



Budget



+ wealth + security

# Booster

November 2013

## Moustachery and Mental Health

When you start to see men resembling porn stars and 80s cricket icons on the streets and in your office, it can only mean its Movember.

Movember is a month long challenge to grow moustaches to raise awareness for men's health, in particular prostate cancer and mental illness. In its eleventh year, it is hoped that this year's efforts will exceed the 1.1 million Mo's grown and \$141.5 million raised in 2012.

Men's health issues have gained greater prominence in the last decade, particularly with well known individuals such as Sam Newman and Alan Joyce publicly sharing their stories and advocating awareness. For insured clients, it is common to see claims for mental health disorders and it is timely to consider how insurance can help.

### Mental Health in Australia

An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare study into the burden of disease indicated that mental disorders are the leading cause of disability in Australia, accounting for an estimated 24% of the total years lost due to disability.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing in 2007 and found that an estimated 3.2 million Australians had suffered from a mental disorder in the twelve months prior to the survey.

### Claims

As mental illness has become more widely discussed and accepted, the percentage of claims for mental illness has increased.

At BT, the percentage of new income protection (IP) claims attributable to mental health has risen from 8 to 14% between 2008 and 2012. But this doesn't capture the whole picture. Many claims are referred to as secondary mental health, in that they began as a different disability then mental disorders also set in. Suffering from a major disease or injury is listed as a key cause of depression.

In 2012 mental health accounted for 23% of all active IP claims (existing and new), and 30% of costs. The claims tend to have a much longer duration than physical illness/injury claims, with the average duration over three years.

### How can insurance help?

Many clients are surprised to learn that mental health is covered under their insurance. Income Protection policies allow clients to take time out of the work force to focus on treatment and recovery. In the event of serious and permanent mental disorders, TPD can also become payable.

Keeping in contact with the work place, and even working in some capacity, generally leads to your client feeling more comfortable and more likely to return to work. Definitions of total disability which provide flexibility and don't penalise your client for working, help to encourage work participation where possible.

The insurer's role, however, is not just about paying claims. The more support and guidance that can be provided in the early stages of the claim, generally, the better the outcome will be for the client. Look for a policy with a counselling benefit in-built. These are common in life policies, but not with income protection. Insurers can also assist with rehabilitation psychologists, and even retraining. In general, the longer a client is on claim, the less likely they are to be able to return to work, so support and assistance in the early stages is vital.

Policies and claims procedures have evolved in the last few years to provide claimants with a greater level of support. For more information about comprehensive cover options, please contact us today.

- <sup>1</sup> <http://au.movember.com/about/history>
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=6442467990>
- <sup>3</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4326.0>
- <sup>4</sup> <http://au.movember.com/mens-health/mental-health>

Source | BT

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings, 2003  
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