



Government of Western Australia  
Mental Health Commission

*We're working for  
Western Australia.*

# Mental Health in the Workplace

Public Sector OSH & IM  
Community of Practice meeting  
25 February 2020

**Karina Jorritsma**

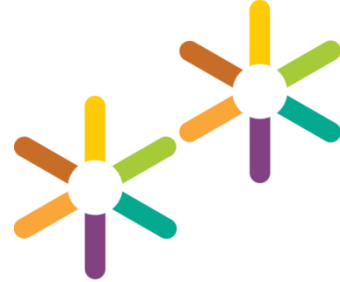
**Professor of Practice, Future of Work Institute, Faculty of  
Business and Law**

**Curtin University**





We acknowledge the traditional Custodians of the Land  
on which we meet, Elders past and present.





# What is mental health?

The World Health Organisation (WHO):

“Mental health is “a **state of well-being** in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and make a contribution to her or his community”.

# What is mental illness?



The Australian Department of Health:

“Mental illness is a general term that refers to a group of illnesses, in the same way that heart disease refers to a group of illnesses and disorders affecting the heart.

A mental illness is a health problem that significantly affects how a person feels, thinks, behaves, and interacts with other people.”

# Prevalence of mental ill-health



**1 in 5**

Australians experience a mental health condition in a given year.

Almost **1 in 2** will experience a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime<sup>1</sup>

Nearly **3 million Australians** live with depression and/or anxiety, affecting wellbeing, personal relationships, career and productivity

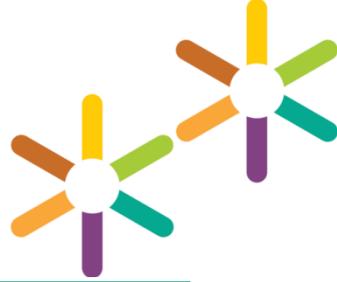
In Western Australia, on average, **one person a day** takes their own life.

Suicide is the leading cause of death for Australians aged 15 – 44<sup>1</sup>

# Mental Health in the Workplace

- Workplaces are uniquely placed to intervene in the rising prevalence of mental health issues.
- Good mental health includes feeling engaged and empowered at work, being motivated and productive.

**1.26 million Western  
Australians in the  
workplace (2016)**





# Economic impacts



Poor mental health costs per year in lost productivity to Australian businesses:

- Absenteeism.
- Presenteeism (attending work but being unproductive).
- Compensation claims.

# WA public sector employees



**454** new mental stress claims in 2019,

**up 6%** since 2018 (427), at an estimated cost of **\$34.5 million**

In WA, **more than half** (56%) of mental stress claims lodged with the Insurance Commission are public sector employees, despite only accounting for 10% of the state's workforce

Estimated average cost of a new mental stress claim in 2019 was **\$76,000**, a **27% increase** since 2015



# WA public sector employees – Insurance Commission of WA Statistics



Psychological  
claims are  
**twice the cost**  
of physical injury  
claims

Psychological  
claims also have  
**longer  
durations**  
due to the  
complexities of  
the injury and of  
returning an  
individual to the  
work  
environment

**Pressure at  
work,  
harassment,  
trauma and  
violence**  
main factors in  
claims



# Economic benefits of action



For every \$1 spent, improved productivity and lower numbers of compensation claims.<sup>1</sup>



# Other benefits

## Compliance



Providing a safe and fair workplace.<sup>1</sup>

## Reputation



Three-quarters of Australian employees say a mentally healthy workplace is important when looking for a job.<sup>2</sup>

## Thriving

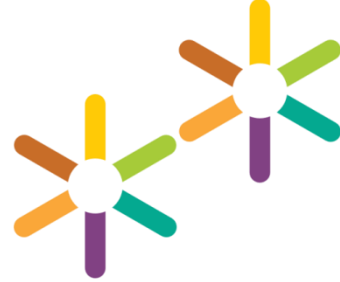


A better organisation to work and improved productivity and profitability.<sup>3</sup>



# Thrive at work

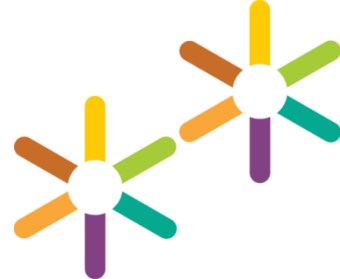
Work design makes life better















- In 2017, the Mental Health Commission funded the Centre for Transformative Work Design to deliver Thrive at Work.
- Evidence based resources and audit tools to support workplaces to become mentally healthy organisations.
- Underpinned by evidence-based strategies to address the full spectrum of mental health.
- The Commission has been a pilot organisation informing Thrive at Work and is now in the process of implementation.



# Thrive at Work Framework

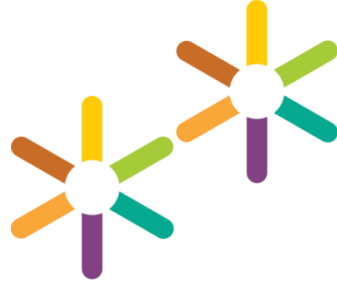


Pillar	Building Block	Key Strategies
 <b>Mitigate Illness</b> Monitor, accommodate, and treat illness, ill-health and injury.	 <b>Detect Illness</b>	→ Leader and employee education → Monitor mental health
	 <b>Support Illness</b>	→ Reduce mental health stigma → Remove barriers to support → Employee Assistance Program
	 <b>Accommodate Illness</b>	→ Injury management process → Return to Work process
 <b>Prevent Harm</b> Minimise harm and protect against risk.	 <b>Increase Job Resources</b>	→ <b>S</b> timulating job resources → <b>M</b> astery job resources → <b>A</b> gency job resources → <b>R</b> elational job resources
	 <b>Reduce Job Demands</b>	→ <b>T</b> olerable demands: time, physical, cognitive, and emotional demands → Demands associated with organisational change and a lack of organisational justice
	 <b>Increase Resilience and Coping</b>	→ Build individuals' resilience and ability to recover from stress
 <b>Promote Thriving</b> Optimise well-being and generate future capabilities.	 <b>Create Conditions for Performance</b>	→ Strategic Human Resource practices
	 <b>Create Conditions for Connection</b>	→ High quality work connections → Diversity and inclusion → Community engagement
	 <b>Create Conditions for Growth</b>	→ Strength-based development → Support lifelong learning



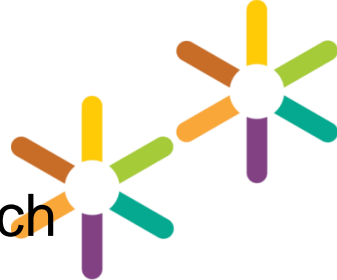
# Summary

- Opportunity for the Public Sector to lead the way by championing thriving and mentally healthy workplaces.
- Agencies will enhance legislative compliance, economic productivity and reputational returns through increased staff engagement, reduced absenteeism and becoming employers of choice.
- Opportunity for leadership to positively influence workplace culture, management practices and staff experience.



# Next steps to consider

- As a public sector working towards a coordinated approach where appropriate.
- Thrive at Work Masterclasses for the Public Sector.
- Departmentally, leverage guidance and expertise from the Centre for Transformative Work Design.
- Use the resources available on the Thrive at Work website [www.thriveatwork.org.au](http://www.thriveatwork.org.au)
- Engage with Karina Jorritsma, Future of Work Institute, Curtin University: [karina.jorritsma@curtin.edu.au](mailto:karina.jorritsma@curtin.edu.au)





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Additional key performance indicators may be developed over the life of the Strategy as needed that focus on priority groups, drugs of concern and emerging issues.

