

# Managing the risk of psychosocial hazards at work Code of Practice

Resources Safety and Health Queensland Industry Leaders' Briefing 2023

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**WHSQ**

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland  
worksafe.qld.gov.au



# Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the various lands on which we meet today and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participating in this session.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of Queensland.

# Overview

1

Legislative changes

2

Psychosocial hazards

3

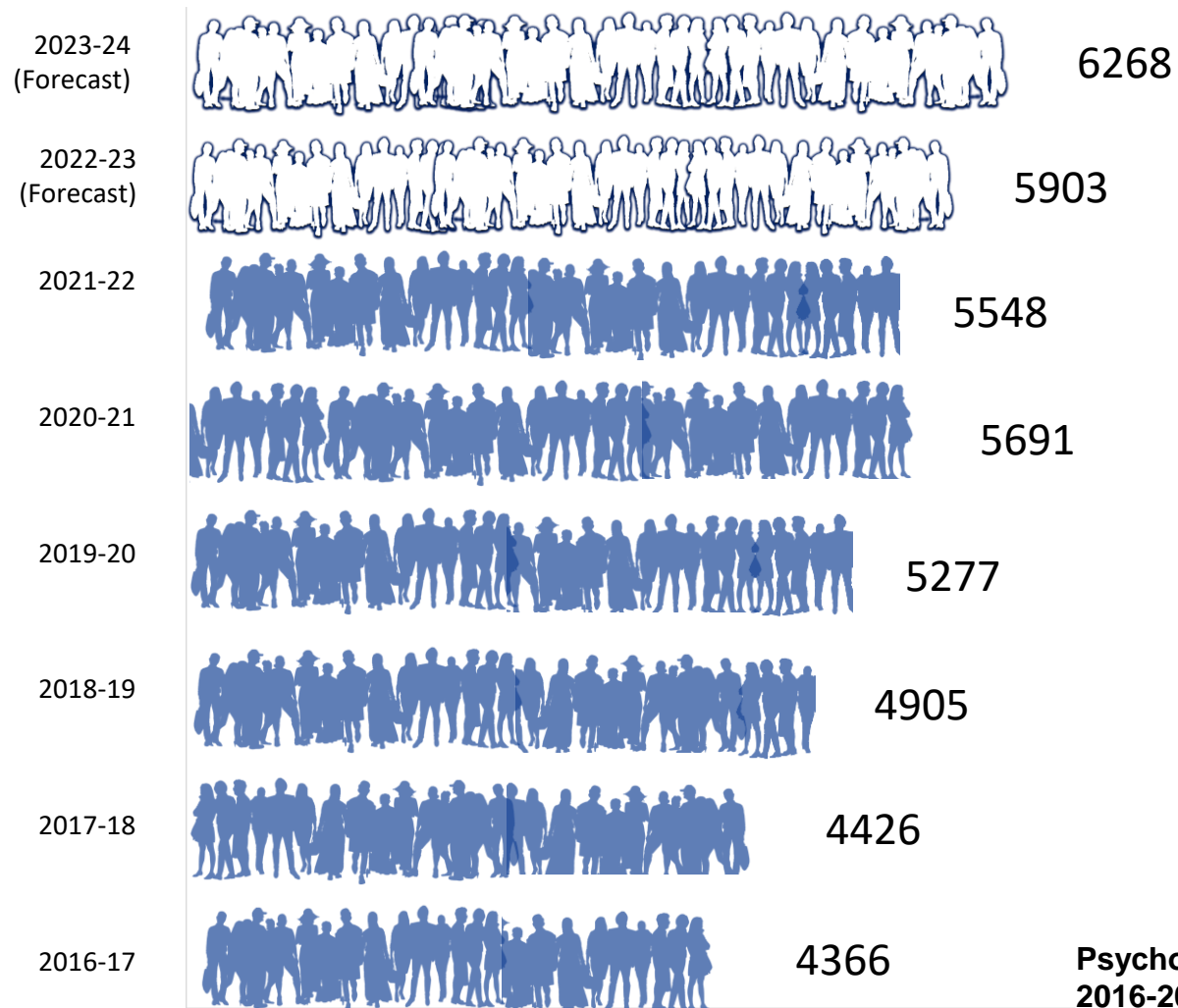
Where do we start?

4

Role of WHSQ in regulating psychosocial hazards

# Why mental health is a growing priority

**Trend:** Psychological injuries are increasing



Overall, there has been a **78% increase** in accepted psychological claims in the last five years.

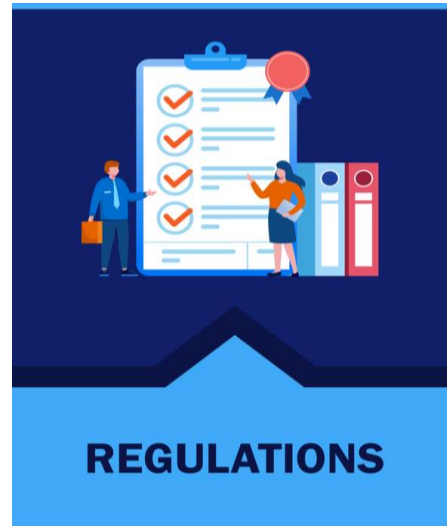
Mental health conditions have the **highest amounts of compensation** of any work-related condition and overall have the fourth highest total cost each year.

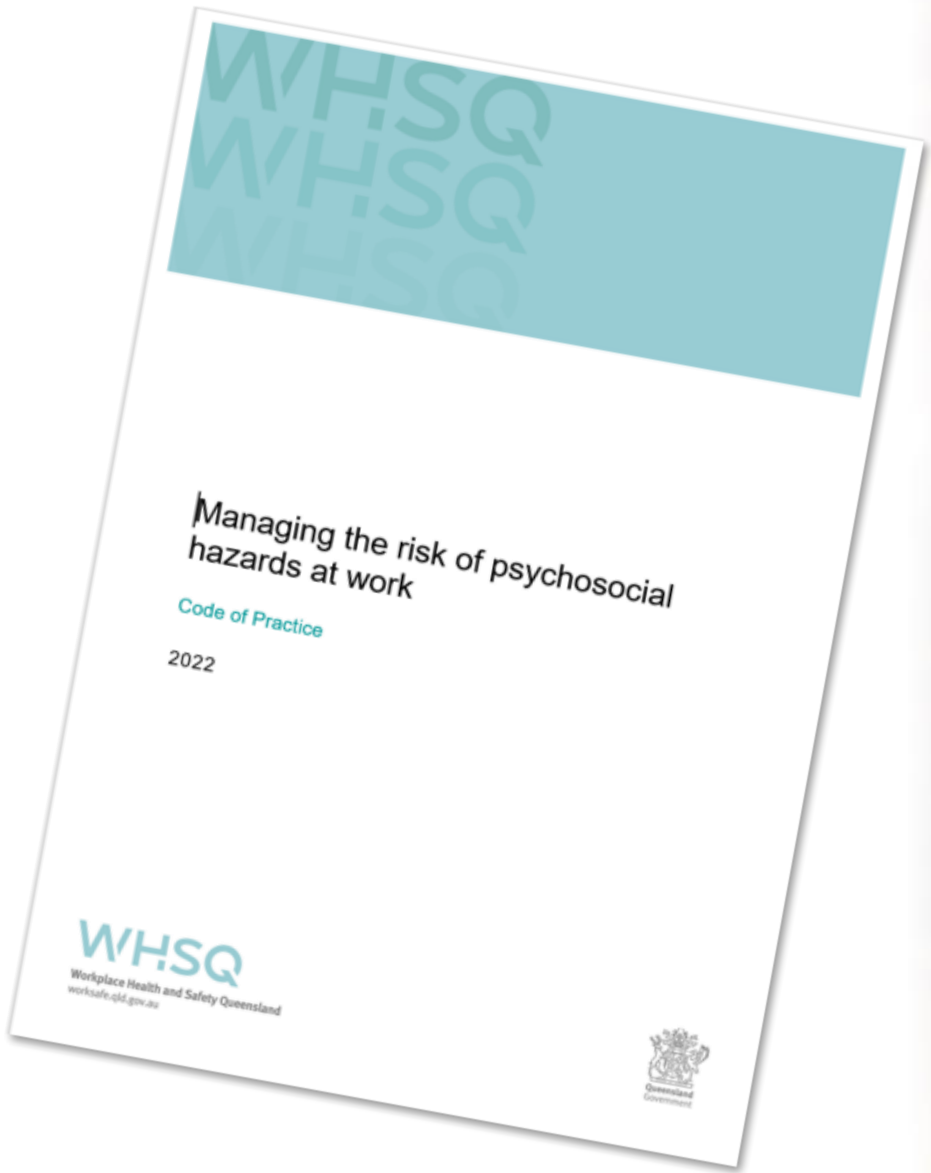
Psychological claims currently represent **9.1%** of total statutory payments (\$118.6 million for 2020-21) and have an average finalised time lost claim cost of \$55,402 (\$48,844 in 2019-20).

This cost is **over two times** the average time lost claim cost of physical injuries (\$23,439 for 2020-21).

Psychological injury (lodge) claim trends and projections, 2016-2024

# Work health and safety legislation





# Work Health and Safety (Psychosocial Risks) Amendment Regulation 2022

## Division 11 Psychosocial risks

### 55A Meaning of psychosocial hazards

A **psychosocial hazard** is a hazard that -

(a) arises from, or relates to -

- the design or management of work; or
- a work environment; or
- plant at a workplace; or
- workplace interactions or behaviours; and

(b) may cause psychological harm; whether or not the hazard may also cause physical harm.

### 55B Meaning of psychosocial risk

A **psychosocial risk** is a risk to the health or safety of a worker or other person from a psychosocial hazard.

### 55C Duty to manage psychosocial risks

# Psychological health policy and legislative landscape

Act

Regulation

Codes of Practice

Standards

Industry Standards

Guidance materials

Boland

Model Psychological Regulations

Model CoP Psych

ISO 45003  
Occupational health and safety management –  
Psychological health and safety at work: managing psychosocial risks

SWA Work-related psychological health and safety:  
A systematic approach to meeting your duties

ACT review

QLD Regs Psych

QLD CoP Psych

Incident notifications

13 guides & toolkits  
E.g. QLD preventing and managing risks to work-related psychological health

NSW CoP Psych

VIC Psych Regs

Sexual harassment

3 WA CoP



What are your  
WHS  
responsibilities?



How do we get  
to here?



# Why psychological health and safety?

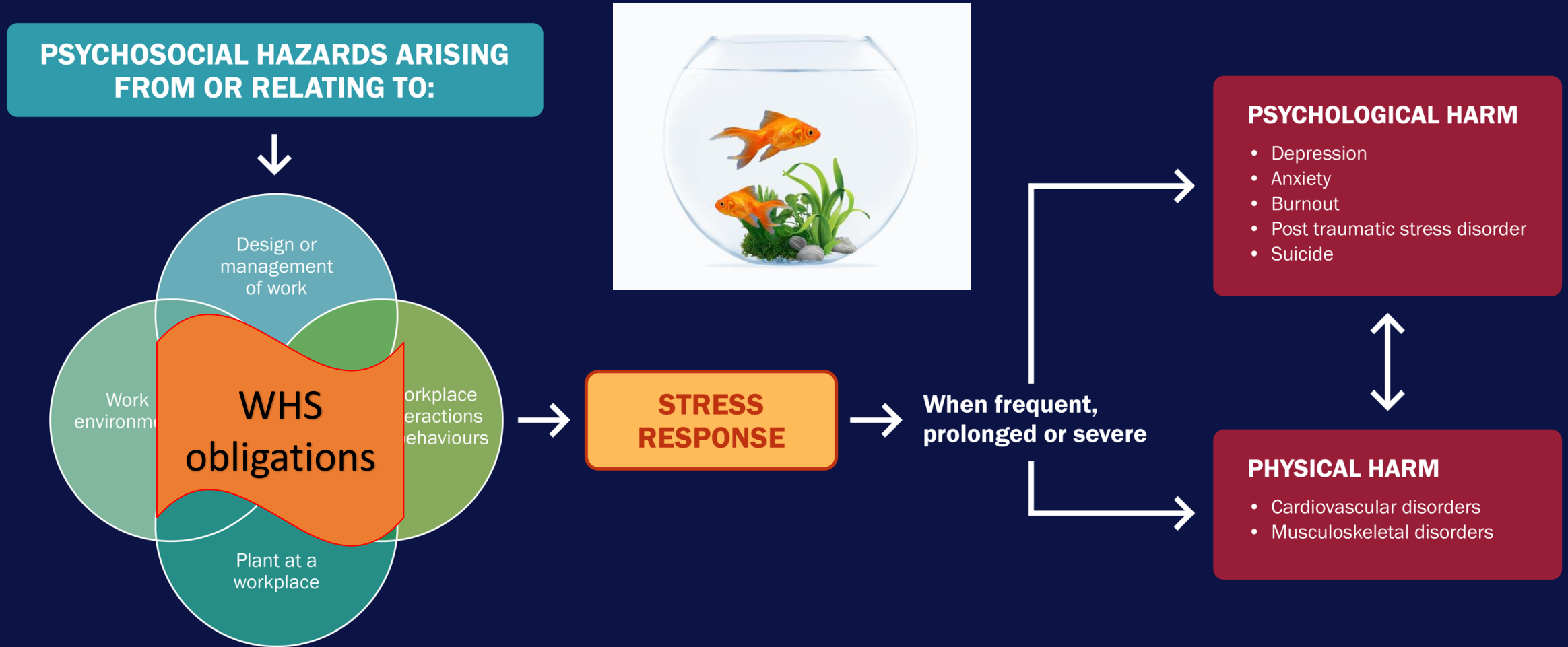


Figure 1: Relationship between psychosocial hazards and injury outcomes

# Psychological Health: features of health hazards

Complex and multifaceted *suite* of hazards that overlap with other hazards

**CUMULATIVE** and **EVENT** based hazards

Invisible and lack tangible effects but can be severe

Person's behavior as a hazard

Stigma

Ambiguity around antecedents that raise psychosocial hazards to critical levels or thresholds

Long latency periods difficult to gather evidence

Less clear about cause and effect with uncertain solutions

Medical diagnostic inconsistencies of psychosocial hazards

**But... psychosocial hazards can be effectively managed.**

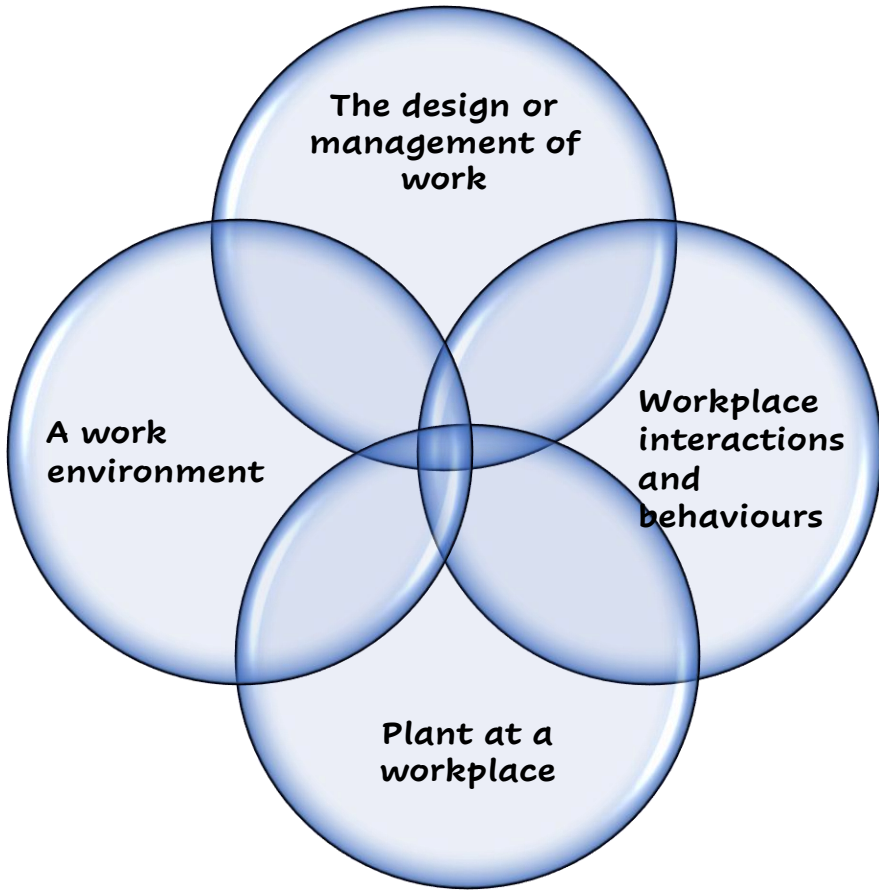


Cumulative

Event based

# Psychosocial Hazards...

that arise from or relate to...



# Code of Practice

The principal aim of the code is to provide **practical guidance** on how to achieve *minimum* health and safety standards. It does this through providing clear, accessible, and useful information for PCBUs and other duty holders about psychosocial hazards at work.

## Example content:

- What are work-related psychosocial hazards?
- Who has a health and safety duty in relation to psychosocial hazards?
- Identifying work-related psychosocial hazards.
- Factors that may put workers at higher risk.
- How to conduct a risk assessment.
- Recording the risk management process.
- Responding to complaints, incidents or reports of psychosocial hazards.
- Examples of work-related psychosocial hazards, example control measures, and an example work-related bullying policy.

# Duties

## Who has a health and safety duty in relation to psychosocial hazards at work?

- Person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU)
- Designers, manufacturers, importers, installers and suppliers of plant, substances, and structures
- Officers (e.g. company directors, senior managers, or executives)
- Workers
- Other persons at the workplace (e.g. visitors, delivery people, customers, clients and patients and their families)



# Key principles





# The risk management process

- Duty holders are required to follow the risk management approach.
- Good risk management is important so that hazards and their source/s can be identified.
- Controls must be aimed at eliminating psychosocial hazards, or where this is not reasonably practicable, minimising psychosocial hazards, in order to be the most effective and sustainable.



# How to identify psychosocial hazards



## Observing the workplace

How work is performed and how people interact with each other.

## Consulting workers

PCBUs must consult with workers when identifying hazards and assessing risks to health and safety.



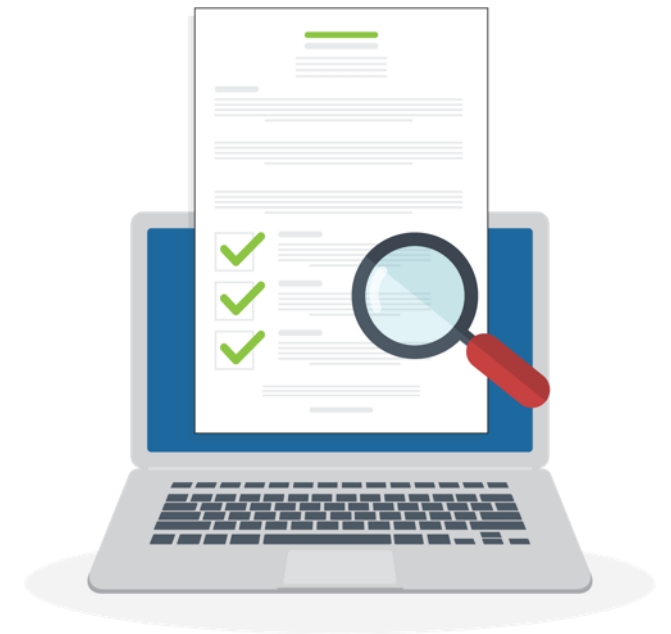
# How to identify psychosocial hazards



## Consulting supply chains and networks

### Collecting and reviewing available information

This might include records of leave, hours of work, workers' compensation claims, grievance information, incident and injury records, EAPs, IR records, meeting minutes, work surveys, turnover data, local crime statistics.



# What do psychosocial hazards sound like?

I feel micromanaged

I'm not treated fairly

I don't know what they want me to do

I can't sleep

I don't know what's expected of me

I have too much work to do and too little time..

I feel burnt out



# Risk assessment tools

## PEOPLE AT WORK - RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

People at Work is a free, validated psychosocial risk assessment survey available via a self-managed digital platform. The survey assesses several of the most common psychosocial hazards. People at Work enables workplaces to identify, assess and control risks to psychological health at work.

*People at Work*

**SUITABLE FOR:** Workplaces larger than 20 workers.

**RESOURCES REQUIRED:** Person/s to manage the implementation of the process.

## PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

A template for conducting a psychosocial risk assessment. The template also provides a risk management plan to help implement controls for the risks identified and an evaluation plan to track the effectiveness of controls.

*Psychosocial risk assessment*

**SUITABLE FOR:** All businesses.

**RESOURCES REQUIRED:** Person/s to conduct the risk assessment and implement controls.

## FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

The focus group guide provides help on how to prepare and conduct a focus group, as well as how to analyse focus group data and report on findings. Focus groups are a powerful tool to help you engage in consultation with workers.

*Focus group guide*

**SUITABLE FOR:** All businesses.

**RESOURCES REQUIRED:** Person/s to conduct the focus group(s) and review data and implement controls.  
Participants allowed work time to attend the focus group session(s).

# Controlling Hazards

## Hierarchy of Controls



# Resources in the Code

- Case studies
- Examples of psychosocial hazards
- Examples of control measures for psychosocial hazards
- Example of a work-related bullying policy
- Example of a risk register



# What is reasonably practicable?

**The question of what is reasonably practicable is determined objectively. It means that which is, or was at a particular time, reasonably able to be done to ensure health and safety, taking into account and weighing up all relevant matters including:**

- the likelihood of the hazard or risk occurring
- the degree of harm that might result from the psychosocial hazard or risk
- what the person concerned knows, or ought reasonably to know, about
  - the hazard or risk, and
  - ways of eliminating or minimising the risk
- the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk
- lastly, the cost associated with eliminating or minimising the risk, including whether the cost is grossly disproportionate to the risk.



**This Code is enforceable and informs what may be reasonably practicable in ensuring health and safety, particularly information which outlines:**

- common psychosocial hazards
- metrics, data sources, and risk assessment measures/methods that can be used to determine the likelihood of risk and the degree of harm that might result from psychosocial hazards
- examples of control strategies.



# Other resources



**Mentally healthy workplaces toolkit**

**About this toolkit**

The Mentally Healthy Workplaces Toolkit aims to help employers, managers and leaders identify and address risks to your business and your employees' mental health and well-being. Use the guidance material and practical resources in this toolkit to facilitate positive steps towards a mentally healthy workplace.

The toolkit, checklist, resources, videos and case studies can be accessed when you log on to the toolkit.

**Mentally healthy workplaces**

- Promise
- Prevent
- Intervene early
- Support recovery
- For small business
- Additional resources



**A guide to working safely in people's homes**



**Work-related violence and aggression in residential aged, disability and youth care**

Residential aged, disability and youth care workers are at risk of work-related violence or aggression (WVA) directly and as witnesses, particularly from residents with emotional, behavioural and intellectual disorders, or cognitive deterioration. Frequent exposure to even low levels of WVA can have a long-term impact on psychological health. This conduct can escalate to other forms of aggression and violence such as physical assault. There are other consequences from WVA including economic and social costs to the worker, their family, their organisation and the wider community. Like all work health and safety risks, WVA risks must be managed.

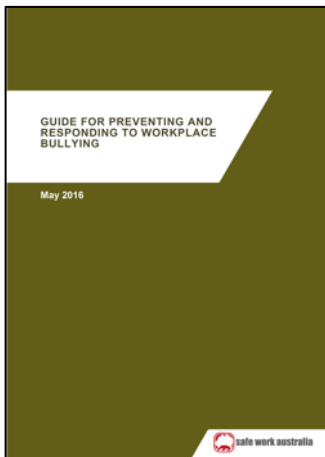
Statistics show that claims for WVA in the residential care sector have doubled in the past five years, with 95 per cent of claimants needing to take at least one day off work and 25 per cent of claimants never returning to work in this sector after injury.



**Work-related violence and aggression in retail**

Work-related violence and aggression (WVA) is common in industries where people work with the public or external customers. It is often associated with armed robbery and acts of violence and aggression or other crimes. It can cause serious physical or psychological injury, and sometimes can be fatal. Retail industry workers have an increased risk of WVA. There are other consequences from WVA including economic and social costs to the worker, their family, their business, and the wider community. Like all work health and safety risks, WVA risks must be managed.

Retail industry claims for WVA have more than doubled over the past 5 years, with 95 per cent of claimants needing to take at least one day off work and 25 per cent of claimants never returning to work in this sector after injury.



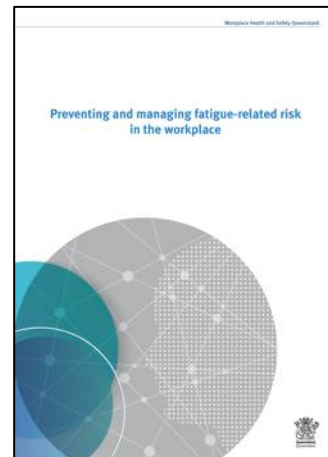
**GUIDE FOR PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO WORKPLACE BULLYING**

May 2016

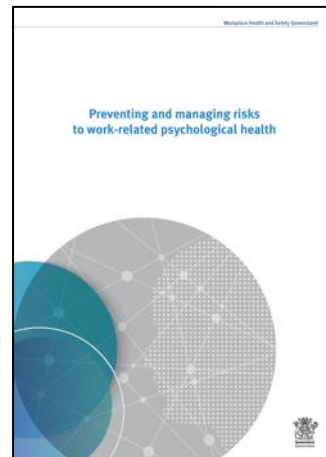
safe work australia



**Prevention and management of work-related violence and aggression in health services**



**Preventing and managing fatigue-related risk in the workplace**



**Preventing and managing risks to work-related psychological health**



**People AT WORK**

Supporting Australian organisations to meet their legislative work health and safety responsibility to identify and manage psychosocial risks in the workplace.

**People at Work**  
A free and validated Australian psychosocial risk assessment survey

Helping to create psychologically healthy and safe workplaces

- Create your account**  
Start your People at Work journey by registering for a free account.
- People at Work process**  
Gain an understanding of the five step People at Work process.
- About People at Work**  
Learn about People at Work, the funding partners and research history.
- Resources**  
A hub of useful resources for your workplace and workers.
- Psychological health and safety**  
Find out about your workplace responsibilities, psychosocial hazards and building a business case.
- FAQ**  
Find answers to frequently asked questions about People at Work.

Visit [peopleatwork.gov.au](http://peopleatwork.gov.au) to learn more.

# Regulating Sexual harassment

Jurisdictional overlap with QPS, AHRC/QHRC, FWC

End to end processing of complaints

Scope of WHSQ / managing expectations

# Challenges and considerations



**TRAUMA OF PERSONS  
YOU MAY SPEAK TO AS  
PART OF INQUIRIES**



**TRAUMA OF  
INSPECTORS AND  
OTHER INTERNAL  
STAFF INVOLVED IN  
RESPONSE**



**ACCURACY OF  
INFORMATION/EVIDENCE  
OBTAINED**

## A reminder of WHS duties



The Model *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (Act) requires a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) to ensure the **health and safety** of workers, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The Act defines 'health' as **both physical and psychological**

These are **LEGAL** obligations

# Questions?



# What next.....



Visit [WorkSafe.qld.gov.au](https://www.WorkSafe.qld.gov.au)



Subscribe to eSafe e-bulletin



Follow the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland  
Facebook page

## Injury Prevention and Management program





[WorkSafe.qld.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)







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