meet Jules

Jules has worked with Metro Trains Melbourne for 12 years and is currently the Wellness Lead. With over 7000 staff at Metro Trains, fostering an R U OK? culture is no easy feat. Metro focuses on building a community of conversation starters, so that talking about life's ups and downs is normalised and everyone feels confident checking in with their workmates. Jules shares some of the organisation-wide initiatives Metro Trains has implemented to make meaningful conversations part of their everyday.

Jules: **Rail workers are more prone to trauma.** They sometimes witness and respond to confronting incidents that can have long term impacts on their mental wellbeing. On top of this, lengthy shifts and solo travel can be stressful. That's why Metro has a strong focus on mental health.

At Metro, we prioritise upskilling staff and creating an R U OK? culture so that looking out for one another is normalised. Our Peer Supporters help us achieve this; they are certified mental health first aiders who provide a safe point of contact for employees seeking support. We also have our Trauma Recovery Guidebook, which prepares and supports drivers in responding to traumatic incidents. And, we launched Rail R U OK? ten years ago.

Rail R U OK? consistently resonates with our staff; it's our springboard for education around taking care of yourself, knowing the signs a workmate might be struggling and checking in.

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Our Wellness Advocates and Wellness Champions work together to run activities for Rail R U OK? Day that best suit their department's needs and challenges. Over the years, we've gone from having a handful of advocates and events, with approximately 2% of staff engaged, to many advocates, over thirty events and 30% of staff engaged - that's one in every three employees!

> **I believe the growing level of interest and engagement is because staff have been able to shape initiatives that are relevant to them. After all, that's what R U OK? is about – feeling seen, heard and supported.**

We all face similar challenges across the rail industry and we're often working towards the same goals. Our official Rail Wellbeing Committee was born a few years ago with V/Line, Yarra Trams, Metro Trains and Department Transport and Planning (DTP).

At our annual joint event last year, a senior leader from each organisation discussed their challenges and how their teams are building an R U OK? culture. It was powerful hearing from the leaders, and what stood out for me was the message around being a whole person. **That an R U OK? culture is about recognising we are all human, holding space for people to talk and learning to listen. I think a lot of the time we don't feel like we have space to talk, but if it's role modelled from the top, it starts to normalise conversations about mental health.**

I've noticed a huge company-wide shift since our first Rail R U OK? Day. Staff are more open, more willing to share the tough times and generally more invested in their wellbeing.

> **Rail R U OK? isn't about training everyone to become a counsellor. It's about acknowledging life isn't always easy and making work a safe place to talk.**

Getting behind Rail R U OK? is an investment in your people and your organisation. Because without your people, you don't have an organisation.

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