



## Case Study: Border Express

### Prevention is better than cure

When Border Express decided to take the initiative and reduce the potential for injuries amongst its workforce, designing the programs was the easy bit.

A family-run company based in Albury NSW, Border Express is a transport and logistics firm that operates nationwide. This means the bulk of its workforce are male truck drivers, whose attitude to most things in life is 'she'll be right mate'. But with long hours on the road followed by manhandling goods on arrival, the company felt it was extremely important to educate drivers on the importance of stretching.

Unsurprisingly, when drivers at the Albury and Sydney depots were asked how often they stretched and the type of program they would be interested in, there was a deafening silence. Group-stretching sessions were knocked back, with the drivers opting for visual stretching aids.

This led to occupational therapist—and senior team member—Wendy Horn, developing the 'Stretch for Work Prevention Program', designed to help mobility and reduce the risk of injury.

Wendy knew *how* she pitched the program would be critical for its take-up. She decided to:

- develop a 'stretch card' for display in vehicles
- demonstrate to employees during 'toolbox' meetings
- provide individual stretching and information sessions for injured workers and those interested in a one-on-one session.

Wendy and the leadership team felt these methods supported the culture for voluntary adoption and maintenance of healthy lifestyle choices.

The stretch program has proved particularly successful in the parcel area of Border Express' Sydney branch. Wendy attributes this to a motivational area supervisor there ... who is also a former soccer coach.

Further stretch sessions are planned for branches in Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Adelaide.

Also launched a year ago was the Employee Wellness Program, which, like its counterpart, was also trialled in the Albury and Sydney depots in 2010.

This program was modelled on the Employee Assistance Program, and saw allied health treatments replace psychological sessions. (The Assistance Program continued to run in parallel.)

Each employee could book three sessions per year with a physiotherapist, masseur or chiropractor. Border Express offered these services to all employees, regardless of whether they had a work-related injury or not, recognising that poor health and injuries impact on work regardless of the cause.

Frontline supervisors encouraged staff to book in for sessions, and promoted a culture of self-care. Border Express says this initiative has been 'readily used and appreciated'.

As Border Express had been receiving only 33 claims per year on average before the introduction of these two programs, there has been little change to this figure. However, it has been able to improve its extremely low rate of claims requiring 12 weeks leave, from 2.9% to 1.3%. And 95% of claims require no time off work and have rehabilitation plans in place to support injured workers.

In trying to improve early intervention services and reduce the potential for further injuries, Border Express decided to focus on preventative workplace initiatives. It is an area many larger organisations overlook, which simply means they fund rehabilitations instead.

Measures designed to prevent injury is something all organisations should be thinking about.