

## **Want a Smarter, Safer Office? Change the Light Bulbs, Sleep Experts Urge**

Bosses should swap old-school lights for brighter, enriched bulbs if they want more alert employees and bigger profits, a leading coalition of sleep health experts has warned.

The Sleep Health Foundation has partnered with the Cooperative Research Centre for Alertness, Safety and Productivity to call for smarter, safer workplaces during Sleep Awareness Week, starting this Monday, July 3.

The nationwide sleep health campaign shines a spotlight on Australia's worrying rates of sleep disorders, and calls on employers to take action to help their workers both sleep better and feel more alert while at work.

"With our 24-hour society, more Australians are working shifts or getting less shut-eye, and suffering serious sleep problems like insomnia as a result," says foundation Chair and Sleep Psychologist Professor Dorothy Bruck. "Their body clocks get confused and their alertness flags, which has a worrying knock on-effect for workplace productivity and injury statistics."

Poor alertness is responsible for almost 10,000 serious workplace injuries and more than 25,000 serious road crash injuries each year, costing the economy over \$5 billion a year in lost productivity and healthcare costs.

Fired up over these alarming figures, the Foundation joined forces with the Alertness CRC to launch a website promoting a range of simple, savvy, science-driven tips that can dramatically improve employee experience and the company's bottom line.

Called WorkAlert, the site advises employers to consider swapping out older fluorescent lights for more efficient LED bulbs that emit more light per unit of energy, reducing energy costs, and at the same time taking advantage of scientific advances to encourage selection of blue-enriched white light bulbs that increase alertness and performance.

Alertness CRC sleep specialist Professor Steven Lockley explains: "Light is a stimulant and studies show that the light spectrum to which we are exposed makes a big difference in its benefits. Shorter-wavelength blue light is more alerting than other colours and so people working in spaces with brighter, blue-enriched white light feel more alert and perform better. Many companies are considering changing their lights to save energy and we would like businesses to understand that if they choose the right light, they can add additional benefits to their bottom line with improved productivity and safety. It's a relatively simple switch that can save thousands on power bills and in lost productivity."

The CRC also calls on employers to investigate better shift work rosters that minimize shift duration, reduce consecutive shifts and ensure ample time off after night shifts to maximise recovery sleep, and consider developing sleep education and sleep disorders screening programs for their employees.

Organisations are invited to partner with the Alertness CRC to help implement changes and measure improvements in safety and productivity. "Together, we can optimise lighting and

schedules to maximise safety and productivity while meeting operational needs,” Professor Lockley says.

He stresses the site is not just for employers. “We also provide information on what employees can do to help themselves including how they might change their lighting at home to help their family sleep better, and tips to help prioritise sleep.”

This year’s Sleep Awareness Week is themed Better Sleep = Smarter, Safer Workplaces. View details of the campaign here: <https://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/public-information/key-events/about-sleep-awareness-week.html>

The WorkAlert website can be viewed here – [www.workalert.org.au](http://www.workalert.org.au).

**For more information and interview requests, contact Lucy Williams on mobile: 0403 753 028.**

#### **About Sleep Health Foundation**

The Sleep Health Foundation is Australia’s leading advocate for sleep health. The Foundation aims to improve people’s sleep and their lives by promoting healthy sleep, raising awareness of sleep disorders and building partnerships with organisations. Free, independent, expert-reviewed fact sheets on every aspect of sleep are available at [www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au](http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au)

#### **About the CRC for Alertness, Safety and Productivity**

The Alertness CRC is an industry focused research program committed to maximising alertness in the workplace. The mission of the Alertness CRC is to 1) Promote the prevention and control of sleep loss and sleep disorders, and 2) Develop new tools and products for individuals and organisations to improve alertness, productivity and safety. <http://www.alertnesscrc.com/>

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