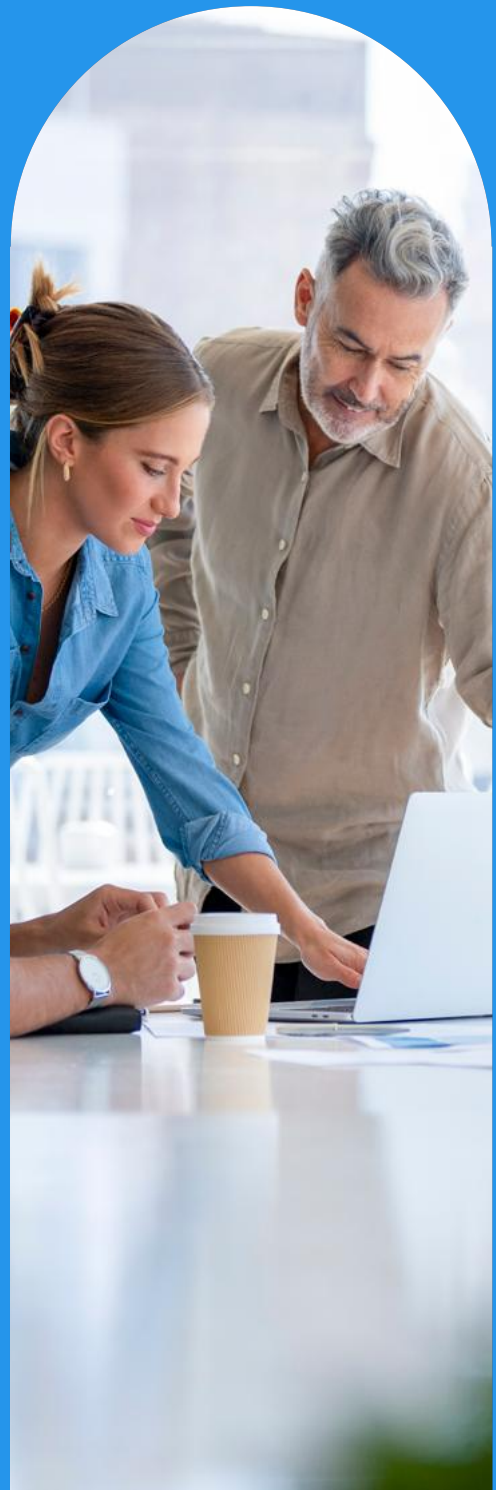




The race for talent:

How to protect your teams
from burnout



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INTRODUCTION

Taking action on burnout

The rise of burnout is linked to major work and life changes in recent years, against the backdrop of widespread health concerns. Stress came from many sources, from the increased demands of work and home, new financial concerns, hybrid working amplifying an always-on culture to the loss of social support. This confluence of factors increased burnout in the workforce.

COVID-19-related stressors further increased the prevalence of burnout, with the Global Workplace Burnout Study revealing that burnout rates rose by 5% within a 12-month period.³

Alongside the difficulties of remote work, the fragility of employment was brought to the fore when jobs were changed or lost overnight. Meanwhile, no-frills lockdown lives also left workers pondering what it's all really worth.

The combination of these factors has left Australian employees feeling jaded. In the recent Headspace Health 2022 Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health Report, only 28% of workers said they felt engaged in their roles, with 72% taking at least one day off work in the past year to cope with a mental health challenge.⁴

Employees are in search of organisations that will better meet their needs. Lockdowns changed the expectations of more than half of workers according to recent Flare and EY Australia research, leaving 31% of businesses unable to find suitable staff.^{5,6}

In this practical guide, we will look at the impact of burnout and how organisations can tackle the root of the problem.

Practical tips for embedding a wellbeing culture will help you protect, retain, and attract talent.

³ Infinite Potential, 2021: *2021 Global Workplace Burnout Study*: <https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/6c37d4f0-7b8a-4dd3-afb8-0a1b504af624/2021%20Workplace%20Burnout%20Study-%20Final.pdf>

⁴ Headspace Health, 2022: *Fourth Annual Workforce Attitudes Toward Mental Health*: <https://go.headspacehealth.com/2022-wfa>

⁵ Flare and EY Australia, 2022: *Pay in the New Economy*: <https://flarebenefits.com/whitepaper/>

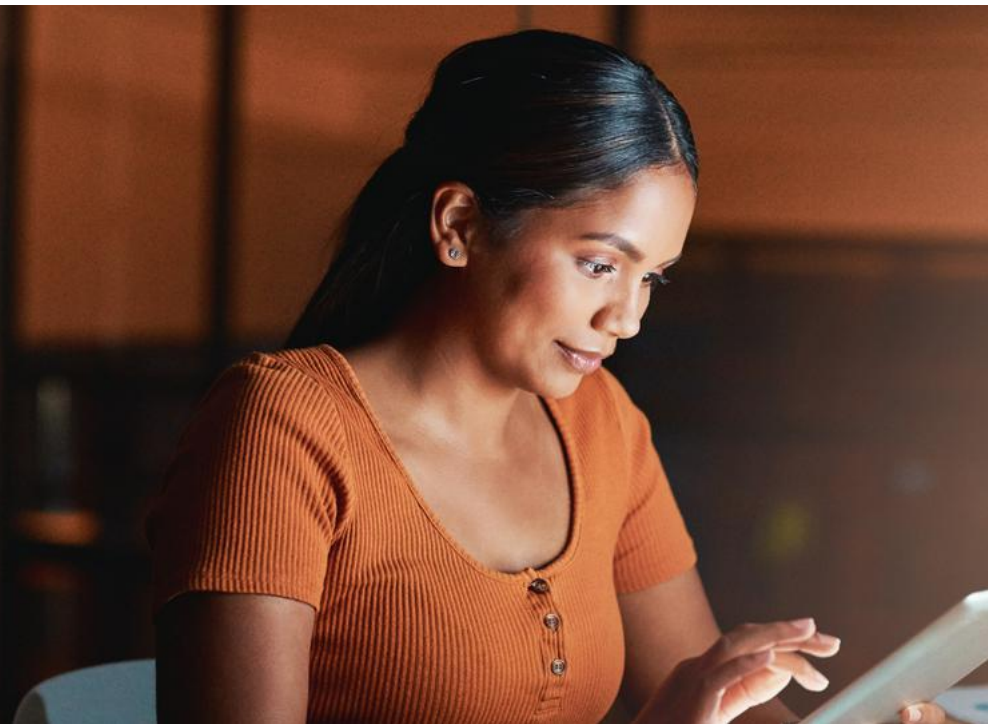
⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, June 2022: *Business Conditions and Sentiments*: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/business-indicators/business-conditions-and-sentiments/jun-2022>

**Burnout rates
increased by**

5%

in 12 months.

Source: Global Workplace
Burnout Study





The way that we work and live has fundamentally changed since COVID. Employees and employers have experienced huge work and life adjustments, and major health concerns. This pressure-cooker environment has resulted in increasing rates of burnout. Greater support is now an expectation from employees, and employers that reduce stress and promote a culture of wellbeing position themselves as employers of choice.

James Windon,
Co-Founder and Co-CEO, Flare



THE IMPACT OF BURNOUT

Why addressing burnout matters

Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion and disconnect caused by excessive and prolonged stress which is not appropriately resolved. It is a gradual process, with the signs getting worse over time.

“Different from standard ‘fatigue or tiredness’, burnout is not simply overcome by a good night’s rest or a day away from work. It requires rest, reflection and change to be overcome,” says Oliver Brecht, Psychologist and Managing Director of corporate performance psychology specialists Veretis – a Flare partner.

Other risk factors can contribute to burnout, beyond the job – a personal crisis, money and life events can add to stress, increasing the risk of employee burnout.

If addressed early, with interventions at an individual and organisational level, employees can be supported to prevent or overcome burnout, feel healthy, and get back to enjoying their work.

The impact on your people

Burnout causes disconnection, meaning employees no longer focus on the reason, purpose or results of their efforts. It can also be detrimental to the physical and mental health of employees.

Physical indicators include insomnia, stomach issues, chronic headaches, neck tension and elevated blood pressure.

Look for the signs of burnout

Employees experiencing burnout may exhibit some of these signs:

1. Overwhelmed by responsibilities they were once motivated to undertake
2. Isolating from others
3. Taking longer to get things done
4. Showing signs of alcohol, drug or other dependencies
5. Being easily frustrated or cynical about their job
6. Being less reliable, coming to work late or not showing up
7. Reduced productivity and performance

Emotionally, burnout sufferers may experience anxiety, helplessness, a loss of motivation and increased cynicism.

All these physical and mental health symptoms have an impact on workplace behaviour, says Dr Ruchi Sinha, Associate Professor of Organisational Behaviour at The University of South Australia Business School.

“The more tense and helpless you feel, the more you withdraw from relationships,” she says. “You will be less engaged at work, and feel more irritable and detached.”

As a result, workplace conflicts are more likely to occur, along with reduced productivity, and a culture without social engagement and cohesion.



The impact on your business

According to Beyond Blue, untreated mental health conditions cost Australian businesses approximately \$10.9 billion per year.

A highly engaged workforce is critical for growth. Employees experiencing burnout have a negative impact on the business by reducing morale, productivity, increasing turnover, presenteeism, absenteeism, and impacting overall business resilience.





What contributes to workplace burnout?

Oliver Brecht from Veretis identifies contributors to workplace burnout:

- Not feeling valued, recognised, or rewarded
- Disconnection from how efforts make a difference
- Feeling overworked
- Disconnection from social support
- A toxic work culture
- Unclear communication or lack of support
- Low autonomy
- Being unable to 'switch off' from work
- Unfair treatment
- No sense of purpose

The link between financial stress and burnout

Money is a source of ongoing stress for Australians. A recent study by AMP found that the number of Australian workers in severe financial stress has doubled since 2020 with rising inflation and interest rates putting nearly 1 million people under severe pressure and another 2 million under moderate stress.

Financial wellbeing is an integral part of holistic wellbeing. It can impact both our mental and physical health. When people are in vulnerable financial positions and under stress, financial worries can carry over into their work, impacting their performance.

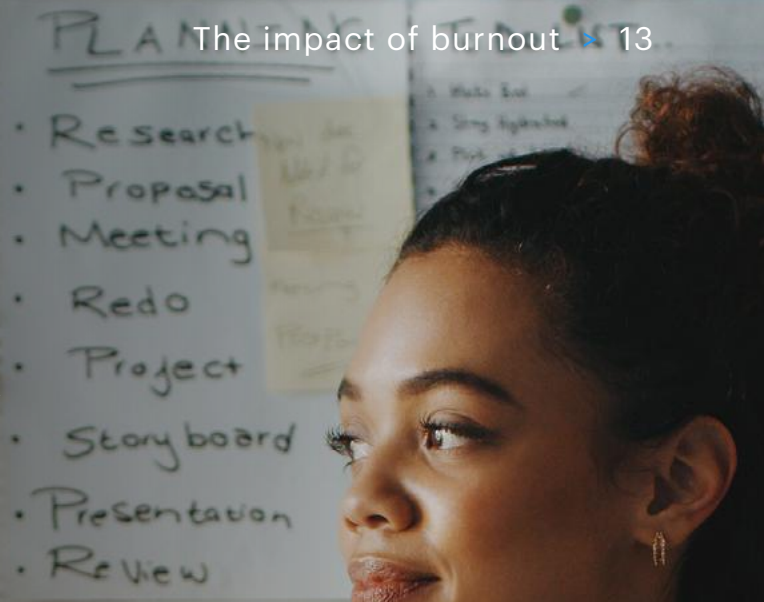
With wallets tightening across Australia due to cost-of-living increases, we are feeling the real impact of financial stress. This is compounded by economic uncertainty like rising interest rates, property downturns, volatile investment markets, and the continued impact of COVID.

To cope with financial stress, Flare and EY Australia research showed that one in ten Australian employees have chosen to take time off from work. Moreover, these employees have taken an average of eight days off per year to deal with issues regarding financial stress.



When employees are experiencing burnout and financial stress, they may avoid dealing with their finances and are less likely to make a plan to get themselves out of debt. They may make more impulse purchases or not consider their budget, for example. Providing support to these employees through financial wellbeing programs and benefits can help break this cycle.

Steph Gillon,
Head of Financial Wellbeing, Flare





Flare tip

Through Flare, employers can provide meaningful financial wellbeing benefits with access to everyday savings across hundreds of retailers, helping to limit the cost-of-living impact. Employees with Flare can access financial wellbeing education from the Flare app too, helping to address key topics around money.



SUPPORT TEAMS

Building a buffer for your teams

To reduce the impact of burnout, organisations need to balance the demands they place on their people with the resources they provide.

A good way to do this is by focusing on middle management, which is sandwiched between taking care of direct reports while managing the expectations of senior leadership.

Balance demands and resources

Managers have a direct influence on how employees feel in their jobs. Their role is to shape a positive experience for employees by providing clear direction, giving help, and support where needed, and removing obstacles.

“Support from your immediate supervisor is a huge buffer,” says Dr Ruchi Sinha.

“Managers need training to negotiate for more team resources, as well as in mental health awareness, so they can provide wellbeing support when needed.”

Empower your managers to support teams

- Help managers understand and identify burnout
- Educate managers on how certain work practices can contribute to burnout
- Normalise burnout as a topic with managers
- Let managers dedicate time to people management
- Pick managers with strong, positive people leadership skills
- Ensure managers understand the power of both formal and informal feedback to help staff recognise their efforts making a difference.

To successfully negotiate upwards, Dr Sinha suggests undertaking pilot studies on initiatives such as autonomy, job crafting or wellbeing support to highlight how they impact productivity and efficiency.

How to structure a wellbeing check-in

One-on-ones are a great opportunity for managers to support their teams. They can check in frequently with their direct reports and make sure that they feel valued and connected to their work, and have what they need to do their jobs.

They should be frequent and split between addressing team goals and personal wellbeing. Factors to consider include:

- Team goals: What tasks were completed? What else do we need to do? What's the strategy to address the problem?
- Personal goals: What are you feeling hopeful about? What are you feeling less engaged or excited about? How are the connections within the team?

“In setting meeting agendas, tasks and action item lists, you should include a wellbeing check-in with targeted questions to identify wellbeing challenges and necessary resources. This helps to catch the signs of burnout so you can intervene early,” says Dr Sinha.

Importantly, managers set the tone for workplace culture. The need to adopt and model healthy behaviours like taking breaks, having boundaries between work and personal life, working reasonable hours, using flexible work policies, and reducing unnecessary meetings.

BUILD STRENGTH

Fostering autonomy and purpose

Research conducted on remote work during COVID-19 found the more autonomy employees have over their time, location and space, the more productive and engaged they are.⁷

Give employees autonomy

Autonomy helps people manage demands, and their physical and emotional energy.

Autonomy over time is the most impactful, says Dr Sinha, but this isn't just starting early and leaving early, or working nine days a fortnight.

"Managers must set specific, realistic, measurable and time-bound goals, and then give their employees the autonomy and flexibility to deliver on those goals," she says, emphasising the importance of clarity on deliverables and deadlines.

⁷ Galanti, Teresa et al. 'Work From Home During the COVID-19 Outbreak: The Impact on Employees' Remote Work Productivity, Engagement, and Stress'. *Journal of occupational and environmental medicine* vol. 63,7 (2021): e426-e432. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8247534/

3 ways to embed autonomy:

Autonomous working leads to better results, improved job satisfaction and employee engagement. Oliver Brecht, Psychologist and Managing Director of Corporate performance psychology specialists and Flare partner, Veretis, offers three tips to embed autonomy at work:

- Invite open-ended questions:** When you're handing over a body of work or doing check-ins, this will identify some of the hard and easiest parts. This will help you build an understanding of what the employee sees as the best way forward.
- Written next steps:** Set the expectations for both the employee and manager to follow and to refer back to.
- Deliver formal and informal feedback on tasks and projects:** While formal feedback covers legalities, and sets expectations and goals, informal feedback helps you catch people doing something good. You want to reward straight after the behaviour to encourage it to happen again.





Case study: Energy Australia gives the power to its people

AFR's Best Places to Work winner Energy Australia uses its program Energise to give teams the flexibility to decide how, when, and where they work instead of this being decided at the organisational level. The continued development of this initiative has seen Energy Australia hit its highest engagement score ever and receive overwhelming support from its people.



Managers must set specific, realistic, measurable and time-bound goals, and then give their employees the autonomy and flexibility to deliver on those goals.

Dr Ruchi Sinha,
Associate Professor of Organisational Behaviour at The University of South Australia Business School.



Help employees feel a sense of purpose

When employees feel emotionally connected to their role, they are more connected to the company, and their purpose.

Tasks or roles that fit with people's interests, knowledge and skills can also improve engagement.

While this might be easier in some roles than others, even the most rigid of roles can benefit from an element of crafting – such as truck driving, as explained by University of Melbourne researchers.⁸ While driving long hours to make deliveries is typically a must, drivers could select their routes or who they work with.

Managers should also realign employees' roles with purpose by highlighting how their tasks help to achieve specific organisational outcomes.

For example, answering phones might not be the most scintillating task, but if no one does it, potential customers might be missed, meaning the organisation won't grow. This purpose-led framing of tasks, in combination with discussing those tasks as building blocks to career progression, can make the mundane more appealing.

⁸ Vella-Brodrick, Dianne et al. 'Crafting your work to increase job satisfaction'. *Pursuit* (2022): pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/crafting-your-work-to-increase-job-satisfaction



Case study: Hilton makes tasks purposeful

Hilton uses a balanced scorecard for staff reviews, which links employee performance with corporate goals, enabling workers to see the organisational impact of their roles and of their performance.



IMPROVE PRACTICES

Creating a culture of wellbeing

Workplace culture defines the collective values, practices, and expectations that guide your team. If your culture prioritises wellbeing as a 'nice to have' and not an imperative, it can perpetuate burnout.

To address burnout, businesses must make wellbeing a priority. When this becomes normalised and ingrained in the culture, then employees model behaviour and encourage one another to adopt healthier approaches. Part of doing this is organisations recognising that wellbeing is directly linked to performance. When people feel and think their best, they perform their best too.

The pillars of wellbeing

A workplace wellbeing program is the experiences, activities, policies, programs and non-wage compensation benefits designed to support individuals to better holistic health.

A well-designed program, along with a culture that embraces employee wellbeing and appealing workplace benefits, can make your business a more attractive place to work for candidates and existing employees.



1. Mental wellbeing

A workplace wellbeing program is the experiences, activities, policies, programs and non-wage compensation benefits designed to support individuals to better holistic health.

One of the ways to help employees manage this stress is to offer mental health benefits. These can come in the form of tools and resources to support your employees.

Examples of mental health benefits:

- Online therapy or counselling services like EAPs
- Expert insight, education, and content on mental health topics like burnout
- Paid time off for mental health days
- Mindfulness like meditation experiences
- Outline how an employee's day-to-day tasks contribute to the broader organisational goals
- Host regular social events



2. Financial wellbeing

Financial wellness is often understated in workplace wellbeing programs, yet financial stress has a substantial impact on an individual and their productivity.

Examples of financial wellness benefits:

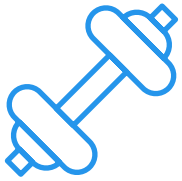
- Accessing On-Demand Pay to cover shortfalls throughout the month
- Financial wellbeing education and support
- Superannuation selection
- Salary packaging like novated leases
- Access to advice services



55% of Australian workers say that COVID changed what they expect from an employer. Employees are actively searching for companies that offer a wellbeing culture. They are correcting work-life balance.

Steph Gillon,
Head of Financial Wellbeing, Flare





3. Physical wellbeing

Physical health is an important component of employee wellness. Whether it's helping your employees stay active or better manage any illnesses they're dealing with, benefits that improve physical health can make a huge difference to your workforce.

Examples of physical health benefits:

- Discounts and perks with well-known health brands
- Digital fitness class access or subsidised gym membership
- Annual health screenings
- Chronic disease management





4. Social wellbeing

Isolation and loneliness can have a significant impact on both mental and physical health. In times where remote working and periods of isolation have become normal, it's important for employers to continue to foster a sense of community, belonging and participation in and outside the office.

Examples of social benefits:

- A digital platform to access wellbeing benefits, anytime and anywhere
- A program for informal connection digitally - like wellbeing check-ins
- Remote company gatherings that create immersive at-home experience

3 ways to incorporate wellbeing benefits

Wellbeing benefits work best when they are aligned with a business culture that supports holistic wellbeing.

- **Incorporate wellbeing into your benefits package:** Employers are redesigning their benefit package to support work-life balance and self-care. With Flare, employers can offer savings with health, sport, travel, and leisure brands, for example, to offer employees a way to unwind and unplug outside of work.
- **Address financial wellbeing:** The rising cost-of-living is causing stress and anxiety, and employers are using benefits like Flare's savings with hundreds of retailers to help reduce the cost-of-living impact on their employees.
- **Deliver wellbeing in a rich experience:** Employers are outsourcing elements of their wellbeing programs to incorporate savings, expert wellbeing content, and experiences. The Flare app delivers these in a simple, accessible, and intuitive platform.



Need help designing your wellbeing program?

[Download the free Flare guide: How to design your wellbeing program for step-by-step guidance.](#)



Case study: How Healius addressed burnout with benefits

Employees of frontline healthcare company Healius were particularly hard hit by burnout during the pandemic. In response, Healius successfully reinvigorated its Employee Value Proposition to offer Flare's benefits and perks that recognised and valued their employees. This included significant savings through salary packaging, and everyday savings with wellness and retail brands. With both on-site and remote workers, the Flare benefits platform keeps employees engaged and fosters a sense of belonging.

HOW TO GET STARTED

Protecting your teams from burnout with a strong wellbeing strategy

This is where Flare can lend a helping hand.

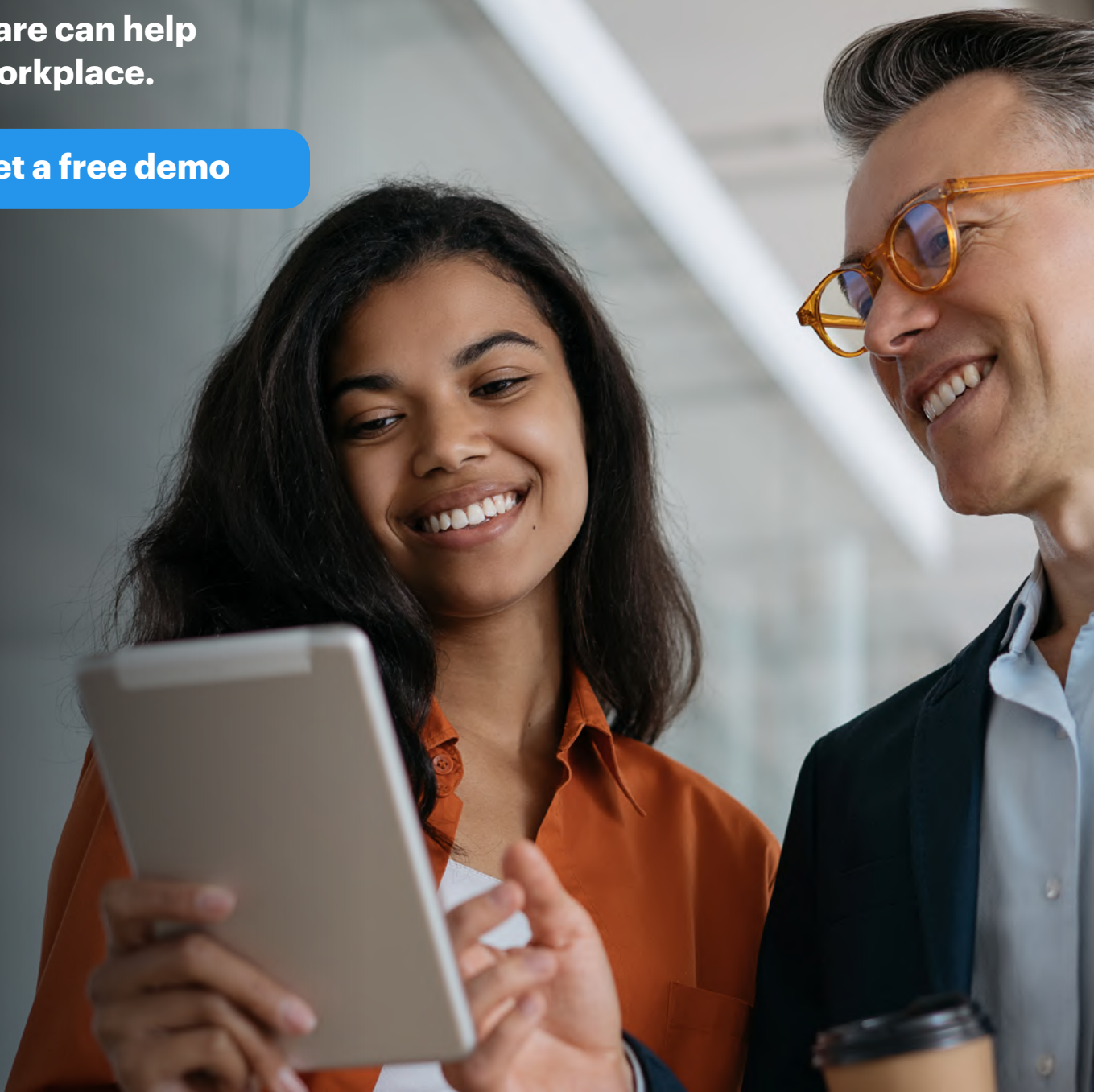
Flare is a leading benefits platform and pay technology provider. The Flare app is available for free to businesses of any size, and brings Flare's full suite of benefits into the hands of employees, at the centre of employee engagement:

- Free access to a competitive suite of perks, savings and wellbeing resources from hundreds of retailers
- Access to valuable salary packaging services to save on tax, including novated car leasing, a tax structure that could give employees a pay boost of nearly \$6,000 per year on average.
- Better engagement with superannuation savings, the largest benefit available to most Australians.
- A wellbeing calendar of expert selected events across the year to easily curate from, uniting your people around significant moments.
- Collections of expert, quality content covering topics like resilience, financial wellbeing, stress and more

Flare serves more than a million employees, including a quarter of Australian workers starting jobs each year, and is integrated into the leading HRIS, time-and-attendance and payroll software suites, allowing for seamless one-time activation.

**Find out more about
how Flare can help
your workplace.**

Get a free demo





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