

Jirsch Sutherland recognised for Mental Health and Wellbeing program



Bradd Morelli, National Managing Partner, Jirsch Sutherland

In October 2019, during Mental Health Month, Jirsch Sutherland kicked off its *We Care Mental Health and Wellbeing* program – and on the cusp of Mental Health Month 2020, we are thrilled to announce we have just been awarded Gold recognition under the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Skilled Workplace Program.

The MHFA accreditation acknowledges Jirsch Sutherland's significant achievements in developing Mental Health First Aid skills in our people and embedding a sustainable and effective program.

Bradd Morelli, Jirsch Sutherland's National Managing Partner, says the accreditation is "testament to the firm's commitment to maintaining a mentally healthy workplace and providing our team members with the tools to assist others who may be suffering mental ill health".

"This year's theme for Mental Health Month is *Mental Health Matters*, which is particularly relevant during these challenging times, with COVID-19 impacting mental health on an unprecedented level," he says. "For our firm, this really reinforces how important it is to have a mental health and wellbeing program and being equipped to recognise when someone else is struggling.

"Last year when we started this journey, we knew how important it was to increase our mental health literacy and this year has only heightened our awareness and further highlighted the need to prioritise mental health and wellbeing."

Creating awareness

As part of Jirsch Sutherland's Mental Health and Wellbeing program, many of Jirsch Sutherland's Managers, Partners and Principals attained the Mental Health First Aid Certificate, which provides simple, practical first aid skills for helping people experiencing mental health

problems or who are in crisis. This initiative made Jirsch Sutherland the first insolvency practice in Australia to implement a company-wide mental health training program.

That's not the only measure the firm introduced. Last year we also held a series of seminars presented by Beyond Blue, and we arranged 'netwalking' tours to get business advisers, company owners and directors, government representatives and Jirsch Sutherland Partners and staff out in the fresh air and give them a break from their computers and work commitments. We also produced a special guide, *Support is just a phone call away*, to enable us to provide business owners, directors and referrers with vital information about free and accessible mental health support services; we published regular articles about mental health in JS Matters, including guidance and links to key resources for business owners and advisers; participated in a Beyond Blue webcast about our program; and spoke with referrers and clients about the Jirsch Sutherland Mental Health program and how they can implement a similar program for their business.

"We have had really positive feedback from these initiatives," adds Morelli. "The importance of having such a program was highlighted by our recent survey of more than 1200 accountants around Australia, with around 60 per cent of respondents saying they view mental health policy as an important characteristic of an insolvency provider.

"It's so important that we and other business advisers are proactive about helping others who may be struggling with mental health issues – particularly during these very difficult times. Often the stresses that can affect mental health are more acute for business owners because their livelihoods depend on the success of their business. It also means that trusted advisers can be in a position where we can offer support."