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**WHY ARE WOMEN SUFFERING IN SILENCE?**

SYDNEY (27 October, 2022) – Menopause. It’s the silent career killer nobody’s talking about.

**Two million** women in Australia have recently gone through menopause, and 80,000 women move into the postmenopausal stage every year - according to research by Australasian Menopause Society (AMS) and AIA Australia.1

And research from the UK revealed this year that “women with at least one problematic menopausal symptom [are] 43% more likely to have left their jobs by the age of 55.” 2

Nearly 30% of women younger than 55 experience moderate to severe symptoms, so it’s likely that around 15% of women across this stage of life are exiting the workforce. 3

It’s estimated that even if just 10% of Australian women retired early because of menopausal symptoms, it would equate to a loss of earnings and super of more than $17 billion. 4

Rebecca Grainger, founder of Australian HR tech startup triiyo, explains that, “Perimenopausal and menopausal women are the fastest growing workforce demographic on the planet, with projections there will be one billion women experiencing menopause in the world by 2025 – that's 12% of the global population, and with an ageing workforce that number will increase.”

The economic impact is huge, but that doesn’t account for the personal or professional cost of women at this late stage in their career leaving their jobs.

Lisa Saunders, Health & Wellness Director at Own Your Health Collective shares, “When you look at Australian population, the latest statistics we've seen are that there are 6.4 million women aged 40+, and menopause can start in the early 40s to mid 40s, and lasts anywhere from seven to 10 years.

“And that timeline intersects with the greatest career aspirations of these women, many who have had caring duties if they've become parents, and their kids are a little bit older, so they're ready to nurture their career – but then they get hit with this.”

**So, what do they mean by “problematic menopausal symptoms?”**

On average, women start menopause around age 51 and have symptoms for five to 10 years. You’ve likely heard about hot flashes, but what a lot of people don’t know is that symptoms also include:

* Brain fog, confusion and forgetfulness
* Trouble sleeping
* Anxiety and moodiness
* Lack of self-confidence
* Joint pain 5

“And if we think about, say, night sweats, for example, the impact on women's sleep and the stress women might experience when they don't sleep well. It affects us cognitively, it affects our drive, it affects our motivation. It affects our productivity.

“So it comes at us from all directions, because it's not just the stress of menopause. It's a time of life stress, as well,” explains Lindsey Brown, Menopause Consultant at triiyo.

Lindsey helped create the brand new Menopause Journey for Australian HR Tech startup triiyo - a series of educational resources created specifically to support women as they navigate menopause at work.

**How does menopause affect women at work?**

Natalie Moore, Founder of Own Your Health Collective, shares that, “There are more than 35 symptoms of menopause. And the biggest effect those symptoms have on women is that they undermine their confidence in their ability to do their job.”

Significant symptoms of menopause can cause women to miss out on job opportunities and career progression, suffer in silence at work, or leave their roles altogether.

Janelle Delaney, Partner at IBM, shared that when she was up for her promotion to Partner, her menopause symptoms had just started to kick in.

“We have this process where you have to first get selected, and then after several months of preparation you go for a one on one interview, and present to a panel of about five people.

“So, I was in the middle of my preparation – which is, obviously, a stressful situation, because it's something that I had been working towards for almost 30 years.

“And I just fell apart – I was crying something like 10 times a day.

“I went through a mock panel, and I received some fairly tough criticism, which was very useful, but it just … it blew me apart.

“Thankfully I was home at the time. We had a guide dog puppy – a labrador, and I sat and sobbed into the fur of this poor puppy. And I was thinking, ‘What is this? This is just insane.’

“So, for me, it was like, Well, what do I do? Do I tell somebody at work? Do I say to them, ‘Look, I'm sorry, but I might cry in this panel. And it's not that I'm not ready for an executive role, it's just that my hormones have gone crazy.’”

At one point, Janelle even considered delaying the process but, luckily, she reached out to a colleague who helped ease her mind and helped her get mentally prepared for the panel interview.

Janelle made it through but, without support, many women don’t.

**What can my company do to help?**

1. Education

Because it’s not something that’s spoken about regularly, many women don’t know what to expect during menopause. They think they’re getting older, or they’re depressed, and often their symptoms are misdiagnosed.

It’s also important to educate yourself, company leaders, managers and coworkers about how menopause can affect women at work and what can be done to support them.

triiyo Founder Rebecca explains, “Menopause education and awareness doesn't just help women, but also their leaders and team members. When people are supported and communication is clear, it creates a culture of care and connection during a time where women feel isolated and alone.”

Enacting a company policy specific to menopause will also help women navigate their journey at work.

“Every company should have a menopause policy and guidance document. So, when women start to experience symptoms, they can read through it and understand what resources and support their company can provide,” says Lindsey Brown, Menopause Consultant at triiyo.

Engaging a resource like triiyo (<https://triiyo.com/>) can empower employees to confidentially access information about menopause and then, if and when they’re ready, loop in their manager to start the conversation.

1. Support

It can be awkward to even start the conversation – especially with a manager or people leader. Not only because it feels very personal, but also because there’s a stigma against it – women are afraid that admitting they need extra support will negatively impact their career.

“Many women do not want to bring it up – they think bringing it up is career suicide.

“So, it's about creating a safe culture where women can talk about what they’re experiencing. There's also an opportunity to coach and educate all staff around how to have those courageous conversations.

“It’s sometimes uncomfortable for women to talk to their manager about this. But, equally, it can be uncomfortable for the manager to be the recipient of this conversation as well.

“And this is what we're learning from workplaces and people that we talked to. People are not sure how to start those courageous conversations or have the confidence to have those conversations,” shares Natalie Moore, Founder - Own Your Health Collective.

Offering employees and coworkers empathy and open lines of communication can make starting and having those conversations much easier.

Asking questions like this can help:

* What can I do to support you?
* Do you need a desk fan or better ventilation?
* Do you need a quiet space to take a time out?
* What time of day works best for you to have meetings?
* When do you feel more switched on?
* Do you need to start and end your work day later?

Really listening and offering flexible work options, if they’re available, can make a massive difference.

Women are far less likely to leave their jobs if they’re feeling understood and supported.

“De-stimatising the menopause conversation for working women is a key step in ensuring retention,” shares Rebecca.

It’s also important to normalise the topic.

“Emotional intelligence is a big piece of that. So, having empathy, having self awareness as well, confidence and understanding, thinking about what language to use.

“If you're the manager, making sure you're being careful with your language, and really just being supportive and empathetic,” explains Natalie.

1. Visibility

Having a Menopause Champion or an executive leader who is vocal about her experience can also help give women a voice and change the narrative.

Janelle Delaney, Partner at IBM, also shared that since her experience she has become a champion for women within her organisation.

“We have a Women@IBM group, and I’ve shared my experience with menopause. And I think that women who have already gone through it, and they're out the other side, should openly talk to the women in the next level down and find out where they're at – and ask what they can do to support and sponsor them through whatever's going on.

“I think, actually, that's a magic way to do it. I think it's important to share that there is ‘the other side,’ and you can get through it.”

If you’re a manager looking for tips on how to develop a program or improve how you support employees through menopause, you can reach out to the triiyo team for a free demo of their custom, online platform at hello@triiyo.com

References

1. *Insurance Business Magazine*, “AIA Australia teams up with Australasian Menopause Society,” accessed 22 October <https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/au/news/breaking-news/aia-australia-teams-up-with-australasian-menopause-society-324945.aspx#:~:text=According%20to%20AIA%2C%20there%20are,healthcare%20visits%20in%20the%20country>
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5. Australian Menopause Society, “Menopause - What are the symptoms?,” accessed 22 October, <https://www.menopause.org.au/health-info/fact-sheets>

**ENDS**

**EDITOR’S NOTES**

“triiyo” is always lower case (2 i’s and 1 y)

triiyo’s website: <https://triiyo.com/>

Images are in this folder: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12e1ogDA5QNnaRQjYmvpSX5w89S15PGhq?usp=sharing>

Video - triiyo Founder Rebecca Grainger on 9 News: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RsiC0yQUJdo>

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**ABOUT**

**triiyo**

triiyo is the workforce connectivity & people management platform that helps companies engage and retain employees before, during, and after leave periods like parental, carer’s, mental health, menopause, retirement, and more.

triiyo includes a library of resources, curated by experts, accessible by all at any time. Their external platform provides a safe, proactive space for people to seek advice and support, confidentially, anywhere.

Their simple, automated tool guides managers through every step associated with complex workplace transitions. triiyo removes the guesswork, ensuring each employee has a consistently positive experience.

Certifications: WEConnect International Certification, Femeconomy certified

<https://triiyo.com/>

**Rebecca Grainger - triiyo founder**

With a professional recruitment and talent management background, Rebecca has a deep understanding of the value of human capital and the importance of employee engagement and retention.

She believes that human connection is needed more than ever and that organisations can play a key role in ensuring their people are supported through all life stages from hire to retire. In simple terms, triiyo equips organisations to support the "whole self" of every employee.

<https://triiyo.com/blog/founder-story>