

New programme encourages staff to reach out for support

A programme encouraging PowerNet staff to feel more comfortable about reaching out for support is being rolled out across the company.

Psychological First Aid (PFA) provides emotional and practical support to someone who has experienced a traumatic event.

GM health, safety and environment (HSE) Rangi Solomon has implemented the programme at two other businesses and has asked HSE advisor Rachel Saunders to come on board as PFA specialist for PowerNet.

Rangi says PFA is a process for supporting people, and assisting them to regain a sense of control in a non-intrusive way when challenged with distressing life events.



Rachel Saunders and Rangi Solomon.

“We care. We’re not here to cure people. We’re not experts. We can refer you on to experts,” he says.

The programme follows Te Whare Tapa Whā – a Maori model of understanding health encompassing the physical, the mind, the spiritual and family.

While still in the early stages of being set up, PFA has the backing of PowerNet’s health and safety committee, senior leadership team and Board.

Rangi says PFA is a good fit with the company’s health safety and environment strategic plan within the wellbeing area.

As a first course of action, Rangi and Rachel are encouraging staff to make contact with PowerNet’s work-based counselling and support services, or with other support networks they may have, such as family, marae, churches and friends.

PFA is being introduced as an additional option if people aren’t comfortable contacting a work-based support/counselling service or feel they don’t have other avenues of support.

Rachel says confidentiality is a cornerstone principle to ensure people have trust in the programme.

“Roles and responsibilities are important because the last thing we want to do is make a person’s situation worse.”

They will be looking for expressions of interest from people to be programme contacts across PowerNet’s offices and depots.

“Having key people scattered across the organisation who feel connected to the programme, and who others trust and see as having some mana, who they can talk to,” Rangi says.

PowerNet has done a lot of good work in relation to hazard and risk mitigation – and the addition of PFA to the wellbeing programme is timely, Rangi says.

The next step will be taking the concept on the road and getting feedback.