



# Mental Health in the Workplace

*What can be done that's  
helpful and achievable?*

Presented by:

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*Organisations spend massive amounts of time and money ensuring the physical well-being and safety of their people... and well they should.*

*However, what most organisations struggle to understand is that it's the failure to address the mental safety and well-being of their workgroup that will cost them the most money over time.*

Source = *Compendium of WHS and Workers' Compensation Statistics*  
(Australian Government, 2012)

**11% = Percentage of Mental Stress claims of all WC claims**

**32% = Cost of Mental Stress claims in all WC claims**

**\$250,690 = Average cost of a Mental Stress claim**

**\$ 68,000 = Average cost of all other WC claims**

## **Source of Mental Stress WC claims:**

- Harassment / Bullying = 37%
- Work pressure = 30.5%
- Exposure to workplace aggression or violence = 15%

- **Around 1 in 3 relationships break-up**
- **40% of Australians experience a serious mental health issue at some point in their life**
- **Every year about 20% of the Australian population is diagnosed with a significant mood disorder**
- **32% of workers believe they don't have a healthy work / family balance.**

Source: ABS, 2010

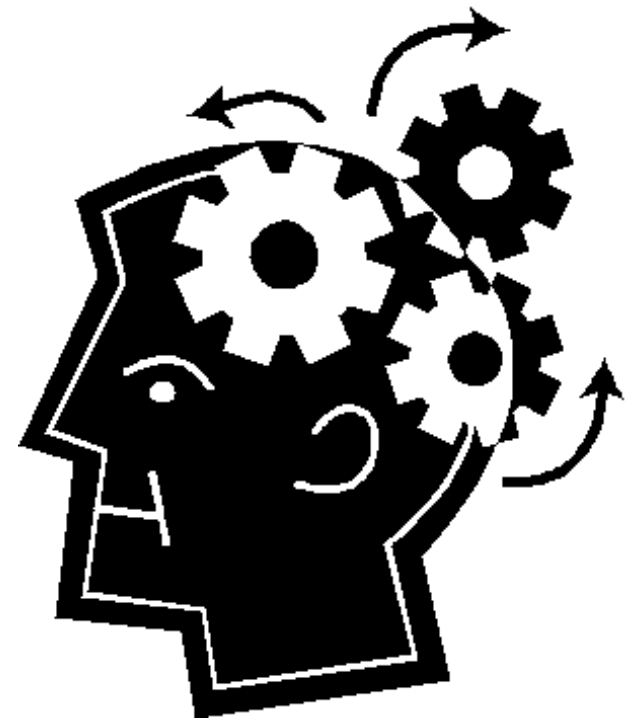
## *World health Organisation Report (2012)*

- Depression is a common mental disorder. Globally, more than 350 million people of all ages suffer from depression.
- Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide, and is a major contributor to the global burden of disease.
- Even in developed countries, it's estimated that two-thirds of those with depression are reluctant to seek help.

- **Absenteeism / Presenteeism**
- **Lower productivity**
- **Conflict / low employee morale**
- **Increased errors**
- **Greater risk exposure and safety concerns**
- **Damage to organisational reputation**
- **Escalation to problems beyond the work-place.**

**Approximately 80% of the mental health problems impacting on the Australian workplace come from around 20% of the identified mental health disorders.**

- **Mood Disorders**
- **Anxiety Disorders**
- **Substance related disorders.**
- **Sleep Disorders**



Mental Health Council of Australia

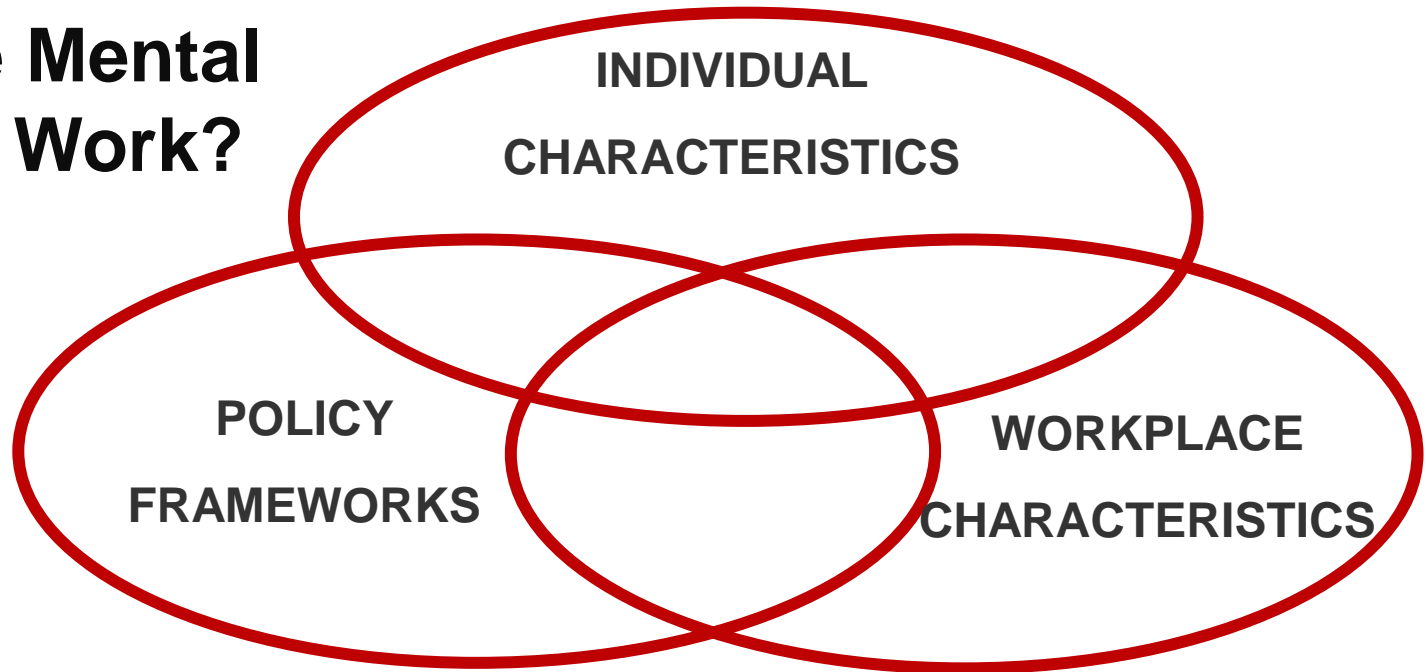
**A person develops a new problem by trying to manage an old problem.**

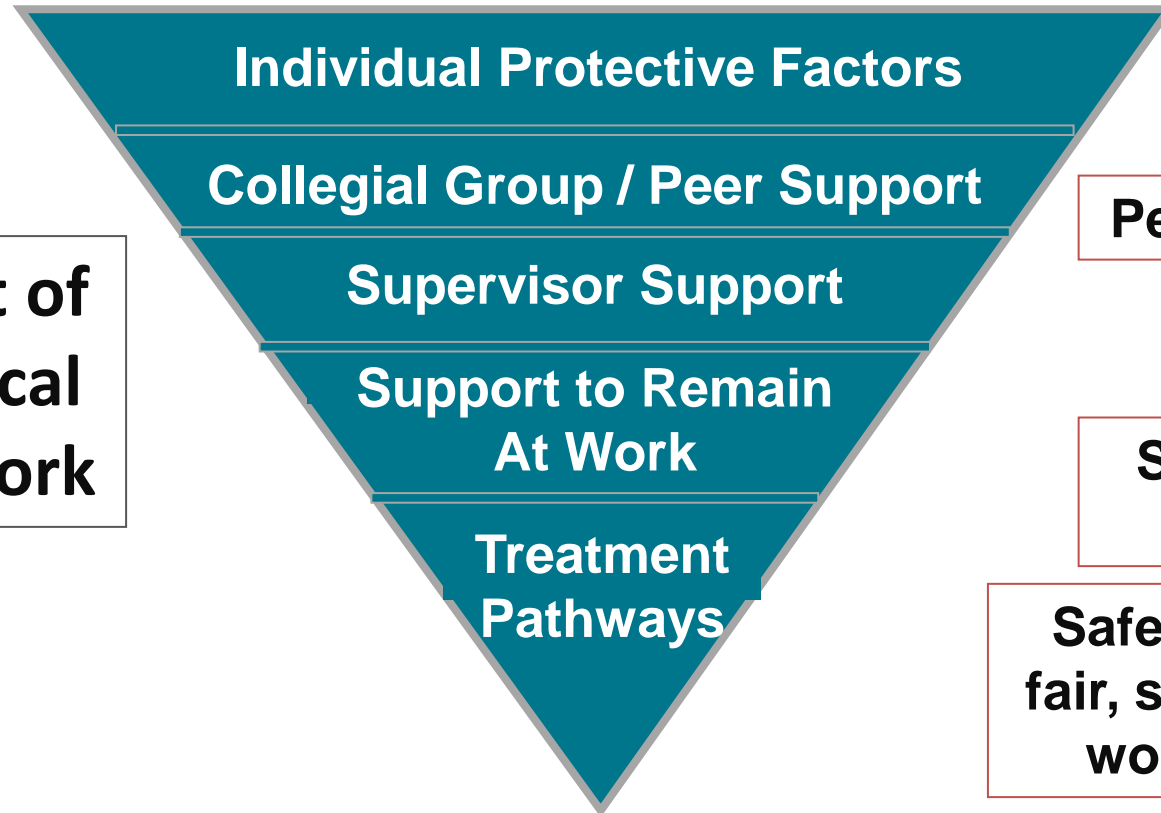
***EXAMPLE: a person develops an alcohol or drugs problem after using these to deal with anxiety or depression.***





# What will influence Mental Health at Work?





**The impact of psychological issues at work**

**Perceptions**



**Satisfying work**

**Safe, secure, fair, supportive workplace**

***Not every problem at work  
is a Mental Health issue.  
The need to diagnose and  
label dysfunctional  
behaviour can lead to  
mismanagement and  
exacerbate the situation.***



# ***Mitigation of Psychological Issues***

**Pre-employment screening for job suitability and pre-existing Mental Health issues.**

- *Depends on accuracy of role specification*
- *Multiple variables to take into account*
- *Potential for a high rate of false negatives and false positives*
- *Can be open to distortion.*

Effective policies and procedures that incorporate psychological safety are well communicated and well used.

- *OSH, EEO, FFW, etc*

Provide training that promotes psychological safety.

- *Employee training (e.g. Mental Health Awareness, Resilience training, etc)*

- *Supervisor training (e.g. Psychological First-aid, Suicide Prevention, etc)*

# STOP

## Suicide: Training On Prevention

a training course for leaders in industry, construction and the resources sector.



## STOP Training

- Note the hazard
- Assess the risk
- Act
  - Talk with the employee
  - Seek advice
  - Link into help
- Focus on supervisors / leaders
- Half-day training

**Be proactive with support programs that mitigate Mental Health issues. Don't wait until disaffection becomes distress.**

- Have a functional and effective Employee Assistance Program (EAP)***
- Initiate programs such as Peer Support, which create supportive networks within the workgroup.***



# PEER SUPPORT

a training course for the resources sector,  
construction and transportation industries.



## Peer Support Training

*A program in which people in a workplace are trained to assist workmates affected by stress.*

- Encourage accessing early assistance
- Reach those who wouldn't ask for help
- Complement other support avenues
- Build support skills in the work-group.

**Use pre-emptive fitness for work / fitness for duty assessments to initiate constructive actions, rather than relying on the “the system”.**

- ***Alcohol and other drugs***
- ***Fatigue assessments***
- ***Mental Health assessments.***

Whenever possible, stay in control of the situation. Don't wait for a crisis point before taking action.

- *More serious the issue, the less control the organisation has and the greater reliance on external organisations and experts (e.g. insurance companies, rehabilitation providers, medical specialists, etc).*

***“A state of wellbeing in which the individual ... can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”***

World Health Organisation (WHO)