beyondblue commissioned the University of New South Wales and Black Dog Institute to conduct a review of existing research investigating the relationship between workplaces and mental health.

The systematic review identified the following key workplace mental health findings:

- Mental health conditions in the workplace are a major public health and economic problem. It is estimated that depression alone costs Australian employers $12.3 billion each year.
- The vast majority of mental health conditions seen in the workplace are either depression or anxiety conditions. These conditions are treatable and, at times, preventable.
- Preventing workers from becoming mentally unwell and assisting those who develop a mental health condition remain at work is in the best interest of employers, individuals and the community.
- There is a general consensus that work is able to promote better mental health and facilitate recovery from mental health conditions. However, certain types of work or work environments can contribute to the onset of, and exacerbate existing, depression and anxiety.
- The relationship between work and mental health conditions is not simple. While high job demands, change and trauma in the workplace can increase the risk of mental health conditions among workers, a variety of other individual and organisational factors can mitigate against this increased risk.
- There is potential for there to be a gap between what the evidence suggests is best practice and what is actually implemented in some workplaces.
- Given the cost, both economic and personal, of mental health conditions in the workplace there is an urgent need for additional research and support dedicated to finding practical workplace solutions. Such research needs to involve both worker and employer groups from the outset.

Although it is limited, the available research evidence suggests the following interventions may be effective in promoting mental health in the workplace:

- increasing employee control
- promoting physical activity
- stress management approaches which utilise cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques
- support and ‘watchful waiting’, not routine psychological debriefing, following a potentially traumatic event in the workplace
- workplace counselling which uses evidence-based therapeutic techniques
- medication and psychological therapies for those diagnosed with a mental health condition
- modified CBT delivered as part of a return to work program
- gradual re-exposure to the workplace as part of a structured treatment program for those with anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

beyondblue hopes the findings of this review will increase awareness of and facilitate the development of resources and interventions to promote the translation of these research findings into practice.

beyondblue has a range of resources available to assist individuals and employers create mentally healthy workplace, including supporting people with mental health conditions in the workplace. For more information visit www.beyondblue.org.au/resources/in-the-workplace