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**P**eople, **P**laces, **P**lanet

# Exploring Psychosocial Risk in a Post Covid World

# Introduction and Background

**Melbourne: 2000's.**

**Working in HSE: Oil, Mining & infrastructure**

- 2004 Legislation introduced that set out psychological harm on par with physical harm
- Sets new challenges to “safety” focused organisations and HS Professionals
- Developed initial psycho-social risk management framework to apply to workplaces



# Understanding and Responding to a changing world

## Emergence of Psychosocial Workplace Risks Over the Past 10 Years

### Societies Expectations



Improved Awareness of Mental Health and potential impacts

Improved Understanding of Risks in Workplaces

Expectation of Individuals in the Workplace

Codification through Legislation

# Psychosocial Harm Themes

## Organisational design factors that create psychosocial risk

- Role clarity and alignment
- Job design and sizing
- Service Agreements and Charters
- Work environment and individual control of choice
- Organisational change and change design & management processes

**Danger** of building structures that undermine “Mental Health / Wellbeing” Activities

## Workplace behaviours that contribute to psychosocial risk

- Management focus and recognition culture of failure and things that go wrong
- Bullying – in all forms, Overt and Hidden
- Favouritism, in-equality of workload and practices
- Inconsistency, lack of process, or adherence to processes

**Danger** of having dominant management cultures and practices that hide or protect these factors

# Concept of Credibility and Care

## Care

All organisations and leaders claim to care about mental health and psychological safety of workers.

What does this Care look like?

## Credibility

Too often, this claim of care is undermined by lack of Credibility

What does Credibility need to look like?

# What's Our Challenge as HS Professionals ?



- What advice do we need to provide?
- How do we engage our organisations around workplace psychological risks?
- What is the capability of HS professionals to provide the advice and expertise that's needed?
- How can we “cut through” some of the factors that inhibit change, or maintain status quo?



# Introducing a Covid Perspective

## What was Pre-Covid Like?

- What did we know?
- What we doing?
- What conversations were we having?
- What did good look like?
- What did our interventions look like?

## What Do We Know Now?

- Organisations can understand and manage psycho-social risks, if they have to
- Changes to organisational design and function can be made, quickly
- There is a newly-built capability and understanding of psycho-social risks across the system
- What new risks, or changed situations, do we have to adapt our thinking to?

Accelerated Learning and Enforced Change....

# Ideas and Opportunities

- Managing the pace and nature of return to individual needs
- Understand factors and motivations that may influence people's perception
- Building on and incorporating differences to organisational and task design introduced during various alert levels and operating environments
- Identify and build into revised work programmes
- Avoiding a re-stabilising to a "pre-Covid" normal
- Re-set our risk profiles and challenge removal of controls
- Adaptation of previous psychosocial and mental health programmes and building on increased understanding of the importance of health on work
- Re-prioritise and re-cast to reflect organisational learning
- Modifying organisational values and culture programmes to ensure conversations and behaviours are reflective of an intrinsically psychologically safe environment



# What does (or can) this look like? 4 Ideas to Explore

Developing ways of allowing our organisations to understand the capability they have built during recent months in relation to understanding and management of psychosocial risk

Identifying some areas that may provide examples of where this capability has been build and demonstrated within organisations and individuals.

Finding ways to engage leadership teams around a changed psychosocial risk profile, what can we do to re-position psychosocial risk

Identifying the conversations we should be having to allow us, as HS professionals, to collectively understand the changed nature of psychosocial risk, the increased varying degrees that people will be impacted and what benefits the workplace can play in what is a wider national post Covid mental health recovery programme

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- Worker engagement and perception measurement
- Review of teams that have improved their performance / productivity through change
- Assess changes to reporting and data trends, what has shifted, can we see increased understanding through reports and responses?
- What information and assurance was requested during the alert levels, what changed from previous interest and requests?

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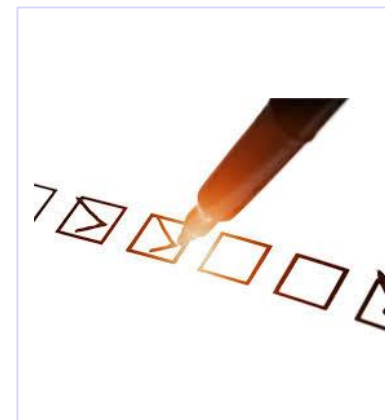
- Formal review of pre-Covid risk profiles, how have previous risk levels changed?
- What additional psychological risks are now in play?
- How may the effectiveness of previous / existing workplace HS risk controls be impacted by changed psychological risks?
- Use formal tools to develop structured, formal programmes to manage and measure psychological risks?
- Align our (HS Industry) definitions and approaches to psychological risk management
  - Existing forums and collaborative programmes
  - Codify and agree how we take conversations forward in our organisations

# Tools, Resources and Information

What may help....

- Prompters to identify psychological risks through 2 key factors (organisational design and behaviours) that drive risk
- Formal definition of psychological risks in risk registers, linked to assurance reporting
- Single programme ownership (i.e. avoid the HR / HSW trap)
- Validation of risks and controls through worker engagement and involvement
- Linking to broader drivers for action, i.e. part of national recovery and mental health improvement
- Developing a “we are not alone” culture in organisations and encourage cross sector collaboration to reduce feelings of vulnerability or uniqueness in relation to psychological risk

RISK MANAGEMENT WORKSHEET		
STEP 1 Identify potential work-related stress hazards	STEP 2 Assess work-related stress risks	STEP 3 Control work-related stress risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mark potential stress hazards in the workplace – complete during discussions/consultation process</li> </ul> <p>For marks in STEP 1, go to STEP 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record when, how often and over what period of time work-related stress risks occur</li> <li>Assess whether there are any interim measures that can be implemented immediately</li> <li>Prioritise risks in the order that they will be dealt with: in the short term, medium term and long term.</li> </ul> <p>Proceed to STEP 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult employees and their HSRs to decide on measures to eliminate or reduce work-related stress risks.</li> <li>Develop an action plan with targets to show:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how risk control measures will be implemented, resourced and monitored.</li> <li>include dates on which actions will be implemented and who is responsible for all actions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Task design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> a mismatch between qualifications/experience and the demands of the job</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> fragmented or meaningless work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of variety</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other (describe):</li> </ul>	Type here	Type here
<p><b>Workload/work pace</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of control over work methods, pace and/or rate</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> work overload or underload</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> high work rate or time pressures</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other (describe):</li> </ul>		



# Tools, Resources and Information

Where may help....

- WorkSafe Victoria
- Safe Work Australia
- Industry forums and work streams (i.e. GHSL Mental Health, CHASNZ, etc.)
- Your existing processes and tools
- Organisations that are doing this well

Golden Chance.... What can we create that codifies and sets out a consensus approach to managing this risk in a New Zealand context?

Tim Barry

# Thank you and Questions