A person with long dark hair, wearing a black headset, is shown from the side. They are holding a black pen in their right hand and are positioned in front of a computer monitor and keyboard. The person is wearing a light blue and white striped shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk and office environment.

EVALUATION OF SUPPORT ACT WELLBEING HELPLINE

FOR SUPPORT ACT

MARCH 2025

FINAL REPORT

The Support Act Wellbeing Helpline is managed on Gadigal land. This evaluation was conducted and authored by Natalie Fisher of NSF Consulting, and Pete Wilson of Pragmatic Research, on the lands of the Gadigal people.

NSF Consulting and Pragmatic Research acknowledge and pay deep respect to Elders past and present for their ongoing care and custodianship of the lands on which we work.



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Executive summary

Introduction

Support Act is a public benevolent institution that works to relieve hardship or distress for people who work in the music, and in some cases, the wider creative industries.

Recent studies into mental health and wellbeing in the music and creative industries found that workers are facing a range of issues that affect their mental health and wellbeing.

Support Act Wellbeing Helpline

The Support Act Wellbeing Helpline is a free counselling service for anyone working in the Australian music or creative sectors. It is delivered by Support Act, in partnership with AccessEAP, a leading profit-for-purpose Employee Assistance Program provider with over 30 years of experience in mental health and workplace wellbeing.

The Helpline provides general counsellors as well as dedicated counsellors on one of four lines: LGBTQI+, First Nations Support, Manager Support and Safety at Work Support.

Counsellors with experience in, or knowledge of, the music or arts sector are preferred, although it is not considered compulsory for the job. Evidence suggests that not all counsellors have these credentials.

Purpose and design of this evaluation

This evaluation was conducted to explore:

- The extent to which workers in the music and broader creative sectors are aware of the Helpline and its offerings;

- The accessibility of the Helpline in supporting diverse groups of workers within the music and creative sectors that might be at higher risk of experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues;
- The efficiency of the service being delivered; and
- The extent to which the Helpline delivers a high quality service.

Key evaluation activities included an online survey of 149 callers, in-depth interviews with 37 people including Helpline managers and staff, callers and external stakeholders, and analysis of program data.

Evaluation findings were synthesised and analysed using an evaluation rubric, aligning findings with the key areas of interest of appropriateness, accessibility, efficiency, effectiveness and quality.

Evaluation findings

Appropriateness

The Helpline caters to an otherwise unmet need for its intended cohort of workers in the music and broader creative sectors. It delivers high quality counselling in a solutions-focused approach, addressing a range of identified issues common to all creative industries.

Accessibility

The Helpline successfully supports diverse groups of workers within the creative sectors that may be at higher risk of experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues. However, accessibility is more challenging for some First Nations callers. There were some barriers to accessing the Helpline, including mixed levels of awareness of the service, and the reluctance of workers in the music and creative industries to seek help.

Efficiency

The service demonstrates strong overall efficiency with robust capacity to meet demand promptly. However, it would benefit from addressing communication gaps in the intake process that can lead to cancellations, and ensuring consistent information flow between intake staff and clinicians, particularly for high-risk cases.

Quality

User satisfaction with the Helpline is predominantly positive, although there were some negative experiences, with one or two suffering poor outcomes. Satisfaction levels remained consistently high across all sectors, showing no significant difference between music industry workers and those from other creative fields.

However, a notable disconnect emerged in external perceptions, as representatives from non-music organisations saw the service as being primarily music-oriented and felt it failed to adequately demonstrate that it addressed their specific sector needs.

Recommendations

1. The Helpline should ensure that counsellors maintain high levels of industry knowledge in the music and creative sectors by tightening intake requirements and providing ongoing industry updates for existing counsellors.
2. The Helpline should strengthen First Nations support to address the inconsistent experience of First Nations callers. This would include revisiting, revising or preparing a cultural competency framework for all counsellors working with First Nations clients.
3. Develop industry engagement and education strategies that include a comprehensive music and creative industries education program, provision of regular updates to industry partners, detailed use cases that illustrate the practical application of the service, and ready-to-use promotional materials for industry organisations to integrate into their

communication channels. The Helpline website should be redesigned with changed language and imagery to appeal to the broader creative sector.

4. Support Act should continue to work to attract long-term funding for the Helpline so that what is considered a vital service can be maintained for the long term, with commitment and support from other organisations and sectors.

Conclusion

The Support Act Wellbeing Helpline is considered a vital service by representatives of the creative industries across Australia. There are some barriers to workers accessing the service, relating to awareness as well as broader industry-related issues about reluctance to seek help.

Many stakeholders in the music and wider creative sectors are eager to partner with Support Act to promote this valuable service to their networks and members who need this support, provided these concerns can be addressed first.

Introduction

Support Act

Support Act is a public benevolent institution that is organised, conducted and promoted for the relief of hardship or distress for people who work in music, and in some cases, the wider creative industries.

The charity provides crisis relief, mental health and wellbeing support to musicians, managers, crew and music workers across all genres of music who are in crisis or who are experiencing, or at risk of, psychological distress. It delivers this through short term financial support, funeral support, mental health prevention, education and training programs, programs for First Nations music workers, and through the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline.

Support Act Wellbeing Helpline

The Support Act Wellbeing Helpline ('the Helpline') is a free counselling service for anyone working in the Australian music or creative industries. It was established to provide music workers with access to free psychological support services. The service was made available to all creative industry workers during the COVID lockdown period and has continued throughout the recovery period.

The Helpline is delivered by Support Act, in partnership with AccessEAP, a leading profit for purpose Employee Assistance Program provider with over 30 years of experience in mental health and workplace wellbeing.

It is funded in part by Creative Workplaces, a division of Creative Australia. Creative Workplaces was established for artists, arts workers and arts organisations to promote and enable fair, safe and respectful workplaces in the arts and cultural sector. It recognises artists as both creatives and workers.

Objectives of the Helpline

The key objective of the Helpline is to deliver nation-wide mental health and wellbeing support, that is targeted, tailored, and accessible to people working in any artform or work across the full music and creative industries.

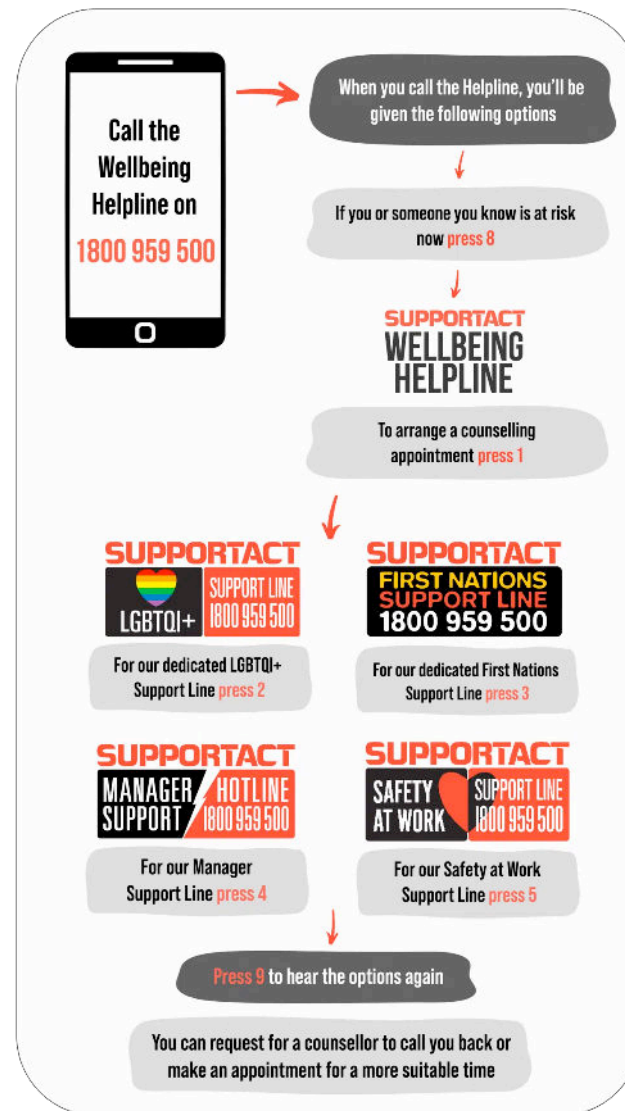
Other objectives of the Agreement with Creative Workplaces include:

- deliver value to the creative sector to ensure services under the Agreement (including wellbeing services) are high quality and operating efficiently;
- deliver services that are inclusive, accessible and appropriate for diverse groups or workers within the creative sectors that may be at higher risk of experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues; and
- ensure collection of meaningful data and evidence on mental health and wellbeing in the creative sector, and to inform assessment of the value of the services and programs funded under the Agreement (while maintaining privacy and confidentiality).

Four dedicated support lines

The Helpline provides general counsellors as well as dedicated counsellors on each of four lines: LGBTQI+, First Nations Support, Manager Support and Safety at Work.

How the Helpline works



Evaluation approach

Purpose of this evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the Helpline for its quality of service, satisfaction and accessibility of services for diverse groups.

The evaluation is guided by the following questions.

Evaluation questions

1. To what extent does the Helpline address an unmet need in the industry?
2. To what extent are workers in the music and broader creative sector aware of the Helpline and its offerings?
3. How accessible is the Helpline in supporting diverse groups of workers within the music and creative sectors that may be at higher risk or experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues?
4. How efficiently is the Helpline utilising its funding and resources?
5. To what extent does the Support Act Helpline provide a high quality service?

Approach to the evaluation

A **summative** evaluation was conducted. Summative evaluations are designed to explore how well a program has been performing after having been in place for some time.

A mixed methods approach was used, comprising an online survey and in-depth interviews with service users and stakeholders.

Key components of the evaluation

1. Evaluation Framework

An Evaluation Framework was developed to identify the key areas of interest, their alignment with evaluation questions and indicators of success to allow for evaluative judgements to be made. The key areas of interest as they align with the evaluation questions were deemed to be:

- Appropriateness;
- Accessibility;
- Efficiency; and
- Quality.

The Evaluation Framework can be seen in the Appendix of this report.

2. Document and program data review

Program data and methods of collection were reviewed, as well as other relevant documents associated with the Helpline.

3. Consultation

Quantitative research

An online survey was distributed via AccessEAP to its audience of approximately 1430 people for whom they have records of having called the Wellbeing Helpline in the past 12 months. The survey was designed to gather data on how callers used the service and levels of satisfaction with various aspects of it. The survey was confidential, although respondents were invited to leave their names and contact details to opt-in for in-depth interview as part of the qualitative research process.

The survey attracted a response rate of 149, with 133 respondents answering all questions.

Qualitative research

In-depth interviews were conducted with 37 people, comprising:

- 16 callers to the Wellbeing Helpline (recruited at random from those who volunteered from the survey);
- 14 representatives of external music and creative/cultural sector organisations;
- 4 Wellbeing Helpline clinicians (counsellors);
- 2 Support Act Wellbeing Helpline representatives; and
- 1 funding representative.

Interviews were conducted via telephone or Teams in January-February 2025.

A full list of individuals consulted is shown in the Appendix of this report (other than callers, whose identities are protected).

4. Analysis/synthesis

Research findings were grouped and coded under key focus areas, incorporating evidence from all sources. Evaluative judgements were made by

analysing evidence under each focus area and synthesising the collecting findings against performance indicators.

The following rubric defines the difference between various levels of performance for each focus area.

Evaluative rubric

Excellent	All indicators of success were realised, very positive outcomes, few, if any, negative comments.
Good	Most indicators of success were realised, evidence of noticeable positive outcomes, some neutral or negative outcomes.
Unsatisfactory	Some indicators of success were realised, some negative outcomes, a mix of comments, not noticeably positive.
Poor	Few indicators of success were realised with comments skewed towards the negative.

Limitations of this approach

There are limitations associated with any evaluation approach. In this case, there are three limitations:

1. We used an opt-in approach to reach service users for interview (although selected randomly from a larger list), which may have resulted in qualitative research representing the more extreme positive or negative cases;
2. Counsellors for interview were identified by AccessEAP and findings are based on a sample size of four; and
3. First Nations findings are based on input from only four people (three clients, one counsellor).

Despite these limitations, the sample achieved a spread of demographics and respondents with a range of experiences.

Evaluation findings - summary

Key focus area	Broad indicator of success	Poor	Unsatisfactory	Good	Excellent	Explanation
1. Appropriateness	The Helpline meets an unmet need for workers in the music and creative sectors.				✓	The Helpline caters for an otherwise unmet need for its intended cohort of workers in the music and broader creative sectors. It delivers high quality counselling in a solutions-focused approach, addressing a range of identified issues common to all creative industries.
2. Accessibility	The Helpline supports diverse groups of workers within the creative sectors that may be at higher risk of experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues.			✓		<p>The Helpline successfully supports diverse groups of workers within the music and creative sectors that may be at higher risk of experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues.</p> <p>However, accessibility was challenging for some First Nations callers. Barriers to accessing the Helpline relate to mixed levels of awareness of the service and creative industry workers' reluctance to seek help.</p>
3. Efficiency	The Helpline utilises resources to deliver the service in a timely manner and is available for all potential users at their time of need.			✓		<p>The service demonstrates strong overall efficiency with robust capacity to meet demand promptly.</p> <p>However, it would benefit from addressing communication gaps in the intake process which sometimes result in cancellations, and ensuring consistent information flow between intake staff and clinicians, particularly for high-risk cases.</p>
4. Quality	The Helpline provides a high quality service with the vast majority of users satisfied with their support.			✓		<p>User satisfaction with the Helpline is predominantly positive. Satisfaction levels are consistently high across all sectors, showing no significant difference between music industry workers and those from other industries.</p> <p>However, a notable disconnect emerged in external perceptions, as representatives from non-music organisations reported that they perceived the service as being primarily music-oriented and felt it failed to adequately address their specific sector needs.</p>



Key Focus Area One

APPROPRIATENESS

The extent to which the Helpline meets an unmet need for its intended user cohort

The Helpline caters for an otherwise unmet need for its intended cohort of workers in the music and broader creative sectors. It delivers high quality counselling in a solutions-focused approach, addressing a range of identified issues common to all creative industries.

Addressing needs of creative workers

A recent study into mental health and wellbeing in the music and creative industries found that the most common issues affecting workers were cost of living, low income, burnout and fatigue, job insecurity, lack of opportunities due to external impacts such as venue closures and festival cancellations, and the high cost of doing business.¹

In-depth interviews with representatives from the music and diverse creative sectors—including screen, visual arts, literature, music, and theatre—revealed a consistent range of issues facing industry professionals. All organisation representatives unanimously indicated a significant and ongoing need for the Helpline to respond to these issues. The service was described as crucial in supporting music and creative industry workers who face complex and interconnected challenges that require specialised assistance.

The specific issues common to workers in the music and creative industries:

Industry-specific mental health issues

Music and creative workers were said to be dealing with mental health pressures that are specific to the broad creative sectors. They included isolation and loneliness, high-stakes project-driven work, often repeated exposure to emotionally intensive content (for example, performing traumatic scenes on stage or screen) and burnout and fatigue. These vulnerabilities were said to be unique to these industries.

¹ Mental Health and Wellbeing in Creative Industries Australia, 2024. Centre for Social Impact and Swinburne University of Technology.

Economic and financial stress

There was widespread agreement that music and creative workers tend to be employed in a precarious gig economy, with irregular income, low hourly rates, and low annual salaries. Some were said to be dealing with late or missing payments and a need for financial counselling to navigate these issues. Some visual artists were known to be living in cars or skipping meals to make ends meet.

Industry structure and poor working conditions

Music and creative industry workers were said to be predominantly micro businesses, sole traders and contractors with limited access to HR support systems. Working this way also means they lack the guaranteed entitlements of salaried employees in other industries and have limited legal recourse for payment disputes. Performers, crew, musicians and others in the festival circuit have been recently dealing with venue and festival closures. There is also the impact of increasing streaming services on Australian actors, musicians and performers.

Discrimination and harassment

Representatives of the screen industry in particular reported that creative workers face bullying, racism and sexual harassment as part of their jobs, often in male-dominated hyper-masculine environments. Many were reportedly afraid to speak up about issues and were therefore exploited at work as they dealt with these industry power dynamics.

Systemic challenges

A number of systemic challenges were reported as impacting the mental health and wellbeing of creative industry workers. They included the reduction of gallery programs impacting visual artists, the Hollywood actors strikes having a flow-on effect on actors and crew in Australian screen actors, and broader societal changes such as reduced employment opportunities, and closure of other support services such as the Arts Wellbeing Collective in Melbourne, all affecting many creative industry workers.

As a result of all of these issues, many music and creative industry workers were said to be experiencing a strain on personal relationships, substance abuse, mental health crises, difficulty accessing support, reduced work opportunities, isolation from conventional support systems, and sometimes the extreme situation of suicidal ideation.

An appropriate service approach

The Helpline delivers support as a solution-focused approach to address the range of industry issues typically experienced by workers in the music and creative industries. The service was thought to empower callers to implement strategies into their lives and work to be able to deal with their issues and manage the risk of ongoing difficulties.

The Helpline's approach to counselling is exemplified by:

- Allowing counsellors to adopt approaches they see fit, in response to the situation and what the caller needs, rather than using a specific model of support; and
- Offering continuity of care within a strong clinical framework and therapeutic interventions, with a series of free sessions to provide ongoing support.

This approach was considered appropriate and necessary in order to support its client cohort.

‘We want to make the sector a **safer and better** place for people to work. Given the significant challenges of people in the sector, access to appropriate and high quality mental health support is crucial.’

Internal stakeholder



Key Focus Area Two

ACCESSIBILITY

The extent to which the Helpline supports diverse groups of workers within the music and creative sectors that may be at higher risk of experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues

The Helpline successfully supports diverse groups of workers within the music and creative sectors that may be at higher risk of experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues. Barriers to accessing the Helpline relate to mixed levels of awareness of the service and reluctance to seek help. Additionally, accessibility is more challenging for some First Nations callers.

Awareness

Before music and creative industry workers can access the Helpline, they need to know it exists.

Awareness of the Helpline is mixed. While some representatives of the music and creative industries indicate that awareness has improved over recent years, others note that even long-term industry professionals were unaware of the service. Geographic disparities were also noted, with one external stakeholder questioning awareness levels in Western Australia.

The COVID-19 pandemic appears to be a significant period when many became aware of the Wellbeing Helpline, particularly as Support Act was providing crisis relief grants to the performing arts and screen industries during this time. This suggests the crisis created both increased need and visibility of the service.

Awareness amongst music industry workers

Despite the Helpline being developed for workers in the music industry, awareness is not consistently high amongst music industry workers, according to representatives of some music industry bodies.

There was said to be limited awareness amongst members of Music NT, despite knowledge by the Executive Director, who regularly includes information about the Helpline in membership newsletters.

A representative of Queensland Music reported reasonable awareness amongst its membership cohort. This was said to be because of Support Act's

considerable presence at BIGSOUND, at which information about the Helpline is shared, and its listing amongst recommended resources for music students.

Members of Entertainment Assist were thought to have reasonable awareness of the Helpline, particularly since the pandemic, when support for creative workers was sought across the sector. Similarly, a representative of Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) reported reasonable levels of awareness amongst its members.

According to the Association of Artist Managers, members were aware of the Helpline because they promote it to them regularly and are strong advocates of the service.

Awareness amongst other creative industry workers

There was a range of awareness levels reported by representatives of non-music industry bodies.

Reasonable levels of awareness amongst members and networks were reported by Access Victoria, Theatre Network Australia and Australian Society of Authors, who mentioned Victorian authors in particular, becoming aware of the Helpline since support was sought during the pandemic.

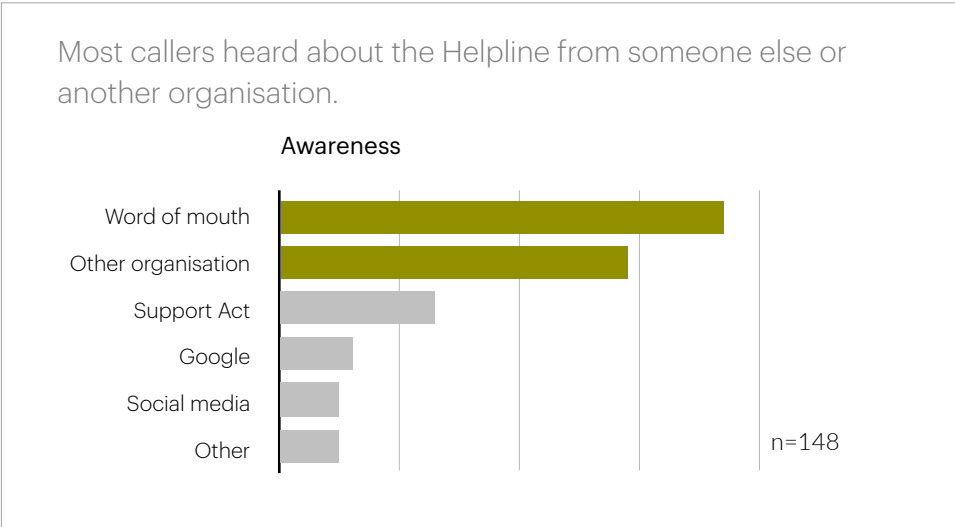
Awareness levels were thought to be low within the screen industry, despite there being a high need for support, although information was said to be starting to filter through to screen workers. Crew were becoming more aware of the service through CrewCare, although there was said to be scant knowledge about the range of offerings.

According to NAVA’s representative, few visual artists were aware of the Wellbeing Helpline, despite needing it.

Source of awareness for callers

Word of mouth was the most common way in which callers heard about the Wellbeing Helpline, with more than a third (37 per cent) hearing about the service from a friend, colleague, manager or social worker.

Slightly fewer (29 per cent) first heard about the service from another organisation, either directly, or via their newsletter. Fewer again (13 per cent) heard about it from Support Act. Then, a small number of callers first became aware of the Helpline from Google (6 per cent), social media (5 per cent), or by other means, including from CrewCare, Creative Workplaces, staff briefing and training/webinar.



Awareness of full range of support offerings

Respondents accessed various types of support, including general counselling, financial counselling, and crisis support. Many were unaware of the full range of services initially, discovering additional support options through their engagement with the service. The financial counselling service appears to be particularly valued when discovered.

The vast majority of respondents (72 per cent) used a generalist counsellor, likely an underestimate, as a further 24 per cent were not sure. Seven per cent used a Manager Support Helpline counsellor, four per cent used the LGBTQI+

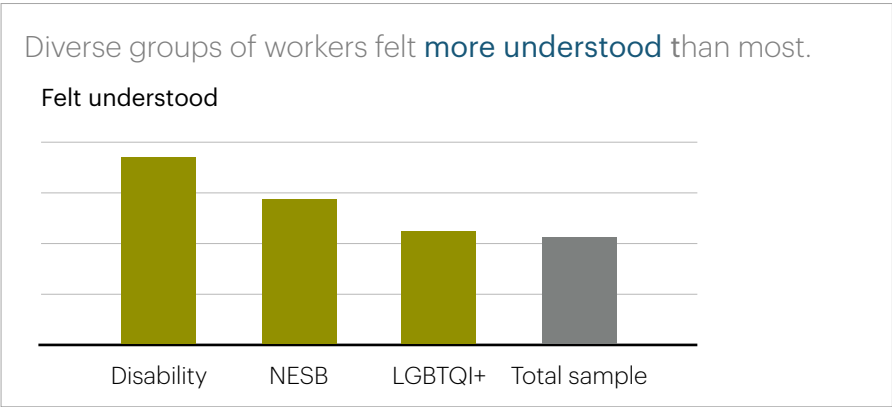
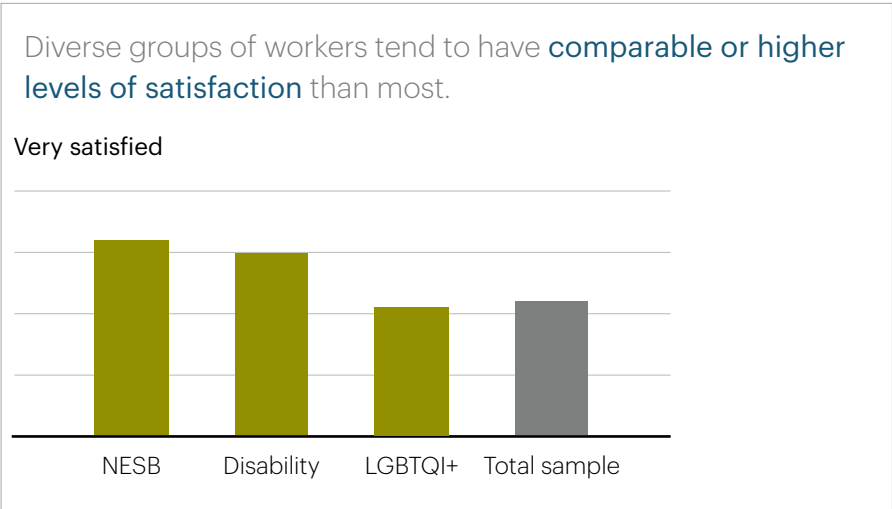
counsellor, with a couple of callers using the First Nations Support Line and Safety at Work Support line counsellors, respectively.

Accessibility

Inclusivity

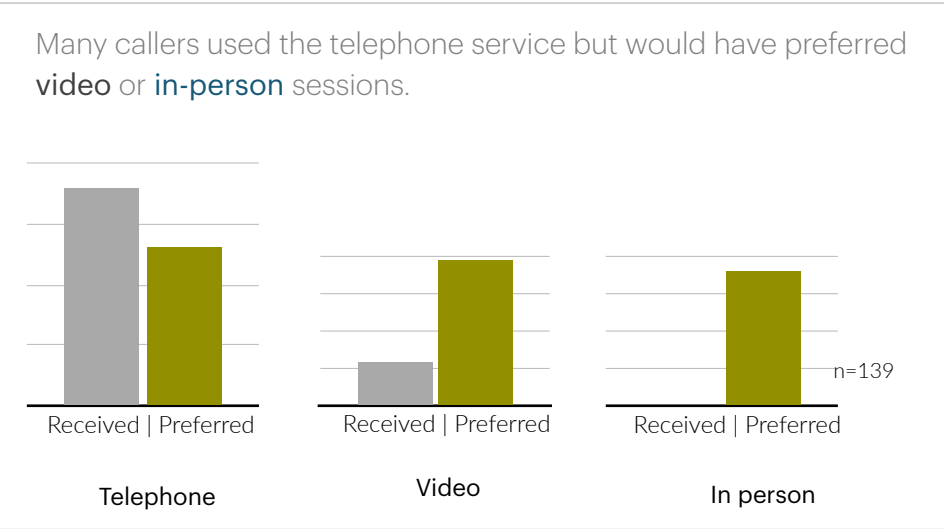
The Wellbeing Helpline is servicing diverse groups of workers well.

Callers living with disability or for whom English isn't their first language felt satisfied and more understood than most other callers. Callers who identified as LGBTQI+ were more aligned with the general cohort.



Preferred access pathways

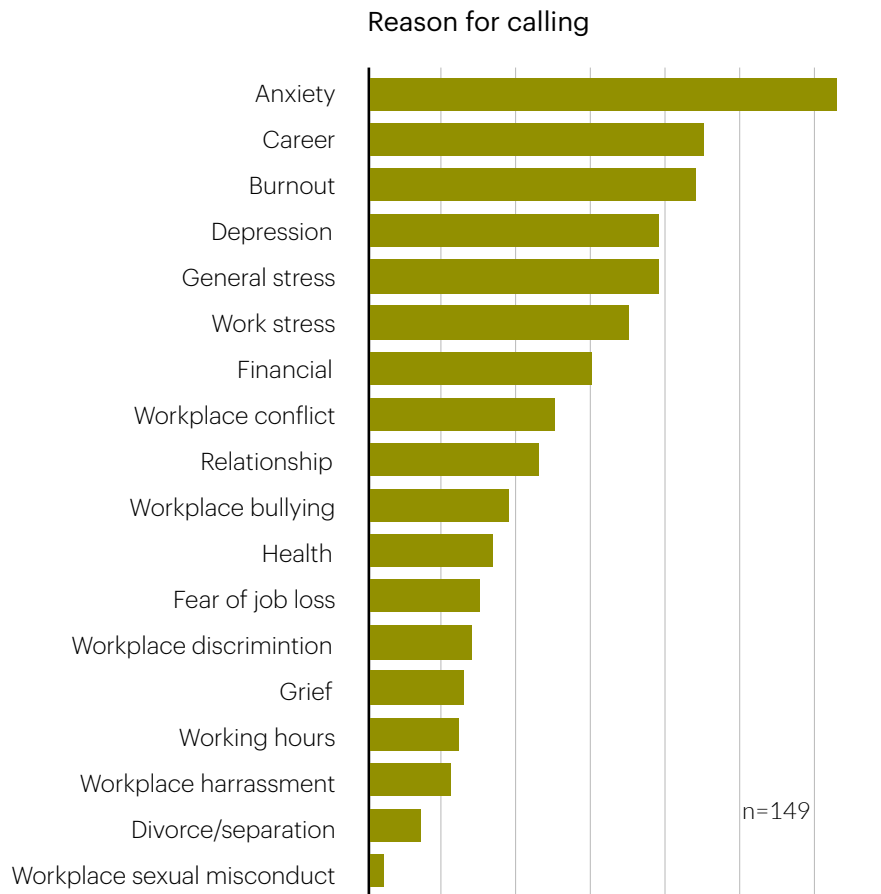
The vast majority (81 per cent) of survey respondents received counselling support by telephone, and most callers preferred to be supported this way. A further 15 per cent were supported by video call, a few face to face. Many respondents would have preferred face to face or video meeting, suggesting an opportunity to expand the video and in-person options for counselling and ensuring that callers are aware of these options when they book their sessions.



Supporting people with a range of support needs

The Wellbeing Helpline supported callers with a range of needs, from mental health concerns, psychological distress and specific practical work issues. The range of support needs is shown on the following page.

Creative workers called the Helpline for a **range of reasons.**



First Nations support

Although based on few respondents, First Nations callers had mixed experiences with the Helpline.

Two First Nations callers were interviewed in depth. Both callers accessed the Wellbeing Helpline but neither used First Nations counsellors, though for different reasons. The first caller sought immediate crisis support and wasn't given the option to be matched with a First Nations counsellor, while the second caller was offered but declined this option. While both acknowledged receiving responsive initial support—with the first caller particularly valuing the quick crisis response and the second caller appreciating financial assistance—they identified significant gaps in cultural competency and longer-term support.

The first respondent, in a leadership position, found that while the organisational support was strong, there was a notable weakness in understanding how Aboriginal perspectives and cultural layers impact leadership roles. They also raised concerns about their counsellor's faith-based approach, noting the potential trauma this could trigger for Aboriginal people with negative missionary experiences. Four months after accessing the service, this caller had left their job due to bullying, highlighting the limitations of the support they received.

The second respondent expressed stronger dissatisfaction, focusing on broader systemic issues affecting First Nations people. While they appreciated having received financial support, they felt the phone counselling service couldn't adequately address their broader concerns about Indigenous representation and rights.

According to a Wellbeing Helpline clinician, working with Indigenous clients requires a nuanced understanding of how identity, knowledge, and responsibility intersect in deeply personal ways. The counselling process demands a sophisticated grasp of specific challenges facing First Nations communities, particularly within specialised contexts like the arts sector. While the counselling approach itself may not differ, demonstrating an

understanding of Indigenous community structures and dynamics is crucial. Without this knowledge, practitioners risk significant blind spots in their therapeutic work. Language choice and comprehension of how individuals define their community connections are particularly vital elements of effective counselling.

Intergenerational trauma forms a critical backdrop to many therapeutic interactions, especially given that many clients are descendants of the Stolen Generations. This historical context shapes current experiences in profound ways. A telling example emerged through one client who initially did not disclose his Indigenous identity during intake. As the therapeutic relationship developed, his heritage became apparent even before explicit discussion. Once acknowledged, this opened new therapeutic pathways that proved highly beneficial to his progress.

Barriers to accessibility

Discussions with external stakeholders from the music and a range of creative sectors uncovered a number of barriers to using the Helpline, ranging from industry culture, perceptions of the service, and personal psychological barriers to accessing any sort of mental health support.

Industry-specific stigma and culture

External stakeholders from music and creative industries highlighted the pervasive stigma surrounding mental health challenges in their fields. The intensely competitive nature of these sectors creates an environment where workers feel compelled to 'tough it out', downplaying their distress and concealing vulnerability. Many professionals avoid seeking help for fear that acknowledging mental health struggles would mark them as unsuitable for their roles or jeopardise future opportunities.

There were said to be no professional norms or standards in the music, and a number of creative industries, resulting in complex relationships between personal and professional reputations. This was thought to contribute to people's reluctance to seek help, as there were no clear pathways or support mechanisms in place for them.

'We get **400 calls a week** from people asking for help, for all sorts of reasons. Our staff are not trained counsellors. We can help with practical things but we **can't support people emotionally** through what it must feel like to not be paid, for example.'

External stakeholder, visual arts sector

Confidentiality and trust concerns

A number of stakeholders representing workers in the music and a range of creative sectors believed their members and workers were sometimes worried about confidentiality, particularly given the competitive nature and culture of their industries. There was said to be a fear that calling for support could impact on future employment opportunities if they were identified as needing support.

A service for musicians only

Despite being available to all creative sectors, the Helpline faces a significant perception challenge due to its connection with a music industry charity. Stakeholders from non-music creative sectors reported feeling the service wasn't intended for them.

This perception is reinforced by Support Act's website, which predominantly features music industry content and imagery. As a result, workers from other creative sectors, such as visual arts, theater, dance, or literature, may not recognise the Helpline as a resource available to them, potentially creating an unintended barrier to access.

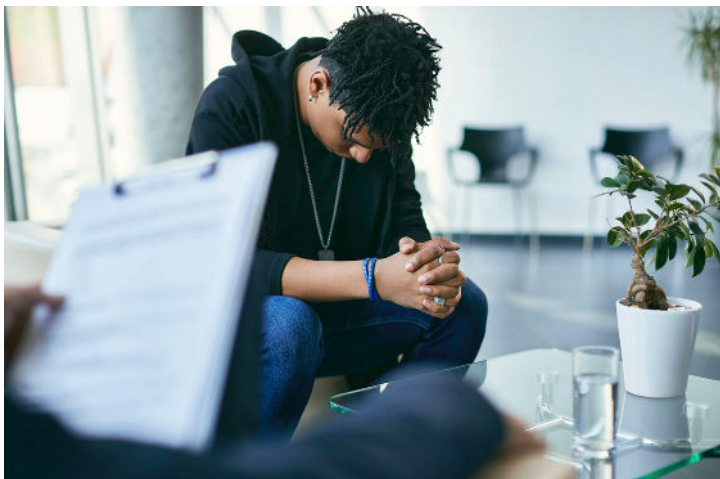
'The **website** doesn't look like it's for anyone other than in the **music industry**.'

External stakeholder, screen industry

Industry demographics and diversity

The music and creative sectors have a unique demographic profile that creates specific challenges for accessing mental health support, including through the Helpline. Many musicians and creative workers are over 50 years old, an age group that typically shows more reluctance to engage with mental health services. There are also significant populations of LGBTIQ+ individuals, Indigenous artists, and artists living with disability, each with distinct support needs that require specialised understanding and approaches.

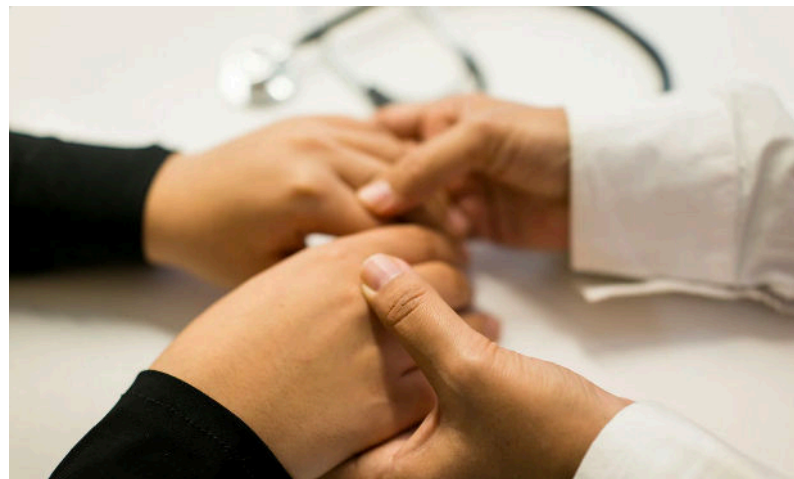
Despite the Helpline successfully supporting diverse workers, their reluctance to come forward is considered an issue.



Personal and psychological barriers

There were said to be personal and psychological barriers for musicians and creative workers to access support through the Helpline, or any other support. They included:

- feeling shame about their financial distress;
- personal pride contributing to reluctance to seek help;
- uncertainty about whether their situation warrants help;
- a fear of taking resources from others who might need them more;
- previous negative experiences with counselling services; and
- confusion about the difference between mental health and mental illness.





Key Focus Area Three

EFFICIENCY

How efficiently the Helpline utilises resources to deliver a timely service

The Helpline demonstrates strong overall efficiency with robust capacity to meet demand promptly. However, it would benefit from addressing communication gaps in the intake process and ensuring consistent information flow between intake staff and clinicians, particularly for high-risk cases.

Available for all potential users in their time of need

The Helpline generally provides rapid access to support, with many respondents reporting same-day or next-day appointments. The registration and setup process is described as straightforward and efficient. This immediate response was particularly valued by those in crisis situations.

'I don't know if I'd have **got through** that time without her
(Helpline counsellor)

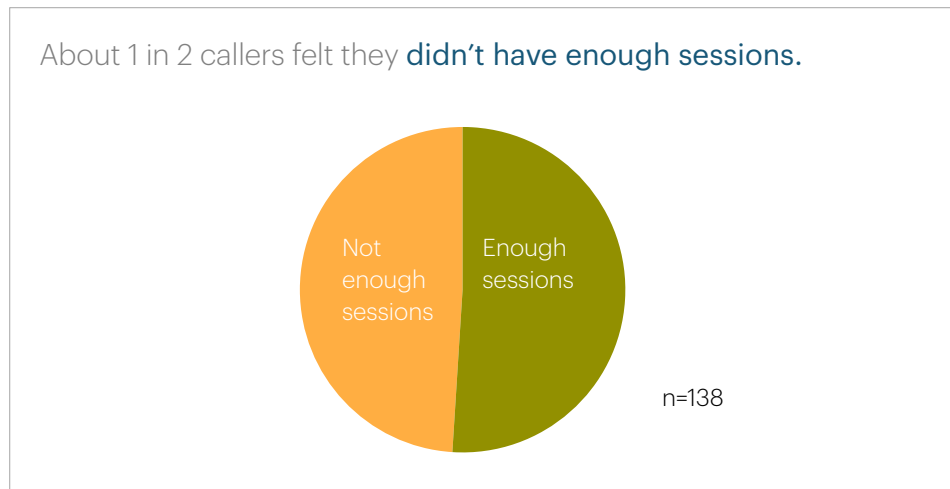
Caller

Close to two thirds (65 per cent) of survey respondents had an appointment arranged within 48 hours (close to half—47 per cent—were within 24 hours, and 18 per cent between 24 and 48 hours). A further 15 per cent had an appointment within two and three days, a further two per cent between three and four days, and eight per cent waited more than four days. Ten per cent were not sure.

For almost all respondents (96 per cent), the appointment they made suited them, with 89 per cent experiencing no issues when arranging their session. For the 11 per cent who experienced barriers when arranging an appointment, two were attributed to their own situation, namely dealing with long hours at work, and difficulty aligning time zones for a call where they were.

Number of sessions

The survey sample was split in terms of the adequacy of numbers of sessions, with 51 per cent saying they were enough and 49 per cent who would have liked more.



Almost two thirds (61 per cent) were offered extra sessions by the counsellor, 18 per cent were not, and a further 21 per cent not sure. Slightly more than a third (40 per cent) requested extra sessions, a further 40 per cent did not, 20 per cent were not sure.

Efficient delivery with minor challenges

Four counsellors interviewed for this evaluation described the service as generally efficient, with strong capacity to meet demand. The staffing structure enables same-day responsiveness for both phone and video consultations nationwide, with after-hours coverage for high-risk situations.

Intake process challenges

Despite overall efficiency, the intake process presents occasional challenges:

- **Information gaps:** Counsellors frequently report receiving minimal background information about clients before initial contact, creating a 'going in blind' situation that, while manageable, is noted as unusual for this type of service;
- **Communication breakdowns:** When AccessEAP's internal IT system faces disruptions, counsellors experience increased workload, including the need to contact unfamiliar clients on short notice, with little time for preparation; and
- **Scheduling inconsistencies:** Double bookings periodically occur through the intake portal, and the promised notifications about short-notice appointments aren't consistently delivered to clients. To resolve these scheduling conflicts, last-minute cancellations often become necessary. Additionally, cancellations sometimes result from misinformation about the intake process or from critical client information not being properly communicated to counsellors.

Critical incidents and risk management

One significant incident highlighted potential system vulnerabilities: a high-risk client experienced a five-day callback delay due to miscommunication during intake and lack of counsellor coordination. While described as rare, happening only a few times a year, these breakdowns carry substantial risk implications, potentially leaving vulnerable clients without support during critical periods.

Key Focus Area Four

QUALITY

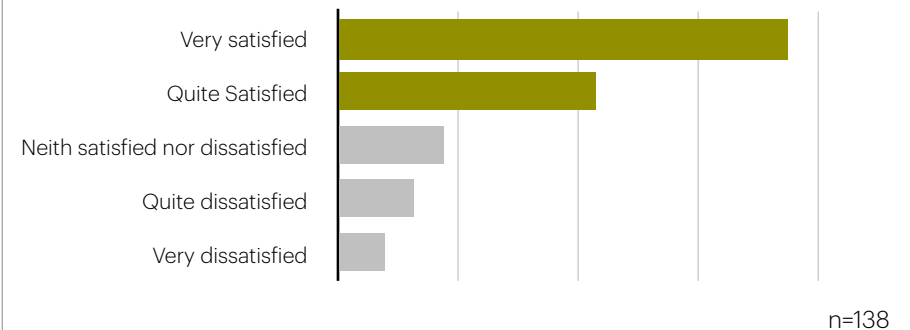
The extent to which the Helpline provides a high quality service

User satisfaction with the Helpline was predominantly positive. Satisfaction levels remained consistently high across sectors, showing no significant difference between music industry workers and those from other creative fields. However, representatives from non-music organisations perceived the service as being primarily music-oriented, failing to adequately address the specific needs of their workers.

Satisfaction

Callers' experiences were predominantly positive. When asked how satisfied they were with the whole service provided by Support Act and the counsellor, the vast majority (74 per cent) were satisfied, with almost half (47 per cent) very satisfied. There were 13 per cent of respondents who were dissatisfied, and 11 per cent were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

The vast majority of callers were **satisfied** with the Helpline.



Factors driving satisfaction

Respondents consistently praised the professional quality of the counselling provided. Key attributes included the counsellors' ability to:

- Maintain continuity between sessions;
- Provide practical, targeted advice;
- Balance emotional support with pragmatic guidance;
- Offer trauma-informed care;
- Demonstrate genuine understanding of complex situations; and
- Offer additional resources and follow-up support.

Factors driving dissatisfaction

Of those who were dissatisfied, common criticisms centred around counsellors who:

- Displayed gaps in specialised counselling skills, particularly for First Nations perspectives and cultural understanding;
- Lacked lived experience or deep understanding of specific creative sectors;
- Demonstrated weaknesses in supporting people with neurodivergence; or
- Seemed mismatched with their clients, therefore unable to offer appropriate support.²

Appropriate matching was a notable observation. When clients were paired with counsellors who had relevant experience or understanding of their specific situation (whether industry, cultural, or identity-based), the outcomes were generally more positive. Several respondents specifically mentioned the

value of having counsellors who understood both mental health and the creative industries.

'The matching process seemed **undercooked**. I wasn't matched that well. He (counsellor) was fine, but I wasn't that comfortable talking to him.'

Caller

How well counsellors understand the situation of their callers

The vast majority of callers (77 per cent) felt that their counsellor understood their situation, with close to a half (42 per cent) saying they understood them 'very well'. Those who felt understood praised their counsellor for their general counselling skills and providing practical steps to help them resolve their situation.

Counsellors understood the situation of most callers well.



² Clients have the opportunity to change counsellors if they wish, although it's likely many are not aware of this or don't fully understand this option.

Counsellor credentials

The majority of callers valued counsellors for their high professional standards and skills, with a small number expressing disappointment in the quality of counselling.

Helpline counsellors are required to have a degree in Psychology, Social Work or Counselling. They need to be registered with recognised associations such as the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), Australian Counselling Association (ACA) or the Psychotherapy and Counsellors Association of Australia (PACFA). They should have a minimum of three years postgraduate experience, but the team averages 12.5 years. Counsellors who created positive experiences were frequently described as empathetic, attentive listeners who provided practical tools.

Counsellors also need to have expertise in critical areas including trauma counselling and crisis management, burnout prevention and recovery, leadership coaching and mental health literacy.

Caller perceptions of counsellors

Many respondents specifically valued feeling heard and understood. The most appreciated counsellors offered concrete strategies and frameworks to manage difficult situations, and provided callers with a framework that enabled them to start clearly articulating to their workplace what was going on.

Creative industry knowledge

Counsellors are not required to have knowledge or experience of the music industry or other creative sectors, although it is favoured. Despite it not being mandatory for the position, industry knowledge emerged as crucial for callers. Respondents strongly preferred counsellors who understood the unique challenges of the music and creative industries.

Many respondents praised counsellors who had industry experience or knowledge, particularly those who understood the unique pressures of

creative work and music touring. Counsellors with direct experience in these areas were notably more effective at providing relevant support.

Support Act and AccessEAP host periodic information sessions for all Wellbeing Helpline clinicians to ensure they stay informed about industry updates and emerging issues. These sessions are designed to provide valuable insights, best practices, and relevant developments to support their ongoing professional knowledge and effectiveness. Yet, this does not seem to be effective or efficient in translating to industry knowledge for all Helpline counsellors.

Non-music industries need reassurance

Stakeholders from non-music sectors, particularly visual arts and screen industries, expressed hesitation about promoting the Helpline to their members without assurance that counsellors had industry-specific training and experience. While there was broad agreement that creative workers across sectors face common challenges, stakeholders expected counsellors to stay informed about industry-specific events that might prompt calls to the Helpline. This includes awareness of situations like festival cancellations or major announcements from Creative Australia.

A stakeholder from the film and screen industry emphasised the importance of incorporating industry knowledge into counsellors' professional development. They also stressed the need for transparency from Support Act about how this training was being implemented across all Helpline counsellors. With these measures in place, stakeholders would feel more confident in accurately promoting the Wellbeing Helpline to their networks.

'It was easy to access but I felt the counsellor had **no lived experience** with the music industry. They thought musos were amazing, but they kind of put me on a pedestal, which seemed weird.'

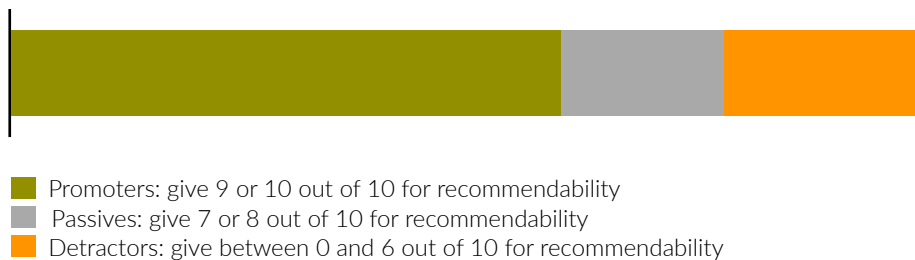
Caller

Recommending the service

Asking how likely someone would be to recommend a company or service to someone else is a useful overarching metric that can provide an overall snapshot of satisfaction. This was explored in the online Helpline survey.

Almost two thirds (60 per cent) of the survey sample can be considered to be active promoters of the Helpline. A further 18 per cent were considered 'passives', while 22 per cent were 'detractors'. This is shown below.

Almost two thirds of callers would **actively recommend** the Helpline.



‘We could **all cooperate** in joint endeavours around mental health to promote the service.’

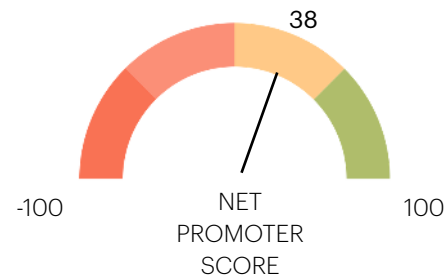
External stakeholder, screen industry

Net Promoter Score

To further conceptualise the promotability of a company or service, it can be useful to know the Net Promoter Score (NPS). This method identifies referrers who are the Helpline’s biggest fans and who are likely to be strong advocates for the Helpline, as well as those less satisfied and who might contribute to reputation damage by talking you down or not using the service.

The currently NPS for the Helpline is 38. This can be considered a positive result. An explanation is given in the Appendix of this report.

The Helpline has a **healthy Net Promoter Score**.



Stakeholders suggested utilising several communication channels to reach their communities and promote the Helpline. These include:

- industry events and partnerships with peak bodies across different art forms;
- collaborations with state and territory arts agencies like Creative Victoria and Arts Tasmania; and
- regular updates through union communications such as the Production Designers Guild and Australian Writers Guild.

Many emphasised the continuing relevance of social media platforms, particularly Instagram and closed Facebook groups, while newsletters from industry organisations with thousands of subscribers were also identified as valuable outreach tools. Live events including concerts, festivals, and educational institutions were mentioned as important touchpoints to connect with both established and emerging musicians and artists.

From a tactical perspective, organisations recommended creating relatable case studies that demonstrate the helpline's value in real situations. They stressed the importance of tailoring language for different sectors, with one suggestion to specifically include the word 'artist' in messaging to improve relevance. Practical ideas included:

- Add the Helpline to production call sheets;
- Create dedicated landing pages for specific creative industries, and
- Incorporate reminders about the service in regular team meetings.

Many organisations highlighted the need for content clarifications in promotional materials. These include emphasising that the service extends beyond crisis support, explaining exactly what the Helpline delivers, reassuring users about confidentiality, and addressing sector-specific concerns. A number of stakeholders suggested a sustained, multi-channel approach to build awareness of the Helpline across the creative industries.

Working with well known people to help promote

Many external stakeholders agreed it would be strategic to engage with well known figures to help promote the Helpline. A few were reticent about this idea, suggesting it could make the service inaccessible to an average creative worker with no profile. Several stakeholders noted that while high-profile ambassadors could be effective, they should be selected carefully to maintain authenticity and represent the grassroots nature of their industry.

Few could come up with specific names to consider to help with promotion, but a representative of the Australian Society of Authors suggested Anna Spargo-Ryan, Tony Birch, Wai Chim, Rosie Waterland, Yumi Stynes, Anita Heiss, Sarah Wilson, Holden Sheppard, Lech Blaine, Erin Riley, Helena Fox and Gary Lonesborough.

A question posed by a few stakeholders related to the Helpline's funding position. Although keen to help support the service, there was a concern about investing time and effort into promotional activities if there was a chance that funding could be cut, which many described as a devastating prospect.

Who are the detractors?

Almost one in five (22 per cent) of Helpline callers gave the service between 0 and 6 out of 10 for recommendability. Considered 'detractors', they were similar to other callers, although with some small differences:

- They were slightly more likely to be **male** (38% compared with 28% for the total sample);
- They were more likely to say they were **living with a number of work or mental health conditions**; and
- They were more likely to work across a **range of industries**, especially community, visual and emerging and experimental arts. 'Detractor' musicians also worked across a range of genres, especially heavy metal and alternative/indie.

CASE STUDY

Support when you need it most

As the sole HR person for an arts organisation with 300 staff, Tania* first learned about the Wellbeing Helpline through the Arts Wellbeing Collective. Her organisation had been searching for affordable mental health support options.

"This is something we really needed to provide our staff with. I did lots of research looking for a nonprofit solution that would be accessible to our team," she explained.

Tania personally used the service for manager support, scheduled EAP appointments, and crisis counselling. She had spoken with about five different counsellors offered by the Helpline—four were absolutely perfect fits, while one wasn't the right personality match for her.

"The nature of HR means you can't vent about a co-worker. I've used other services before, but this is the best one by far," she shared. "Sometimes when I'm facing an intense situation, I'll book counselling sessions twice a week. It helps me decompress and triage my emotions."

What sets this service apart for Tania is how the counsellors understand the arts sector. They're incredibly personable, perhaps because they're connected to the creative arts themselves. Many

have sent me helpful resources and videos by email, going above and beyond with their support.

"They've provided great insight into managing psychosocial hazards and conflict resolution. I can call them while preparing approaches to difficult situations, and they offer perspectives that enhance my work practice."

The impact has been transformative for Tania—both personally and organisationally. She says the change in her situation is 100% attributable to the Helpline counsellors. "Having this outlet has been totally game-changing. It means I can show up again without being grumpy or disturbed."

For her organisation, the Helpline has elevated her employee care standards. "Little organisations can't do this without it being a free service. It has uplifted the way we provide care for our employees—we simply couldn't do it without this service."

**name changed for confidentiality*

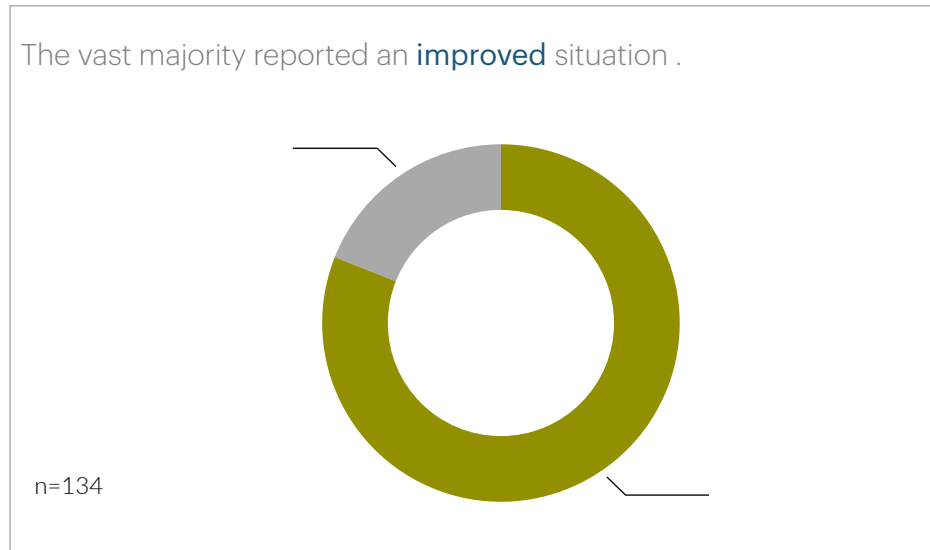
'Having this outlet has been totally **game-changing**.'



'Sometimes when I've facing an intense situation, I'll book counselling sessions twice a week. It helps me totally **decompress and triage my emotions**.'

Improved situation

The majority (81 per cent) of respondents reported their situation had improved since receiving the counselling, with 44 per cent saying it had improved a great deal.



Of those whose situation had improved since using the Wellbeing Helpline, around 75% attributed some or all of their mental health improvement to the service itself. For some callers, the Helpline, although helpful, was perceived to have been part of a broader system of support that enabled them to improved their situation.

The main reasons cited by the 25% who didn't credit the Helpline for their improved situation included finding more help from other sources (like GPs or specialists), preferring self-directed healing, or experiencing issues with counsellor continuity.

Ways in which callers' situations improved

The Helpline was said to have had a positive impact on callers in a number of ways, including in their personal and professional lives.

Career and employment impact

Several respondents experienced job changes or transitions; others were able to stay in their industry despite the challenges. There were multiple cases of income changes (both positive and negative), with several mentioning moving from higher to lower positions. Yet, despite those demotions, there was evidence of improved career decision-making skills.

Mental health and emotional support

The Helpline impacted callers in a range of ways mentally and emotionally. Broadly, the Helpline provided callers with strategies to cope with stress management. Significantly, one respondent specifically mentioned suicide prevention. There was also reported support with workplace bullying and trauma, and the provision of a safe space to talk through challenges. Others received support in dealing with the grief and loss of colleagues.

'If not for the Helpline I probably would have **taken my own life** during COVID. I was so down. I didn't think of my children or family. If it weren't for Support Act I wouldn't be here.'

Caller

Poor outcomes for a few

A small number of callers reported no improvement or poor outcomes from the Helpline. One client in particular was extremely disappointed with what was described as inappropriate and unprofessional therapy that resulted in them self sabotaging following the counselling. This client has since been in

touch with the Helpline about their experience, and correspondence between the two has followed with the aim of resolving this situation.

Professional development and skills

A number of callers reported the development of new professional skills as a result of receiving support from the Helpline. This included Mental Health First Aid training, Active Bystander Training, learning to recognise workplace red flags, development of financial management skills and tools for helping others with mental health concerns.

Several mentioned ongoing use of learned strategies. Some implemented regular self check-ins, such as five to six times a year. There was evidence provided of people 'paying it forward' with recommendations to others for example, or donating back to the service. For others, they shared tools and strategies with family members.

Financial outcomes

The Helpline was said to support callers in managing their financial situations. Some respondents received help with budgeting and financial planning, others with mortgage and superannuation management. There were also reports of developing tools for tracking spending and saving, and some experienced significant income recovery (for example, one respondent mentioned a 40 per cent increase in income).

While most financial impacts were positive, some negative experiences were reported. Some respondents found it sufficient as a stand-alone service, but others needed additional financial support services to deal with their complex issues.

'It's such an **important** and **great** service. I have worked in the arts in lots of capacities. Artists are very emotional and intuitive but it means there is a lot of stuff that can bubble over.'

Caller



CASE STUDY

From struggling worker to support worker

Roger* has been working as a Welfare Officer for CrewCare and serve as a safety officer for mental health at live music events. His journey with the Wellbeing Helpline began through his involvement with CrewCare's mental health programs, which were developed in conjunction with Support Act.

"I was the poster boy for the wrong things," When he personally needed support for work-related issues, Roger called the Wellbeing Helpline. As someone who describes himself as an angry person, he was genuinely impressed with the service. The turnaround was remarkably quick—a counsellor called him back within two hours. He had several sessions and was very happy with the results.

"The Wellbeing line is a tool for our triage officers to use, so that my phone doesn't ring 24/7." The CrewCare project distributes cards with the Support Act and CrewCare information, including the 1800 number and QR codes showing all available services and programs.

What makes this work meaningful is seeing the industry change. Roger claims that mental health has

always been taboo in his industry. To be seen having issues like addiction, depression, or anxiety was to be considered a risk because of being on tour. "These days we're trying to get rid of that stigma."

Through CrewCare's partnership with Support Act, we've trained nearly 400 people in mental health first aid over the past four years. Promoters are now starting to bring in CrewCare Welfare Officers to events. "There was always someone there with a heart."

I believe strongly in continuing to raise awareness about the 1800 number. "We need to continuously be in people's faces, but not spamming them." Roger believes the key is finding the right people who have familiar faces that crew members trust—currently we have welfare officers in Queensland, Sydney, and Melbourne.

Roger's goal is to help create a safe space for young people entering the industry and ensure they know support is available when they need it.

**name changed for confidentiality*

'The Wellbeing Helpline is a tool for our triage officers to use, so that **my phone doesn't ring 24/7**.'

'There is always someone there **with a heart**.'



Data quality

An important part of understanding the quality of a service is to collect regular meaningful data.

Caller data is collected by AccessEAP whenever someone comes for support. Data quality has improved in the past 12 months, in response to requests from Creative Workplaces. There will always be tension between increasing data collection and ensuring the service remains confidential. For example, it would be helpful to know where in regional Australia callers are based, but confidentiality concerns have resulted in postcodes being unable to be collected.

The demographic data currently being collected by AccessEAP can be considered to be thorough and relevant. However, to improve ongoing monitoring of the service, the following additions could be considered:

1. Immediate Needs Assessment

It could be useful to understand the context in which the caller is coming forward for support, collecting data on the urgency of support needed (such as in a scale rating), whether they need immediate crisis support; and if they have any other support systems currently in place.

2. Service Expectations

Before callers receive support, it is important to understand their expectations. If they're not calling during an immediate crisis, data could be collected on preferred counsellor characteristics (e.g., gender, cultural background, industry background), ideal session frequency, best times/days for regular sessions, any specific expertise they're seeking (e.g., trauma, career transition, stress management).

3. Industry Context

During counselling sessions, clinicians may collect data about callers' industry involvement and work type to track caller demographics over time. Information could include:

- Current industry employment status;
- Primary income source (creative vs. other work);
- Work cycle status (high workload, touring, or production periods); and
- Specific creative discipline (more detailed than existing categories).

4. Access Information

The Helpline services clients from across Australia. Ongoing tracking of access information can be useful for tailoring the service to callers' needs over time. Data could be collected on transport/mobility needs if arranging a face to face session, time zone considerations for remote sessions, technology access for video sessions and any language support needs

CASE STUDY

Finding calm and changing events career

Hilary* discovered the Helpline while searching online for counselling services for people in stressful jobs. "I was dealing with extreme workplace stress including a psychotic boss and verbal assault."

When she called the general line about her situation, they quickly connected Hilary with a counsellor who specialises in events industry issues.

"It was literally life-changing. The strategies she gave me weren't just for managing the moment - they became teaching tools I continue to use. I sit down with myself 5-6 times a year to work through stressful situations. I've even written down tips on my wall as a reminder." What made the biggest difference to Hilary was having a counsellor who truly understood the events industry.

Hilary described her counsellor as incredibly calm. She calmed Hilary when she panicked, more effectively than her friends and family could. Instead of overwhelming her with

numerous solutions, the Helpline counsellor focused on single things to assess at a time.

The counselling helped Hilary recognise red flags with other companies, allowing her to be more selective about which jobs to take. Now she has a much less stressful events life than she did before.

Hilary has since referred several colleagues to the service, though she was surprised to find many industry veterans had never heard of it. She has even donated to Support Act after experiencing how valuable their services were for her.

"If I could suggest one improvement, it would be increasing awareness through marketing. Advertising on the back of toilet doors at events and festivals and partnering with industry bodies would help more people discover this incredible resource."

**name changed for confidentiality*



'It was literally **life-changing**. The strategies she gave me weren't just for managing in the moment, they became teaching tools I continue to use.

'Other counsellors have simply told me to 'not work so hard', but she **understood that wasn't possible in my situation.**

Recommendations

The following recommendations are for Support Act to consider, following evidence derived from this evaluation.

Recommendation 1: Maintain high levels of music and creative industry knowledge in counsellor cohort

Consider tightening the screening process for the intake of new Helpline counsellors to ensure that they all have experience or adequate knowledge of the music and creative sectors, including current events in the media.

Although it seems unnecessary for counsellors to be conversant with aspects of individual sectors, to demonstrate an affiliation with them and their common issues should be mandatory.

Support Act should consider preparing regular industry briefings to assist counsellors keep up to date with music and broader creative industry news, such as providing newsletters on a regular basis, perhaps prepared in collaboration with key stakeholders in the range of creative sectors. This should be set up to be regular, systematic, current and ongoing.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen First Nations support

Implement a comprehensive cultural competency framework for all counsellors working with First Nations clients. This framework should address the distinct ways identity, knowledge, and responsibility operate within Indigenous communities, particularly in artistic contexts. Counsellors should receive specialised training on intergenerational trauma, especially concerning the Stolen Generations, and its impact on current experiences.

The intake process requires significant modification to better identify and address cultural needs. Consider developing optional cultural identity questions and offering First Nations counsellor matching as a standard

practice rather than on request. Importantly, counsellors should maintain cultural neutrality and avoid approaches that might trigger historical trauma, such as faith-based counselling that could evoke negative missionary experiences.

Recommendation 3: Industry Engagement and Education

Consider implementing a **comprehensive industry education program** that equips key organisations with the knowledge and resources to properly inform their members about the Helpline. This approach should include conducting face-to-face information sessions in each state, providing stakeholders with direct access to service representatives who can address specific questions and concerns. Working closely with peak bodies across the creative sectors will be essential for amplifying awareness and ensuring consistent messaging reaches diverse industry segments.

Establish a systematic approach for delivering **regular updates** to industry partners, coupled with dedicated support resources for those actively promoting the service within their networks.

Develop **detailed use cases** that illustrate practical applications would help reticent users envision how the service could address their specific needs. These examples should demonstrate the breadth of support available across different creative sectors and scenarios.

Prepare **ready-to-use promotional materials** for industry organisations to integrate into their communication channels. This should include regularly updated content packages for newsletters, social media posts, and website integration that can be deployed with minimal modification. These materials should incorporate compelling testimonials and video endorsements from previous service users to build credibility and demonstrate real-world impact.

Send all stakeholders who participated in this evaluation a **summary of the evaluation findings**. This will contribute to much-needed increased transparency and collaborative approach to the service, also helping to strengthen industry relationships. Many stakeholders requested this.

Re-design the Helpline website to be positioned to appeal to all creative industries. This should include updating imagery and language to connect with the visual arts, screen, literature and other creative industries.

Recommendation 4: Long-term Planning and Sustainability

Support Act should continue to work to attract long-term funding that can maintain the service for the next 5-10 years and beyond. Such funding is essential for supporting music and creative workers who rely on continuity of care, particularly when addressing complex or ongoing challenges within the creative industries.

Long-term sustainability through ongoing funding is important in earning the trust and support of certain sectors and will impact on their willingness to promote and use the service.

Conclusion

The Support Act Wellbeing Helpline is considered a vital service by representatives of creative industries across Australia, from a range of sectors, including music, visual arts, theatre, performing arts, screen and others. It has demonstrated that it is providing a unique and crucial service for creative workers experiencing mental health issues. Satisfaction levels are high, although areas of improvement have been identified so that the service can further improve to meet client needs.

Barriers to accessing the service relate to mixed levels of awareness, perceptions of who the service is for, and broader creative industry issues that impact on workers' willingness to seek help at all.

There was widespread endorsement amongst external stakeholders for the service to be extended to reach more people across wider creative sectors, however, the service would need to be re-positioned to connect with members from a range of industries. Stakeholders are ready and willing to work with Support Act to promote the service to its members in creative ways.

If Support Act and AccessEAP can work to address some of the concerns raised in this evaluation, the Helpline will become a stronger service. All endeavours should be made to secure ongoing funding for what is considered to be an essential service for music and creative workers who work in such precarious situations and deal with considerable uncertainty in their lives.



“In the visual arts people work alone. Having this service is so important for people who won’t have much money and time and who are putting their hearts and emotions out for the world to see.

I’m so glad it’s been extended to the visual arts.”

Caller, visual artist

Appendices

1. Individuals consulted
2. Evaluation Framework
3. Discussion guides
4. Online survey
5. Net Promoter Score explained

1. Individuals consulted by in-depth interview

Internal Stakeholders

Name	Position	Organisation
Clive Miller	CEO	Support Act
Lisa Smith	CFO	Support Act
Patrick McCarthy	Manager Strategic Initiatives and Engagement	Creative Workplaces
Steve Hossack	Counsellor	AccessEAP
James Austen	Counsellor	AccessEAP
Mae Chong	Counsellor	AccessEAP
Skye Rabe	Counsellor	AccessEAP

External Stakeholders

Name	Position	Organisation	Sector
Mark Smith	Executive Director	Music NT	Music
Sarah Farnsworth	Director Operations	QMusic	Music
Ben Steel	Managing Partner and Founder	Screen Well	Screen
Margaret Tilson	Manager, Strategic Policy and Insights	Screen Australia	Screen
Zoe Angus	Director, Industry & Commercial	Screen Producers Association	Screen
Penelope Benton	Executive Director	NAVA	Visual arts
Erica McCalman	Co-CEO	Theatre Network Australia	Theatre/ Performance
Christian McBride	Chair	CrewCare	Theatre/ Performance
Maggie Collins	Executive Director	Association of Artist Managers	General
Julia Edwards	Chief Executive	Entertainment Assist	General
Elise Chidiac	Organiser	MEAA	General
Kathy Lapan-Walker	Wellbeing & Mental Health Facilitator	Creative Wellbeing Support	General
Lucy Hayward	CEO	Australian Society of Authors	Literature
Josh Pether	CEO	Arts Access Victoria	Accessibility

Callers*

Caller	Gender	Job
Caller 1	F	Community arts worker
Caller 2	F	Musician
Caller 3	F	Art management
Caller 4	F	Performer
Caller 5	F	Musician
Caller 6	F	Musician
Caller 7	F	Musician
Caller 8	F	Events management
Caller 9	F	Crew
Caller 10	F	Visual artist
Caller 11	M	Performing arts
Caller 12	M	Festivals
Caller 13	M	Musician
Caller 14	F	Screen and poetry performer
Caller 15	F	Crew
Caller 16	F	Musician

* Names withheld to protect their identity

2. Evaluation Framework

Criteria of Merit	Evaluation questions	Indicators of success
1. Appropriateness	To what extent does the Helpline meet an unmet need for its intended user cohort?	The Helpline meets an unmet need for workers in the music and creative sectors.
2. Accessibility	To what extent are workers in music and the broader creative sector aware of the Helpline and its offerings?	Workers in the music and broader creative sectors are aware of the Helpline and the range of services offered. The majority of callers are aware of the range of supports offered by the Helpline. Many creative industry workers, including those from high risk groups, know how to access the Helpline and would call if the need arose.
	How accessible is the Helpline in supporting diverse groups of workers within the creative sectors that may be at higher risk of experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues?	Services are inclusive and accessible for diverse groups of workers within the creative sectors that may be at higher risk of experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues.
3. Efficiency	How efficiently is the Helpline utilising resources to deliver a timely service?	The Helpline is available for all potential users at their time of need. The vast majority of callers were able to schedule an appointment with a psychologist within 48 hours.
4. Quality	To what extent does the Helpline provide a high quality service?	The majority of users are satisfied with the Helpline and their ease of access to the service. This includes callers to dedicated Helplines (LGBTIQ, Safety at Work, First Nations). The majority of psychologists or counselling staff understand the range of issues facing different genres of workers (such as those affecting musicians from a range of genres, crew and other backstage workers). Support Act has the best possible data to demonstrate its performance against the objectives.

3. Discussion Guides

Support Act Wellbeing Helpline evaluation

Discussion guide- USERS

INTRO

Thanks for agreeing to talk with me about your experiences using the Wellbeing Helpline. Anything you tell me will be treated confidentially.

EXPERIENCE

Tell me about your experience with the Helpline.

Strengths

Weaknesses

IMPACT

How are things with you now, after having used the Helpline? To what extent did the Helpline contribute to that? Were there other things at play, such as the passing of time, or other influences that have meant things have changed for you?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Just finally, thinking about your own experience using the Helpline, do you have any suggestions for improvements to the service?

Support Act Wellbeing Helpline evaluation

Discussion guide- EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

INTRO

Thanks for agreeing to talk with me about your experiences using the Wellbeing Helpline.

NEED

Are there any issues specific to your industry or network affecting creative workers for which they'd benefit from counselling support?

AWARENESS

What do you know about the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline?

Thinking about creative workers in your industry or network, how aware do you think workers are of the Helpline? (low/ medium / high). Do you know what they'd know about the Helpline? (probe: just a crisis line or offering wider support?)

If more people in your industry or network knew about it, do you think they'd use it? If not, what are the barriers?

ACCESSIBILITY/ BARRIERS

Are there any particular considerations/ accessibility requirements that would need to be made to support workers in your industry or network?

What are the barriers to people in your sector not accessing the service?

PROMOTION

What advice or help would you give Support Act to promote the Helpline to individuals and businesses/organisations in your industry?

What do you think are the best channels or methods for Support Act to communicate with workers in your network? (eg social media, industry events, word of mouth, newsletters)?

Are there any trusted voices or key figures in your network that could help spread awareness and encourage workers to use the Helpline?

4. Online survey

SUPPORT ACT HELPLINE USER SURVEY - NSF CONSULTING/ PRAGMATIC RESEARCH - 2.12.24

INTRODUCTION

Support Act is in the process of evaluating their Wellbeing Helpline and we'd love to get your feedback so we can continue to improve the service. The following brief survey asks about your experiences using the Helpline. It is important to note that all your answers will remain confidential and if there are any questions you don't feel comfortable answering that's OK.

The survey is being run by independent evaluators, NSF Consulting, who have strong experience in health and cultural evaluation projects. Their work adheres to the relevant Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) as they relate to market research and evaluation.

The Wellbeing Helpline is confidential, and the name of anyone accessing the service is not shared with Support Act. To ensure the survey reaches all individuals who have accessed the Helpline, it is being distributed by AccessEAP.

If you have any questions or concerns about the survey, please contact Tracey Dillon at tracey.dillon@accesseap.com.au

AWARENESS AND USE

How did you first hear about the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline?

Support Act Social Worker

Support Act Website

CrewCare Welfare Officer

Creative Workplaces webinar / communication

Other music industry organisation

Other creative industries organisation

Brochure/poster in venue

HR manager at my workplace

Manager/Supervisor

Staff / contractor briefing

Training/Webinar/Awareness session

Music or Creative Industries newsletter

A friend told me

A colleague told me

Google search

Facebook

Instagram

Support Act promotional materials eg sticker, business card with QR code etc

Other [PLEASE SPECIFY]

When did you last use the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline?

2024

2023

2022

2021

2020

2019

2018

If you are OK to share, what was the reason(s) you made contact with the Wellbeing Helpline? SELECT AS MANY AS APPLY

Anxiety

Burnout

- Career concerns
- Depression
- Divorce/separation
- Fear of loss of job
- Financial concerns
- Grief counselling
- Health issues
- Long working hours
- Relationship issues
- Stress management
- Workplace conflict
- Workplace discrimination
- Workplace harassment
- Workplace bullying
- Workplace sexual misconduct
- Workplace stress
- Other [PLEASE SPECIFY]

If you had not contacted the Wellbeing Helpline, what do you think you would have done? SELECT AS MANY AS APPLY

- Spoken to a friend(s)
- Spoken to a colleague(s)
- Used my employer's employee assistance program
- Accessed other free mental health services
- Accessed paid mental health services
- Visited my GP
- Other [PLEASE SPECIFY]
- Nothing [EXCLUSIVE]

ARRANGING APPOINTMENT

How quickly were you able to arrange an appointment with a counsellor?

- Within 24 hours
- Between 24 and 48 hours
- Between 2 and 3 days
- Between 3 and 4 days
- More than 4 days
- Not sure

Did the day and time of the appointment suit your schedule?

- Yes, absolutely
- Yes, mostly
- No, not really
- No, not at all

Did you experience any barriers when arranging the appointment?

- Yes
- No

[IF YES] What were those barriers? Please provide as much detail as you like
[OPEN-ENDED]

ACCESS

How did you receive the counselling support?

- Telephone
- Face to face in-person
- Video meeting (e.g. Zoom/Teams/Face Time)
- Instant chat counselling
- I did not receive the counselling support/attend appointment
- Other [SPECIFY]

[IF NOT RECEIVE SUPPORT] Why did you not receive the counselling support/ attend appointment? [OPEN-ENDED] [GO TO SATISFACTION]

How would you have preferred to receive the counselling support? SELECT AS MANY AS APPLY

- Face to face in-person
- Telephone
- Video meeting (e.g. Zoom/Teams/Face Time)
- Email counselling
- Instant chat counselling
- App
- Text
- Other [SPECIFY]

COUNSELLORS

What type of counsellor did you use? SELECT AS MANY AS APPLY

- Generalist counsellor
- LGBTQI+ Support Line counsellor
- First Nations Support Line counsellor
- Manager Support Helpline counsellor
- Safety at Work Support Line counsellor
- Not sure

How many sessions did you use? ENTER NUMBER

Were the number of sessions enough or would you have liked more?

- Enough
- Would have liked more

[If Would Have Liked More] Were you offered extra sessions by the counsellor?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

[If Would Have Liked More] Did you request extra sessions?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

How well do you think the counsellor understood your situation?

- Very well
- Quite well
- Not that well
- Not at all well

What makes you say that? Please provide as much detail as you can [OPEN-ENDED]

SATISFACTION

Overall, how satisfied were you with the whole service provided by Support Act and the counsellor?

- Very satisfied
- Quite satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Quite dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Not applicable

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is 'very likely' and 0 'not likely at all', how likely would you be to recommend the Wellbeing Helpline to friends, family or colleagues in need?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

If you are OK to share, to what degree has your situation improved or not since receiving the counselling?

- It has improved a great deal
- It has improved a little bit
- It hasn't really changed
- It has got a little bit worse
- It has got a lot worse

[ASK IF IMPROVED OR GOT WORSE] To what extent do you think Helpline has been part of these changes? [OPEN-ENDED]

Do you have any other feedback about the Helpline? [OPEN-ENDED]

And finally, just a few questions about you

Please select the creative industry in which you do your work. Even if you're currently out of work choose the industries that you have mostly worked in. SELECT AS MANY AS APPLY

- Music
- Performing Arts – including Circus and Physical Theatre, Comedy, Dance and Theatre
- Community engaged practice / Community Arts
- Digital Games
- Emerging & Experimental Arts
- First Nations Arts and Culture
- Literature
- Multi Art Form Practice
- Screen – including development, production, post-production, distribution and exhibition
- Visual Arts, Craft & Design

Other creative industry [PLEASE SPECIFY]

Which best describes the type of work you do? SELECT AS MANY AS APPLY

- Performing artist
- Visual Artist
- Composer
- Writer
- Producer
- Technical worker
- Crew
- Manager
- Administration
- Other [PLEASE SPECIFY]

[IF MUSIC] What genre(s) of music do you work in? SELECT AS MANY AS APPLY

- Pop
- Rock
- Alternative/Indie
- Electronic/EDM
- Country
- Heavy
- Hip Hop/ Rap
- Jazz
- Blues
- Folk
- Classical
- Art Music
- Cabaret / Music Theatre
- Other music genre [PLEASE SPECIFY]

[ASK ALL] Which best describes your current creative industry work arrangement?

- Full-time employee (35+ hours per week)
- Part-time employee (less than 35 hours per week)
- Self-employed sole trader/freelancer
- Independent contractor
- Business owner with employees
- Casual/temporary worker
- Other [PLEASE SPECIFY]

DEMOGRAPHICS

Which age group do you fall into?

- Under 18
- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- 66 and over
- Prefer not to say

Do you identify as...?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Other
- Prefer not to say

What is the postcode of where you live?

Prefer not to say

Do you speak another language other than English?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

[IF YES] Which language(s)? [OPEN ENDED]

Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

- Yes, Aboriginal
- Yes, Torres Strait Islander
- Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- Neither
- Prefer not to say

Do you identify as someone living with a disability?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW

As well as this survey, NSF Consulting will also be holding some confidential discussions with Wellbeing Helpline users by phone or video call over the next few weeks. These discussions will take about 20-30 minutes and will allow us to talk to you in more depth about your experiences with the Support Act Wellbeing Helpline. Would you be interested in taking part? (NB. Not everyone will be contacted)

Yes (please leave your name, phone and mail address and we will be in touch)
No

Thank you again for contributing to this important survey.

5. About the Net Promoter Score

Research has shown that asking how likely someone would be to recommend a company or service to someone else is a useful overarching metric that can provide an overall snapshot of satisfaction and be used as diagnostic tool to identify areas for improvement.

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 is 'very likely' and 0 'not likely at all', how likely would you be to recommend the Wellbeing Helpline to friends, family or colleagues in need?

The analysis of this 'recommendability' data allows us to calculate an overall average score out of 10, as well as to group responses into different bands to understand the variability of views.

This Net Promoter Score (NPS) method identifies referrers who are your biggest fans and who are likely to be strong advocates for your services ('Promoters': who give scores of 9 or 10 out of 10 for recommendability), as well as those less satisfied and who might pose reputational issues by talking you down or not using your services ('Detractors': who gives scores of between 0 and 6).

The 'Passives' (scoring 7 or 8 out of 10) are generally satisfied with your services but are unlikely to talk much about you (either positively or negatively).

The final NPS subtracts the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters to arrive at a number that represents the level of recommendability. Obviously, the more positive the number the higher likelihood users will refer your service.

What is a good NPS?

Ideally, any NPS score is best interpreted through comparison with competitors and/or the relevant sector as a whole.

Much NPS work is applied to consumer-facing companies (retail, banks, insurance, energy providers, telecommunications etc.), where quick surveys can be easily and frequently implemented and NPS scores tracked and easily compared with other companies in the same sector. In consumer NPS research, an NPS of 0 to 30 is seen as a desirable place to be. An NPS between 30 and 50 is seen as excellent and anything above that is outstanding (and very rare). For reference, Apple and Microsoft often score around +40, Amazon about +25, Google about +10 and Facebook -20. Toyota and Volkswagen score about +30. Coca Cola is on 0 and McDonalds -8.

A recent study in Australia suggested providers of healthcare services should aim for an NPS of 30 or more from their patients. In an American study, the average NPS across healthcare services was a higher 58. Specific NPS data on mental health services is not as readily available.