



## November 2019

As we start winding down towards the end of the year, there's still a lot going on at the University! We have important reminders in this month's newsletter about washing your hands properly to avoid getting sick, and information about working safely with nanomaterials and silica. We encourage everyone to go home on time on Go Home on Time Day, and celebrate the festive season safely at all the end of year parties. In very exciting news, we now have an onsite staff counselling service! Read on below to find out more.



### Go Home on Time Day - Wednesday 20 November 2018

Go Home on Time Day is on 20 November this year.

Whilst going home on time should be the norm rather than the exception, this is not the case for everyone. Working excessively long hours is detrimental to both physical and mental health. Additionally, fatigued workers are less productive and more likely to make mistakes and have accidents.

So, in the interests of safety, wellbeing and work-life balance, let's all make a special effort on Wednesday 20 November to finish work on time and go do something we enjoy!



### Bushfires: Major Critical Incident Response

For the first time since new fire ratings were introduced in 2009, catastrophic fire danger was forecast for Sydney for Tuesday 12 November. For staff affected by these devastating fires and in need of psychological and emotional support, Benestar is available on **1300 360 364**.

The Benestar critical incidents and major events resource kit, which includes information and articles on how to support yourself and others impacted, can be downloaded [here](#).

This resource kit contains the following factsheets:

- Helping employees who have been involved in a critical incident
- Supporting children after a major event
- Helping children cope with traumatic stress
- Common reactions after a major event
- Coping after a critical incident
- Tips for supporting family, friends and colleagues
- Making use of Best You program after a major event



## New Benestar Onsite Service

In 2019, UNSW renewed its contract with Benestar as our Employee Assistance Program provider. As part of the new contract, a Benestar counsellor will be available to staff for appointments at the Kensington campus for half a day every fortnight. This is in addition to the existing services which are available over the phone (1300 360 364), online, through the [Benestar app](#) and via face to face appointments at the Benestar offices.

The new service will run in Room G033 in The Quad, from 9am - 1pm every second Wednesday from 27 November onwards, continuing throughout 2020. Some of you may know this venue as the flu vaccine clinic room. (During the flu clinic, the counselling service will move to a different venue.)

Gabrielle McCorry will be our regular Benestar onsite counsellor. Appointments with Gabrielle can be booked by calling 1300 360 364 (bookings can be made from Friday 15 November onwards). It will also be possible to book in on the day for any appointments which remain free, by going to the room and putting a cross next to your chosen time on the appointment sheet on the door.

Benestar services are available free to all staff, including casual staff, and their immediate family members.



## SafeSys Update

A WHS System Replacement Project Team has been established and will be overseen by a WHS System Replacement Steering Committee. The requirements for a replacement system have been developed and are currently under review, with requirements to be sent to vendors next week. The planned timeline is tight, and includes:

- System selection in December 2019
- System implementation commencing Feb 2020
- System implementation completion Q3 2020

The system selected will be off-the-shelf, with no customisations. It will require changes to existing practices and processes and (hopefully!) support streamlined processes, dashboard reporting and an intuitive interface.



## A Reminder of the Importance of Washing Hands Properly

Washing your hands properly is not just for laboratory or workshop staff and students. Frequently washing your hands, especially before eating, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of many common seasonal illnesses (flu, gastric etc.) or contamination from things that you may have touched.

Basic soap and water is as good at cleaning your hands as any hand disinfectant or sanitiser. The sad reality is, about 25% of people don't wash their hands at all, and of those who do, they don't wash them

frequently or adequately. In fact those who do wash their hands on average do so for only around 10 seconds which at best will remove about 90% of germs. It should take about 30 seconds to wash your hands adequately (steps 1-9 in link below). The problem is, the remaining bacteria will grow and can double in number in less than 20 minutes! It doesn't matter what you use to wash your hands, if your technique is poor then your hands will not be clean. [Read more.](#)

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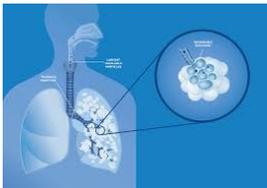


### **Medibank Massages and One-on-one Consultations**

UNSW Wellbeing is arranging for Medibank to provide free 10-minute massages to UNSW staff members in November. We are also arranging for one-on-one consultations so staff can make an appointment to discuss their health insurance needs with a consultant.

Dates and other details are currently being locked in. [This page](#) will be updated when dates and booking links become available so be sure to keep an eye on it!

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### **NSW Halving Exposure Limit to Silica**

The NSW Government has announced plans to halve the workplace exposure threshold for silicosis-causing silica and introduce new safety fines for manufactured or engineered stone fabricators. It will support Safe Work Australia members' recent recommendation to reduce the workplace exposure standard for respirable crystalline silica from a time-weighted average of 0.1mg per cubic metre over eight hours to 0.05mg, with a three-year transition period.

The government will also support Safe Work Australia undertaking further research on whether a reduction to 0.02mg per cubic metre is achievable.

According to a Cancer Council [fact sheet](#) on silica dust, some international bodies recommend an exposure limit of 0.025mg per cubic metre over eight hours, but there is no evidence that *any* exposure level is safe.

Manufactured stone is particularly hazardous, with a crystalline silica content of 90 per cent, compared to three per cent for marble and 30 per cent for granite.

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### **Does Your Research Involve Nanotechnology?**

A reminder that the [HS933 Working with Nanomaterials Guideline](#) is available on the Health & Safety website to help identifying and managing the many and varied risks related to this growing field. Any assessment of risk should include consideration of [HS933a Nanomaterial risk banding checklist](#), which includes a flowchart, that may be useful in helping to determine control measures. It is important that the completion of [HS933b Nanomaterial Work Record](#) (or equivalent) be completed for all individuals working with nano materials with unknown toxicological properties. This record must be kept for 40 years following the individual leaving employment at UNSW.

[Here](#) is an article relating to evidence that some nanomaterials are harmful.

While not endorsing any products in particular, nanoparticle safety containment cabinets are available on the market and the purchase and use of these should be considered as part of your risk management plan. See [here](#) for an example of a nano cabinet.

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### **End of Year Parties**

As we approach the festive season don't let your end of year party be spoilt by an incident. Familiarise yourself with the UNSW [HS825 Alcohol and Drugs Procedure](#) including the UNSW No Open Container Code. Also, the UNSW Code of Conduct sets out the principles for behaviour. Top tips for a fun (and safer) party: Set a definite start and end time, make sure that everyone has a safe way to get home, check the venue in advance for any obvious hazards, ensure there is plenty of substantial food and water available, have a designated person who can deal with any issues, don't give offensive secret Santa gifts.

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