

HOW TOUGH ARE WE NOW?

Report for
WorkSafe Mines Safety

2023

**WORKSAFE MINES
SAFETY ROADSHOW**

factive 



WHILE THERE ARE SUCCESS STORIES TO SHARE, THERE IS ALSO AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT THERE IS STILL A LONG WAY TO GO.

TERMS USED IN THIS REPORT

BULLYING

Repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or a group that creates a risk to their health and safety. It can include unjust criticism, ridicule, practical jokes, humiliation, gossiping, deliberately excluding somebody from work tasks, sabotaging work tasks, or abusive comments.

DISCLOSURE

The process of revealing to another person information about an experience or incident that has caused psychosocial harm to oneself. A person may wish to disclose what has happened to them but choose not to lodge a formal report of their experience.

DISCRIMINATION

Any distinction, exclusion, or preference that is made based on a particular characteristic (such as race, sex, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity) and that impairs equality of opportunity and treatment.

GENDER

The behaviours, social attributes, and opportunities associated with being a particular sex and which are socially constructed, learned, context and time specific, and changeable. Gender often determines what is expected, allowed, and valued in a person in any given context or society.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

An umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed gender differences. GBV is also often perpetrated to 'punish' or 'correct' behaviours that a person may believe are inappropriate for another person due to cultural and individual understandings of gender.

GENDER IDENTITY

How someone feels (in their heart, mind, body, and soul) about which gender they are. A person's gender identity may not align with the gender that they are assumed to have because of the sex they were assigned at birth.

HOMOPHOBIA

The fear or hatred of people who are attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender.

HYPER-MASCULINITY

A term used in psychology and other academic disciplines to signify an exaggeration of behaviours that are stereotypically associated with being a biological male, including placing an emphasis on physical strength, aggression, and dominating others.

MASCULINITY

The pattern of social behaviors or practices that is associated with ideals about how men should behave.

PREVENTION

Taking action to stop a psychosocial incident from first occurring or preventing it from further occurring.

REPORTING

The formal process of lodging a complaint about an incident that may have caused psychosocial harm to oneself or to somebody else. The report is usually made through established channels. It can sometimes be made anonymously.

RESPONSE-READINESS

Being ready to respond to a psychosocial incident when it occurs, ideally through a victim-centric approach.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another person.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Any unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favours, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might be reasonably expected or perceived to cause offense or humiliation to another when such conduct interferes with work; is made a condition of employment; or creates an intimidating, hostile, unsafe, or offensive work environment.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Whom a person is physically, psychologically, romantically, and/or sexually attracted to.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments, or advances, or acts to traffic a person for sexual purposes, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

SURVIVOR

A person who has experienced sexual harassment or any other type of psychosocial harm. In the psychological and social support sectors, the term 'survivor' is generally preferred to the term 'victim' because the former implies resiliency and the ability to recover.

TRANSGENDER

An adjective to describe a person or persons ('transperson') whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. A transgender woman ('transwoman') is a woman who was assigned male at birth. A transgender man ('transman') is a man who was assigned female at birth.

VICTIM-CENTRIC

An approach that is based on a set of principles and skills designed to guide professionals in their engagement with survivors of psychosocial harm. It aims to create a supportive environment in which the survivor's interests are respected and prioritised, and in which the survivor is treated with dignity and respect. The approach helps to promote the survivor's recovery and their ability to identify and express needs and wishes, as well as to reinforce the survivor's capacity to make decisions about possible interventions. Also referred to as 'survivor-centred'.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY AND TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Factive Consulting acknowledges and pays our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia, whose ancestral lands and waters we work and live on throughout Australia.

We honour the wisdom of, and pay respect to, Elders past and present, and acknowledge the cultural authority of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides the findings of a Roadshow run by the WorkSafe Group (WorkSafe) of the [Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety](#) (DMIRS) to explore existing practices for managing psychosocial risks in the mining industry in Western Australia. It offers recommendations for mining companies and for WorkSafe intended to address gaps in current systems and practices for dealing with psychosocial hazards in the industry.

We wish to thank all the people from across the mining industry who attended the Roadshow workshops – for their time, contributions, and commitments to making workplaces in the mining industry throughout Western Australia safer environments for all.

In 2010, the then Resources Safety Division of the Department of Mines and Petroleum in Western

Australia (Resources Safety) ran its first [Roadshow](#) to explore the links between gender and safety in the mining industry. At that time, participants from across the State were invited to share their ideas on how 'toughness' was affecting the way people behaved; and the impacts that a concept of needing to be tough to fit in was having on attitudes towards and practices of safety in their workplaces. The results back then showed there was little awareness throughout the industry of the possibility of a relationship between gender and safety – of how the industry's acceptance of and preference for a particular kind of masculinity could be considered a root cause of safety incidents and negative attitudes towards women and persons of diverse identities. The recommendations from that previous Roadshow focused on improving awareness of this link, providing guidance and tools on how to address

“ IN THE ROADSHOW WORKSHOPS WE CONDUCTED IN 2010, THE MAIN ISSUE WE DISCOVERED WAS NOT THAT THE MINING INDUSTRY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA WAS NOT DIVERSE AT ALL, BUT THAT EFFORTS TO INTRODUCE OR STRENGTHEN DIVERSITY – IN TERMS OF PEOPLE AND THINKING – WERE BEING CURTAILED BY A DEEPLY EMBEDDED CULTURE OF HYPER-MASCULINITY WHICH WAS BOTH INCOMPATIBLE WITH CREATING SAFE WORKPLACES AND, AS THE PARTICIPANTS IN THAT PREVIOUS ROADSHOW EXPRESSED, AN UNDESIRABLE FOUNDATION ON WHICH TO BUILD A RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE.

- 2010 Roadshow facilitator, Dr. Dean Laplonge.





gender-related safety risks, and creating a new narrative and shared language for greater diversity and acceptance within the industry.

Based on the findings of this most recent Roadshow which explored similar issues, we can say with some certainty that things have changed.

Today, people who work in the mining industry in Western Australia are more aware of the impacts that behaviours can have on personal safety and wellbeing and, to some extent, on organisational productivity and success. As the conversations in the workshops from this most recent Roadshow clearly show, workers now have a shared language to help explore these issues. There is a willingness to discuss at least some, if not all, the industry's psychosocial hazards and impacts.

Sexual harassment is no longer a taboo topic, even if sexual violence may still be somewhat difficult to identify and talk about. Words like 'transgender', 'disability', 'sexual orientation', and 'First Nations' were practically non-existent in the discourse on toughness thirteen years ago, but they were to varying degrees of comfort discussed in all the workshops in this most recent Roadshow.

Our aim with the Roadshow workshops in 2023 was not to explore or to prove the prevalence of psychosocial incidents on mine sites in Western Australia today. We did not want to nor need to ask participants about personal or individual experiences. The results of the Australian Human Rights Commission's [*National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces*](#) (2020), the Parliamentary enquiry into sexual harassment in the mining industry as described in the [*Enough is Enough*](#) (2022) report, and the [*Report into Workplace Culture at Rio Tinto*](#) (2022) are evidence enough that behaviours that can cause psychosocial harm to workers are happening. For many of us, these reports offered validation of what we had been experiencing and witnessing in the industry for many, many years.

Instead, during our recent visits to several key mining regions throughout Western Australia, we spoke to human resources officers, health and safety representatives, team leaders, mental health professionals, and many more people currently working in the industry about what had changed. We wanted to know what mining companies are doing today to respond to psychosocial hazards that their workers face; how well they are engaging in the prevention of harm-causing behaviours; how well they are responding when a psychosocial incident like sexual harassment occurs; and what they think should be the next steps in the industry's journey towards creating even more respectful workplaces.

Since the Roadshow in 2010, Western Australia has introduced new work health and safety regulations for the control of psychosocial risks, requiring persons in charge of a business to eliminate or minimise these risks in their workplaces in the same manner they would any other risks posed by work conditions. The environment of the management of behaviours such as sexual harassment and bullying has changed significantly. But have attitudes and practices towards these risks changed as well? Has the mining industry in Western Australia moved away from its preference for hyper-masculinity? Is it no longer an industry in which a person needs to be and act tough to fit in?

The overall findings of this Roadshow 2023 suggest the answer to all these questions is YES — but partially and inconclusively.

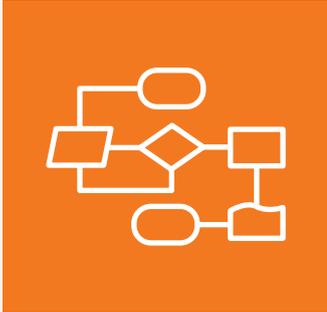
In the Roadshow workshops, older workers listened to what younger workers had to say. Female voices were no longer being drowned out by the opinions of their male colleagues. Individuals were not afraid to identify as having a mental disability, being an immigrant who has experienced discrimination, or being a gay person working in the industry. The discussions were sometimes challenging, but always respectful. And while there were success stories to share, there was also an acknowledgement that there is still a long way to go, along with a sense of eagerness to get on with that important work.

Roadshow activities

The Roadshow 2023 – *HOW TOUGH ARE WE NOW? The psychosocial wellbeing of mine site workers* – included five workshops in key mining locations throughout Western Australia. These workshops were organised by DMIRS. The participants who were invited to attend were all employed in the industry at the time.



Key activities



MAPPING COMPANY RESPONSES

How are mining companies managing the risks of harassment and violence on mine sites?



TELLING AND LISTENING TO POSITIVE STORIES

How have mining companies responded to psychosocial risks and incidents in a positive way?



PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK FACTORS AND REASONS

How does a person's identity expose them to specific kinds of psychosocial risks on mine sites?



BUILDING FRIENDLY WORKERS, HEALTHY WORKPLACES

What does a friendly mine site colleague do? What does a healthy mining employer offer?





Facilitator

The Roadshow workshops were facilitated by [Dr Dean Laplonge](#), a senior gender-based violence (GBV) specialist with [Factive Consulting](#). Dean has been a leading voice in challenging gender norms and practices in the mining sector. He facilitated Resource Safety's first Roadshow on this topic back in 2010, kickstarting an exploration of how ideas about toughness and gender affect workplace safety on mine sites in Western Australia. Since that time, he has worked throughout the world supporting the efforts of international development banks and the private sector to improve prevention of and responses to GBV and is widely recognised as an international expert in managing the risks

of these behaviours in workplaces. In 2022, Dean was awarded a Visiting Fellowship at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, to pursue research in this field. He continues to work on GBV risk management projects for, among others, the World Bank Group, the United Nations, the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, and the Dutch Development Bank.

Dean was accompanied by two regional inspectors – Stephen Best and Narelle McMahon – and three mental health and wellbeing inspectors – Jordan Jackson, Kath Jones, and Lea Millington.



Key findings

PSYCHOSOCIAL INCIDENT PREVENTION

1 There is significantly improved language and awareness around issues such as sexual harassment and bullying that make it easier for employers, contractors, and workers in the industry to discuss and understand behaviours that can cause psychosocial harm. There is, however, still some silence around more sensitive psychosocial risks such as sexual violence and homophobia.

2 Employers have generally accepted there is need to provide workers with some training on issues such as sexual harassment, bullying, violence, and discrimination. However, this training is more likely to be delivered in a single, isolated session during which workers are made aware of specific behaviours that are not tolerated on a worksite. There appears to be little awareness within the industry that this approach to training on issues such as sexual harassment and discrimination is known to have very minimal impact, even sometimes negative impact, on changing attitudes towards or practices of these behaviours.

3 There are limited opportunities for workers in the industry to receive training that is known to be more effective in addressing the risks of sexual harassment and other behaviours that can cause psychosocial harm, including training that is delivered in multiple short sessions over a long period of time, training in which workers can discuss differing understandings of certain behaviours, and training in which men in particular feel safe to express their concerns about the industry's increased focus on behaviours that may cause offence to others.

4 Mining companies are generally approaching psychosocial risks from the perspective of needing to protect their workers from behaviours that may cause psychosocial harm and are giving little attention to how to empower their workers to identify and address the risks of engaging in and/or experiencing these behaviours.

5 Overall, prevention practices for addressing psychosocial risks tend to be top down, with little involvement of workers in the planning of these prevention practices and little participation by senior leaders in the implementation of these prevention practices.

Key findings

PSYCHOSOCIAL INCIDENT RESPONSE

- 1 There is significant confusion and misunderstanding around the new requirement to manage the risks of psychosocial hazards in the workplace.
- 2 Psychosocial incidents are more likely to be investigated through a human resources lens rather than through a safety lens. This means that companies are more likely to undertake an investigation into a psychosocial report that is more focused on validating the report and determining any necessary disciplinary actions, rather than undertaking an investigation that allows for continuous learning around psychosocial risk controls.
- 3 Within the industry, practices of responding to reports of psychosocial incidents do not match good practice, are not victim-centric, and are unlikely to be in the best interests of workers who have suffered psychosocial harm. Current response practices are likely to cause further harm to affected workers and are potentially creating barriers to reporting of incidents.
- 4 Personnel who have been assigned responsibility for responding to a psychosocial incident may not have been provided with adequate training to understand good practices.

OTHER FINDINGS

- 1 While there is increased diversity of people working in the mining industry, diversity has not been applied with respect to ways of thinking or working.
- 2 Diversity exists as primarily a matter of concern for human resources (e.g., recruitment, anti-discrimination) and has not filtered down into other areas of the industry, including recognising how diversity might benefit safety.
- 3 Little is known about how different workers may face different levels of psychosocial risk and different experiences of psychosocial harm based on intersecting identities. The approach taken to manage psychosocial risks in the industry to date has assumed a homogenous workforce.

Recommendations

PSYCHOSOCIAL INCIDENT PREVENTION

For mining companies...

Adopt a multiyear action plan for the prevention of psychosocial risks that includes a range of activities, overarching goals and objectives, as well as indicators and measures for impacts.

Create a committee of diverse representatives from across the workforce to review and make recommendations for updates to policies on harassment, violence, discrimination etc.

Update existing training on behaviours that can cause psychosocial harm to ensure training is interactive and intended to empower workers to recognise and manage risks of psychosocial harm at individual and team levels.

Provide regular opportunities for workers to discuss behaviours that can cause psychosocial harm. These could be integrated into existing meetings (e.g., toolbox talks, safe start meetings). Training of supervisors and team leaders in how to facilitate these conversations may also be needed.

Ensure senior leaders participate alongside workers in all psychosocial risk awareness and prevention activities and training.

Provide opportunities for senior leaders to participate in gender transformative training programs that are intended to help them a) understand their own privilege and power, and b) learn how to use this privilege and power in their companies in ways that help tackle inequalities and hierarchies of power that increase the risk of psychosocial harm.

Consider adopting key performance indicators around psychosocial risk management for senior management.

For WorkSafe...

Publish an extensive glossary of terms to help improve knowledge of a shared language in the industry around psychosocial risks and diversity.

Develop a suite of simple and quick conversational pieces that supervisors can use during safe start meetings or toolbox talks to promote a continuous conversation about psychosocial hazards.

Develop a tip sheet that explains training tactics that have proven to be effective in changing attitudes towards and practices of disrespectful behaviours in the workplace.

Support research into how social identity affects psychosocial harm on mine sites with the aim of recommending targeted psychosocial risk management approaches based on identity.

Develop a suite of guidance notes to improve knowledge of the specific psychosocial risks that diverse groups face and how to address these. These guidance notes should be written by working groups made up of relevant industry workers from within the diversity categories. They should include recommendations companies can take to address specific psychosocial risks for each diversity group.

Develop guidance for the industry to raise awareness about how to address more sensitive psychosocial risks, including male-male sexual violence and homophobia. This guidance should be accompanied by opportunities for key personnel in the industry (e.g., HR, safety officers, senior leaders) to attend workshops on how to start the conversation around these risks within their workplaces.

Recommendations

PSYCHOSOCIAL INCIDENT RESPONSE

For mining companies...

Establish a dedicated committee that is responsible for managing all reports of psychosocial incidents and ensure each member of this committee receives advanced training in how to respond to immediate disclosures, how to conduct safe and ethical investigations, and how to undertake an incident investigation within a risk management framework.

Create protocols and templates for reporting internally and externally on psychosocial incidents that strengthen protection of confidentiality and limit the amount of information that is shared and to whom this information is shared.

Strengthen the role of safety personnel in responding to psychosocial incidents, including ensuring lessons are used to inform additional preventative actions.

Engage expertise to help safety professionals learn how to integrate the risk management of psychosocial hazards into their safety management and practices.

Update safety checklists to include psychosocial risks.

For WorkSafe...

Provide further clarity around what is expected from WorkSafe, when a person in charge of a business receives a report of a psychosocial incident, including a practical explanation of what the new regulations mean for mining companies.

Consider developing additional resources that will strengthen a victim-centric response by mining companies to reports of psychosocial incidents.

Re-advertise existing resources that mining companies can use to undertake a risk assessment of psychosocial hazards in their workplaces.

Support practical training sessions for safety professionals in the mining industry to learn how to apply a risk management approach to psychosocial risks.

Develop monitoring and evaluation tools that mining companies can use to assess the effectiveness of their reporting channels and responses.

PSYCHOSOCIAL INCIDENT PREVENTION



**PREVENTION ACTIONS
SUGGESTED BY ROADSHOW PARTICIPANTS**

Many mining companies have adopted measures to help prevent incidents of harassment, bullying, violence, and discrimination. Common measures include policies and training. These efforts have helped create a shared language within the industry around behaviours that can cause psychosocial harm.

In general, however, psychosocial harm prevention measures in the industry tend to be limited in scope. There is little evidence that mining companies are taking a holistic approach to the prevention of incidents that can cause psychosocial harm. Detailed and comprehensive multi-year action plans with clear objectives seem to be non-existent. Instead, prevention of psychosocial harm relies on the delivery of one-off and short-term interventions, the impacts of which are not effectively measured and therefore unknown. Reported psychosocial incidents are also rarely being used as opportunities to learn about how to improve prevention.

Most participants said their employer has some kind of **POLICY** that deals with sexual harassment and/or other behaviours that can cause psychosocial

harm. In some cases, there are separate policies that each address a different psychosocial risk, whereas other companies have an overarching policy that addresses the broader aim of creating a respectful workplace. Regardless of the type of policy used, the content is generally the same. The companies use these policies to state a commitment to protect workers from various behaviours that can cause psychosocial harm; to define key terms such as 'sexual harassment' and 'gender-based violence'; and to outline the approach they commit to taking if an incident occurs.

In most cases, it appears these policies have been written without input from groups of workers who are likely to be at risk of experiencing a psychosocial incident. Their understanding of the risks they face and their preferred options for how these risks and the resulting incidents should be dealt with do not, therefore, guide the direction of the policies. These policies also appear to be viewed as static documents that are not regularly reviewed and that do not necessarily connect to other actions the companies take for psychosocial risk management.



TRAINING on behaviours that can cause psychosocial harm are now more commonplace. Most participants said their employer offers some opportunity for workers to learn about behaviours such as sexual harassment and violence. In many cases, this training is limited to an introduction to the company's policies during orientation. A few companies offer bystander intervention training – teaching workers techniques for diffusing situations when disrespectful behaviours occur or for calling out these behaviours. In one case, a participant shared how their company tries to ensure that psychosocial risks are discussed regularly in workers' meetings. Compared to 13 years ago, there seems to be a greater willingness to let disrespectful colleagues know that "we don't do that here". This suggests a maturity in the capacity of workers to address the behaviours at the grassroots level and may help prevent minor one-off incidents from growing into much larger and more impactful problems. It also potentially helps eliminate the need for many incidents to be escalated, thereby reducing the time and resources that might otherwise be required to respond to these incidents more formally – through an investigation, for example.

Overall, however, the training still appears to adopt approaches that are known to be fairly ineffective in helping to change attitudes towards harassment and violence or practices of these behaviours. Training that is currently offered is more likely to try to tell workers what not to do – the bad behaviours. It is more likely to be the same training for all workers and does not allow for discussions about specific and diverse psychosocial risks that workers may face based on their identity or work location. It is rarely followed up with opportunities to explore how the training might affect every day working relations. And the impacts of the training are not being measured over time.

One common concern among the participants is that **SENIOR LEADERS** are not widely seen to be involved in the company's psychosocial risk prevention activities. They may endorse the company's efforts to create a respectful workplace for everyone, but they themselves are not participating in the same training that workers are expected to attend. When they do, it is often only to open the training session and to announce



their support for it. This situation sends a message that the risk of perpetrating and/or experiencing psychosocial harm in the workplace does not exist for senior leadership. It suggests that it is only workers who commit sexual harassment or experience bullying. The problem of psychosocial harm thereby becomes a workers' problem, almost as if to suggest workers – but not management – are both the cause of and the solution to the problem.

This represents a significant gap in the ability of mining companies to address psychosocial risks effectively because it means that companies are not addressing what we know to be root causes of behaviours that cause psychosocial harm – inequalities and imbalances of power.

The reason women, girls, and transwomen experience a much higher rate of psychosocial harm globally is because of the continuing widespread subjugation of non-male subjects and the economic, legal, and social power afforded to male subjects in almost all cultures and societies. Effective and sustainable prevention of psychosocial harm is not achieved when people in positions of power



tell others to behave better or to be nicer to each other. Prevention of the behaviours that cause this harm requires a fundamental shift in organisational systems of power. This message has not been well explained to leaders in the mining industry.

Senior leaders are encouraged to become *champions* of change. They are told that their primary responsibility is to *protect* workers from psychosocial harm. But being a champion and seeing oneself as responsible for the protection of others are positions that risk a continuation of the very power structures and practices that lead to people being harassed, bullied, intimidated, and discriminated against.

We need to do better on how we advise and support senior managers to address the psychosocial hazards in their workplaces. We need to encourage them to participate in transformative change at the personnel and professional levels, to understand and to acknowledge how their own power and privilege may be contributing to a culture in which psychosocial harm is being done. If elimination of the risk of psychosocial harm is the ultimate goal, it is better that we guide leaders on how they can champion and empower at-risk workers to manage the psychosocial risks they face in their workplaces.

There does not appear to be a strong practice of **PREVENTION LEARNING** from incidents that cause psychosocial harm. The responses companies take to these incidents – discussed in the next part of this report – do not appear to feed into their efforts

to prevent the same or similar incidents reoccurring. Each incident appears to be dealt with in isolation. Persons who are tasked with responding to incidents are not being tasked with identifying lessons from an individual incident to better understand and implement effective preventative measures. It is fairly easy to identify who is responsible for responding to an incident (conducting the investigation, writing the report etc.), but it is difficult to identify who is responsible for implementing sustainable prevention of psychosocial incidents because in most cases mining companies do not appear to have anybody in this role. This suggests that more weight is being given to responding to incidents that occur than to preventing incidents from occurring. Many participants felt that the overall approach to psychosocial risk management by mining companies is currently more reactive than proactive.

While efforts have been made to address some behaviours that can cause psychosocial harm, there remain some **TABOO TOPICS**. Sexual harassment and violence against women, discrimination against Indigenous and immigrant workers, verbal abuse – these are all examples of disrespectful behaviours where there is a more mature conversation than we heard in the previous Roadshow in 2010. However, there continue to be noticeable gaps in wanting to or having the language to discuss other behaviours, especially sexual violence by men against men, and sexual exploitation and abuse linked to employment or promotion opportunities and in which power plays a significant role.

PSYCHOSOCIAL INCIDENT RESPONSE



RESPONSE ACTIONS SUGGESTED
BY ROADSHOW PARTICIPANTS

Reporting channels

In general, there appear to be three different kinds of reporting channels that companies in the mining industry make available for workers to report psychosocial incidents.



REPORTING IN-PERSON TO AN ON-SITE PERSON

Common examples = immediate supervisor, line manager, manager, HR, contact officer, safety team, medical team, chaplain, general manager, peers, grievance officer.



REPORTING DIRECTLY TO AN EXTERNAL PERSON OR ORGANISATION

Common examples = employee assistance program (EAP), police, WorkSafe, Women in Mining (WiM) Network.



REPORTING VIA A DEDICATED SYSTEM

Common examples = whistle-blower system, corruption portal, dedicated email, online incident reporting system, telephone hotline.



THERE ARE **FOUR KEY GAPS** IN HOW COMPANIES HAVE SET UP AND HOW THEY MANAGE CHANNELS FOR REPORTING A PSYCHOSOCIAL INCIDENT.

1

The probability that a person will report a psychosocial risk or incident tends to increase if they can do so anonymously. The third option (reporting via a dedicated system) is the one that offers the best chances of a person being able to do this. However, the first option is the one that appears to be the preferred option for mining companies. This is most likely because of a belief within the industry that all reports must result in validation of exactly what happened and disciplinary action against perpetrators – a somewhat misguided interpretation of the ‘investigation’ as discussed in more detail later in this section.

2

The reporting channels are the same for all workers, even as the level of risk of experiencing psychosocial harm is not the same for all workers. Certain workers, based on their identity or power within a business, are likely to be at greater risk.

3

The reporting channels have been set up without asking workers what they think would be the easiest and safest ways for them to report a psychosocial incident. They may therefore not be the most appropriate reporting channels for a company to offer. They may not be practical reporting channels.

4

The effectiveness of the available reporting channels in terms of their accessibility and how comfortable workers feel using them is not being monitored.

While companies are making efforts to encourage workers to report psychosocial incidents through establishing reporting channels, the likelihood of a **NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE** for an affected worker after making a report is high for three main reasons.

A. FOCAL POINTS HAVE RECEIVED **INADEQUATE TRAINING**

Internally, the following roles were identified as being responsible for receiving disclosures or reports of psychosocial incidents:

- managers
- supervisors
- HR personnel
- safety reps
- first aiders
- medical staff
- chaplains

Most participants were not convinced that personnel who occupy these roles in their own companies have been provided with adequate training to know how to respond to a disclosure or report of a psychosocial incident in a way that would ensure no further harm to an affected worker. They have not received what is referred to as 'psychosocial first aid' training, for example.

B. COMPANIES ARE TAKING **UNSAFE RESPONSES TO REPORTS**

Participants identified the following as actions their employer would take in response to a report of a psychosocial incident:

- Relocate the worker to a different site
- Remove the worker from the situation for their protection
- Mediate with the complainant through HR
- Require a statement of fact
- Document the report
- Gather evidence to verify the complaint
- Identify and discuss the complaint with witnesses
- Notify others in the company (HR, management etc.)
- Conduct an investigation

These actions are not necessarily victim-centric.



A VICTIM-CENTRIC RESPONSE TO PSYCHOSOCIAL HARM IS ONE THAT RESPECTS THE WISHES AND DECISIONS OF THE PERSON WHO HAS EXPERIENCED THE HARM, AND ONE IN WHICH THIS PERSON IS PROVIDED WITH ALL THE INFORMATION THEY NEED TO MAKE INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS NEXT. BY ALLOWING THEM TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, WE REAFFIRM THEIR UNIQUE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SITUATION, GIVE THEM BACK A SENSE OF CONTROL OVER A SITUATION IN WHICH THEY MAY HAVE FELT A LOSS OF CONTROL, AND RECOGNISE THEIR RIGHT TO OWN THE STORY OF THEIR EXPERIENCE.

In all cases, there is a potential for further harm to the affected worker especially if that worker does not agree to any one of these actions being taken.

- If they do not agree to being relocated to another work site, this could imply they are being punished for what has happened to them.
- The fact that the incident occurred already suggests there is an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the affected worker, and so any mediation is likely to be unequal and unfair. Mediation may place the affected worker at further risk of psychological harm, especially if they are forced to confront the perpetrator.

- Any documentation or sharing of what has happened without the consent of the affected worker is a breach of confidentiality.
- Requesting or seeking proof that the incident occurred may make the affected worker feel their experience of the incident is not believed.

In many cases, people report a psychosocial incident for one or two main reasons:

1. They want the behaviours that are causing them harm to stop.
2. They want some emotional support.

C. COMPANIES ARE MISUNDERSTANDING INVESTIGATION APPROACHES AND AIMS

Overwhelmingly, participants were of the view that on receiving a report of an incident that has caused psychosocial harm, an investigation is both necessary and mandatory. Moreover, they believe that the intent of such an investigation is always to find out more about what happened, to verify the allegation, and to determine disciplinary action.

WorkSafe has produced [guidance](#) on managing the risks of psychosocial harm in workplaces. This guidance recommends that companies adopt a four-step process.

This methodology does not appear to be well known or widely practiced within the industry. Instead, based on the participants' responses in the Roadshow workshops, it appears most mining companies in Western Australia consider any psychosocial incident to be a human resources problem. There is not yet a strong appreciation of the benefits of involving safety personnel in the management of psychosocial risks or responses to psychosocial incidents. This means the companies are missing out on opportunities for continuous improvements in the controls they have in place to prevent future psychosocial incidents.





64%

of participants express confidence in the effectiveness of their company's current system for responding to reports of psychosocial incidents. Participants from Perth had the highest confidence in their company's response system, whereas participants in Kalgoorlie had the lowest.

On reflection, participants also expressed some doubt that they fully understand the system their company uses to respond to reports of psychosocial incidents. They express only a

68%

confidence in the information they provided about this system. The highest level of confidence was among the participants in Perth. The lowest was among the participants in Bunbury.

A SNAPSHOT OF INCLUSION

In discussing the progress that the mining industry in Western Australia has made towards becoming more diverse, Roadshow participants felt there have been improvements in the integration of women, Indigenous workers, young persons, and older workers, but fewer improvements in the integration of persons with disabilities, immigrant workers, and persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity. In all cases, there is continued room for improvement to address the structural and individual barriers that prevent mining companies from creating workplaces in which diversity is accepted and impactful.

Smaller companies are finding it harder to deal with diversity as they do not have access to all the resources they need to understand and to respond to every issue.

There is some evidence of a backlash to diversity initiatives especially in recruitment. Participants said that comments about a person being employed simply to meet a diversity target are common. They

worry that white males, in particular, may be starting to see the industry as a place where they will be unable to progress their career because they feel they are likely to be overlooked for promotion if they are competing for a role against somebody who fits into a diversity category.

These views are increasing the risk of certain people being subjected to behaviours that can cause psychosocial harm. Some are being told they are “only here because you are a woman” rather than an experienced worker. Some are being dismissed as “just another tick-the-box Indigenous person” rather than a competent worker. This increases the risk that their ideas or instructions will be ignored, that they will be sidelined from team discussions, or that they will be subjected to abuse or intimidation. It might mean they feel they have to work twice as hard as their colleagues to prove their worth – a situation that can encourage them to take risks with their own work and wellbeing. These are therefore views that need to be addressed.





Barriers to inclusion



Some participants expressed a greater appreciation of the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous attitudes towards work and how this understanding is important to avoid criticism of Indigenous workers for not working 'properly'. There is also improved awareness of differences in understandings of cultural and family obligations that may affect perceptions of Indigenous workers. Conversations around the kind of disrespectful behaviours that Indigenous workers might face on mine sites were, however, noticeably challenging with few participants contributing. Importantly, and perhaps signifying the extent of the work that needs to be done to address barriers to the inclusion of Indigenous people in the mining industry, the First Nations workforce was not well represented in the Roadshow workshops. While individual participants self-identified as gay, immigrant, female, and disabled, no participant identified as being a member of a First Nations community.



Alongside the inclusion of women, participants were more positive about progress that has been made in accepting immigrants into the industry. They gave examples of companies being more accommodating of different cultural practices and making efforts to provide opportunities for immigrants to share these practices with the local Australian workforce. Diversity linked to immigration nevertheless mostly assumes the immigrant is from a non-Anglo and non-Christian based culture. When discussing immigrants, participants did not consider that workers who come from countries such as Canada or the UK might also be considered as 'immigrants'. It is assumed that it is easier for people from those countries to fit into the mining culture on account of their assumed shared language and culture. Nevertheless, a person's accent regardless of their country of origin was regularly seen as a target for bullying. And there is an established hierarchy of power on mine sites between those who speak with an identifiable Australian accent and those who do not.

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS	INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS
Racism	Racism

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS	INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS
Visa situation	Communication
Language	Risk perception
Cultural differences	Discrimination
Accommodation arrangements	Differences in safety education
Food availability	Home sickness
Recognition of certification	Cultural norms around speaking out
Religious practices	Class and caste



Barriers to inclusion



Several participants suggested that older people and younger people face similar risks of psychosocial harm, arguing that there are more similarities than differences between these two groups. Both are under pressure to prove they can do the job. For an older person this is often motivated by an internal concern about their own physical and mental capabilities as they change with age. Participants shared their concerns that little is being done to help older workers adjust to physical and mental changes that may affect how quickly or competently they can complete a work task that they previously experienced no problems in completing. It is not easy for older workers to have conversations about these changes. Companies do not have established practices of reviewing work tasks for older workers in consultation with them. This exposes older workers to psychological harm caused by an internal diminishing of self-worth and how their work colleagues view their changing capabilities.



Generally, participants felt that the mining industry has not done enough to address barriers to inclusion due to disability, especially when the disability is physical in nature. Where persons with disability are being employed, they are mainly in administrative roles. Operational practices are generally not being considered from a disability perspective. It is simply assumed that most work tasks require a certain level of physical ability. There is, however, some awareness of the need to accommodate mental disabilities. While it may not yet be regular practice, participants recognise there is scope for considering how work roles could be adjusted to better accommodate different mental capacities of people. They see this as recognising different strengths in different persons and no longer needing to insist that everybody in a team must be good at every task required of that team.

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS	INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS
Technology	Rigid work practices
Rigid work instructions	Physical capacities
Inflexible roles	Sense of self-worth
Training opportunities	
Recruitment	

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS	INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS
Worksite and equipment design	Social stigma
Transportation	Awareness
Accessibility	Perceptions
Facilities	
Fitness for work tests	
Rigid work instructions	
Emergency response procedures	

Barriers to inclusion



Participants were more willing to talk about the inclusion of transpersons than they were persons of diverse sexual orientation – lesbian, gay, bisexual etc. Some companies have adopted the practice of people stating their preferred pronouns in their email signature. There is some misidentification of ‘trans’ as a sexual orientation rather than a gender identity and some confusion about the meaning of the terms ‘transwoman’ and ‘transman’, with participants not sure which is used when and for whom.

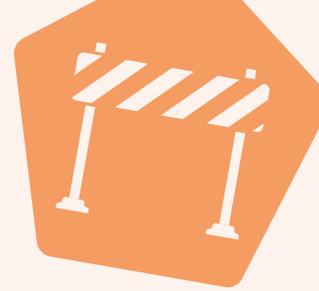


While the acceptance of women in the mining industry has improved, the experience of women is often underestimated or assumed to be non-existent. Even women with decades of experience in the industry are still often told by much junior men how things should work. Surprisingly, there continue to be gaps in the availability of adequate washroom facilities for women in workplaces.

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS	INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS
Facilities	Social stigma
Leave entitlements	Education
PPE	Visible target

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS	INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS
Childcare responsibilities	Stereotyping
Facilities	Perceptions
Boys' club	Sexism
	Harassment

Barriers to inclusion



Young people find it difficult to fit in because while they lack experience, they may also be less willing to admit to this lack of experience for fear this will expose them to ridicule or bullying. They are less willing to speak out about their concerns and more likely to continue doing a job even if they think it is not the right way to do it or recognise a risk in doing it. Participants are concerned that younger people are coming into the industry with a lower level of general education than previous generations. They also have less ability to cope living in remote areas especially if there is limited or no internet connectivity, with some participants sharing stories of young people who have quit because they find it too difficult working in a location where they cannot access social media.



Throughout all the Roadshow workshops, not one group of participants selected lesbian and gay as a diversity category to discuss. In one workshop, one participant suggested this was because there were no longer any barriers to the inclusion of lesbian and gay people in the mining industry. When challenged on this exclusion, however, most participants said it was because they felt they did not have enough information about the needs of lesbian and gay workers to take on this discussion.

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS

Training	Confidence
Mentor programs	Risk perception
Internet connectivity	Communication skills

BUILDING RESPECTFUL MINE SITES



What kind of person do we want as a work colleague, to feel we are safe from experiencing psychosocial harm while at work and to know we will be well supported if we are subjected to harassment, violence, bullying, or discrimination?

What kind of employer do we imagine will best support us to manage the risks of psychosocial harm that we face at work and to offer a good response if ever we are exposed to such an incident?

We asked the Roadshow participants these questions. And they created their **PERFECT COLLEAGUE** and their **IDEAL EMPLOYER**.



Our perfect colleague

The kind of person who is most likely to make us feel respected is somebody who has the confidence to stand up to bad behaviour and to call it out. They listen to what others say. They are not afraid of sharing knowledge or skills to help others get the job done and to help everybody improve. They are fun to be around, with no drama. They listen when we have things to say. They support us when things are not going well. And they always check in on us. If we tell them something in confidence, they won't break that trust. If something happens to us, they will ask us what support we want and need. They are more interested in learning from us than telling us what to do.



Our ideal employer

The kind of employer who is most likely to promote a respectful workplace is one that provides us with opportunities for training and with adequate resources to do our work. We expect them to take timely actions in response to issues and to be transparent about the outcomes of any investigations. We want them to be innovative and to allow creativity to be part of our everyday work. There should be open lines of communication between all levels and decisions that affect us should be made with us. We want our employer to be fair in the way it treats people and to not hide discrimination or bias behind closed doors.





WORKSAFE MINES SAFETY ROADSHOW 2023

Report for WorkSafe Mines Safety.

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