

RU OK?™

inTrucks&Sheds

meet Teagan



Teagan, 32, works in warehousing, logistics and transport for the oil and gas industry. His career kicked off ten years ago in Darwin as a casual stevedore, before he became a forklift operator and took on various leadership roles. He is now the Queensland Manager for Qube Energy and is based in Chinchilla, three hours inland from Brisbane. Teagan's work in frontline and managerial roles, has given him unique insights into the challenges of the industry and how businesses can build mentally healthy workplaces.

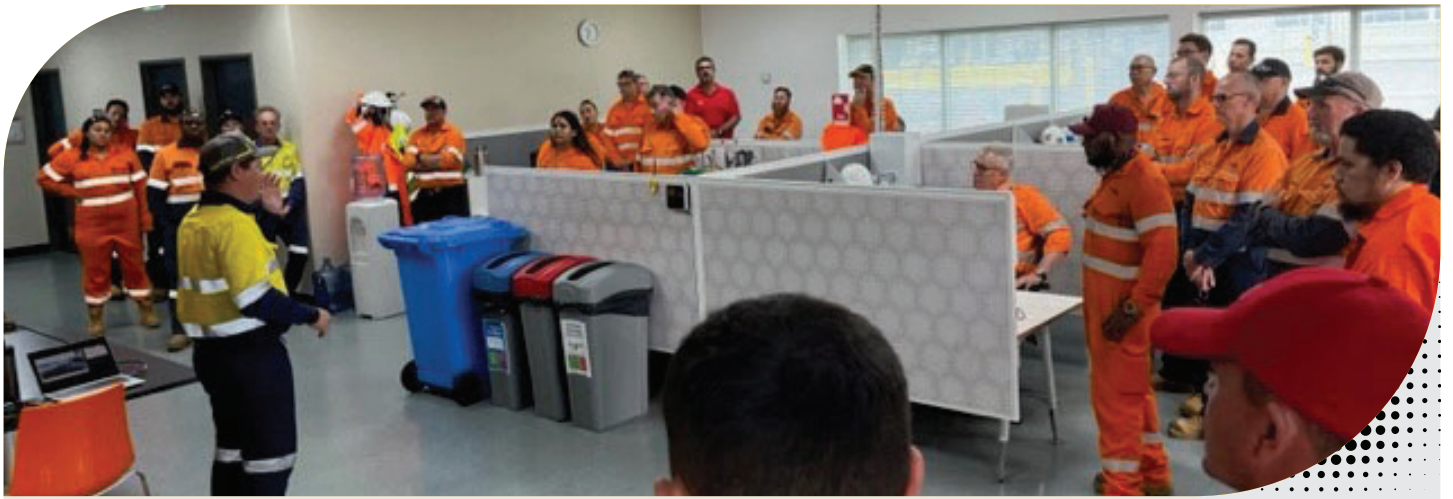
Teagan: Early on in my career, as a forklift operator and a team leader, I moved from job to job because I was on short term contracts. That's not uncommon in our industry, but it brings with it a whole heap of uncertainty. You're constantly wondering when your next job will be and trying to line up consistent work. On top of that, I started out during an oil and gas downturn, which meant people were being moved around to other contracts or laid off fairly regularly. It added a lot of pressure and stress that I wasn't prepared for.

Since I've moved to Chinchilla and settled into the new management role, **I'm focused on building a culture that enables two things – people feel comfortable reaching out for support when they're not doing well, and workers feel confident checking in on their colleagues when they notice a change.** I think it's important to have both skills in the workplace because many people, especially males, struggle bringing up their issues but find it easier to talk when prompted. Another thing I've noticed over the years is just how different everyone presents when they're going through a hard time. We've had some people turn up to work and I can tell immediately from their appearance, body language or attitude that they're not OK, but then I've also been completely thrown by someone telling me they split from their wife 12 months ago, and despite me working closely with them, I never knew.



Making conversation a regular thing can create a culture where people are constantly there for each other, and you don't miss the signs.

It happened to me the other day. I'd been a bit reserved because of an incident that had affected me, and one of my staff walked over and asked 'hey, are you ok?'. I felt really proud that we have a team that genuinely feels comfortable checking in on colleagues regardless of their role.



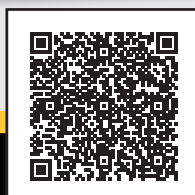
“It can be scary starting conversations for the fear of the answer you might get, and not knowing how you can support them, but it’s always better to ask and let them know you are there and that you care.”

I would encourage managers and leaders building a culture of trust and authenticity, to allow yourself to be seen, and don’t put on a façade. Last year was the launch of R U OK? in Trucks & Sheds, and I was keen to do a presentation in the lead up so it wasn’t just a ‘day’ that came and went. I was chatting to a close friend of mine about how I wanted to share some of the struggles happening in my life at the time – my brother had been in an accident and two people close to me had attempted suicide – but I was worried I would lose credibility as a manager, so I said maybe I’ll stick with sharing statistics and more general info. She said ‘absolutely not – **your staff need to know that you face challenges too, that’s the only way you make change**’. And, she was right. Shortly after I spoke, one of the more hardened staff members came up to me and said ‘my brother took his life and listening to you talk about that makes me know I can talk about it’. I’d opened more doors for people to have conversations. It was an incredibly powerful moment, and one I will carry with me forever.

R U OK? in Trucks and Sheds is more than just a day of action. It’s giving time for conversation and time to connect as humans. And the more time we give, the more chance we have of growing a supportive and productive workplace. In this industry, if we have a forklift incident we’ll do a stop for safety, release safety alerts and investigate it. Why? Because we know it’s going to create a better business by making us safer. **We must invest in both the physical and psychological safety of staff to thrive.**

Get behind the day, bring your team together, find champions in the business to help support this movement and get the conversations rolling.

Drive conversations and ask ‘are you OK?’



www.healthyheads.org.au/ruok

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