

WHITE PAPER

# Creating Safe Workplaces



EMERGENCY  
ALARM

BREAK GLASS  
AMPAC

A practical guide to  
change

Dr Tanya Finnie

**RedHead**  
Communications

Where Diversity Thrives and Leaders Come Alive

In partnership with Elect Training and Consulting

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# DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD



Considering the changes within the Work Health and Safety Act that now includes psychosocial safety and various recent reports that followed the Safety at Work report around sexual harassment, there is an urgent need to create safer workplace cultures. The purpose of this paper is to educate and provide some practical tips on actions that you can take, as well as areas to explore to support your workplace to be a place where people can feel safe and bring their whole selves to work.

As the owner of RedHead Communications, a company specialising in workplace culture this is an area that I am very passionate about. We partnered with Elect Training and Consulting, a safety company and director Mark Small provided some key insights into the safety side of this paper.

It outlines a variety of topics and concepts to explore around creating a safety culture in your business. It presents a framework for perspective taking on your individual behaviour to create safer workplaces and to provide spaces where people can bring themselves to work and speak up without fear, to create a thriving culture.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions or comments you may have.

Warm Regards  
Dr Tanya Finnie  
Director RedHead Communications

# ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

## RedHead Communications

Where Diversity Thrives and Leaders Come Alive

RedHead Communications is a boutique management consulting firm specialising in all things culture. The principal Dr Tanya Finnie is a global cultural strategist with expertise in building meaningful relationships and instilling confidence within individuals. With valuable global experience, they offer cultural, diversity and inclusive practice insights. With a unique skill set and vast knowledge, they assist organisations in growing their human capital and increasing their cultural intelligence (CQ).

Tanya did her PhD In Cultural Leadership and a Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and Development. They are also the organisers of the annual Diversity and Inclusion Summit in Perth and recently established a based in Singapore as well. Tanya was the key author and instigator of this paper.

## ELECT TRAINING & CONSULTING

Elect Training and Consulting is a respected provider for workplace health and safety solutions, servicing Australian organisations that value tailored specialists informing the safety and well being of their people. Through our specialist training programs, consulting services, and system-development capabilities, Elect provides organisations with the tools to thrive in safer and healthier working environments. As a result, we help positively contribute to the safety of the Australian workforce as a whole.

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# INTRODUCTION

**A healthy work environment is crucial for the mental health, psychical health, and overall wellbeing of employees.**

The workplace plays a major role in individuals developing skills, identity and an overall sense of self-worth[1].

A new West Australian Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act took effect on 31 March 2022. It has evolved to now include psychical health and psychological health under its definition of health in the workplace.

As mental health can be impacted by experiences in the workplace, it is an important discussion around workplace safety as the Act evolved to include psychosocial hazards.

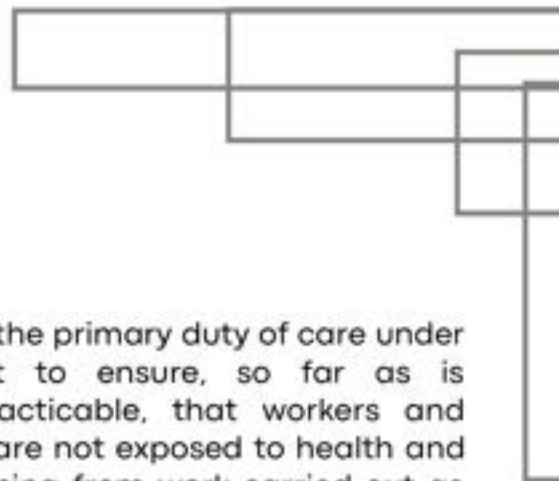
Psychosocial hazards at work are aspects of work and work situations which can lead to psychological or physical harm[2]. These psychosocial hazards can occur due to the design, management, culture or structure of a workplace and have the potential to increase the risk of psychological or physical harm.

Psychosocial hazards can include work related stress, fatigue and burnout which can be caused by poor support or increasing job demands. Other Psychosocial hazards include bullying, harassment, violence and aggression, discrimination, and misconduct[3].

There is a complex interplay between psychosocial hazards and risk factors and organisations should adopt a framework to keep employees both psychically and psychologically healthy and safe in the workplace. In this paper we took two well researched models, the Hudson Safety model and the Cultural Intelligence (CQ) model and combined them to provide strategies to navigate these changes.

Ms Agius, Work Health and Safety Commissioner, stated it to be morally and legally unacceptable for psychological harms to be accepted as part of the job[4]. This is also directly in line with the National Enquiry Report (2020) that led to the Respect@Work report, which was an enquiry into sexual harassment in the workplace.

# LEGISLATIVE CHANGES IN WA



The Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act 2020 took effect in March of 2022[5]. It has evolved to define health as physical and psychological health resulting in the need for employers to ensure risks and psychosocial safety hazards are minimised as far as is reasonably practicable[6]. Through managing psychosocial risks and assessing psychological hazards in a similar way as physical safety hazard.

Employees will often receive training on how to protect their physical health, through instructions on for example handling chemicals, ergonomically safe practices etc. However, training is not always provided to workers to care for their psychological health, this needs to change.

The Government of Western Australia, Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety has produced a code of practice outlining common psychosocial hazards in the workplace[7], such as fatigue, burnout and harassment. Providing guidance on how employees should identify and manage psychosocial hazards in their workplace.

Everyone in the workplace has a duty to manage hazards and risks to the physical and psychological health and safety of a worker.

The PCBU has the primary duty of care under the WHS Act to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that workers and other persons are not exposed to health and safety risks arising from work carried out as part of the business or undertaking[8].



**PCBU-** The business entity that conducts business. For example companies, franchisees, self-employed, contractors and sub-contractors. Not volunteer associations.



**Worker-** Anyone working for a PCBU as for example an employee, trainee, apprentice, work experience or independent contractor.



# PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS IN THE WORKPLACE

Psychosocial hazards at work are aspects of work and work situations which can lead to psychological or physical harm[9]. It refers to the mental behaviour of the society as a whole.

On the other hand, the word 'psychological' is used in the sense of the 'mental behaviour' of an individual. Thus the two are differentiated by external and internal factors.

PCBUs have a legal responsibility to protect their workers by managing psychosocial hazards in the workplace. This can be done through identifying hazards which may affect a worker's mental health, assessing the severity of the risk then taking actions to eliminate and control risks to build a safe and healthy work environment[10]. If these hazards are left unaddressed they can impact workers' psychological safety, leading to a decreased productivity and harmful workplace cultures.

**Poor psychological health and safety costs Australian organisations \$6 billion a year in lost productivity (in absenteeism)[11 and 12].**

Hazards to one's mental health can occur in more obvious forms such as bullying, fatigue, sexual harassment violence or aggression. Though, may also occur due to common work-related stress, stemming from lack of adequate training support or job security[13].

Seemingly minor incidents, when left unaddressed can create sustaining negative impacts on an individual's mental health. Psychosocial hazards can also include conditions such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and sleep disorders[14].





Typically, populations from diverse cultural backgrounds, young people, women, individuals with disabilities and members of the LBBTQI+ community, experience the burden of unsafe working environments and poor management. It is important these groups have reasonable opportunities to have their views and concerns regarding workplace safety heard, demonstrating the importance of a creating speak up culture in the workplace.



This involves encouraging workers to speak up when they witness behaviours which can threaten the psychological safety of a worker and go against the values of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Having a speak up culture provides a platform and opportunity for employees to express ideas or grievances without fear of ridicule or being shut down by others. It is crucial to enable staff to appropriately deal with difficult conversations in an appropriate manner to foster a speak up culture.

### An individual's reaction to psychosocial hazards will be influenced by a range of factors including their



Personality



Age



Education level



Degree of training



Health status



Social status in the organisation



Pressures they face outside the workplace





As there is the potential for psychosocial hazards to lead to serious mental illness, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts, it is important all workers are educated around mental health, as this will help debunk common myths while providing them tools to appropriately support themselves and their colleagues.

Increased demands and higher targets for workers increase pressures, and threaten psychosocial safety by leading to stress and fatigue which has the potential to decrease productivity [15].



Fatigue and stress can be both a psychosocial hazard and the outcome of being exposed to psychosocial hazards. Stress is not considered an injury in itself, but if prolonged can lead to physical and psychological harms. These can appear through physical signs, emotional signs of behavioural signs[16]. One in five staff taking time off due to feeling mentally unwell in the workplace per year[17]. Psychological injuries typically require three times more time off work than other injuries [18].

However, employees not taking time off when needed due to fears of facing stigma or being managed out of an organisation leading to

'Presenteeism' which is the term given when sick workers come to work, work at levels that are less than optimal, was estimated to cost business about \$25 billion each year[19].

Groups with a greater risk of psychological harm include casual workers, labour-hire workers, women, apprentices, or young workers, and culturally and linguistically diverse workers [20].

Intergenerational trauma for example got passed down from the first stages of colonisation. It is worth noting psychological injuries typically require three times more time off work than other injuries [21].



# SEXUAL HARASSMENT

**Sexual harassment can be defined as conduct of a sexual nature which is unwanted or unwelcome and which has the purpose or effect of being intimidating, hostile, degrading humiliating or offensive.**

The most common form of sexual harassment in the workplace is gender-based harassment, which involves inappropriate conduct based on one's gender[22].

Sexual violence often has a direct link to a sexist workplace culture. Sexism creates a harmful and dangerous workplace culture which can more easily lead to serious misconduct, such as sexual harassment and sexual assault.

Risk factors for sexual harassment can involve a hierarchical and male dominated culture.

A report exploring Rio Tinto's culture, has revealed the largely male dominated workforce with approximately 79% men, has been harbouring unacceptable rates of sexual harassment and everyday sexism[23].

Workplace cultures that are more tolerant of sexual harassment, produce more sexual harassment as harmful behaviours are tolerated or normalised. This culture creates serious psychosocial hazards which can leave employees feeling psychologically unsafe at work. This can also take a toll on their self-esteem, personal relationships and overall health while contributing to reduced job satisfaction, increased stress and conflict.

It is important to strengthen reporting processes and accountability for perpetrators of everything from harassment and assault to everyday sexism to ensure employees can feel confident in reporting behaviour negatively impacting their psychosocial health.

Individuals who belong to multiple minority groups and individuals who possess less authority in the workplace are more likely to experience sexual harassment.



## Factors to consider when examining psycho-social hazards

The duration, frequency and severity of the exposure.

Work designs and systems, including job demands and tasks and how work is managed, organised and supported.

Information, training, instruction and supervision provided to workers[24].

How the psychosocial hazards may interact or combine.

Workplace interactions or behaviours.

Structures at the workplace.

Design and layout, and environmental conditions, of the workplace.

## Structures which can impact the psychosocial safety of the workplace include

Barriers to workers compensation and support

Workplace relationships which can be categorised as inappropriate or dangerous

Poor work design, which deprives work over aspects of the work they undertake

Frequency working evenings and weekend

Poor leadership and workplace culture

Lack of adequate policy and procedure

Low levels of autonomy and control

Low recognition and reward

Remote and isolated work

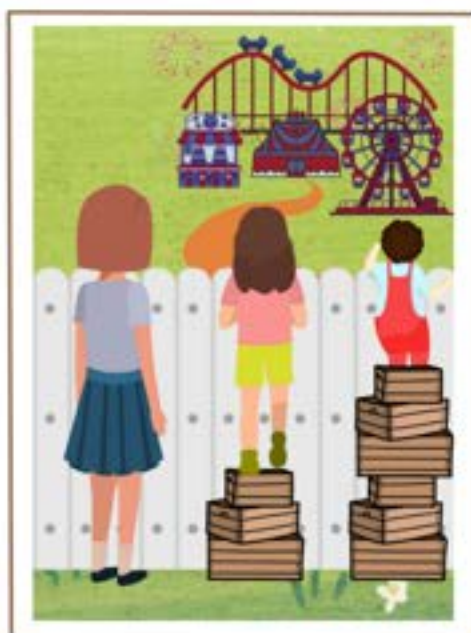
Exposure to poor quality or hazardous environments

Not enough management, communication support training or resources[25]

Poor Environmental Conditions as a hazardous working environment

# EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY

Equality in the workplace means treating every employee the same and providing every employee the same resources and opportunities. Equity recognises that different employees may have different circumstances. Meaning different divisions of resources and opportunities may also be needed for all employees to receive an equal outcome. Forget the golden rule of treating people like you want to be treated. The platinum rule is to treat others like they would like to be treated. As per the image below, an ideal outcome is to remove the barriers completely where possible.



## INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS IN THE AUSTRALIAN WORKFORCE

Australia's Indigenous population currently have an unemployment rate of 52% for those aged 24-65, while the nation average rate of unemployment sitting at 3.5% as of June 2022.



The Indigenous populations' lack of participation in the Australian workforce can be attributed to fears of feeling psychologically unsafe at work.

Due to the persistence of negative stereotypes, a lack of cultural understanding and cultural intelligence surrounding indigenous populations.

Indigenous workers offer different and unique perspectives, and experiences, which can provide valuable insight for businesses.

Through improving the cultural intelligence of the workplace, businesses can have employees from a diverse range of backgrounds, not only reflecting the Australian population, but providing businesses with unique insight and a competitive advantage due to the diversity of thought.

# IMPORTANCE OF WORKPLACE CULTURE

Workplace culture can be defined as the ways people in a company behave, as well as the attitudes and beliefs that inform how employees behave.

Toxic and unhealthy working cultures need to change to remove psychosocial hazards. Workplace culture is everyone's responsibility. However, leaders need to invest in culture to prevent these hazards from leaving employees from feeling unsafe psychologically or undervalued in the company.

It is important to ensure management and executives at all levels are aware of their roles and responsibility in upholding a positive workplace. Management behaviour can set the tone for workplace culture. If higher-ups and executives in a company are excused for behaving in ways that are unprofessional, such as through making harmful or derogatory comments, it can create a culture where employees believe such behaviours are accepted and also

create a workplace culture which is psychologically unsafe.

Other negative behaviours which can be harmful to the culture of a workplace include talking negatively about colleagues when not present, a less acknowledged form of bullying.

These negative behaviours can create a prevalence of disengaged employees. To combat this, it is important to unblock communication between different levels of staff. When individuals feel they are not heard they are more likely to check out. This can be done through promoting a speak up culture and asking employees how they are feeling or what they are thinking. A good rule to consider here: If you are not willing to take out a billboard over the freeway with what you are about to say, maybe it is not worth saying.



## Employee Perks

Employee perks have the potential to assist in creating a positive workplace culture and good morale within a company. Perks can include providing breakfast and snacks for employees, celebrating employee milestones and birthdays in the company or initiatives such as bring your pet to work day. This should be implemented through various perspectives. A golf day for example may be great fun, but could exclude a whole group of workers who simply are not interested in golf.

Creating a positive culture where individuals feel safe psychologically can encourage progress and improve staff retention. The better the culture greater the company.

# CASE STUDY: GOOGLE WALKOUT



In 2018 over 20,000 employees and contractors walked out of the offices of Google across the globe after the company provided a 90-million-dollar severance package to Andy Rubin, the creator of android mobile software after sexual misconduct allegations.

Employees protest of the company's handling of sexual harassment, misconduct, mistreatment and a non-inclusive workplace culture. Leaving flyers on their desk reporting that they were protesting a "Workplace culture that's not working for everyone".

This could prove to be a real danger to Australia if organisations do not become more inclusive as people power is on the rise and individuals growing more aware of the importance of equality. As seen through recent Black Lives Matter protests across Australia, LGBTQI+ marches, and the more recent protests surrounding women's reproductive health and access to abortion in America.

Google has successfully evolved its reputation and workplace culture through offering increased employment perks and advocating for openness in the workplace. Demonstrating how workplace cultures can grow and implement principles of diversity and inclusion improving psycho safety of employees and overall productivity of businesses. Organisations resistant to change risk losing market share and employees to company's which are more progressive and offer a healthier workplace culture.

Having a positive corporate culture, makes the onboarding process for new employees more effective. As Employees in a company with a positive culture become more motivated to succeed and display more loyalty to the company and a greater retention of staff.

[27 & 28]

# BIAS

Biases are the shortcuts your brain created to deal with information you process every day. The subtle assumptions we make about others can influence who we do business with, promote at work and exclude from certain conversations.



You need to ask yourself what your biases are, become conscious of your own biases. We all have biases, but it is what you do with your biases that defines you. How do you strategise around them?

## Bias Defined:

**Your unintended people preferences that are formed by your socialisation, personal experiences and representation in the media. In other words, the social filters you use to make assessments.**

How we consume our media, the people we hang out with, the environment in which we grew up and the culture we work in all influences our behaviour and biases.

## Ask yourself:

- Who did you have at your last BBQ? Was it people just like you?
- What was your journey like up to now? (Love, Business, Qualifications) And what left lasting beliefs.
- Where do you consume your media? Which way do these channels lean politically and what biases may be in it?

We categorise on visual cues, however there are off course a lot we can't see. For example, if we constantly see women as secretaries and primary school teachers and men as managers and trades, our brains become wired this way. Your unconscious brain then decides who are similar to you and who are different.

Our brain is overloaded with 11 million pieces of information every second, yet we can only take in forty to fifty pieces of information and process around four to seven, leading to us making assumptions. We have all been on the receiving and giving end of blind spots or unconscious bias. By accepting they exist, understanding how they work, we can manage them.

So, what do we do? You need to create an inclusive culture.



**It is important to be vigilant of your own biases and be an ally to members of minority communities.**

One type of bias is for example **Affinity bias** - people who are like you. Recruitment or assigning tasks to those you have an unconscious affinity with. This leads to micro behaviours. For example, supporting someone you have an unconscious affinity to in a team meeting or taking them for lunch. It is not necessarily intention.

## MICROAGGRESSIONS

Discrimination against minority groups is believed to be on the decline in recent years, though COVID managed to change these numbers to increase again. Displays of hostility can still affect minority groups in more subtle ways. These are often referred to as microaggressions.

### Microaggressions Defined:

**Verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, insults or dismissive behaviour that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group[29].**

They are often subtle or brief that devalue or hurt an individual's self-worth leading to disadvantage and psychological harm in the workplace. The microaggressions can place barriers to the entry and advancement of individuals from marginalized groups within the workplace, limiting the potential of a business[30]

"She's a good person— she didn't mean anything by it."

"What's wrong, can't you take a joke?"

They are seemingly small acts of prejudice used against members of marginalised groups such as LGBTQI+, women, POC, people with disabilities. These microaggressions often have much larger impacts than originally perceived, and awareness of how these microaggressions can harm marginalised groups can promote meaningful anti-racist, anti-homophobic action in the workplace[31]. Micro aggressions can be cumulative if they occur inside a workplace where the culture permit them or does not actively speak up against their occurrence.



## Examples of Microaggressions

**Gender microaggressions** - catcalling or staring at intimate parts of a person's body can lead to objectification and result in an individual feeling unsafe physically and psychologically.

**LGBTQI+ microaggressions**- Asking lesbian and gay couples, who is the man and women in the relationship.

**Racial Microaggressions**- Where are you really from? Where were you born? Complimenting someone's English when they appear non-white.

**Ableist microaggressions**- Accusing people with mental or physical disabilities of "being difficult".

**Religious microaggressions**- Claiming an Islamic woman is oppressed because of what she chooses to wear.

These micro-aggressions can lead to a hostile work environment and be harmful to the productivity of a business as employees can feel psychologically unsafe at work.

Microaggressions can be situated in the structure of the workplace and reflect power dynamics as behaviour and communication with individuals in the workplace exemplifying a lack of inclusion[32]. Displaying a disconnect between current legislation and company action, or a disconnect between workplace statement of diversity and actual practice of the company[33]. To combat a hostile work environment and change the culture of a company, employers and those higher up can use micro affirmations, these are small, intentional acts that people show when they want another person to succeed.

The micro aggressions are effective at ostracising or othering members of minority groups, limiting an workers ability to bring their authentic selves into the workplace, which then limits their overall psychological safety. If individuals feeling psychologically unsafe at work due to an element of their identity, or feel the need to hide an element of their identity it is unfair to assume they are doing their best work.

### Othering Defined:

The act of treating someone as though they are not part of a group and are different in some way.



# MODELS TO GIVE CONTEXT

Two models that will be looked at throughout the paper include the **Hudson Safety model** and the **Cultural Intelligence model**. The Hudson ladder is a tool which can be used by organisations to track the progress of an organisation's safety culture.

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is our capability to adjust to diverse people, whether ethnic diversity (country of birth), national (different regions in the same country), gender, generational or organisational (different departments).

The two models directly relate to feeling safe in the workplace.

## The Hudson Safety Model

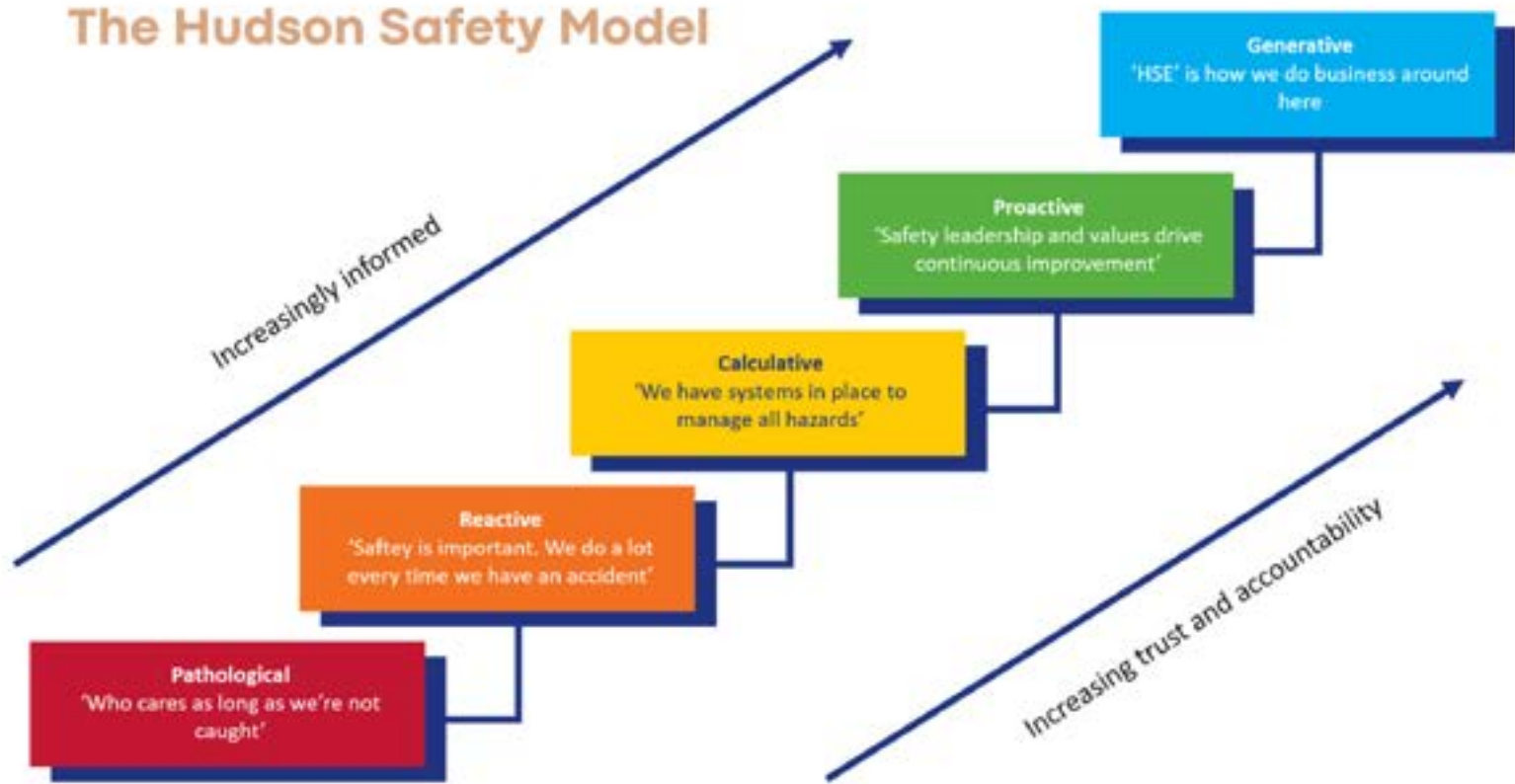
A safety culture is a culture where workplace safety and health are given priority in the way people think and act while at work. Different workplaces will have differing levels of strengths in their safety culture, a useful way to examine a company's safety culture is through the Hudson Model. It is an evolutionary ladder progression, which is used to display to employers where their workplace safety culture currently sits, and allows individuals to visualise what it may look like in a more advanced stage of the model. Each level possesses new developments building upon the previous stage, meaning companies are not able to skip stages.

This model is currently used across the world by many multi-national organisations and is effective at measuring both the tangible and the intangible aspects of workplace safety culture. A safety accident can occur due to a lack of workplace safety culture, including a reluctance to implement changes even when they are expensive or go against longstanding practices.

However, organisations with a positive or more evolved safety culture can make necessary changes demonstrating that they are flexible and operate and according to need rather than tradition. This makes the company better at managing risks making them profitable and productive in the long term. Management has a responsibility to ensure that everyone including top management does things the way they should be done, so safety becomes not only a priority but a true value of the company [36].



## The Hudson Safety Model



This model can be applied to the psychosocial safety of a workplace, and workplace culture[34].

### Hudson defines each level of safety as follows:

**Pathological safety culture:** Safety is a problem caused by the workers. The drivers are the business and a desire not to get caught by the regulator.

**Reactive safety culture:** Organisations start to take safety seriously, but action is taken only after incidents; when they see a problem and they want to fix it.

**Calculative safety culture:** Safety is driven by management systems, with much collection of data. Safety is still primarily driven by the management and imposed rather than looked for by the workforce; agreement they safety is the way to go.

**Proactive safety culture:** With improved performance, the unexpected is a challenge. Workforce involvement starts to move the initiative away from a purely top-down approach.

**Generative safety culture:** There is active participation at all levels. Safety is perceived to be an inherent part of the business. Organisations are characterised by chronic unease as a counter to complacency[35].

## Cultural Intelligence Model

Having a positive workplace culture can set precedent for healthy workplace dynamics while having a culture which permits inappropriate or unreasonable behaviour and treating them with a lack of consequences or tolerance can be a risk factor leading to psychosocial safety hazards. CQ is our ability to adapt to different cultures to make sure we are more inclusive while helping us understand how perceptions of different cultures shape interactions with others.

It is important to acquire knowledge regarding other cultures so to be able to better navigate cross cultural interactions and be able to adapt to perform new behaviours based on new cultural surroundings. Culture is simply the way we do things around here. Organisational or workplace culture includes values and behaviours that employees share and demonstrate. Culture could also refer to how we talk in the workplace, how we treat different groups and who those groups are.

**It is important to have a culture which prioritises the safety and psychosocial safety of employees, and a culture which takes action to remove hazards which threaten the mental wellbeing of staff.**



By combining both models to review the culture of the organisation, psychosocial hazards will become more widely acknowledged by management and could be routinely monitored by all staff. This will add to the workplace culture of safety as all employees are able to manage hazards such as stress effectively and create a positive workplace culture which allows everyone to feel safe at work.

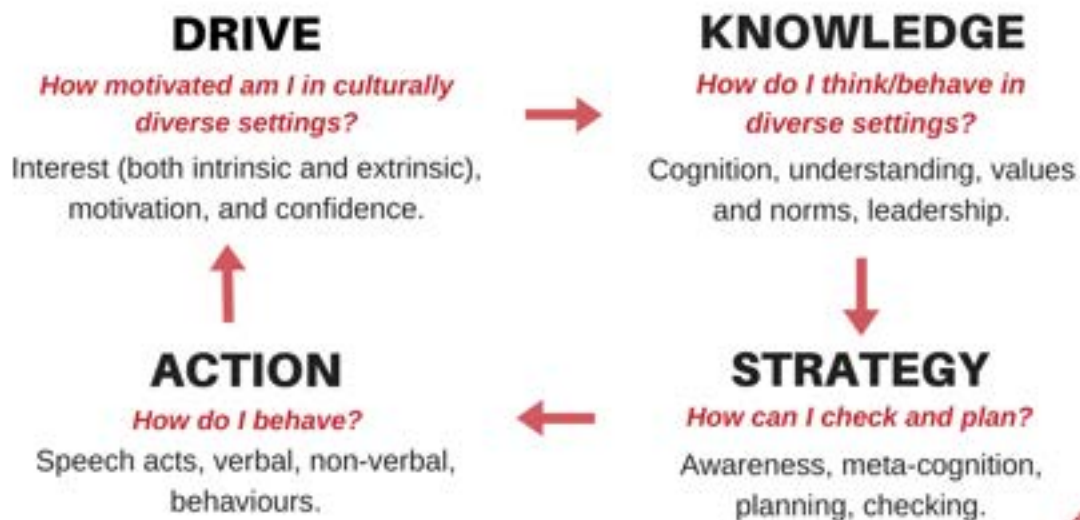
**By increasing your cultural intelligence you will be able to move through the Hudson Safety Ladder much quicker and strategise around the gaps in a more inclusive manner.**

Academic research demonstrates that anyone can improve their CQ as long as they are driven to do so. Even if that drive is originally for external reasons as for example simply wanting to improve the bottom line. Change will take place quicker and most likely at bigger increments if there is some intrinsic drive as wanting a safer workplace where people can speak up and feel included.

# CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE™ (CQ)

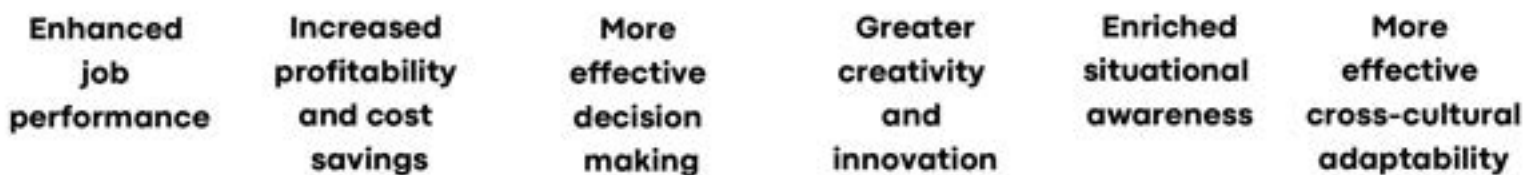
The ability to function effectively in culturally diverse settings

Cultural Intelligence is conceptualised in a four-factor model. The quadrants of CQ are **motivational CQ** (drive), **cognitive CQ** (knowledge), **metacognition** (strategy) and **behavioural CQ** (action).



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## Increased CQ leads to



This strongly links with the Hudson ladder, as through using both models, we can assess how a workplace responds to psychosocial hazards and incidents which occur as a result of these hazards.

# CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Australia's border restrictions and social distancing played a role in minimising the spread of the virus however have had significant impacts upon employee's mental health due to prolonged exposure to stress, uncertainty, loneliness and isolation.

Australia prided itself in its multiculturalism however there has been evidence of an increase in racial microaggressions and xenophobia during this pandemic. During stressful times, people revert to their traditional values, their comfortable cultural space and adapt less[37].

Australia's model of cultural awareness will need to evolve, post COVID-19 pandemic to best serve our multicultural, inclusive and integrated society. Various imbalances of recognition of intersectionality increased as direct result due to COVID. As for example an increase in racism, sexism, ableism etc.

## DRINKING CULTURE AND THE WORKPLACE

**The consumption of alcohol is very widespread within Australia and associated with many social and cultural activities.**

There are many patterns of use, workplace cultures and safety that arises from this. The relationship between workplace culture and alcohol-related harm is becoming more widely recognised in Australia[38]. Exemplified with the recent announcement of new guidelines by the WA Chamber of Minerals and Energy. Limiting the consumption of alcohol to a four-drink limit for FIFO workers at on site accommodation facilities, also banning shots and double-servings of alcohol in response to reports of sexual harassment and assaults across the sector[39].



## One in four people (25.8% or 5 million people) aged 18 years and over exceeded the guideline in 2020-21.

This includes those who either consumed more than ten drinks in the last week and/or consumed five or more drinks on any day at least monthly in the last twelve months (twelve occasions per year)[40].

Alcohol is a major and growing contributor to the burden of disease globally and in Australia and deserves the growing attention it is receiving globally from a public health perspective. The consumption of alcohol is widespread within Australia and entwined with many social and cultural activities. However, harmful levels of consumption are a major health issue, associated with increased risk of chronic disease, injury and premature death.



Australia has implemented a range of measures to reduce alcohol-related harm, including liquor licensing and service regimes, education programs to raise awareness about the dangers of harmful drinking, drink driving campaigns combined with law enforcement initiatives such as high visibility random breath testing, responsible service of alcohol training programs, and a range of prevention, early intervention and treatment programs. However, there are still a significant number of Australians consuming alcohol at risky levels, impacting their health and sometimes the wellbeing of others around them. The pressure to drink alcohol is stronger than the pressure to consume any other drug, leading to high relapse rates.

Groups such as Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, and Sikh Australians may be feeling deterred to work for a company with a heavy drinking culture, particularly one that does not offer non-alcoholic alternatives. This drinking culture which has become common place in many Australian businesses can impact an individual's psychosocial safety in the workplace and limit the organisations' ability to recruit new talent. Important to champion a workplace culture where individuals are free to be themselves and make their own choices, including the choice to not drink.





**According to the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education, the popularity of non-alcoholic drinks has exploded in Australia. Annual alcohol retail turnover grew by \$3.6 billion, or 29%, between 2019 and 2021**

Such prodigious growth is reflected in the bottom line of Endeavour Group, Dan Murphy's parent company. In its 2021 annual report, Endeavour Group recorded \$11.9 billion in sales, which represented year-on-year growth of 9%<sup>[41]</sup>.

Aligning with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Strategy to achieve their goal to Reduce Harmful Use of Alcohol Consumption by 10% by 2025<sup>[42]</sup>. Implementing the Australian National Alcohol Strategy 2019 – 2028 framework by improving awareness and understanding of alcohol harms<sup>[43]</sup>.

## **What you should consider in the workplace:**

<b>Normalise alcohol-free work events.</b>
<b>Promote healthier, happier communities and free choice.</b>
<b>Provide no alcoholic wines or beers instead of simply soft drinks as an alternative.</b>
<b>What is our drinking culture like? For example, if you provide Friday drinks or alcoholic drinks in a work environment, do you also provide alternative non-alcoholic wines, not just soft drinks.</b>





# RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Create a speak up culture, allowing employees to feel safe in the workplace.
- 2 Mitigate risk of psychosocial hazards such as bullying, harassment, discrimination etc through providing compliance-based training.
- 3 Include training on how to maintain mentally healthy workplaces. Note with all training it should be part of a larger training plan with a strong focus on implementing the training in the workplace.
- 4 Call out inappropriate behaviour in the workplace. Note this requires a safe space, where people can speak up to call it out, without the fear of losing their job or being excluded in some other way.
- 5 Incorporate mindfulness and meditation practises in the workplace.
- 6 Implement inclusion and diversity as a key management strategy. Note: Simply creating a role for a diversity and inclusion employee is not enough. This needs resourcing as any other role.
- 7 Invest in your Diversity and Inclusion Strategy like you would for your operations strategy or any other.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

8

Don't make assumptions around individuals' sexuality, gender identity etc.

9

Create a training plan around inclusivity as opposed to random training. Note there is academic evidence that simply offering unconscious bias training (without a plan to incorporate it, may increase the biases of individuals.)

10

Develop a mission statement and summary of core values to share with employees.

11

Set objectives and develop strategies to improve workplace culture as part of your broader review process.

12

Be mindful of language used when speaking to individuals. An example could be to use gender neutral pronouns when talking to a group.

13

Develop supporting programs to help observers and victims of discrimination.

14

Review your organisation's approach to managing psychosocial risks in the workplace.

15

Ensure workers and managers are given sufficient instruction, training and supervision.



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