



University of  
**Southern**  
**Queensland**



# WELLBEING MATTERS GUIDE

PEER INSIGHTS FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE LEADERS  
— A REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE PERSPECTIVE





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CANNONVALE

TOOWOOMBA

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KEMPSEY



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To begin we would like to acknowledge and pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging and all generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which we live, work, and learn.

We sincerely acknowledge the time and valuable contributions from the social enterprise founders, leaders and team members who participated in this project and shared their insights. The sharing of stories and lived experiences are invaluable in creating a resource for fellow social enterprises in rural, regional, and remote locations. We hope this Guide will support those involved in the establishment and ongoing provision of services to achieve both personal and professional wellbeing and resilience.

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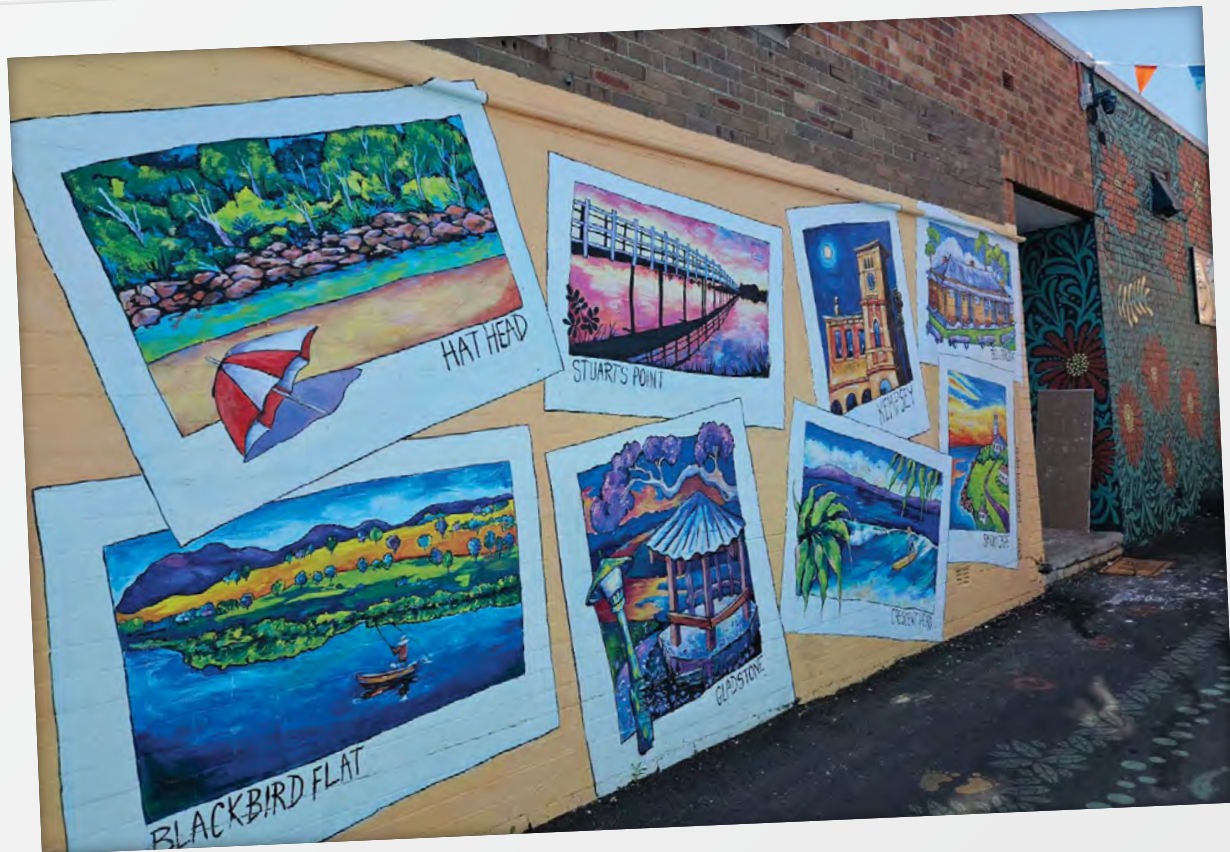




## WELLBEING MATTERS GUIDE: THE PURPOSE

Social enterprise work often involves supporting individuals who have faced difficulties and hardships. This, combined with the commercial pressures of delivering efficient and quality services, can lead to demanding and stressful conditions. For example, social enterprises team members in these roles often work non-standard hours with limited peer support, especially in regional, rural and remote areas. Similarly, founders and leaders, in addition to their role in establishing and growing their enterprises, often share the same workload as staff, contributing to the overall strain.

Aligned with strategic State/Federal priorities to support sustainable development and strengthen the social enterprise sector, this Guide has been developed to enhance the wellbeing of those at the heart of regional, rural, and remote social enterprises—founders and team members. By sharing the experiences of founders and leaders, fostering collaboration and providing resources, the Guide aims to enable those leading social enterprises to navigate challenges, adapt to changing circumstances, and continue to make a positive impact on their communities.



## WELLBEING MATTERS GUIDE: THE APPROACH

1. Anecdotal evidence and the research team's previous experiences of working with regional, rural and remote (RRR) social enterprises were integrated with initial findings from a rapid review of scholarly literature. The review focused on identifying themes from wellbeing interventions and resources for RRR social enterprise founders and staff across the world.
2. Building on the identified themes and to ensure that the Guide effectively addresses highlighted needs, the research team then engaged with social enterprise stakeholders such as funders, government and peak body representatives to refine the proposed data collection activities. This was followed by in-depth interviews and co-creation workshops with RRR social enterprise founders, leaders and team members. These workshops were held across northern New South Wales and regional Queensland. Specific locations included the New South Wales locations of Armidale and Kempsey, and the Queensland towns of Mt Isa, Toowoomba, and Cannonvale (Whitsundays) – in order to capture the breadth of RRR experiences and contexts. Additionally, various representatives located in RRR locations attended online sessions.
3. The insights gathered from the above-mentioned activities have directly informed this Guide, making it relevant and practical for the unique contexts of these social enterprises. Noting the feedback and desire regarding an increased sense of belonging and empowerment, this Guide aims to inspire confidence, reduce isolation and help foster a sense of community while providing practical strategies to navigate challenges and achieve goals.

The quotes provided throughout this Guide are the valuable insights gathered from the interview and workshop participants.





## WELLBEING MATTERS: WHY?

Wellbeing involves physical, emotional, and personal growth aspects, and maintaining it allows for resilience in navigating life's challenges. Taking care of wellbeing is an ongoing process, leading to health, positive emotions, productivity, and meaning.

Social entrepreneurs often prioritise the needs of others, both at the individual level and organisational level, which can sometimes lead to their own wellbeing being overlooked. It is crucial to remember that for social entrepreneurs, taking care of themselves is not selfish but essential for providing effective support to their teams and communities.

While often easier said than done, for social entrepreneurs that balance and combine hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing elements into daily practices, a more holistic sense of wellbeing that supports both immediate happiness and long-term fulfilment can be fostered.

Hedonic wellbeing focuses on pleasure and enjoyment that enhances positive emotions and can lead to immediate, short-term happiness and satisfaction. Strategies for enhancing hedonic wellbeing so social entrepreneurs feel good in the moment could include:

- Engaging in enjoyable activities regularly that bring joy, such as hobbies, sports, or socialising with friends
- Practicing mindfulness techniques such as meditation or deep breathing to savour the present moment and reduce stress

- Celebrating small wins and acknowledging own achievements, no matter how small, to boost mood and motivation
- Prioritising self-care routines such as reading, taking a walk, or listening to music

While eudaimonic wellbeing focuses on meaning and purpose around personal growth, self-acceptance, and living according to one's values, and this can lead to long-term fulfilment and a deeper sense of wellbeing. Strategies for enhancing eudaimonic wellbeing so social entrepreneurs can live a meaningful and purposeful life could include:

- Identifying, setting, and pursuing meaningful goals that align with values and passions. This could be related to career, personal growth, or community involvement
- Spending time reflecting on what gives your life meaning and how you can incorporate elements into daily routines
- Investing in building and maintaining strong, deep, and meaningful relationships with family, friends, team members, and community to provide support and a sense of belonging
- Engaging in activities that contribute to others wellbeing such as volunteering or mentoring

## WELLBEING MATTERS GUIDE: THE STRUCTURE

This Guide offers a curated collection of insights and resources designed to support the wellbeing of founders and teams in RRR social enterprises. Framed using a staged lens (i.e., the processes of ‘start’, ‘scale’ and ‘sustain’) for the organisational journey, the content draws on stories and experiences from current social enterprise leaders to:



START

### HELP NAVIGATE ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH AND COMPLEXITY

This Guide explores the iterative nature of organisational growth (and noting that stages are not always sequential), offers insights into the unique challenges and opportunities at each stage.



SCALE

### SHARE INSIGHTS INTO CONTEMPORARY LEADER PERSPECTIVES

This Guide includes vignettes and quotes that delve into leaders' priorities, strategies, barriers, and enablers, providing a deeper understanding of individual experiences.



SUSTAIN

### FOSTER A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND SHARED PURPOSE

This Guide highlights the common challenges and connections among social enterprise leaders, offering practical strategies and inspiration to overcome obstacles and achieve shared goals.



# GLOSSARY

### Beneficiaries

The individuals or groups that benefit from an organisation's activities, who may or may not be the same as its customers.

### Board of Directors

A group of individuals elected or appointed to oversee an organisation's activities, set policies and strategies, and make decisions on major issues.

### Burnout

Burnout is a form of exhaustion caused by constantly feeling swamped. It happens when we experience too much emotional, physical, and mental fatigue for too long.

### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

A voluntary, confidential service provided by a workplace to help team members manage personal and professional issues that may affect their wellbeing, health, or job performance.

### Founder

The individual or group of individuals who start a new organisation or enterprise, often serving as its initial leaders and visionaries.

### Funding

Money given by individuals, organisations, or governments for a specific purpose.

### Impact

The significant, positive change that results from an action, enterprise, project, program, or policy. Social impact work refers to the measurable improvements to the lives of stakeholders or the environment that can be linked to an intervention or initiative.

### Resilience

The ability to successfully adapt to stressors, maintaining psychological wellbeing in the face of adversity and “bounce back” from difficult experiences.

### Stakeholders

Any individual or group with an interest in or influence over an organisation, such as customers, team members, investors, suppliers, or communities.

### Values

Values are individual beliefs that motivate people to act one way or another. They serve as a guide for human behaviour.

### Wellbeing (or well-being)

The state of doing well especially in relation to one's happiness or success.





# START



## WHY IT MATTERS? THE WELLBEING CONNECTION

The early stages of a social enterprise can be demanding, both emotionally and physically but it is also important to consider personal and professional wellbeing at the start as the pressure to succeed, coupled with the challenges of navigating a new venture with limited resources, can take a toll on social enterprise leaders' wellbeing. By embracing strategies that prioritise wellbeing, social enterprise leaders can better equip themselves to handle the demands of their role and make sustainable contributions to their community.





## BUILDING A FOUNDATION OF SUSTAINED SOCIAL IMPACT

The inception of a social enterprise is a delicate dance between passion, purpose, and practicality. There is excitement about fostering meaningful change and the challenge of prioritising projects while wearing many hats. In RRR areas, social enterprise leaders face unique challenges due to limited resources, a smaller team member pool, and restricted networking opportunities. Despite these obstacles, there is a strong desire to foster meaningful change. Amidst this context, it is crucial for social enterprise leaders to build a strong foundation of personal and professional wellbeing in order to deliver on sustained social impact.

To do so, consider the following strategies:

### CLARIFY PURPOSE

The early stages of a social enterprise can be challenging but having a clear sense of purpose that stems from insight into personal values can be a powerful driving force. When social enterprise leaders are aware of their purpose and values, it can not only aid decision-making but also help in persevering through setbacks and maintain their unwavering commitment.

### BUILD 'THE' TEAM

While the early stages of a social enterprise might be a one-person show, actively consider future recruitment requirements, and seeking formal and informal mentors. Building not just a team but 'the' team that includes internal team members, and external colleagues and mentors is crucial at this initial stage. A diverse, well-rounded support system can help problem-solve, boost morale, and provide a sense of community.





## CLARIFYING PURPOSE

Before launching a social enterprise, it is valuable for founders to have a clear definition of its purpose. This means understanding the specific social or environmental issue they want to address and how they plan to tackle it. It is equally important to be clear about their own sense of purpose and personal values and how they align with the organisation's purpose. This clarity will not only shape their approach to the enterprise and the impact they aim to achieve but also contribute to their personal wellbeing in several ways.



## REAL WORLD SNAPSHOT

Many social entrepreneurs are driven by a strong sense of purpose and a desire to make a positive impact. However, this passion can sometimes lead to neglecting one's own needs. The quote from a social enterprise leader highlights a common challenge faced by social entrepreneurs, the tendency to prioritise the needs of their organisation and community above their own wellbeing. This can lead to burnout and have a negative impact on both the individual and the organisation..

*"We all know so many stories of social entrepreneurs, particularly who burn out because they're leading an organisation, and they don't put in the wellbeing strategies for their own selves. And then they burn their staff out, but they also burn themselves out because they're so driven by this idea, and this business, and they put themselves last. So, they always put the people that they are trying to create impact for first, and that's really damaging for people's wellbeing, you know, particularly their mental health."*

— Participant 2



## REAL WORLD SNAPSHOT

In the dynamic and often demanding world of social enterprises, leaders must bring a range of qualities, skills and knowledge areas. One of these, according to a social enterprise leader is self-awareness as it can help in understanding one's own strengths, weaknesses, and emotional responses to stress. By recognising personal patterns and triggers, leaders can take proactive steps to manage their wellbeing and avoid burnout.

*"Self-awareness is really important to me to make sure that I'm healthy. I value person centered practice and at our social enterprise we lead with flexibility. I think to solve things you have to be willing to be flexible, adapt, change. If you're not changing, you're not growing. When issues do come up, being able to communicate openly and honestly to one another and meeting regularly so you can discuss things is really important to me."*

— Participant 1



## WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH:

A clear sense of purpose can help social entrepreneurs boost motivation as well as help in navigating the challenges and uncertainties that come with starting a social enterprise. For example, a social enterprise leader passionate about environmental sustainability might face setbacks in fundraising or regulatory hurdles. However, a deep commitment to protecting the planet can provide the motivation to keep going, even in the face of adversity. While moments of distress and frustration are inevitable, a strong sense of purpose can be a powerful anchor.

## STRONGER CONNECTIONS:

When a social entrepreneur's personal values are reflected in their organisation's mission and the needs of stakeholders, they are more likely to attract like-minded individuals who share their passion and commitment. For example, a social enterprise leader focused on environmental sustainability might attract volunteers and supporters who are passionate about climate change and eco-friendly practices. This can create a strong sense of community and support. Additionally, operating in an authentic and genuine way, guided by personal values, can lead to stronger relationships, increased trust, and a more fulfilling experience.

*There are expectations on me from the board as they have an invested interest in the organisation's progress. We have a membership base which are the only people that can enforce something on the board members. There's a lot of community members and then funding partners and then probably much higher than all of that on the list is our staff who are the ones I have direct contact with. So, they're probably my largest stakeholder group. They would be affected by my wellbeing at the time, and I'll be affected by theirs."*

— Participant 9B

*"It can be exhausting to challenge stereotypes and biases in the community. Educating our community, conveying our purpose and justifying my position and championing for a marginalised cohort in our community. Getting our message across to an audience feels like it's never ending."*

— Workshop participant



*"I found my sense of purpose when I realised it was connecting with people in the community and making a difference to people's lives. That's why I bounce out of bed now."*

— Participant 5





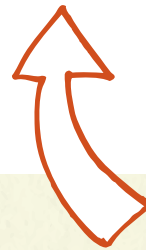
## BUILDING A TEAM

The early stages of a social enterprise, or any initiative, often revolve around the social enterprise founder. However, it's essential for social enterprise founders to start thinking about building a team and connecting with colleagues from the beginning.

Finding the right people can take time, so it's best to start early. Despite resource limitations, social enterprise founders should carefully consider the skills and expertise needed to complement their own. They should seek out support services and explore

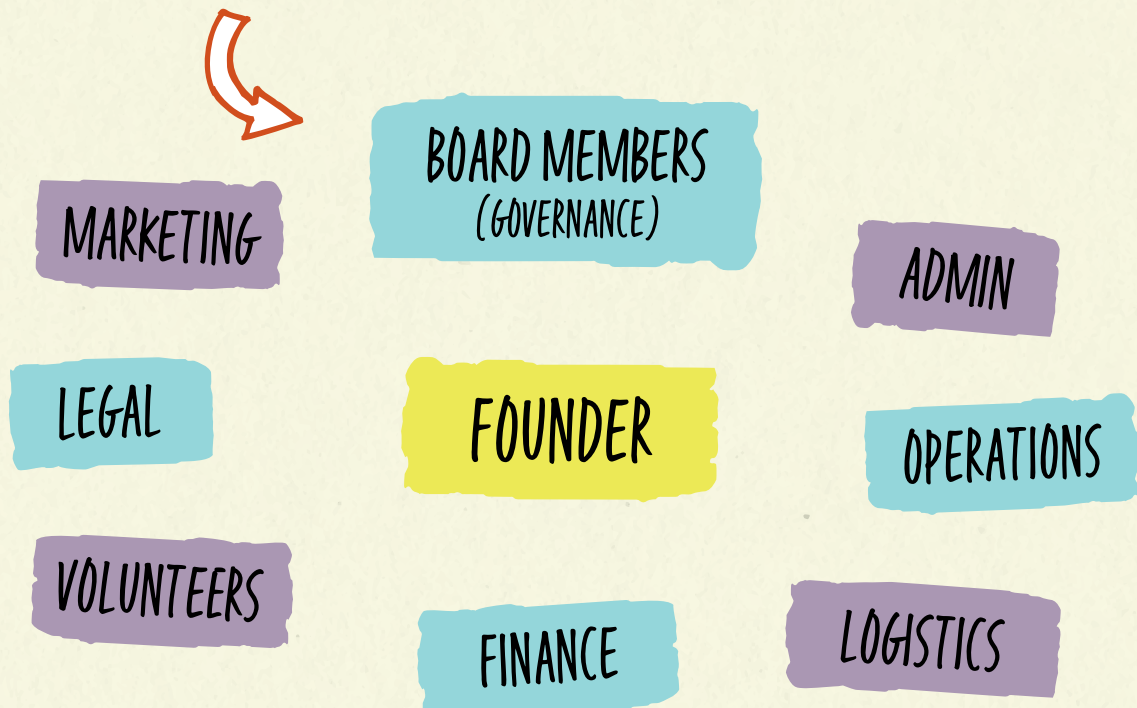
opportunities to connect with potential peers. This could involve reaching out to industry experts, networking with like-minded individuals, or utilising online platforms to find suitable candidates.

By proactively building 'the' team that shares the mission and brings the right skills, social enterprise founders can lay the foundation for the long-term success of their social enterprise and alleviate some of the pressure and workload that often falls on their shoulders.



**As a starting point, do you have people in mind for these roles? Do you have a position description for each of these roles? Which roles will be provided by other providers (i.e., legal)? Who else might you benefit from connecting with?**

**Peak body resources, local social media communities, breakfast groups and.... are good options – if there are none in your area, you can start one!**





## REAL WORLD SNAPSHOT

While there is a strong desire to make a positive social impact, as an organisation, social enterprises must also comply with governance and reporting requirements. These requirements can be tedious for social enterprise leaders who are trying to balance their social mission with the demands of financial sustainability and accountability. As shared by a social enterprise leader, having people who do not share the purpose and understand the experience can help be an additional barrier for coping with the demands.

*"I've been running social enterprises where you must report to a board, or you have to report to a director and the director reports to the board or the CEO or whatever the reporting line is, and the accountants, or the board, don't understand social enterprises."*

— Participant 2



## REAL WORLD SNAPSHOT

In the context of social enterprises, particularly in RRR areas, staff retention can be a major challenge. Limited access to talent, combined with the demanding nature of social enterprise work, can lead to high turnover rates. This can have a detrimental impact on the organisation's capacity to deliver services, maintain continuity, and achieve its goals. As shared by a social enterprise leader, losing valuable team members can be both personally and professionally devastating. It can disrupt operations, create a stressful work environment, and negatively impact the organisation's ability to achieve its mission. Therefore, prioritising wellbeing for both self and team members through a supportive work environment, fosters both loyalty and retention.

*"Recruiting staff is so much more intense when you've got people that burn out. We don't have the population to replace them. I mean there is the care for the person, but there's also a business reality. I can't lose these people. It took us a year and a half to find an accountant. I'm asking, 'what do I need to do?' and 'how do I help you?' If I lose them, they are so valuable to this organisation and to me as a person."*

— Participant 6A



## OBJECTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK:

In the dynamic landscape of social enterprises, social enterprise leaders play a crucial role in fostering a culture of constructive feedback. For example, a social enterprise leader providing transitional housing for homeless individuals might benefit from regular feedback from staff and residents but also colleagues working in a relevant Government department. This can help identify areas for improvement, ensure the program is meeting its goals, and create a more supportive environment.

On a personal level, seeking feedback can also help social enterprise leaders develop self-awareness and recognise their own biases and the potential impact of personal experiences on professional interactions. This can lead to more empathetic and effective leadership.

By surrounding themselves with a diverse and skilled team from whom they can seek feedback, social enterprise leaders can gain valuable insights, identify strengths and weaknesses, make more informed and effective decisions, and create a positive and supportive work environment.

*"I think it's really important to have external mentors because sometimes people are too close to what is impacting on my wellbeing. If the mentor is internal and they don't want to lose me, they're not going to give me genuine constructive feedback, whereas external mentors will."*

— Participant 9A

*"I started hanging out with other social enterprises and talking about the issues that I was facing. When we meet monthly, we just talk about stuff, we talk about challenges, upcoming events, what we need help with, and how we can work together. We've actually developed really good friendships."*

— Participant 1

*"I work a lot with people who have behavioural issues, or they might have post-traumatic stress disorder, and so I might say something, and it triggers them. Or you know, I come across a lot of people on Ice. Because I'm exposed to that so much, I can think that's normal, but actually, it's not normal."*

— Participant 1





*"We're putting our staff in with kids with trauma for long hours in really difficult situation. And that's no different to putting guys at heights working with asbestos in the construction industry. And the question to me from our Board was, 'do you think you're doing enough to take care of the wellbeing of your staff'? They're a very proactive Board, they're forward thinking and they don't shy away from understanding that there could be a cost to supporting staffs wellbeing."*

— Participant 6A

*"I've found it's taken me 4 1/2 years to really see some relationships come to life. These are really important to the business and also to me personally. It just takes time and there will be times where you almost just give up, especially when you realise how far away from Brisbane you are. That definitely impacts the wellbeing of the business and myself."*

— Participant 15

*"The labour pool is very thin in regional areas. So that is going to create a difference to begin with. Finding qualified people, I needed was really difficult in this small community in which I live, and the jobs aren't stable either because they're very funding dependent."*

— Participant 10

## COMBAT RECRUITMENT BARRIERS:

In the early stages of an organisation, finding the right people can be a significant challenge. This is amplified in RRR areas. By leveraging their network and starting early, social enterprise founders and leaders can identify potential team members who align with the organisation's mission and values. For example, a social enterprise leader focused on providing housing and support services for homeless individuals in a remote region might face challenges in recruiting qualified staff with experience in homelessness services.

By starting early and leveraging their network, social enterprise founders and leaders can identify potential candidates who share their passion for the cause and support building skills and knowledge over a period of time. Similarly, governance plays a crucial role in the success of a social enterprise. The same approach can help in establishing a well-functioning Board of Directors, enhance accountability, and ensure the organisation is operating ethically and transparently.

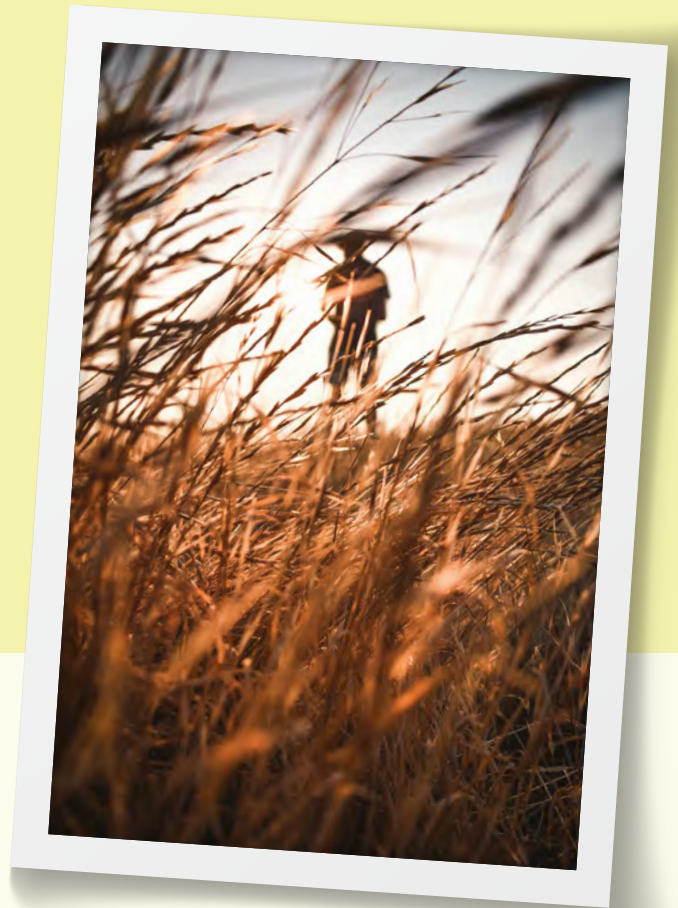
While not an immediate solution, this proactive approach can save time and resources and help build a strong and dedicated team.





## DEFINING WELLBEING

Participants were asked how they would define their personal and professional wellbeing. Their responses included:



CONNECTEDNESS VOCATIONAL BALANCE ENVIRONMENT  
 APPROACH HEALTH HEALTHY WORKLOAD  
 SOCIAL STATE FEEL PEOPLE GUT MANAGE PHYSICAL  
 SELF-NOURISHMENT FITNESS SPIRITUAL GOOD EXCITED  
 MANAGING EMOTIONAL MIND TIME TASKS  
 FEELING HOLISTIC MENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENT  
 FINANCIAL SOUL ENVIRONMENTAL PERSONAL BODY WORK-ENERGY  
 SPIRIT FUNCTIONING



# SCALE



## WHY IT MATTERS? THE WELLBEING CONNECTION

Once an organisation is established, there may be an opportunity for social enterprise leaders to consider growing the operation. This stage, known as the scaling stage, involves increasing delivery of services or business operations. However, as this stage can bring multiple complexities it is also important for social enterprise leaders to be considerate of their wellbeing and of others. As an organisation grows, the ability to be aware of the points in which stress can manifest becomes increasingly crucial for individual leaders. The demands of scaling operations, meeting heightened expectations, and maintaining a strong social impact can create significant pressure on those at the helm. By prioritising self-care and stress management techniques, social enterprise leaders can set a positive example for their teams, make sound decisions, and foster a resilient and sustainable organisation.







## BALANCING GROWTH AND SELF-CARE

Scaling an organisation may mean increasing service delivery to more people, replicating a business model in other locations, diversifying services or products or making systems change. Growing an organisation will take considerable thought and be the outcome of assessing the readiness to scale. This readiness will depend on a number of factors that you will need to consider, including but not limited to your team, stakeholders, financial situation, competition, legal, governance and infrastructure. An assessment of these factors may assist you in identifying gaps that need to be rectified before scaling and can also highlight any strengths that you can draw on. All

this aside, there is potential that a scaling process may place unwarranted stress on social enterprise founders and/or the team, particularly if there are unforeseen challenges that arise. It is crucial that social enterprise founders and leaders are aware of the trigger points that may impact negatively on the wellbeing of themselves and that of the team. Without this, service delivery and potential to scale effectively will be compromised.

The following section will focus on strategies to cultivate stress awareness and build culture and capacity.





## CULTIVATE STRESS AWARENESS

Being aware of potential stress and managing it is vital for the leadership and team members of an organisation to sustain their effectiveness and resilience. In a mission-driven sector with high demands, effective stress management helps maintain focus, sound decision-making, and long-term commitment to the organisation's goals. Social enterprise leaders should identify and be aware of their own anxieties and keep check on things that could contribute to positive wellbeing. For example, questioning whether they are getting enough sleep, are they coping with relationships, is there time for enjoyment within and outside of the workplace, are small wins in the business being celebrated, how are the staff getting along, and are they showing up everyday? These are some of the questions social enterprise leaders can ask themselves. Social enterprise leaders should also set the example for their team, provide check ins with team members, ensuring there is open conversation and support for positive wellbeing.

The **5 Ways to Wellbeing** is a useful resource that can be accessed by anyone to obtain useful tips and tricks on managing wellbeing both personally and professionally. Additionally, there is a quiz that helps determine an individual's current state of overall wellbeing and provide suggestions based on the results.





## REAL WORLD SNAPSHOT

Stressful situations will occur. To effectively manage this, it is important to identify the specific factors that contribute to your stress and where possible, implement strategies to mitigate their impact. These strategies can be immediate or self-care, but it is important to understand what this look like for you! Utilising tools available and promoting these within the workplace and setting an example to the team will work toward ensuring stress levels are managed and wellbeing is a priority.

These quotes from a social enterprise leader demonstrate some of the possible strategies:

*"I think personal and professional wellbeing is '6 of 1, half a dozen of the other' because you spend just as much time at work as you do at home. So, I'm a huge believer of prioritising wellbeing in the workplace so you can have a good personal life and vice versa. I'm not going to go out and drink excessive alcohol the night before a work meeting and expect to be the best version of myself the next day."*

*"I've had to equip myself with tools such as Mental Health First Aid Training and therapy, to kind of get through work. Within the first 6 months I realised how important that is because I was dealing with a cohort of people that needed so much support, and if I didn't have those tools set up, then I was going to struggle. It's really important that you've backed yourself, otherwise it can be really overwhelming. I've done a better job at task prioritisation and keeping track of where I'm at with tasks. You know, being kinder on myself at the fact that this is not possible for one person. So, anything you do is better than nothing. Task prioritisation from a priority perspective, but also a timeframe perspective, and when people are asking me to do things, making sure that I'm setting the expectation up front to take that pressure off me, which is really beneficial."*

— Participant 9B





## REAL WORLD SNAPSHOT

Building on the above, the importance of mentors and peers cannot be underestimated, particularly for those in RRR areas.

The snapshot below shows how unique the role of social enterprise leaders are in remote areas and how burnout can manifest easily. It is crucial to gain support from peers who experience similar things in their roles or from Board members who can provide support through understanding.

*"Living in a small remote community, you live and breathe what you do and everyone knows where you live. There's nothing for kids to be knocking on my door at 3am with an issue, or I've got to go down to lock-up, or there is always something happening, and you don't get to switch off. There's no knock off at 5pm where I'll go home and put my feet up. That doesn't happen. This is my absolute life and for the outcomes we want for our kids, we have to be available".*

*"I went through a really difficult time about 18 months ago and everything got on top of me, and I wasn't looking after myself". I burned out and our location isn't really favourable for when things go wrong. To get to therapy can be over a 1 1/2 hour drive and it's very difficult to get there. There's still a bit of stigma attached to mental health especially in the farming kind of circles. But burnout was very real, and it takes a lot to come back once you reach that burnout stage. It takes a lot to come back. I'm back now but making sure that doesn't happen again is definitely a priority. For me that means talking to peers that are going through the same stuff that I'm going through. It's about eating more cleanly and exercising. Also, I've got a fantastic Board. One member works in the industry as a youth worker, and they completely get the pressures. They've actually just come out here for a couple of days to check-in, make sure everything is good, and they're like 'wow, you're a long way from anything' and it takes them 2 days to get out here."*

*"We've slowly starting to get the funding to build up our staff so that the onus isn't always on me. The priority whenever we go for any funding is 'let's fund our staff or new staff so that we can take some of the pressure off.'"*

— Participant 3



Cultivating stress awareness is vital to social enterprise leaders because their work often involves high levels of uncertainty, resource constraints, and pressure to create meaningful social impact. Recognising and managing stress can assist in maintaining good mental and physical health.

As the biggest asset to the organisation, by being aware of stress, social enterprise leaders can implement strategies to mitigate its effects. This will not only enhance their personal wellbeing but also improve their ability to lead their team, make sound decisions and sustain their ventures in the long term. Ultimately, stress awareness fosters a healthier work environment, enabling social enterprise leaders to better serve their communities and achieve mission driven goals.



*"I'm the biggest asset to the business and so need to look after my own wellbeing."*

*— Participant 15*

*"It's certainly been a journey. Managing things like compassion fatigue and decision fatigue have been a challenge."*

*— Participant 11*





## BUILDING CULTURE AND CAPACITY

Key strategies that can contribute to the organisations long-term viability and success include team members wellbeing, supportive work environments, professional development and recognition. These strategies can be enacted through fostering open communication, empathy, and mutual respect among team members. Policies and practices can be implemented that support work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements, time off or mental health leave. Recognising and rewarding the team's accomplishments can also boost morale and create a positive atmosphere.

Wellbeing within a RRR organisation encourages resilience, collaboration, and shared meaning – enabling social enterprise founders and teams to navigate challenges while staying aligned with their mission and creating positive impact both within the organisation and the wider community.



## REAL WORLD SNAPSHOT

As shared by a social enterprise leader, getting the culture right for an organisation requires a combination of delegation, clear direction and tasks, inclusion in decision making and a fair sharing of responsibilities.

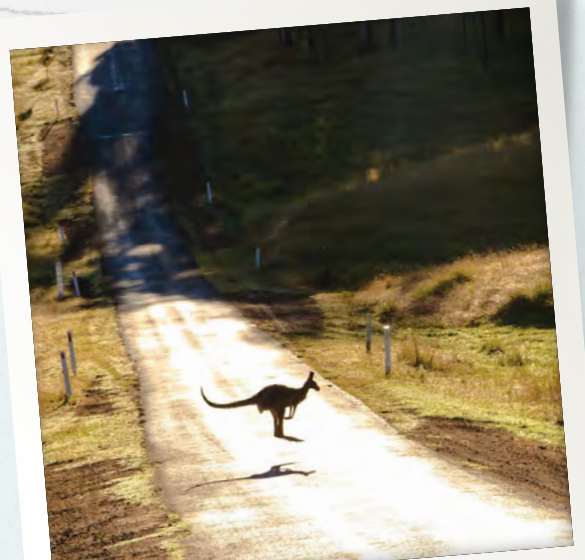
*"When I came on board here, the staff were really down. They'd had a period of significant change, but the staff didn't keep up with the change and there was a lot of change fatigue. They were kind of rudderless and the culture wasn't so good. I noticed straight away the policies, procedures, guidelines, and reports were very poor so we did a strategic planning meeting to work out what are truly our values that will make us super-duper awesome. So, we've got positivity, diversity and inclusion, accountable action, innovation and evidence, kindness, and courage".*

*"We hold people to account because when people are held to account, they don't mind it, but it's when you don't give people direction that they flounder, and their wellbeing isn't so good. We're really big on partnering and working for new innovative ideas — like the 9-day fortnight so we can be the best we can be. When people resigned because they weren't keeping up with the new expectations, the team culture blossomed even higher because people realised 'oh if someone doesn't perform, they're going to be held to account' and 'oh, we are going to have our workloads reduced because we're not going to have to pick up the slack for someone else'. We are monitoring everyone's performance, not to be Big Brother, but to make sure the workloads fair".*

*"We do a lot of personality tests to work out what are people's strengths based on their personality type. So, for example, an introvert who loves presenting, is not going to enjoy necessarily doing, say, workshops. But they might like doing presentations about 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'. So, you find the roles that suit the people, so you might not necessarily have to try and do a performance management on someone who's just doing the wrong job. So, I found that I've had to mould people's roles to better suit them, and that's made them happier."*

*"We have a philosophy; I have a very big philosophy. Never do just what's in your job description. If you've got a skillset and for example you understand how to work Microsoft Teams and you see one of your teammates can't get on and they don't understand it, I would expect that that person would help them and see they need help as part of that helping others, so I try, we try, and encourage each other to support each other and bring the best out in each other."*

— Participant 5





## HOLISTIC POLICIES AND PRACTICES:

Key strategies that can contribute to an organisations long-term viability and success include team member wellbeing, supportive work environments, professional development and recognition. These strategies can be enacted through fostering open communication, empathy, and mutual respect among team members. Policies and practices can be implemented that support work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements, time off or mental health leave. Recognising and rewarding the team's accomplishments can also boost morale and create a positive atmosphere.

Wellbeing within a RRR organisation encourages resilience, collaboration, and shared meaning – enabling social enterprise founders, leaders and teams to navigate challenges while staying aligned with their mission and creating positive impact both within the organisation and the wider community.

## EFFECTIVE DELEGATION:

Social enterprise leaders require the leadership skills to delegate effectively, empowering team members to take on meaningful roles that deliver high-quality service to the community. It is important to preserve the mission, culture and deep sense of purpose to strengthen positive impact in the community.

Effective delegation in an organisation enhances wellbeing by empowering team members, encouraging trust, and promoting skill development. It balances workloads, reduces stress, and encourages collaboration, leading to a supportive workplace culture. By distributing tasks efficiently, it improves job satisfaction, mental health, and organisational stability, contributing to both personal and collective fulfilment in pursuing the enterprise's social mission.

Improper delegation can lead to role confusion and imbalance, potentially increasing stress and reducing productivity if tasks are not matched appropriately to individual strengths. Likewise, change to the business model or operations that are not communicated well will also impact team members and potentially their wellbeing.

*"We prioritise wellbeing through mental health leave. It's a bit like sick leave in that you accrue it over time and it's a leave policy for permanent and casual staff. We just budget that into their wages for the year. There's no questions asked and we're able to be flexible and responsive to our workers wellbeing needs."*

— Participant 13

*"The most successful people in the social enterprise I've put on have been people I've developed and walked alongside and made sure they understand what the role is. They haven't been alone".*

— Participant 1

*"You've got to build trust and respect."*

— Participant 6E



## FACILITATORS FOR WELLBEING

Participants shared how they maintained their wellbeing as shown here:



A word cloud of various terms related to wellbeing and personal development. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with some words appearing more frequently than others. The words include:

- VALUES
- FAMILY
- EXERCISING
- BALANCE
- DOGS
- WORK-LIFE
- YOUTUBE
- MENTORS
- WALKING
- EATING-HEALTHY
- MEDITATION
- SOCIAL-WORKER
- SUPERSVISORS
- UNDERSTANDING
- CREATIVITY
- IMPORTANT
- YOGA
- PRIORITISING
- FISHING
- DOWNTIME
- NON-NEGOTIABLE
- ALIGN
- MORAL-COMPASS
- GYM
- SUPPORT
- SELF-LEARNING
- BACK-YOURSELF
- TOLERATE
- COUNSELLORS
- PERSONAL-VALUES
- EMBED
- CALM
- MINDFULNESS
- EATING-CLEANLY
- PRESENT
- SURFING
- READING
- DOCTORS
- MUSIC
- EXPECTATIONS



# SUSTAIN



## WHY IT MATTERS? THE WELLBEING CONNECTION

The sustaining stage of a social enterprise is characterised by strong foundations, clear strategic goals, and effective and embedded processes. A social enterprise leader's role during this stage involves fostering a culture of collective care and thinking about their wellbeing beyond their day-to-day role. By creating a supportive and inclusive environment where team members feel valued and cared for, social enterprise leaders can not only enhance team member wellbeing but also contribute to the organisation's long-term success. A positive and supportive work environment can increase job satisfaction, reduce stress, and facilitate a greater sense of purpose. This in turn can help social enterprise leaders create a meaningful and fulfilling work environment that benefits both themselves and the organisation, solidifying their legacy in the later stages of their careers.





## CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF COLLECTIVE CARE AND ENDURING IMPACT

The sustaining stage of an organisation is a phase where the organisation has achieved a level of maturity. While the organisation may not experience the same steep growth as in its earlier stages, it can continue to expand its services and improve alignment with the social mission. While the overall direction of the organisation is clear, important elements of this stage include refining the service and business models, strengthening partnerships and increasing internal capacity of team members. As the organisation matures, social enterprise leaders need to foster a culture of collective care and consider what meaningful work is to them and their stakeholders.

To do so, consider the following strategies:

### NURTURE A COMMUNITY OF COLLECTIVE CARE

As an organisation, or an organisational leader, settles into what can be considered the maturity stage, a profound shift often occurs. This stage, characterised by a stable structure and clear embedded processes, presents a critical opportunity to delve deeper into the wellbeing of the organisation's most valuable asset: its people.

That is, while the initial stages of organisational development are heavily centred on survival and growth, maturity allows for a more introspective approach. This includes fostering job satisfaction, developing future leaders, and ensuring a smooth transition of power when key individuals retire or leave. By taking these steps, social enterprise leaders can build a lasting legacy of success and create a supportive workplace that not only attracts but also retains key stakeholders.

### CONSIDER THE LEGACY OF YOUR WORK

A social enterprise leader's legacy is not solely defined by a single metric. For example, while financial success is important and can contribute to the overall wellbeing of the organisation and its team members, it is equally essential to consider the broader range of positive impacts a social enterprise leader can have. As an organisation enters a mature phase, a successful social enterprise leader is one who can adeptly navigate the delicate balance between financial goals, team member wellbeing and the organisation's impact on the broader ecosystem. This holistic approach requires a commitment to organisational sustainability, social responsibility, and the wellbeing of stakeholders including those beyond the immediate organisation. By considering the long-term impact of their actions, a social enterprise leader can maximise the possibility and potential of enduring impact both through the organisation and their individual efforts.





## NURTURE A COMMUNITY OF COLLECTIVE CARE

While the previous organisation stages noted in this Guide focus on survival and growth, this stage and the associated maturity allows for a more introspective approach. That is, this stage presents a prime opportunity to strengthen organisational culture (from the previous section) and further prioritise collective care in the organisation.

Collective care in this context refers to a broad approach that emphasises the wellbeing of the entire organisation, rather than focusing solely on individuals. It involves creating a supportive and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and cared for. This might involve fostering a positive work culture, providing support and growth opportunities, promoting work-life balance, and addressing systemic issues. By focusing on these areas, social enterprise leaders can create a positive and supportive work environment that benefits both team members and the organisation as a whole. This approach not only contributes to short-term sustainability but also lays the foundation for enduring success.

An important part of prioritising collective care is increased awareness and active addressal of psychosocial hazards such as high job demands, low job control, and poor social support that can negatively impact wellbeing and in turn job satisfaction. These hazards are also linked to Workplace Health & Safety measures and the [Black Dog Institute](#) provides a useful starting point for understanding them as well as how to address them.





## REAL WORLD SNAPSHOT

Collective care is closely linked to an organisation's culture and capacity. It can also look different in different organisations. See some possible examples as shared by a social enterprise leader.

*"We've got an amazing, innovative board. So, when we worked out the roster, we could spread the small team out over 2 weeks to work a 3-day fortnight. We also have free parking, which saves \$7.00 a day in town for parking. We have a coffee machine that's commercial, so instead of going to the coffee shop and buying a \$6 coffee, you can make yourself your own barista coffee at work. We can tell people are working hard and we have weekly 'awesomeness awards' where staff nominate someone that did something awesome to highlight people's strengths and remind them why they're great."*

— Participant 5

## REAL WORLD SNAPSHOT

Along with explicit measures as noted in the previous snapshot, everyday practices such as regular check-ins with flexible frequency are also examples of how social enterprise leaders try to build collective care.

*"Twice a day, or as frequently as we need to, but no less than monthly at shift crossover time when both the people that are finishing and the people that are starting, we have 'toolbox talks' for 5 minutes just to quickly cover off on essential communication, or to talk about a situation that's happened. This can also include reminders about the supports available, and let them know that we're going to be doing ice creams on this day to keep them cool and providing lunch on that day to help get through and that sort of thing. So, I guess it's just about having that space for people to feel informed and aware of things."*

— Participant 9B





*"We're encouraged to be everything to everyone, and that can be a really difficult role to play, to play that chameleon, and I think that can have a fragmenting effect on your wellbeing and your person."*

— Participant 11

*"You know, if you slow things down, it might take you two years to begin to really see huge benefits."*

— Participant 2

*"With grant funding we did some of our capacity building around the resilience stuff. So one of the things I did was our whole management team went through mental health first aid training."*

— Participant 4

## DECREASED UNCERTAINTY AND ANXIETY: :

The reality often demands social enterprise leaders to meet the expectations of everyone around them. The pressure to be "everything to everyone" can lead to feelings of stress, anxiety, and burnout. The same feelings can then cascade down among team members and colleagues. Recognising the feelings and challenges and taking proactive steps, even if they take time can decrease uncertainty and anxiety for all stakeholders.

## BOOSTED MORALE AND A GREATER SENSE OF SECURITY:

When a staff member experiences a challenging situation, such as a "really scary" incident with a client, their wellbeing can be significantly impacted. In such moments, by demonstrating empathy, providing immediate support, and implementing preventive measures, social enterprise leaders can create a safe and positive work environment. While some of this is inherent to a social enterprises leader's personal and professional style, these are also skills that can be built through appropriate training. This not only benefits individual team members but also contributes to collective care and can further enhance morale, reduce stress, and create a more resilient workplace.

*"In a previous social enterprise, after a really scary incident with a client, I told my manager what had happened and they were just so unsupportive. There was no kind of wellbeing support for staff then. I don't think this would happen now and I really hope that social enterprises are more supportive, know how to respond in situations like this and are more aware of potential issues."*

— Participant 2





### CONSIDER THE LEGACY OF YOUR WORK

As noted earlier, a social enterprise leader's legacy is not defined by a single metric. For example, while financial success is important and can contribute to the overall wellbeing of the organisation and its team members, it is equally essential to consider the broader range of positive impacts a social enterprise leader can have. As an organisation enters a mature phase, a successful social enterprise leader is one who can adeptly navigate the delicate balance between financial goals, team member wellbeing and the organisation's impact on the broader ecosystem. This holistic approach can extend from internal capacity building and mentoring colleagues to actively embracing external sustainability commitments, such as adopting environmentally friendly practices and minimising the organization's carbon footprint. It also necessitates a focus on social responsibility, including fair labour practices, community engagement, and ethical sourcing. By balancing these factors, leaders can create a lasting legacy that benefits the organisation, its team members, and the broader community.



## REAL WORLD SNAPSHOT

The work in the social enterprise and indeed any social justice landscape includes guiding individuals towards a new way of thinking often requires navigating difficult conversations and ensuring that everyone is aligned with the organisation's goals and values. This can take toll at the individual level. By fostering open dialogue and implementing innovative approaches, social enterprise leaders can empower their communities to remain effective in their mission and adapt to evolving needs. As shared by a social enterprise leader:

*"It can be a real challenge when you're trying to move people from one way of thinking to another way of thinking. Oftentimes, I've had to have very difficult conversations with people who have come into a church community, seeking to do good for their community, but not necessarily understanding the infrastructure of the church, in understanding the infrastructure of our policies, our procedures, the way that things work. And so, we need to be implementing new structures, new ideas, being innovative about the way that we are approaching our relationship with the community. Yeah, to be able to ensure that as an organisation, as an institution, that we remain effective in our mission."*

— Participant 11



## REAL WORLD SNAPSHOT

As you may have experienced already or seen through this resource, the role of a social enterprise leader is not a quick fix or an overnight success story. It requires hard work, dedication, and the willingness to face challenges and setbacks, all of which have implications for wellbeing. Being prepared for the same and treating the experience as a journey, not a destination, requires an ongoing approach to learning, growth, and self-reflection. The below words from a social enterprise leader are a powerful reminder of this.

*"You've got to have a buy-in. You've got to have the passion. You've got to have the resilience behind you. Not everything is roses. You've got to get into the dirt, to turn the dirt, to plant the seeds, to have your roses at the end of the day. So, from that perspective, are you willing to do that?"*

*"If you're going to come into this field or if you're going to do this, it's not an overnight journey. Your journey is 10 to 15 years. Your commitment is 20 years, 30 years. Then you've got to also look at are you going to leave a legacy? What is your legacy or what is your footprint?"*

— Participant 7



Social enterprise leaders play a pivotal role in shaping the future of their organisations and the communities they serve. Their decisions and actions across defining their mission, building strong teams, managing finances, developing partnerships, and measuring impact, can have a lasting impact on how their legacy and impact not only survives but thrives.

*"Wellbeing is not just about me alone. I look at wellbeing as how the team is going as an overall, how the business is going as an overall. So, I'm talking about how the finances are running, if I am within budget, and if I have a business continuity plan for times when the whole town comes to a standstill and is isolated because of adverse weather."*

— Participant 13

Amidst the relentless demands of running a social enterprise, taking a break can often feel like an unattainable luxury. This is however an important element of all stages but particularly at the sustaining stage as it can also help in delegating tasks and building a strong team, thus creating resiliency in the organisation. Additionally, taking regular breaks can help to reduce stress, improve focus, and ultimately lead to better decision-making.

While not a quick fix, and there can be challenges in stepping away from the helm of the organisation, especially when there is a sense of responsibility for ensuring everything runs smoothly, this quote from the social enterprise leader shows how taking breaks can not only help with wellbeing but also assist with succession planning.

*"One of the things that experience taught me is that it's very hard when you have a very small management team because it's very hard to have the level of subject matter expert in roles. So, one of the other things I've done in terms of strategy is using the grant to look at how we contract out certain functions, such as a HR specialist."*

— Participant 4

*"It's quite a small team and so they're probably the people that rely on me most, and that would be affected by my wellbeing at the time, and I'll be affected by theirs."*

— Participant 9B

*"At the start of the year, I went on a holiday for the first time in many years. I had to communicate everything, make sure I've got the right people in the positions that can pick up the slack when I go. But yeah, it does play on my mind because even when I was away, even though I knew I put everything in place to make sure the kids were fine, of course, I still worry."*

— Participant 3



# LINKS

## HELPFUL WEBSITES AND ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES



**Dear Mind – Queensland Department of Health**  
<https://www.mentalwellbeing.initiatives.qld.gov.au/>

Dear Mind is a Queensland Government initiative aiming to improve the mental wellbeing of Queenslanders. On this page you can find ideas for mental wellbeing activities and other mental health resources.



**Lifeline Australia**  
<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

Lifeline is a national charity providing all Australians experiencing emotional distress with access to 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention services. To speak to a Lifeline Crisis Supporter, phone 13 11 14.



Australian Government

## HEAD TO HEALTH

**Head to Health – Australian Government**  
<https://www.headtohealth.gov.au/>

Head to Health is a free confidential service from the Australian Government that provides easy access to wellbeing and mental health support. Call 1800 595 212 to access support.



**13YARN (Thirteen YARN)**  
<https://www.13yarn.org.au>

13YARN is the first national crisis support line offering a confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter who can provide crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 13 92 76.



**Beyond Blue**  
<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

For more than 20 years, Beyond Blue has been a reliable source of mental health information, support, and hope. Mental health support and resources for work, education, and home. Call 1300 22 4636 to access the Beyond Blue support service.



**QLife**  
<https://qlife.org.au/>

QLife provides anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships. Call 1800 184 527.





## Headspace

<https://headspace.org.au/>

Headspace centres and services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young people in Australia and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities. Call 1800 650 890.



## Black Dog Institute

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/>

Black Dog Institute is a proudly independent not-for-profit medical research institute affiliated with UNSW Sydney. Resources are provided on the prevention of mental illness and suicide, digital mental health services, mental health for young people, workplace mental health, and mental health system reform.



## Youth RESET

<https://youthreset.com.au/>

Youth RESET is a certified social enterprise delivering trauma-informed wellness programs and resources to youth and adults.



## Benefolk

<https://benefolk.org/>

Resources and support to empower changemakers with everything they need to make their impact and thrive. Contact 1300 236 336 for further information.



## Understorey

<https://understorey.org.au/>

Understorey is an online place to grow participation and capability in the Australian social enterprise sector. It is a place to navigate the sector and to learn and exchange. It does this to help social enterprises thrive and contribute to a better future.



## TIACS (This is a conversation starter)

<https://www.tiacs.org/>

TIACS is a professional mental health counselling service for tradies, truckies, farmers and blue-collar workers. Contact the support line: 0488 846 988.



## Southern Queensland Rural Financial Counselling Service

<https://rfcsnetwork.com.au/>

The Rural Financial Counselling Service provides free and independent financial counselling to eligible farmers, fishers, foresters, and related small businesses who are in, or at risk of, financial hardship. Contact 1300 771 741.



## Rural Wellbeing Toolkit

<https://www.unisq.edu.au/research/sqnnsw-hub/resources/wellbeing-toolkit>

Ideas, tips, and strategies for anyone supporting the wellbeing of others in their rural community. Developed for the UniSQ SQNNSW Innovation Hub and funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.



# WELLBEING MATTERS GUIDE

PEER INSIGHTS FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE LEADERS  
— A REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE PERSPECTIVE



University of  
**Southern  
Queensland**