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Minding the conversation gap on Rail R U OK?Day

The Australian rail industry is taking a proactive approach to the emotional wellbeing of its 110,000 employees through the launch of a national campaign aimed at creating a better workplace for rail employees.

The inaugural Rail R U OK?Day will see rail companies across Australia hold activities and provide opportunities for staff to engage in conversations about their emotional status by prompting them to answer one simple question: Are you ok?

Partnering on this initiative are suicide and harm prevention charities R U OK? and the TrackSAFE Foundation, who want to give rail staff the confidence and capacity to talk about life's ups and downs and help them feel safe and supported whilst at work.

"The rail network is a workplace; train drivers, guards, emergency services and other rail industry employees are the first people on the scene when incidents take place on the network and for them, severe mental, physical and emotional trauma can result from witnessing such an event," said TrackSAFE Chairman Bob Herbert AM.

"Rail R U OK?Day supports our existing trauma management program and aims to increase awareness about the importance of looking out for each other in the workplace, which is crucial to an industry that is too often affected by suicide and the consequential trauma suffered by rail employees," said Mr Herbert.

R U OK? Chairman, Mike Connaghan said the partnership with TrackSAFE promotes an important message to a national industry, which will help to create a world where everyone is connected and protected from suicide.

"Rail R U OK?Day will see industry employers and employees foster an environment of support and encouragement, so that asking 'are you ok?' becomes standard practice," said Mr Connaghan.

Research shows that a strong sense of community and trust between colleagues is crucial in workplaces where frontline employees experience higher exposure to trauma.

"We believe that this day of action will empower people to help a workmate, whether it be on Rail R U OK?Day or any day," he said.

The inaugural Rail R U OK?Day was launched this morning at Central Station in Sydney by The Hon. Sussan Ley MP, Minister for Health, Chairman of TrackSAFE, Bob Herbert AM and Chairman of R U OK?, Mike Connaghan.

Health Minister Sussan Ley said the Federal Government was committed to working with communities to raise awareness of suicide risk, to help those at risk of taking their own lives and to assist those affected by suicide.

"Any suicide is one too many and it is devastating for families and communities," said Ms Ley.

"I am committed to working with communities and organisations such as R U OK? and the TrackSAFE Foundation to reduce the tragic impact of suicide," Ms Ley concluded.

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