

GUIDELINES TO BEST ROSTERING PRACTICES

The participants were asked to identify in the ideal world, best rostering practices. They included:

- No more than 7 days rostered in a row (ideally 5)
- No more than 4 consecutive night shifts.
- 3 sleeps after nights (if less than 3 night shifts ?2 sleeps off)
- Call rosters should be considered as if duty rosters.
- Two consecutive days off a week.
- Forward rotating shift patterns.
- Fewer shift changes as possible.
- One work period per 24 hours – no split shifts

BARRIERS AND BENEFITS TO HEALTHY ROSTERING PRACTICES

The participants were asked to draw up a list of barriers to, and benefits of, best practice rostering.

BARRIERS

- **Workforce issues:** This involved the number of MRTs available to do the work and the increased demand for this type of work. There appears to be a higher demand than the workforce can accommodate and this is a barrier to a healthy roster. Recruitment and retention were both listed as one of the barriers, but equally as a benefit, to best practice rostering.
- **Financial issues:** The cost of having more staff creates a financial strain, however the cost of overtime and penal time may mitigate or complicate matters. These are considered by the group to be factors that act as barriers to a healthy roster.

- Skill sets and increased specialisation: The department size versus the FTE creates a further barrier. More MRTs are increasingly becoming specialised which throws the skill sets off balance with the needs of the department. This service demand and workforce structure dynamic was viewed as a barrier to healthy rostering.
- There is a reluctance to change amongst staff members as well as employers.
- The rostering ability of the person who has the responsibility for writing the roster is also a barrier, as this is in itself a difficult task. Not everyone can write a good roster.
- Individual preference of employees was also listed. Individual employees each have their own preferences as to shifts and the times of the day that they work, or even the number of days they work. It is difficult juggling all of these preferences and keeping employees happy all the time.

BENEFITS

- The increased health and safety of employees, patients, and the public is seen as a benefit of best practice rostering. The minimisation of fatigue will ensure greater health and safety at work for employees as well as patients and best practice rostering is one line of defence against fatigue.
- Recruitment was seen as both a benefit and a barrier to best practice rostering. If the best practice principles are employed, in principle it should be easier to attract and retain MRTs. Employees do talk to one another and both good and bad employers will be well known amongst groups.
- Retention was also seen as both a barrier and benefit to best practice rostering. If one's employees are happy, the turnover rate is likely to be far less than if the employees were unhappy. A healthy roster contributes to this benefit.
- Best practice rostering is likely to increase productivity and improve the quality of work.

- A sustainable roster is a benefit of healthy rostering.
- If the roster is based on best practice principles, the employer is likely to be able to make some, if not significant savings, on overtime.
- A good roster is a flexible roster. There should be room to accommodate for last minute changes due to sudden illnesses or leave, as well as to accommodate for planned leave.
- A roster based on best practice principles promotes a healthy work-life balance. Employees should have access to time off for annual leave and other leave entitlements as this fosters a more balanced and healthy lifestyle. This in turn means employees are likely to be less stressed and happier at work.
- A good roster should have predictability. It allows employees to anticipate upcoming changes and to prepare themselves both physically and mentally. It also allows the employer to manage its staff more effectively and have contingency plans for sudden absences.
- Demographics were also seen as a benefit of best practice rostering.
- Employees will have increased wellness and happiness, which can only be good for the workplace and staff morale.

Although there are barriers, they are outweighed by the benefits of a healthy roster.