

Case study

# Sydney Metro builds a wellbeing culture with Select Wellness and GLWS<sup>®</sup>

# Overview

Sydney Metro is Australia's biggest public transport project.

Health and safety is integral to Sydney Metro's core values, and safety leadership sits at the very heart of its governance framework. Every day, the organisation's priority is to send everyone home safely – employees, contractors, customers and members of the community.

Building on strategies provided by regulators (SafeWork NSW and the Office of National Rail Safety) as well as its own independent research into industry best practice, Sydney Metro have identified that [strong leadership](#) is at the foundation of a progressive health and safety culture.

The organisation's Health and Safety directorate is a mature, team highly respected for its work in supporting leaders to uphold their role and accountabilities in achieving strong health and safety performance outcomes.

So when improving employee wellbeing emerged as a growing priority in early 2019, it made perfect sense to have this new wellbeing focus sit within the Health & Safety team as a natural extension of their core mandate.

Working closely with the People and Culture Team, the then Deputy Executive Director Health & Safety and AFR BOSS Young Executive 2020 ([Louise Howard](#)) embarked on an exciting mission to improve wellbeing.

Project completed for:



Program partners:



# Where should wellbeing fit within an organisation?

Arguably, wellbeing can fit comfortably into several different ‘homes’ within an organisation’s structure.

There’s also a strong case for multi-disciplinary, cross-team collaboration to ensure wellbeing messages and initiatives are aligned, integrated and layered at every ‘wellbeing touchpoint’ opportunity.

But maybe it doesn’t really matter where wellbeing sits, so long as there is good oversight of direction, implementation and review.

---

**Our best guidance is to place wellbeing wherever there is the greatest:**

**Capacity** - where there are sufficient people, time and budgets to take wellbeing on as a true priority, avoid short termism, tokenism and ‘tick a box’ initiatives

**Commitment** - where wellbeing is firmly regarded as an enabler of a sustainable high performing culture and business outcomes, not merely as a compliance issue or ill-affordable luxury

**Capability** - where there is a willingness to build deep understanding and expertise in wellbeing as a holistic, dynamic, multi-dimensional, intrapersonal and subjective construct, related yet distinct from health, mental health, resilience and safety considerations; and where there are the project and change management skills to plan and implement programs effectively

**Credibility** - where the function, team or individual executives driving the wellbeing agenda will communicate and be received most favourably by key stakeholders, sponsors and influencers.

---

In Sydney Metro’s case, at the time of need and appetite for change, this so happened to be the Health & Safety team, probably because of its success in positive performance outcomes. In another organisation it could just as easily sit with people and culture, learning and development, organisational development, talent, diversity and inclusion or even behavioural and conduct risk.

# What's changed in Sydney Metro?

Perhaps the most significant change of all has been leaders and their teams feeling greater permission to prioritise self-care and wellbeing over work demands.

The program has also survived and thrived with various changes in the project team and sponsors - Louise has been promoted to Executive Director, Safety, Transport for NSW, and has since passed the (very much afloat) wellbeing baton to [Kate Cole](#), Deputy Executive Director, Health & Safety.

An evaluation of the wellbeing program's impact has shown that the work on leader wellbeing has enabled cultural change and that wellbeing needed to be explicitly stated and role-modelled.

Sydney Metro's leadership group and critical project teams have developed a deep understanding about wellbeing, how their behaviours add or detract from their performance, satisfaction and wellbeing, and which specific leader wellbeing behaviours are most detrimental - not only to themselves, but to those impacted by their leadership wellbeing shadow.

**Read on for the details on why and how Sydney Metro deployed GLWS and chose Select Wellness as their program partners for this high profile, important cultural change initiative.**



**2 years**

since program began

# Why did Sydney Metro choose GLWS®?

Sydney Metro is an organisation dominated by engineers, so the strong evidenced-based, direct, logical and transparent design that characterise GLWS solutions resonated well.

Towards late 2019, two members of the Sydney Metro Health & Safety team completed the [GLWS practitioner accreditation program](#), not just to expand and upskill their wellbeing capabilities but importantly, so they could develop an independent, well informed view about the suitability of GLWS for Sydney Metro's needs.

Here's a sample of what they reported back:

“The GLWS is a series of questions which target what matters most to leaders, to comprehensively assess their wellbeing. The secure online survey comprises two broad sections – Working Well (professional life) and Living Well (home, social and personal life).

Answers are collated to generate a Personal Wellbeing Report, which is reviewed with the individual leader in a confidential, one-on-one debrief session with an executive coach. These are designed to capture the essence of a leader's physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual wellbeing.

Following completion of the GLWS, a Team Wellbeing Report can be produced, or a group report for a wider cohort across multiple teams. The GLWS Team/Group Wellbeing Reports highlight what is consistently working well (strengths) to support a team's wellbeing and productivity, and the areas of greatest diversity between individual leaders' wellbeing. They also provide a series of 'next steps' for a team to work on to improve their wellbeing as a group. Thus the GLWS seeks to be more than an individual journey, but offers a framework to embed wellbeing across teams.”



# Next steps - going together to go far

Following accreditation, the Sydney Metro in-house team met with GLWS to develop a better understanding of Sydney Metro's objectives, gain an appreciation of alignment with existing health and safety initiatives, discuss how to position wellbeing support and, to clarify important contextual dynamics within the organisation.

*One of the benefits of undertaking the GLWS is the growth in leaders' wellbeing awareness, attitude and skills. Their commitment to role-modelling positive wellbeing behaviours helps others feel psychologically safe, empowered and supported to do similarly. These changes are inextricably linked to improved wellbeing across the broader employee base.*

A proposal introducing **Select Wellness** as our recommended delivery partner for this pilot project was submitted and accepted.

The pilot was a success, and after an in-depth evaluation of each initial stakeholder's experience, the Global Leadership Wellbeing Survey (GLWS) was strongly endorsed for wider scale rollout, and Select Wellness were confirmed as Sydney Metro's chosen GLWS coaching partner to deliver the survey and manage the project going forward. Since this initial pilot, Select has become Sydney Metro's trusted wellbeing consultancy, their goto advisers while the team at GLWS remain on hand to provide seamless support as needed.

**Select Wellness** are continuing to work closely with the Sydney Metro wellbeing team helping to plan, support and review each new phase in the program, and providing personalised support to individuals coming through. Sydney Metro are committed to offering this life-changing program to another 65 leaders, managers and senior professionals by mid 2021.



# Program details

## 1 Stage One Scoping, design and planning

Sydney Metro initially invested in internal capability building for its wellbeing team, by having team members become GLWS accredited at the end of 2019. This meant:

- 1 They were able to both pave the way for its introduction and also be a strong driving force in providing one-to-one follow-up and check-ins
- 2 We felt they had a great shared understanding.
- 3 They knew how the GLWS tool and data worked and were instrumental in helping to pull out the most valuable insights and areas for action

## 2 Stage Two Key stakeholder engagement and briefing

The wellbeing specialists at GLWS ran a mini-masterclass and short Q&A session for the executive management team, and held a series of meetings and discussions to help support Sydney Metro's internal specialists, understand their organisational dynamics, structures, key decision makers and influencers, past histories and wellbeing initiatives.

## 3 Stage three Initial pilot and concept testing

The GLWS was rolled out via an individual leader wellbeing program with five executives who represented a cross-section of wellbeing needs and a diverse range of views, engagement and positivity levels.

The Sydney Metro in-house project team demonstrated impeccable relationship management skills and their guidance in helping steer through the positioning and communications was critical in this early stage.

Effective stakeholder management, engagement and briefing have been recurring critical success factors, and feature heavily in the most successful GLWS executive wellbeing programs. It's worth the effort!



### 3 Stage three (cont.)

Upon agreeing to take part in the pilot, a carefully customised invitation to complete the GLWS survey was sent by the GLWS Client Services team on behalf of the Sydney Metro Health & Safety Executive, with sponsorship from their CEO along with an introduction to Select Wellness.

Absolute confidentiality of data was underscored, with an explicit commitment the organisation would never have access to any individual's personal results. This put individuals at ease and they also sought out follow-up support from the internal GLWS experts, which has helped sustain momentum beyond their program with Select Wellness.

Upon completion of the survey, each executive in the pilot met with their designated coach from Select Wellness to debrief their GLWS Personal Wellbeing Report and unpack their results. We then held a review session with each participant to get feedback on their experiences and their recommendations for rolling the program out across Sydney Metro.

The health and safety team concluded that the pilot group found value in participating in the GLWS, with participants describing the experience as:

- ▶ Providing increased awareness of the impact of personal and work related stress
- ▶ Providing practical strategies to address challenging areas
- ▶ A good reminder and an opportunity to refocus

Some participants commented that going through the program felt for the first time as if they were being given permission to think about and be aware of their personal wellbeing as a priority. This enhanced their view that Sydney Metro:

- ▶ Cared about their personal wellbeing
- ▶ Wanted to help support them as individuals
- ▶ Viewed it as appropriate for leaders and their teams to spend time on their wellbeing at work
- ▶ Wanted individuals to feel set up for success

Sydney Metro used these pilot learnings to develop a set of recommendations, formulate their new approach to wellbeing and expand the program to a wider group.



#### 4 Stage four Program expansion

Following the success of the pilot, in July 2020 the program was then offered to another group of 15, all operating at senior levels within one intact team. Since then, throughout all the upheavals of COVID-19, the program has been progressively extended, at a pace sustainable for the organisation whereby it has now become successfully embedded with strong engagement from across the business.

- 1 Preparation / briefing session:** Select Wellness provides an overview of the program to participants
- 2 GLWS completion:** Participants are sent the survey, which takes around 15 minutes to complete online
- 3 Individual debrief:** Survey answers are immediately collated to generate a GLWS Personal Wellbeing Report, which is then reviewed with the individual participant in a confidential, one-on-one debrief session with designated Select Wellness coach
- 4 Follow-up support and check-ins:** Personalised follow-up and additional development resources are provided by the participant's coach drawing upon an extensive curated toolkit aligned to the factors identified by their GLWS profiles as being of most relevance
- 5 Evaluation survey:** Participants are asked to complete a short feedback survey on experience and the impact of taking the GLWS with Select Wellness
- 6 Team Report:** A GLWS Team Report is prepared and sent to the leader and the team for analysis and discussion
- 7 Team debrief session:** Select Wellness debriefs the entire team, and together they develop an action plan and next steps

# Results

## The good

An analysis of the aggregated findings showed areas of support and strength were reported in the wellbeing domains of **Relationships, Resilience, Meaning & Purpose** and **Intellectual Engagement**. The team is strongly connected to the work that they do and how it will improve the lives of many. This strong connection helps them manage the relentless pace of their projects and they also have high scores for gratitude and derive strong meaning from their work.

## The challenges

Areas of potential derailment were found in the wellbeing domains of **Health & Vitality** and **Balance and Boundaries**, correlating to items such as making time for participants to ‘unplug’, the ability to control their schedule or take short breaks, experiencing sleep difficulties, and feeling stressed or anxious about work.

The analysis of the group data has highlighted some of the more psychosocial, systemic aspects of wellbeing, which fall beyond the scope of any one individual person’s influence to singlehandedly change. The data has provided insights into where a collective leadership focus may be needed to future-ready the organisation.



- ⚠ Team members were operating at an unsustainable pace
- ⚠ Wellbeing was impacted by passive-aggressive political behaviours
- ⚠ A majority of the team was at risk of burnout
- ⚠ Individuals needed more feedback and acknowledgement around the work that they do
- ⚠ Gruelling schedules prevented engagement in deep thinking
- ⚠ Frustration on lack of clear career next steps
- ⚠ Work and home boundaries were blurred
- ⚠ Work continued into evenings and weekends, making it hard to ‘turn off’ and impacting family time



## Outcomes, priorities and plans

Sydney Metro is dedicated to using the knowledge from the GLWS to improve wellbeing culture across the organisation with the three main priorities being:

- 1 Setting more boundaries regarding meetings and schedules
- 2 Incorporating wellbeing into work practices, and making it a focus across teams
- 3 Sharing learning from this experience with teams, leaders and executives with plenty of open and honest feedback

It was noted that the permission to prioritise wellbeing over work demands was a key enabling cultural change and needed to be explicitly stated and role-modelled.

Following the program with Select Wellness and GLWS, Sydney Metro is looking at implementing a number of key actions:

- ▶ Implement the Sydney Metro Monday afternoon and lunchtime pilot 'walk the talk'
- ▶ Review requirements and duration of meetings
- ▶ Seek feedback from their teams to understand how their actions impact on their teams wellbeing
- ▶ Introduce more walking meetings
- ▶ Discuss health, wellbeing and feelings during team meetings or as a separate conversation weekly
- ▶ Make time to acknowledge and recognise successes
- ▶ Share wellbeing tips, ideas and solutions with each other and our teams
- ▶ Communicate commitment to their action plans as a leadership group
- ▶ Share results with and provide feedback to the Sydney Metro executive team
- ▶ As the volume of aggregated data amasses, so too does the case for clearer individual, team, leader and organisational accountabilities, especially regarding the psychosocial factors identified by the GLWS assessments.

Wellbeing is a journey, but with accurate baseline data and the ability to track, monitor and manage progress and risks along the way, it's one that can be mapped and planned with a clearly articulated destination - just don't expect to get there overnight!

# What is GLWS?

The GLWS is a uniquely holistic, evidence-based set of online, virtual and in person solutions developed exclusively for leaders and their teams, delivering deep insights and actionable steps to shape and sustain success.

Our focus is on helping to support leaders and their teams tackle wellbeing priorities head-on, providing tools, training, expert advisory advice, coaching and encouragement every step of the way to help you achieve and deliver a wellbeing strategy with solutions that work.

We're empowering individuals, teams and organisations to thrive by helping leaders to 'Learn, Live, Lead & Embed' better wellbeing for all.

**glswellbeing.com**

✉ [support@glswellbeing.com](mailto:support@glswellbeing.com)

☎ + 61 (0) 438 100 023

in [Connect with Audrey on LinkedIn](#)