

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Presentation by
**PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH &
SAFETY TEAM**

SAFESWORK NSW



Where does the Code of Practice fit in?

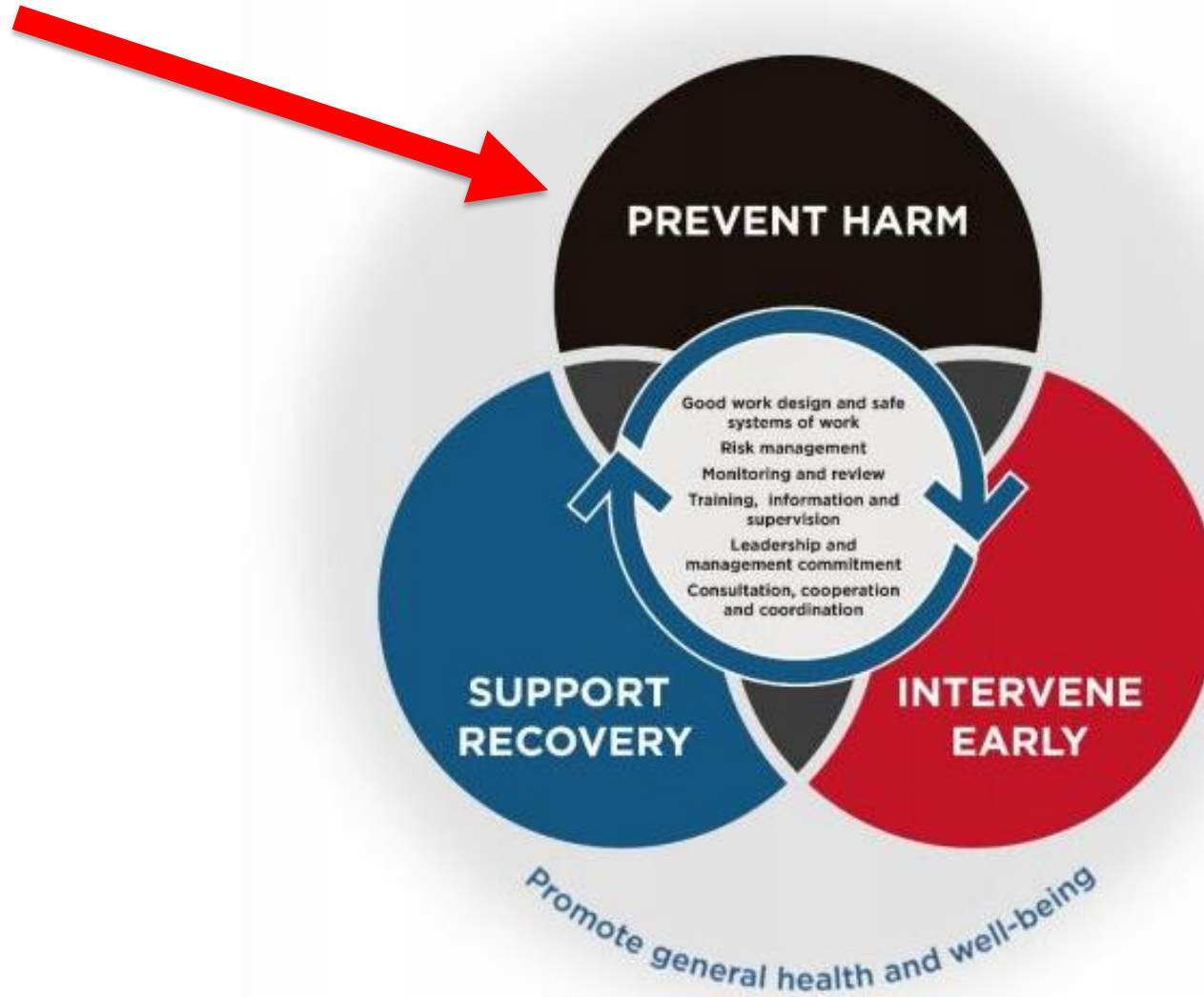
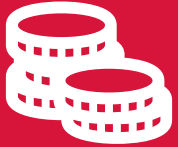


Figure 1. Systematic approach to psychological health and safety

Psychological harm - the cost

- compensation/legal costs
- costs of replacement staff
- training & supervision costs
- staff turnover rates increase



In 2018-19 the gross incurred cost to the NSW workers' compensation system from psychological injuries was over **\$585 million**.



The total number of days lost in NSW in 2018/19 because of work-related psychological injuries was over **1.2 million** days off work



The average cost for an individual claim is over **\$85,000** – and often significantly impacts premiums



The average time off work for a psychological claim was **175 days**, compared to 44 days for physical injury claims.



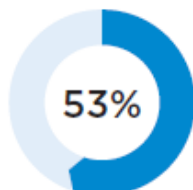
Absenteeism, presenteeism, compensation claims due to mental illness is estimated to cost NSW employers **\$2.8 billion per year**.

NSW WORK-RELATED PSYCHOLOGICAL INJURY CLAIMS

SIZE OF THE PROBLEM

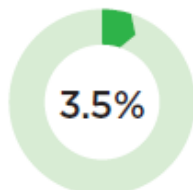
Psychological injury claims from 2014/15 to 2018/19

Over 26,600 workers needed time off work.



53% increase in claims for psychological injury.

Physical injury claims



This compares to only a 3.5% increase in the same period for physical injuries.

AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME OFF WORK

Total days lost in 2018/19



Psychological claims



Physical injury claims



COST OF CLAIMS

Psychological claims



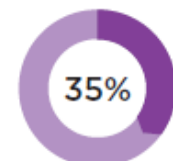
Physical injury claims



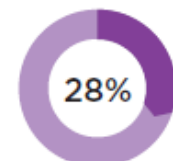
*SIRA 2018/19

MECHANISM OF INJURY

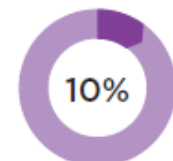
Most common mechanisms leading to a psychological injury between 2014/15 to 2018/19 included:



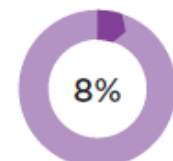
Work related harassment and/or workplace bullying



Work pressure



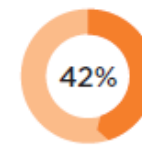
Exposure to workplace or occupational violence



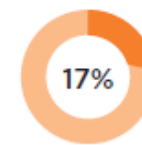
Exposure to a traumatic event

MOST COMMON PSYCHOLOGICAL INJURIES

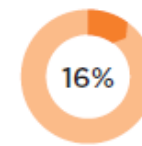
From 2014/15 to 2018/19 90% of psychological injury claims were:



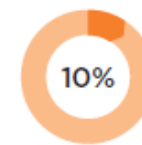
Anxiety/stress disorder



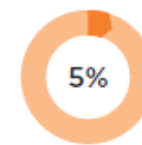
Reaction to stressors



Anxiety/depression combined




Post-traumatic stress disorder




Depression

Psychosocial hazards in the design & management of work



Role overload (high workloads or job demands)



Role underload (low workloads or job demands)



Exposure to traumatic events



Role conflict or lack of role clarity



Low job control



relationships between workers and their supervisors and managers



Poor support from supervisors and managers




Poor co-worker support



Workplace violence



Bullying



Harassment including sexual harassment



Inadequate reward and recognition



Hazardous physical working environments



Remote or isolated work



Poor procedural justice (processes for making decisions)



Poor organisational change consultation

Exposure to work-related psychosocial hazards

Stress response

When prolonged or extreme

**Reduced mental health
& poor health
behaviours**

- Unhealthy eating
- ↓ Physical exercise
- ↑ Alcohol consumption
- Sleep effects

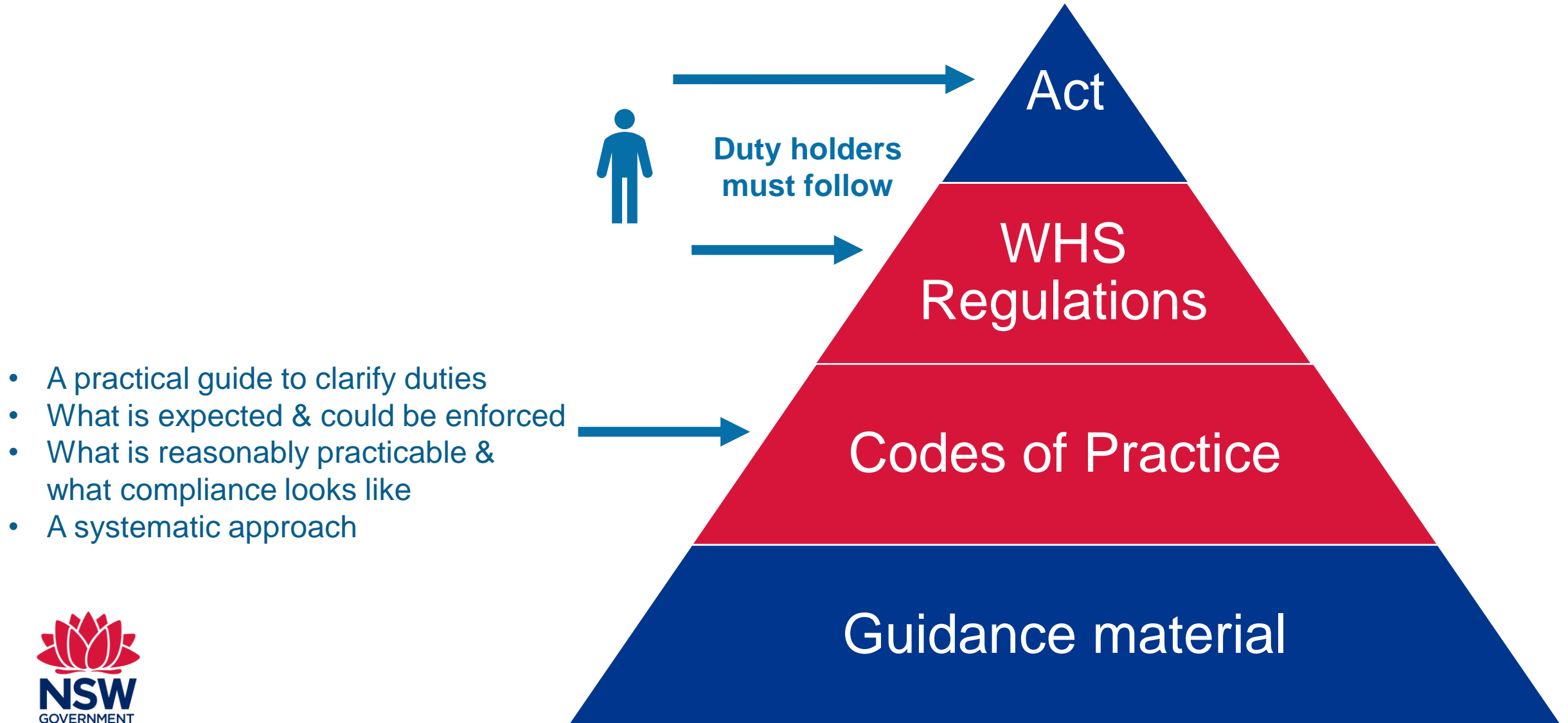
Psychological injury

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Burnout
- Suicide

Physical injury/illness

- Cardiovascular disorders
- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Gastrointestinal disorders
- Immune deficiencies

NSW WHS Legislative Framework



Why a code of practice

Sometimes confused

- Businesses, workers and other stakeholders were telling us that despite the guidance material available, they are sometimes confused around what they must do to manage **work-related** psychological risks

Research

- Issues of uncertainty and lack of clarity are supported by research

Reactive, ad-hoc

- Nearly 80% of NSW workplaces told SafeWork NSW they take a reactive or ad-hoc approach instead of a systematic approach

Need more clarity

- NSW workplaces were telling SafeWork NSW they want more clarity to know what they must do to manage risks to psychological health under the WHS legislation

Purpose of a code of practice

- A practical guide to clarify duties under the WHS Act
- More certainty around what is expected and could be enforced
- What is reasonably practicable and what compliance looks like
- To recommend a systematic approach to identify, assess and control risks to psychological and physical health

What is in the code

Common psychosocial hazards

- Individual factors

Risk management

- Leadership, planning, preparation
- Supply chain
- Using data
- Control with work design, safe systems, residual risk
- Reasonable adjustment

Supporting Return to Work



Duties

- Primary duty – contracting, procurement
- Consultation
- Multiple duty holders
- Officers
- Workers

Responding to reports

- Investigating
- Recording
- Confidentiality

Industry scenarios

Case study – the Code in practice



Scenario 2 - School

Scenario 2. School

Scenario context and work content

A new governmental policy is required to be implemented with little time for consultation.

The school provides for students with complex needs.

The changes mean that teachers will need to add to their current workload. This will increase tasks such as face to face teaching and its preparation and planning, data collection and analysis, ongoing assessment, staff meetings, and communications with parents and community. These requirements make it difficult to continue to manage daily incidents and interactions amongst increasingly complex student cohorts, professional learning and development and compliance activities.

Psychosocial hazards and risks

Role overload: The change has added to the demand on workers. Workers are concerned that to meet deadlines, tasks such as professional learning, reporting and lesson planning are priorities, and therefore will need to be completed outside standard work hours. Workers are also concerned the changes may require learning new skills at a time when they are experiencing difficulty with the existing role overload.

Poor organisational change consultation, poor support and low job control: Poor change consultation has contributed to the perception that there has been limited consideration of existing workload and poor support to manage the increase in workload from new requirements. Workers have limited say in the decisions about their workload, how the work is done and the changes to their work.

There are no clear guidelines to support re-prioritisation of tasks to meet deadlines within the strict timetables of schools.

Psychosocial controls

Role overload: The organisation consults with teachers to:

- Review current tasks and new demands to prioritise.
- Monitor and review the work hours undertaken by teachers and capacity to incorporate new work load associated with this policy.
- Employ more permanent teachers to take responsibility for new policy/procedural requirements.
- Provide system support centrally available for schools to access.
- Ensure that there are enough resources allocated to manage these risks and undertake effective consultation, coordination and cooperation processes.

To address **poor organisational change, poor support and low job control**, the organisation will:

- Consult with workers about the proposed changes.
- Undertake analysis to inform the re-prioritisation of tasks.
- Communicate to affected workers how this will change their work and how they might now re-prioritise tasks.
- Provide support and required professional learning to undertake additional tasks within core working hours.

Review and improve

The organisation will:

- Review WHS procedures and processes to ensure that psychosocial hazards and risks including role overload and low job control are reported and recorded through the systematic approach to managing psychosocial hazards.
- Implement cyclical and frequent reviews, both at system and school level, of current task demands of workers.
- Monitor progress and impact on affected workers and provide responsive support based on consultation.
- Review timetables to ensure that accommodations are made to reduce remote and isolated work caused by the increase in work demands.

Keeping track of psychosocial hazards in your workplace

APPENDIX B. EXAMPLE OF A RISK REGISTER

Site: Customer service team in Ballina office				Management representative(s): Mark and Ahmet				Worker representatives: Ian, Jen and Tracey				
Date issue raised	Hazard/situation	Information sources	Harm Consequences	Harm Likelihood	Level of risk	What controls are in place?	How adequate are existing controls?	What further controls are required?	Actioned by and comments	Date completed and comments	Who and how will monitored and review	Review date
30.9.20	Alleged harmful workplace behaviour - bullying when allocating work and managing performance	HR grievances, a psychological injury claim from team, HSC, and verbal reports by a sub-contractor	Severe	Moderate - two workers compensation claims for psychological injury in last 12 months in same team	High	Workplace behaviour/ code of conduct training completed annually.	Not effective - Consult affected workers about possible additional controls	Clarify and prioritise workload and confusion around service level agreements	Ahmet WHS manager did root cause analysis, and work design resulted in improved scheduling, reduced time pressure and improved role clarity. Referred to HR manager (Mark) for code of conduct investigation and allegation not substantiated.	30.10.20	Ahmet to check in with affected workers/ customer service team and manager to ensure controls have addressed underlying issues	27.11.20

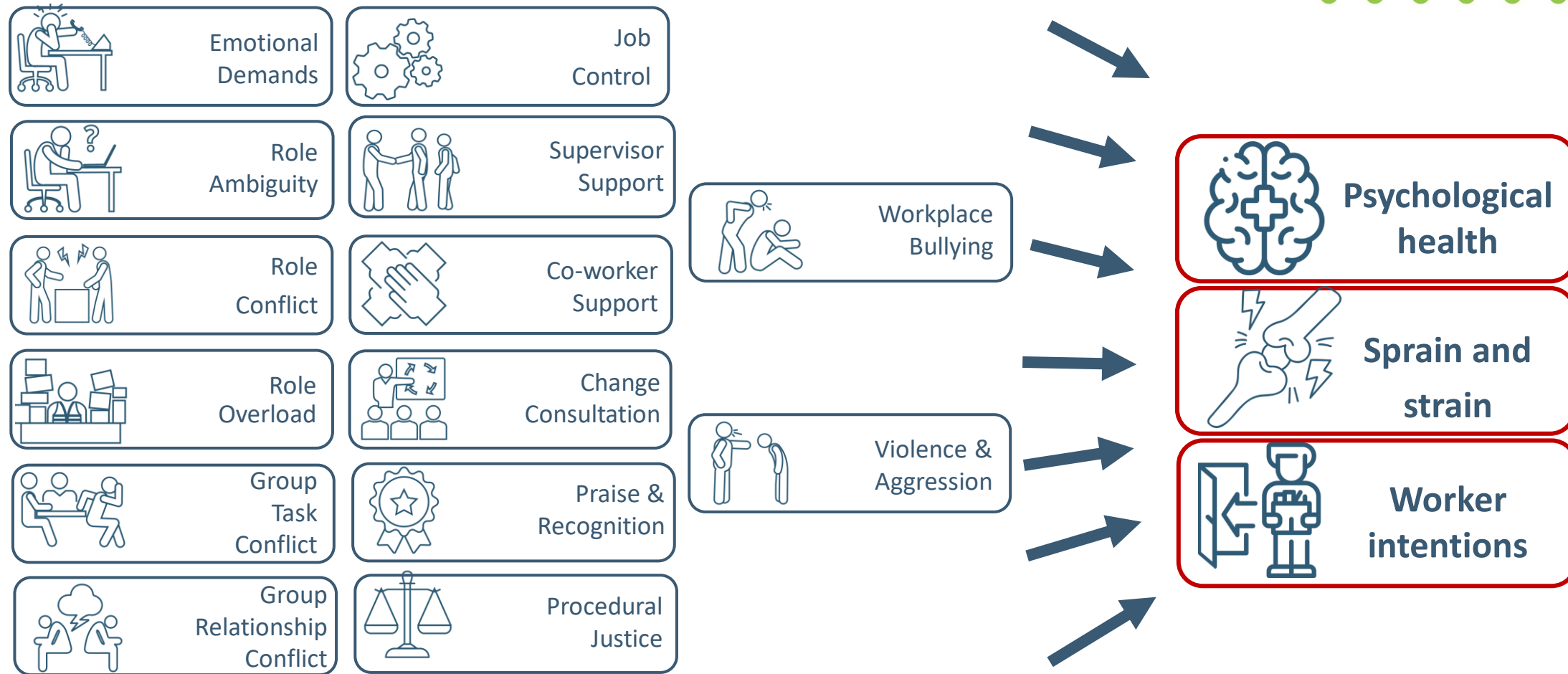
What is People at Work?

- Australia's free **validated** and **evidence-based** psychosocial risk assessment survey tool with benchmarking.
- A five step process to **identify, assess** and **control** risks to **psychological health at work**.
- Suitable for businesses with more than 20 workers.

Nationally available via a **digital platform** consisting of resources, interactive learning modules and automated custom reports
– **all for free.**



What does People at Work measure?



People at Work

Australia's only validated 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.



PEOPLE AT WORK RESOURCES

Examples:

- Communication plan
- Promotional materials
- Project implementation timeline
- Focus group guide
- Action planning guide
- Example control measures
- Guidance for conducting evaluations
- Reviewing & improving tool

People at Work Suggested Survey Implementation Timeline

Step 1: Preparing the workplace

Develop a business case

Identify project lead / establish steering committee

Develop communications plan

Step 2: Conducting the PAW survey

Communicate with workers about survey and purpose

Create your organisation account

Set up and initiate your survey, send survey invitation

Promote the survey throughout the survey period

Monitor survey responses and send reminders

Extend survey if required

Survey closes



Free resources for small-medium business

Mental health training and coaching



Training

Sign up for free training and coaching

We have easy-to-do programs you can use to improve mental health in your workplace. We have training for employers, managers, and employees. Led by experts, these programs are free and available now.

Mental health capability check



Tools

Check how mentally healthy your workplace is [↗](#)

Answer a few questions and our tool can tell you how mentally healthy your workplace is compared to others across NSW. It will then give you confidential, easy-to-follow suggestions that could improve mental health at your work.

Are you a medium-large business?



MHW Strategy

Support for NSW businesses to become mentally healthy

Capability check

Benchmark your workplace

Step-by-step guide

6 step with advice to create mentally healthy workplace

Ambassador Program

Our champions of change raising awareness and importance of mentally healthy workplaces

Recovery at Work Toolkit

Tips to support recovery at work

Leadership toolkit

Tips for leaders to create mentally healthy workplaces

Where to go for more information

Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work:
www.safework.nsw.gov.au/code-psychosocial-hazards.

People at Work website:
www.peopleatwork.gov.au

Mentally Healthy Workplaces:
nsw.gov.au/mental-health-at-work

Contact SafeWork NSW on:
13 10 50 or www.safework.nsw.gov.au