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MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

Electricity distribution company CitiPower and Powercor has won the Mental Health Employer excellence award at the 2014 Victorian Public Healthcare Awards presented by Victorian Minister for Mental Health Mary Wooldridge. The inaugural award recognises the company's Mental Health Program which promotes awareness, prevention and early intervention.

"This award is the highest recognition and acknowledges the achievements of organisations that have worked to improve understanding and awareness of mental illness and provided support services to employees," CEO Tim Rourke said.

"CitiPower and Powercor is proud of our robust mental health strategy and significant investment in a range of programs aimed at creating a sustainable mentally healthy workplace for our employees. Through awareness, we hope to encourage staff to start having the conversation."

The program includes some of the following implemented initiatives:

- Working with BeyondBlue to establish tailored engagement and training sessions including for the Senior Executive Team and 35 awareness sessions to more than 1000 staff at 13 urban and regional locations.
- Creation of a Mental Health booklet distributed to the homes of all employees.
- Appointment of a Return to Work Advisor with mental health expertise.
- Formation of a Peer to Peer Support group who continue to volunteer their time to support their colleagues.
- Enhancement of the Employee Assistance Program which has provided 24 hour counselling for more than 100 employees and their families to date.
- Creation of an Intranet page and video promoting Mental Health support services.
- Ongoing promotion of the annual RUOK? Day; and
- Inclusion of Mental Health Awareness training in induction programs.

"Over the past 18 months, CitiPower and Powercor have developed a very strong mental health strategy focusing on mental health awareness, prevention and early intervention for its 2,000 employees around Victoria," Ms Wooldridge said.

"CitiPower and Powercor has invested approximately \$370,000 to help create and sustain a workplace that encourages positive mental health. This includes removing the stigma associated with mental illness, understanding organisational factors that contribute to poor mental health, and developing workplace practices that contribute to good mental health."

The company was represented at the 10th Annual Victorian Public Healthcare Awards by General Manager, Network Services Garry Audley, Senior Strategic Health and Safety Advisor Danielle Fairchild, and Senior Return to Work Advisor Lindy Davies.

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Editor's note: Photographs available upon request

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