

MINDS MATTER

A Tasmanian framework for building
mentally healthy workplaces



WORKCOVER
BOARD
Tasmania

An initiative of the WorkCover Board Tasmania,
delivered by WorkSafe Tasmania

www.worksafe.tas.gov.au/mindsmatter





Acknowledgement of Country

In recognition of the deep history and culture of this Island, we acknowledge Tasmanian Aboriginal people, the original and continuing Custodians of the Land, Sea and Sky. We acknowledge and pay our respects to all Tasmanian Aboriginal people, all of whom have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Aboriginal rights.

Accessibility information

For information about technology and support available to help you read this document, and to learn more about general support with reading and writing, you can contact:

- your local library – find yours by searching for ‘Libraries’ on the Service Tasmania website at www.service.tas.gov.au
- 26TEN on 1300 00 2610 (email@26ten.tas.gov.au).

Please note

This is not a legal document and contains information for guidance only. To have a full understanding of the law, please read this document alongside the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* and other legislation referred to in this document

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Background

The Workplace Mental Health Framework Project

Tasmania has the highest rate of long-term mental health conditions in Australia.¹ The aim of the Workplace Mental Health Framework Project was to address the need for action to improve the health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians through building mentally healthy workplaces.

Under Tasmanian law, employers have an obligation to address work related risks to their workers' health and safety. This includes risks to mental health and safety as well as physical health and safety. While employers are familiar with their legal responsibility to build and maintain physically safe workplaces, the WorkCover Board Tasmania (the Board) recognised that there is a need to support employers to make sure their workplaces are mentally safe as well.

On behalf of the Board, WorkSafe Tasmania (WorkSafe) led the Workplace Mental Health Framework Project and developed this Minds Matter Framework (Framework) and the Minds Matter Toolkit (Toolkit). Both of these resources are based on research undertaken as part of the project by the University of Tasmania's Menzies Institute for Medical Research through the Working Well Tasmania Study.² This study included a statewide survey of employers and workers to learn about capabilities in Tasmanian organisations for managing the mental health of workers.

The project was supported by the Department of Health through the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy, which recognises the importance of evidence based activities to support mentally healthy workplaces.³



Resources

This Framework and the Toolkit provide practical guidance to you as an employer in preventing harm to your workers' mental health and in promoting wellbeing, resilience and positive mental health in your workplace.

You can find this guidance on WorkSafe's website in a section dedicated to workplace mental health. Go to [worksafe.tas.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au) and search for 'Mentally healthy workplaces'.

We welcome your feedback via email at wst.info@justice.tas.gov.au

Support

If you would like some free and confidential mental health support, please contact:

- Lifeline at lifeline.org.au or phone 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue at beyondblue.org.au or phone 1300 224 636
- Access Mental Health at health.tas.gov.au or phone 1800 332 388
- 1800 Respect at 1800respect.org.au or phone 1800 737 732
- Mental health and staff wellbeing, Business Tasmania at business.tas.gov.au



Words and terms used in this Framework

Word/term	Notes
compassion fatigue	When a person becomes physically, emotionally and mentally exhausted due to repeated exposure to the stress and trauma of others.
culturally safe workplace	A workplace where everyone is respected and included, regardless of culture or background.
employee assistance program	A counselling service offered by employers to their workers to promote psychological wellbeing.
hazard	A situation or thing that has the potential to harm a person.
mental health	A state of mental wellbeing that makes it possible for people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn and work well, and contribute to their community.
moral distress/injury	Discomfort or distress caused by exposure to events or situations that violate a person's moral or ethical values. Repeated or unmanaged moral distress can lead to moral injury, which is chronic psychological and emotional distress.
peer support	Where people provide mutual support and assistance to each other.
psychosocial hazards	Hazards in the workplace that may cause psychological and physical harm.
reasonably practicable	Whatever is, or was at a particular time, reasonably able to be done in relation to ensuring health or safety.
risk	The possibility that harm (death, injury or illness) might occur when exposed to a hazard.
trauma-informed approach	An understanding of trauma and its effects, promoting safety and supporting choice and control. It encourages safe and trusting relationships where disclosures of trauma are possible and are responded to appropriately.
workplace	Any place where a worker goes or is likely to be for their work, including temporary and mobile sites, such as construction sites, vehicles and other vessels.





Introduction

Why mentally healthy workplaces matter

People's mental health matters

According to the World Health Organisation good mental health is crucial to people's wellbeing.⁴ It makes it possible for people to cope with the stresses of life, realise their abilities, learn well, work well, and contribute to their community.

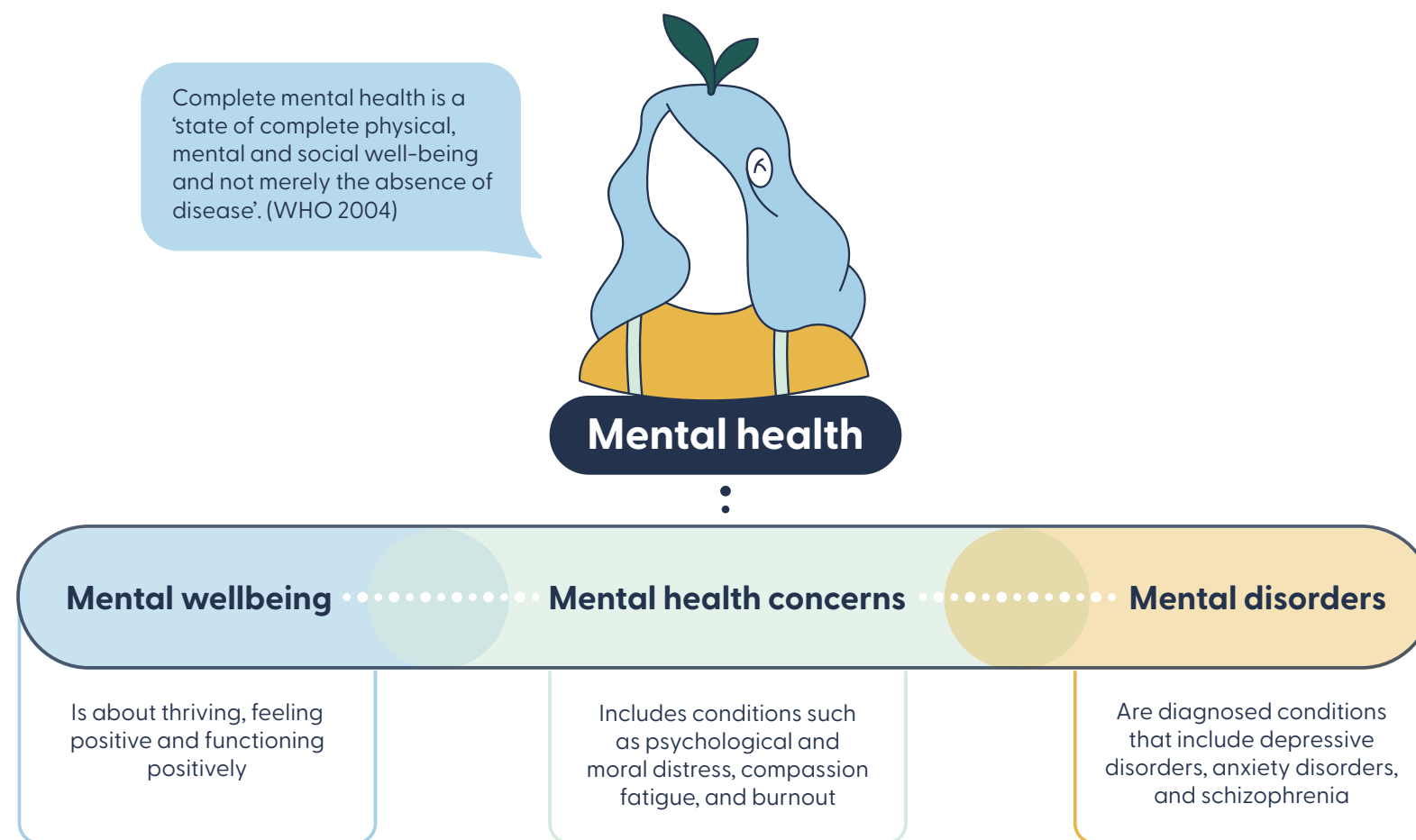


Figure 1: Mental health, wellbeing, concerns and disorders

Employers have legal obligations

As an employer, you have a duty to ensure the health and safety of your workers, and this includes their mental health and safety. Employees also have the right to a safe workplace.

Under Tasmania's [Work Health and Safety Act 2012](#), employers are required to ensure as far as is reasonably practicable that their workers are not exposed to work related risks and hazards to their health and safety – both physical and mental.

This means you must remove those risks or minimise them as far as is reasonably practicable.

Tasmania has a code of practice for [Managing psychosocial hazards at work](#) that applies to all workplaces. The code gives practical guidance on how you can manage health and safety risks associated with psychosocial hazards and how to achieve the standards required under work health and safety laws.

You have other legal obligations relevant to workplace mental health, including:

- a requirement to eliminate sex discrimination and harassment – [Sex Discrimination Act 1984 \(Cth\)](#)
- preventing disability, age and racial discrimination – [Anti Discrimination Act 1998 \(Tas\)](#) and [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#), [Racial Discrimination Act 1975 \(Cth\)](#) and [Age Discrimination Act 2004 \(Cth\)](#)
- supporting workers who experience mental health concerns arising from their work – [Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1998 \(Tas\)](#).



To find out more about your legal obligations and other legislation that might be relevant to ensuring a mentally safe workplace, for example, privacy and industrial relations legislation, go to the Minds Matter Toolkit on WorkSafe's website.

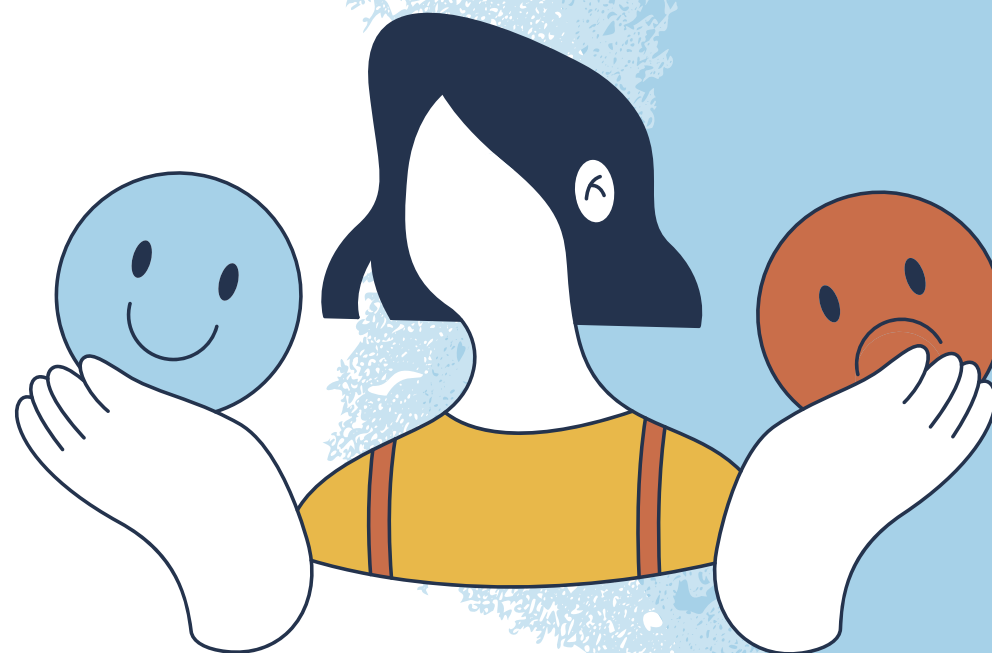
Go to [worksafe.tas.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au) and search for 'Mentally healthy workplaces'.



Mentally healthy workplaces are good for business

Providing a mentally healthy workplace makes business sense – it's good for your workers and productivity. A mentally healthy workplace helps you to:⁵

	attract and keep workers
	increase worker engagement and job satisfaction
	reduce absenteeism
	increase productivity and competitiveness
	reduce the likelihood and cost of workers compensation claims and other legal actions.



The Board and WorkSafe Tasmania both work to ensure physically and mentally safe and healthy workplaces across the State. In doing this work, they support It Pays to Care, which is an evidence-based policy to promote fair and efficient workers compensation schemes across Australia.⁵

It Pays to Care complements this Framework and is a useful policy to consider for your injury recovery processes. The policy notes the influence of workplace factors on workplace injury recovery and return to work outcomes.

These factors include the workplace environment prior to injury as well as how a workplace injury and a worker's return to work is managed. Influential factors include:

- job satisfaction
- control over work that is done
- pre-existing levels of support from colleagues and supervisors
- stigma (including against people experiencing poor mental health)
- poor workplace culture
- the employer's financial capacity, which helps determine the level of support available to injured workers.

Overall, a positive psychosocial work environment is associated with stronger recovery and earlier return to work



Every **\$1.00** spent on creating mentally healthy workplaces gives a return of between **\$2.30** and **\$4.00**. This reflects improved productivity and reduced workers compensation claim costs.⁶

What the research shows

The impact of mental health concerns in workplaces



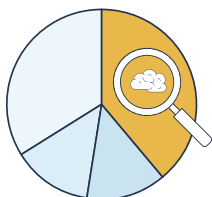
Mental health concerns cost Australian businesses **\$6 billion each year in lost productivity**. Work-related mental health conditions typically require 3 times more time off work than other injuries.⁶



At any one time in Australia, an estimated **1 in 5 people** is experiencing a mental health concern or disorder.⁷



More than **1 in 5 female workers** and **1 in 7 male workers** in Australia report experiencing significant psychological distress.⁸

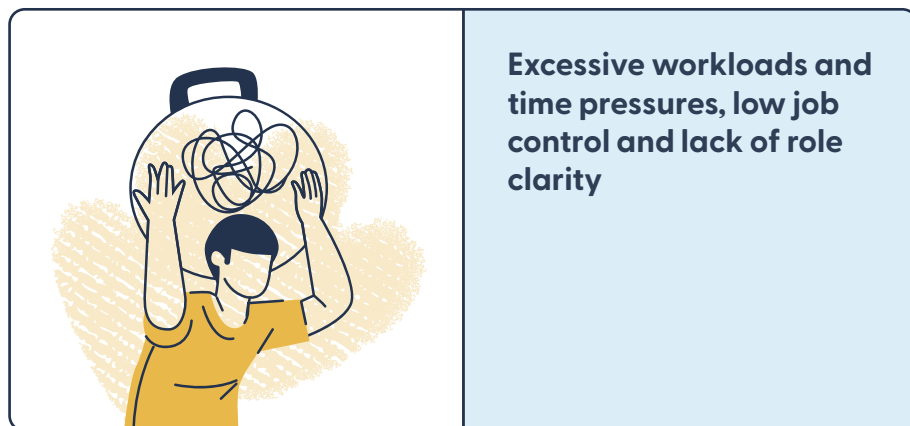


Forty-three per cent (43%) of working-aged Australians have experienced a mental illness during their lifetime.⁷



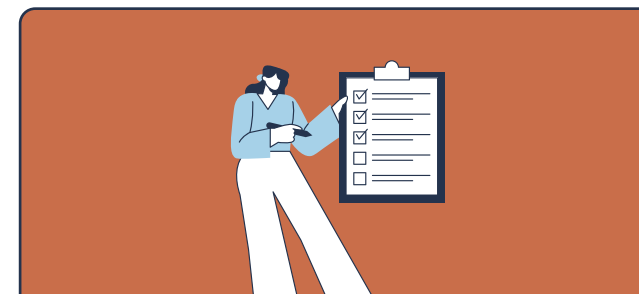
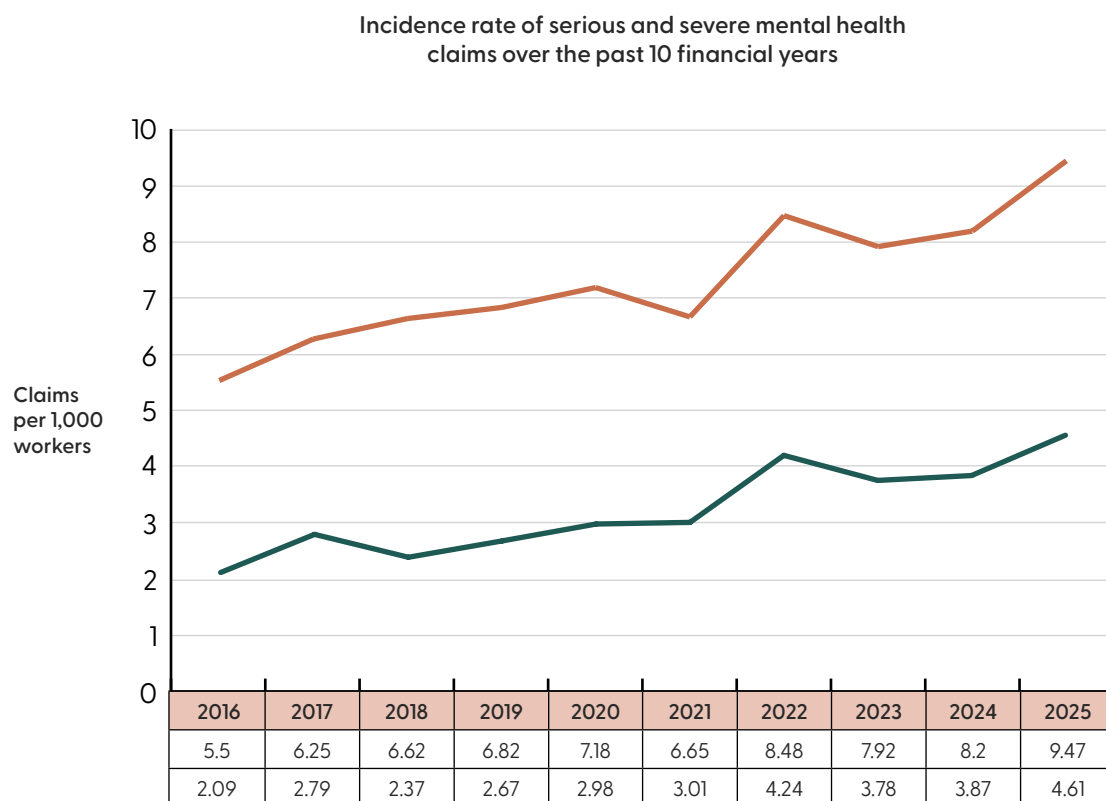
Common causes of work-related mental health concerns

Some mental health concerns are caused by work, some outside of work, and some are a combination of both. Work-related mental health concerns can be caused by:



Workplace mental health in Tasmania

There has been a steady increase in the incidence rate of serious and severe mental health claims over the past 10 years. The average percentage increase over this time has been 7% for serious claims, and 11% for severe claims.⁹



A survey of Tasmanian employers showed their capability to deal with workplace mental health is low.

- **70%** indicated their focus on workplace mental health was 'basic awareness' or 'intention' to act
- **19%** indicated they were taking limited action
- **Only 12%** indicated they were taking effective action.¹⁰

In Tasmania:⁹

- **ninety per cent (90%)** of serious work-related mental health condition claims are due to work-related mental stress
- work-related harassment and/or workplace bullying and work pressure are the most significant causes of work-related mental health concerns – accounting for **more than 60%** of serious mental health claims in Tasmania
- each mental health injury claim results in an incapacity of **more than 60 days' absence** from work
- health care and social assistance workers reported **the most mental health injuries** in 2018.

The Tasmanian business landscape poses challenges for workplace mental health and wellbeing:¹⁰

- Most businesses in Tasmania are small/medium businesses with less than 20 employees. In consultations during this project, businesses indicated that they want support and resources to prioritise workplace mental health.
- Almost 40% of workers are in the retail, health care and social assistance, agriculture, and construction industries. These industries can be particularly vulnerable to mental health concerns due to the nature of the work, regional isolation.
- There is a large casual workforce for which job security can be a key issue affecting worker mental health.



In consultations during this project, tradespeople, contractors and small business owners described the unique pressures they face when it comes to mental health and wellbeing. Many were working across multiple roles – managing staff, handling admin, dealing with compliance, and delivering services – with little time to stop or check in on themselves.

Several participants said that because they were ‘the whole business’, it felt like there was no room to be unwell and no one to step in if they needed support.¹⁰

What makes a workplace mentally healthy

A mentally healthy workplace:



protects mental health



promotes good mental health, resilience and wellbeing

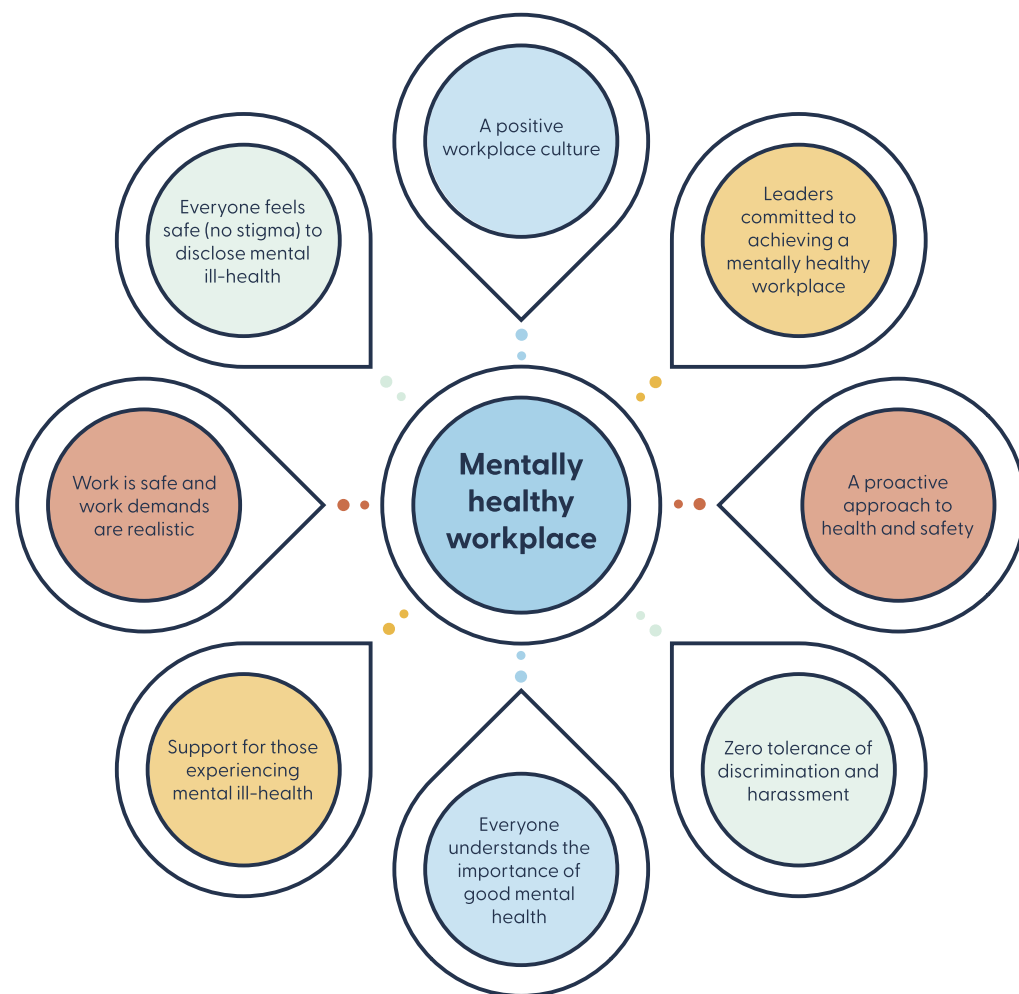


actively **responds** to people showing signs of distress.

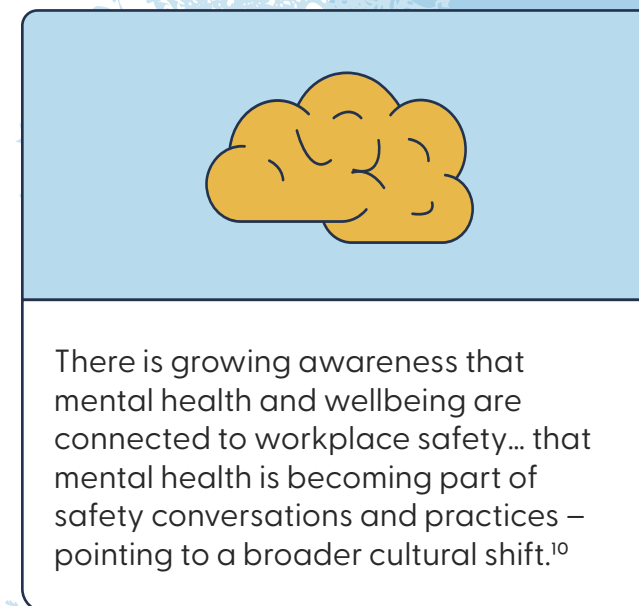
Working in a mentally healthy workplace can contribute to people's mental wellbeing by providing:

- **acceptance** – a positive workplace culture creates an environment where workers feel valued, supported and motivated to contribute their best efforts
- **job satisfaction** – working in a mentally healthy workplace gives people a greater sense of purpose, achievement and pride in their work
- **social connection** – a supportive work environment enables social connections, both protecting mental health and promoting wellbeing
- **access to help** – in mentally healthy workplaces, people know how to access mental health services if needed, and they feel comfortable to do so
- **role clarity** – everyone has a clear understanding of what is expected of them and why
- **recovery** – workers experiencing mental concerns get better support and recover faster in mentally healthy workplaces.⁵

Figure 2: What makes a mentally health workplace



Importantly, information shared by Tasmanians in the Working Well Tasmania Study and in other public consultations during this project showed that employers and workers recognise developing and maintaining mentally healthy workplaces is everyone's responsibility.



What Tasmanian workplaces want

Consultations were held during this project to make sure that this Framework and the Toolkit meet the needs of the Tasmanian community. People want practical, tailored tools that are easy to use in busy environments.¹⁰



Protect

People want effective protective actions. Simple but meaningful actions often work well, for example, flexible work practices and early conversations about wellbeing.



Promote

People want promotion actions that are inclusive, easy to access and actively supported by employers.



Respond

People want responses from their workplace that are confidential, trauma informed and culturally safe. This is particularly important for people in sole roles, casual work, or highly regulated sectors.



Tasmanians consulted during this project described a strong appetite for mental health to be recognised as a shared workplace responsibility – one that is woven into daily practices, not just policies.

Support needs to be early, trusted, and visible, and must account for the different pressures workers face depending on their role, employment type, and personal context. Whether it's a check-in at the start of a shift, protected time to recover, or the knowledge that speaking up won't lead to punishment, people told us feeling seen, safe, and supported at work made the biggest difference.¹⁰

The Minds Matter Framework



The Minds Matter Framework

A framework supports policy and practice – the rules and the way you do things.

The parts of a framework are usually quite general; they are designed to be built on, to be added to. People generally use a framework as an organised and consistent way to approach a problem, situation or issue.

Using a framework to guide actions can save a lot of time and take the guesswork out of dealing with issues. This is especially important when dealing with the complex and important issue of people's mental health.

WorkSafe produced this Framework to provide practical guidance based on research and statewide consultations. It is directed towards employers as they have the legal responsibility when it comes to work health and safety in the workplace. However the information is transferable, and we heard that workers are also interested to work with employers to apply this Framework in a way that best supports everyone in their workplace.

We recommend you use this Framework to plan and guide your actions to build a mentally healthy workplace. This can help you as an employer to meet your obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012*. It will also help to make your workplace an environment where everyone's mental health is taken as seriously as their physical health at work.

Action areas

This Framework identifies 3 focus areas.

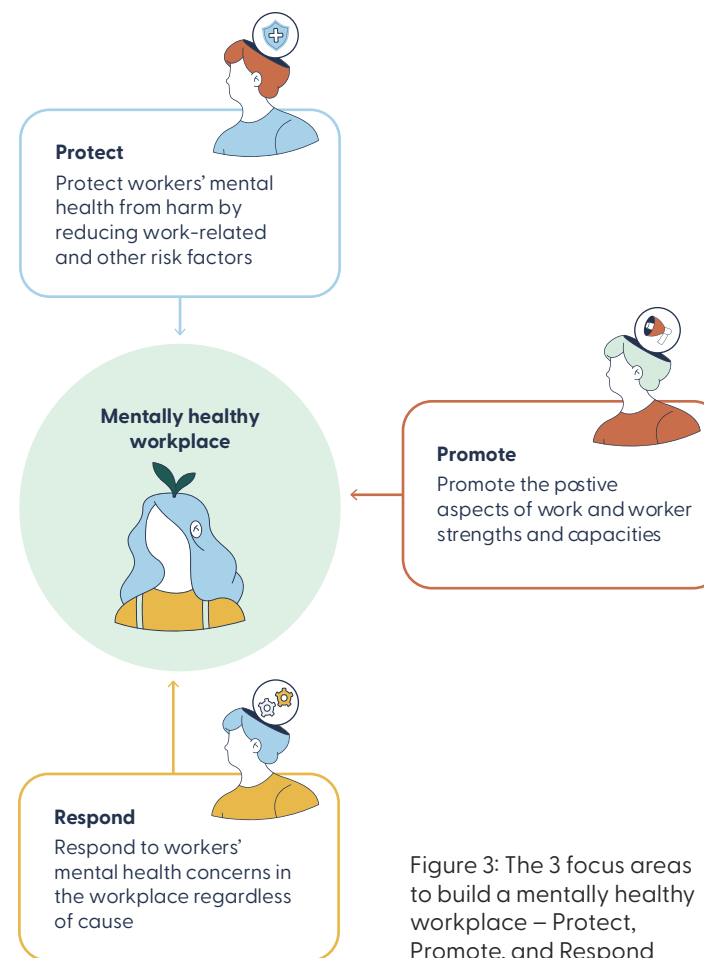


Figure 3: The 3 focus areas to build a mentally healthy workplace – Protect, Promote, and Respond



An integrated approach

When it comes to mental health in the workplace and this Framework, an integrated approach means that the 3 focus areas – Protect, Promote and Respond – are not treated separately but as part of a single coordinated strategy. This approach means that actions in one focus area reinforce actions in the other focus areas.¹¹

Confidentiality

To achieve a mentally healthy workplace, discussions of mental health in the workplace need to be normalised. Confidentiality plays an important part in gaining trust and removing stigma to enable these discussions. This requires a positive and supportive workplace culture, empathetic leadership and a collective effort by everyone.

Minds Matter Toolkit

This Framework sets out steps to guide you as you take actions that best suit your workplace. The Toolkit includes guidance and links to information and other resources that will help you to use this Framework and achieve a mentally healthy workplace.



Go to worksafe.tas.gov.au and search for 'Mentally healthy workplaces'.



Focus areas

Protect workers' mental health from harm

Activities in the Protect focus area support your legal obligations and aim to protect workers from harm by:



Identifying, assessing and controlling work-related hazards to the mental health of your workers.



Identifying, assessing and addressing other factors that affect mental health in your workplace.

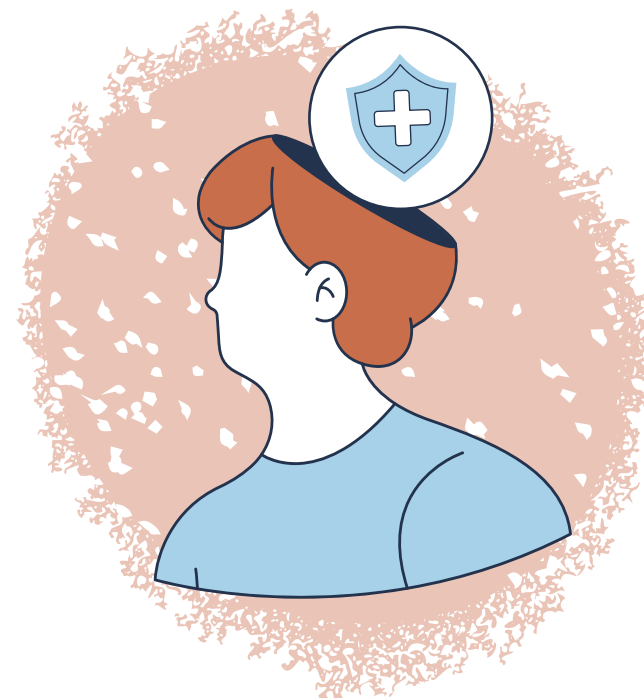


Table 1: Examples of activities that protect workers from harm to their mental health

Activity	Example
Identify and assess psychosocial hazards	Conduct a psychosocial risk assessment
Work directed interventions	Improve job control, improve job design, provide flexible work arrangements, prevent burnout, foster open and positive working relationships
Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment	Prevent bullying and harassment, ensure non discriminatory work practices
Address risk factors for mental illness that are not related to work	Subsidise worker gym memberships (because physical activity provides protection against depression)

Protect in action

Creating a positive workplace culture

A hospitality worker gained employment at a busy food venue and noted that, while there were no obvious negative issues in the workplace, there were no established activities or conversations focused on health and wellbeing, unlike in their previous job. They discussed this with their supervisor and suggested some simple ways to promote wellbeing within the team. The supervisor introduced initiatives including discussing wellbeing in staff meetings and promoting staff to participate in physical activity challenges.

These actions helped to normalise discussions around mental health and encouraged staff to be proactive about their physical and mental wellbeing.¹²

Identifying and addressing psychosocial hazards

A community service organisation hired additional administrative support staff to ease the workload of existing employees. The new staff were at risk of regularly seeing distressing client information as part of their daily tasks. To protect everyone's wellbeing, the organisation reviewed its procedures and implemented changes to minimise unnecessary exposure. This included clearly defining who needed access to sensitive material, introducing task rotation, and providing digital safeguards to filter distressing content where possible. It also included ongoing access to the Employee Assistance Program and mental health support for workers.

As a result, existing employees experienced reduced workload and associated job strain, while the administrative support staff were protected from unnecessary exposure to potentially traumatic material.¹²



Starting conversations early

Participants in the public consultations undertaken during this project highlighted the value of workplaces that raise mental health and wellbeing early – not just when something goes wrong. Participants noted that some organisations use structured induction processes to set expectations around safety, outline support options, and create space for conversations about what helps people stay well.

People shared that having these conversations when they first joined an organisation made a difference. It gave them permission to be open and made it easier to ask for help down the track. Some described feeling reassured to know they weren't expected to simply manage on their own. Others reflected that talking about mental health early made it clear that wellbeing was not a side issue – it was part of how the workplace operated. These early check-ins helped build trust and opened the door to more supportive workplace relationships.¹⁰



Promote the positive aspects of work and workers' capacities

Promoting the positive aspects of work and what workers are capable of can reduce the negative impact of psychosocial hazards that you're not able to eliminate or minimise. It also supports the general wellbeing of your workers.

Activities in the Promote focus area contribute to a mentally healthy workplace by:



Promoting the positive aspects of work.



Promoting and building on your workers' strengths and capacities.



Encouraging and fostering the wellbeing of your workers through a positive workplace culture that is built on respect.



Although mental health is being more openly talked about, there is still stigma around the topic. Research shows that many employers are unsure how to strengthen the wellbeing of their workers in a consistent and inclusive way.²

We know that empathetic and understanding leaders are shaping safer workplace cultures and that informal peer support plays an important role in wellbeing. However, many employers struggle with knowing how to overcome the stigma surrounding mental health, making it difficult to effectively support staff.

In the examples below the Protect and Promote actions reinforce the integrated approach of this Framework.



Table 2: Examples of activities that promote the positive aspects of work and workers' strengths and capacities

Activity	Example
Consulting with workers about what aspects of their job are the most satisfying	Conversations, staff surveys
Rethinking and redesigning job roles to improve job satisfaction	Discussing job roles with staff to identify opportunities for improvement
Promoting workplace mental health	Activities around how individual workers can improve and care for their mental health and wellbeing
Activities to foster hope, optimism, resilience and ways of dealing with challenges	Team building activities, employee resilience and mindfulness programs
Encouraging physical activity	Group outings, walking meetings, subsidising gym memberships

Promote in action

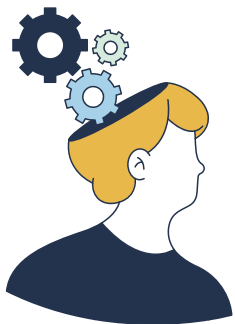
Connecting with other people



A Tasmanian organisation created a community-based office space for sole traders to work alongside others, reducing isolation and fostering connection. The space provides informal peer support and a psychologically safe environment, reflecting research on the mental health needs of people working outside standard employment such as sole traders and independent contractors.

This fulfilled the need for connection, support, and a shared place to work which applies to workers across industry and employment types and environments.¹⁰

Building on the strengths and capacity of workers



In a meeting with their supervisor, an electrical apprentice was feeling underutilised in their role and unsure how to contribute more to the team. They shared their skills and interests, and their supervisor worked with them to identify tasks that matched their strengths, including opportunities to assist with projects that aligned with their learning goals.

Over the following weeks, the apprentice took on these new responsibilities and participated in additional tasks to develop their skills. This increased engagement, boosted confidence, and helped the apprentice feel more valued, while the supervisor noticed improved productivity and motivation across the team.¹²

The importance of acknowledgement and recognition



Workers in a busy healthcare facility were often faced with high workloads and long working hours due to the facility being understaffed. Managers were aware of the negative impacts this was having on stress and morale but faced barriers in changing the workload of their employees. They introduced a recognition program that highlighted staff efforts and achievements, and celebrated milestones.

Staff reported that the initiative helped them feel appreciated for their work and boosted team morale, even in the context of ongoing high demands.¹²

Respond to mental health concerns

As an employer, you have legal requirements to meet in relation to the health of your workers. Your responsibilities include responding in a timely, safe and non discriminatory way to workers who are showing signs of mental health concerns in your workplace.

It is important to use a trauma-informed approach when thinking about, discussing, and responding to the mental health concerns of your workers. This means providing a safe workplace environment where people feel comfortable opening up about challenges they may be facing inside and outside the workplace. More information about a trauma informed approach is in the Toolkit.

Well-designed, integrated Respond actions reinforce Protect and Promote actions in the examples below.



Table 3: Examples of activities that respond to workers' mental health concerns

Activity	Example
Return to work plans and programs	Formal plans, including modified duties or accommodations on return to work
Employer funded, independent supports	Employee Assistance Programs
Anti-stigma programs designed to reduce stigma surrounding mental illness	Mental health literacy programs for everyone in the workplace, RUOK? days
Building workplace capability to respond to mental health concerns, including critical incidents	Mental health first aid training for some workers to complement physical first aiders, peer support training program, critical incident procedures

Respond in action

Leaders creating positive cultures and building trust



A Tasmanian retail worker sought mental health support after a distressing workplace incident. They were unable to access the company's Employee Assistance Program, due to timing difficulties and a dismissive manager.

Following a transfer to a different store with a new manager, the worker was provided with clear guidance on mental health support during induction. This more effective response enabled the worker to access the support they had originally needed.¹⁰

Walk and talk response



A Tasmanian based paramedic experiencing work related mental health concerns accessed psychological support provided through the workplace. Attending the support sessions became yet another stressful activity to fit into their busy schedule.

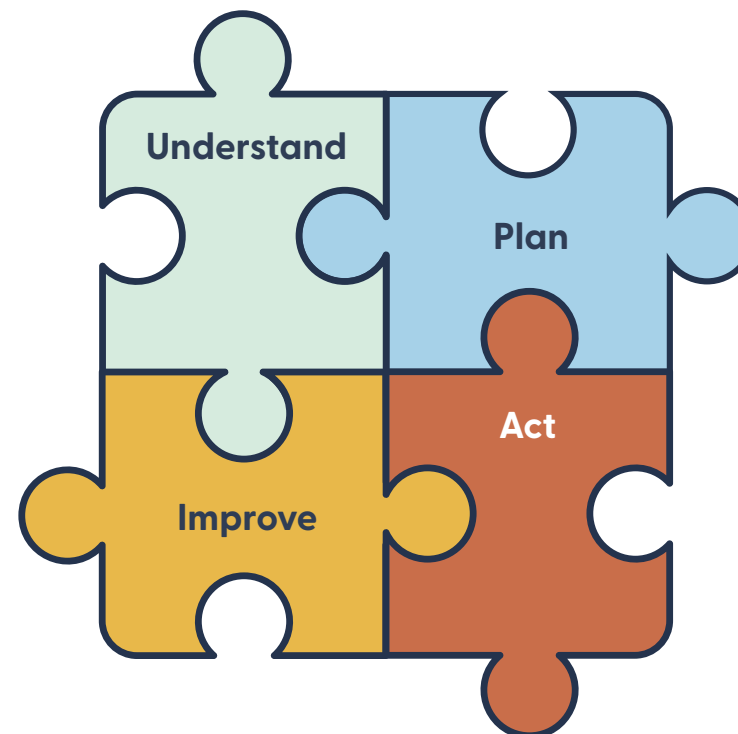
This was resolved through redesigning the support sessions as 'walk and talk' style activities – dealing with the mental health concerns while doing an outdoor activity.¹⁰

Get started



This Framework guides you to take actions that best suit the needs of your workplace. These actions can build on your existing work health and safety processes. The Toolkit contains a checklist to support and track your progress. The steps to follow are described below.

1. **Understand** your legal obligations and the mental health needs of your workplace.
2. **Plan** what you will do within the 3 focus areas – Protect, Promote and Respond.
3. **Act** on your plan by taking small, achievable steps.
4. **Improve** your approach by reviewing your actions and building on your successes.



Consult your workforce seek advice access practical tools

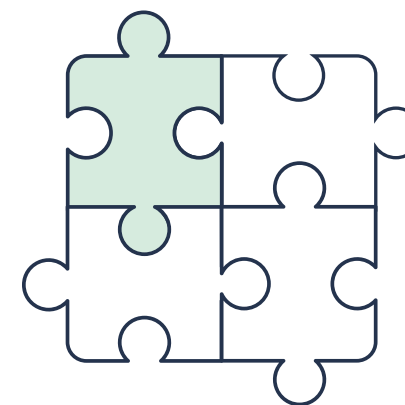
Figure 4: Recommended steps to guide the building of a mentally healthy workplace

Step 1: Understand

The first step is to understand your legal obligations and the mental health needs of your workplace.

This involves:

	learning about your legal obligations
	looking at your business information
	doing a psychosocial risk assessment
	identifying what your business is already doing.



Understanding legal obligations

You can refer to information under ‘Employers have legal obligations’ in this Framework for details about what you must do to protect the wellbeing of your workers.

Importantly, by law, you must consult your workers when developing strategies to manage work-related mental health hazards. You can do this through:



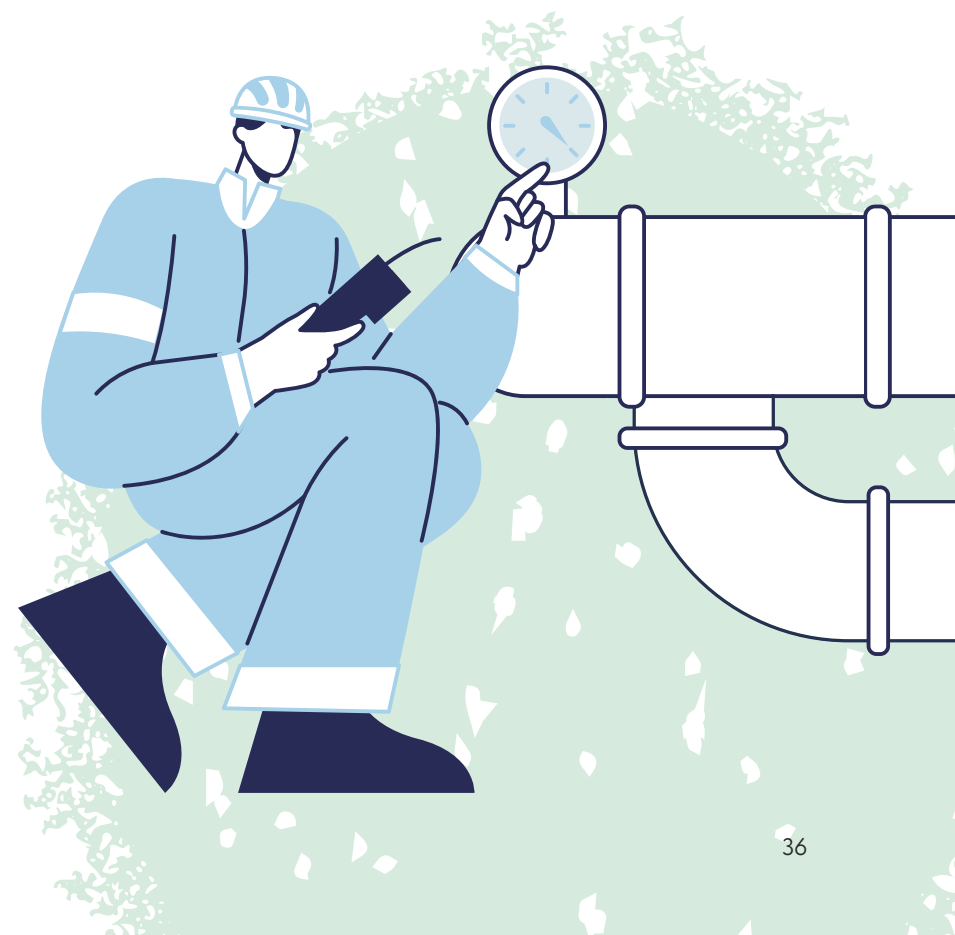
staff surveys, focus groups, workshops or one-on-one conversations



regular and transparent 2-way communication with your team.

Reviewing business data

Your business information may help you identify if workers might be experiencing mental health concerns. For example, spikes in unplanned leave, rising workers compensation claims, workers accessing more support services and tools, and reports of bullying and harassment.



Assessing psychosocial risks

A key step in achieving a mentally healthy workplace is undertaking a psychosocial risk assessment. This allows you to identify, assess and plan how to control the psychosocial hazards specific to your business.

A psychosocial hazard is anything that could harm someone's mental health.

- Psychological harm or injuries include conditions such as anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and sleep disorders.
- Physical injuries include musculoskeletal injury, heart disease and physical injury following fatigue-related workplace incidents.

Each workplace is unique and the hazards and strategies you need to reduce or control them will be specific to your workplace. Psychosocial hazards can be influenced by:

- the size of your workplace, organisation or business
- the way your workplace operates
- the goods and services you produce or provide
- the nature of your workforce, such as gender, age, cultural characteristics and skills mix.



Figure 5: What is involved in a psychosocial risk assessment

Psychosocial hazards that may be identified in a risk assessment include:

- job demands
- low job control
- poor support
- lack of job role clarity
- poor organisational change management
- inadequate reward and recognition
- poor organisational justice
- traumatic events or material
- remote or isolated work
- poor physical work environment
- violence and aggression
- bullying
- harassment, including sexual harassment
- conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions.

Building on what is already working well

Identifying existing processes and supports that are working well to address work related mental health hazards means you can build on these foundations to continue creating a mentally healthy workplace. This approach is efficient and sustainable because it uses familiar systems, reduces effort, and increases the likelihood of worker engagement in your plan.



For more information and guidance to help you understand your legal obligations and the mental health needs of your workplace (Step 1), go to the Toolkit on WorkSafe's website.

Go to worksafe.tas.gov.au and search for 'Mentally healthy workplaces'.

Step 2: Plan

The second step is to develop a plan with your workers that integrates actions across the 3 focus areas.

An effective plan will:

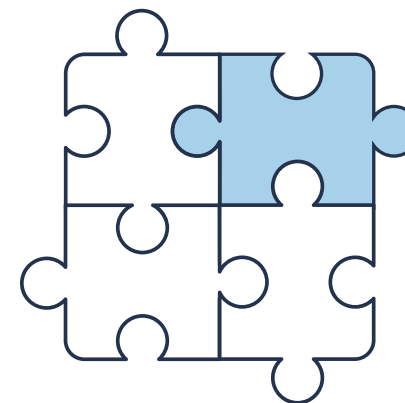
- identify specific and achievable actions with a clear timeframe for taking those actions – this includes how to eliminate or reduce psychosocial hazards you have identified in your workplace
- identify the physical, human and financial resources you will need
- identify everyone's roles and responsibilities in implementing the plan
- include strategies for:
 - communicating the plan with your workers
 - monitoring and measuring the success of actions taken
 - overcoming any barriers in implementing the plan.

A plan will usually combine 3 types of actions. Including a combination of these actions will give you the best chance of building a mentally healthy workplace.

Worker-directed actions aim to improve a worker's skills, knowledge and strengths so they can cope with working conditions.

Work-directed actions aim to improve working conditions and the way work is organised and done.

Illness-directed actions aim to help workers experiencing mental illness and psychological distress to access support and/or services as soon as possible.



It is a good idea to include your plan in your existing work health and safety risk systems and processes. Doing this will make it clear that building and maintaining a mentally healthy workplace is a business as usual activity for you and your workers.

Worker-directed

- Provide workers with training in how to look after their own wellbeing
- Increase capability of workers to support their fellow workers
- Promote the use of wellbeing support services
- Establish mental health champions to lead physical and mental health initiatives to improve worker wellbeing
- Encourage peer support and team connection initiatives
- Promote regular breaks and healthy work habits

Work-directed

- Incorporate mental health safety as part of workplace induction processes
- Design work tasks to suit the capabilities and interests of workers
- Provide a flexible working environment
- Include key performance indicators (KPIs) for workplace mental health and safety
- Include workers in conversations about the design, delivery and content of their work
- Develop systems and policies that support positive workplace culture and promote the importance of a mentally healthy workplace
- Assess and improve the physical work environment and opportunities for team interactions

Illness-directed

- Provide managers and leaders with training on how to understand and respond to workplace mental health risks
- Be available and open to transparent, non-judgemental discussions about mental health issues
- Provide and promote the use of external support services when needed
- Increase worker understanding of warning signs of potential mental health concerns in themselves and their team
- Establish return to work plans following psychological injury or illness
- Provide reasonable adjustments to work duties and hours when needed



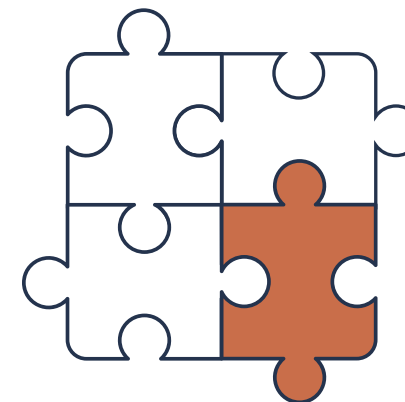
For more information and guidance to help you to develop a plan that integrates your activities across the focus areas (Step 2), go to the Toolkit on WorkSafe's website. Go to [worksafe.tas.gov.au](https://www.worksafe.tas.gov.au) and search for 'Mentally healthy workplaces'.

Step 3: Act

The third step for you and your workers is to put your plan into action.

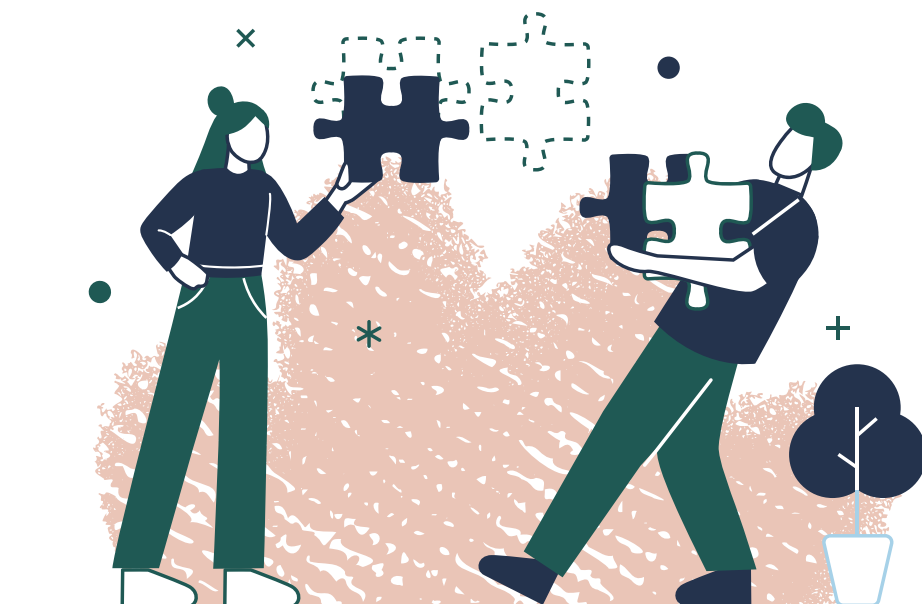
Act on your plan by:

- clearly communicating your plan with your workers, building a shared understanding of how it will be implemented and the resulting benefits
- giving clear roles to those responsible for implementing the plan and making them accountable for the results
- ensuring your managers and leaders are committed to the plan and have the right skills, capabilities and confidence to build a mentally healthy workplace
- providing the physical, human, and financial resources required
- developing and applying strategies to mitigate the risks involved in implementing the plan
- embedding your aim of achieving a mentally healthy workplace in worker induction processes and ongoing education and training.



For more information and guidance to help you put your plan into action (Step 3), go to the Toolkit on WorkSafe's website.

Go to worksafe.tas.gov.au and search for 'Mentally healthy workplaces'.

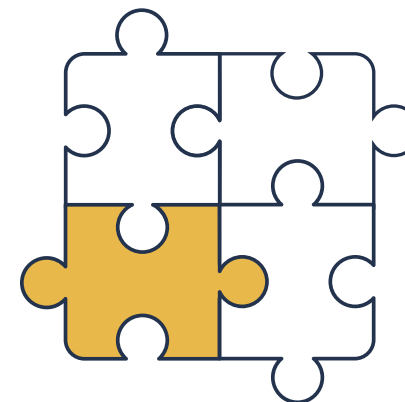


Step 4: Improve

The fourth step is to monitor the actions you've implemented, measure how effective they are in creating a mentally healthy workplace and improve the plan with adjustments where needed.

Once you have implemented your initial plan, you should evaluate its outcomes and build on your successes. To do this:

- Look again at your business information/data to see if there has been improvement in the areas you looked at when you took the first step in this process. For example, unplanned leave, workers compensation claims, workers accessing support services and tools, and reports of bullying and harassment.
- Consult with your workers on what has worked and what needs more attention:
 - Has the plan achieved a positive mental health culture?
 - What more can you do to improve workplace mental health?
- Adjust your plan where necessary and take new actions if needed.



For more information and guidance to help you monitor, measure and respond to how well your plan is doing (Step 4), go to the Toolkit on WorkSafe's website.

Go to worksafe.tas.gov.au and search for 'Mentally healthy workplaces'.



Final thoughts

Workplaces play an important role in supporting people's mental health and mental health concerns have a significant impact on workforce productivity.

WorkSafe produced this Framework and the Toolkit to encourage you and your workers to support the mental as well as physical health of everyone in your workplace.

Mental health in the workplace is not just an individual issue – it is shaped by culture, leadership, systems, and the daily realities of work.¹⁰



Acknowledgement of contributions

This Framework was informed by research and consultations conducted by researchers at the Menzies Institute for Medical Research at the University of Tasmania, including the production of:

- a benchmark of Tasmanian employers' levels of capability for managing the mental health of their workers, using data from surveys undertaken during the Working Well Tasmania Study
- a review of evidence from around the world for workplace based programs and actions that focus on improving workers' mental health
- a blueprint of evidence-informed actions and activities linked to the needs of employers and workers in Tasmanian workplaces.

Stenning & Associates developed a foundation document, 'Minding your Business. A framework for building and supporting mentally healthy Tasmanian workplaces'.

We acknowledge the following organisations for information publicly available through their websites which has helped in the production of this Framework.

- It Pays to Care at itpaystocare.org
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians at racp.edu.au
- Safe Work Australia at safeworkaustralia.gov.au
- World Health Organisation at who.int

Endnotes

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021), Health: Census, ABS Website, accessed 10 December 2025.

² Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania (2025) The Working Well Tasmania Study. Survey Results Report [unpublished report], Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania, Tasmania.

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⁴ World Health Organisation (WHO) (n.d.) Mental health overview, accessed 16 March 2026.

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¹² WorkSafe Tasmania (2026). Psychologist, Workplace Wellbeing, Policy and Projects, information provided by internal subject matter expert.

¹³ Safe Work Australia (2022) Managing psychosocial hazards at work, Code of Practice, accessed 27 November 2025.