this week.