

## **ACC should be congratulated**

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*(Upper Hutt, New Zealand)* Mentally unhealthy workplaces are costing New Zealand businesses far more than the \$250 spent by ACC for staff on its employee wellbeing programme, says the Mental Health Foundation.

According to research by Southern Cross Healthcare, New Zealand businesses spend \$1.7 billion on health care, with more than half this figure - \$940 million - relating to injury, illnesses, or absence from work.

“In New Zealand’s tight labour market, it’s clearly common sense to invest in the health and wellbeing of your employees,” says Judi Clements, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation.

“Wellbeing programmes can reduce absenteeism, and prevent illness caused by stressful work environments, which increase the chance of a person developing depression or anxiety.”

Working Well is a Mental Health Foundation project that helps employers to create and maintain mentally healthy workplaces. Its seminars focus on a range of topics including health and wellbeing, reducing workplace stress, effective communication, and supporting staff.

“Our Working Well programme shows that employers cannot ignore the issue of mental health and stress in the workplace,” Clements says. “With regards to the ACC, the question should not be, how much does a staff wellbeing programme cost; but how much will it cost if you don’t have one.”

The Foundation’s national Health Promotion Hui, taking place in Upper Hutt today, aims to change social, economic and physical environments to improve health for all people.

“The ACC, like many employers the Foundation works with, have realised that healthcare schemes which only focus on illness are counter-productive when a broader approach that focuses on health promotion will produce better results.

“They should be congratulated for making the wellbeing of their employees a top priority.”

ENDS

**Media enquiries and interview bookings:**

Paula Taylor

Communications & Marketing Manager

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand

021 300 594