

THE CONTEXT

Insights into Work, Worker & Workplace Wellbeing in Victorian Manufacturing

January 2022



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Evidence | Analysis | Change

Rapid Context is an Australian research consulting firm with significant subject matter expertise in organisational culture. We provide private organisations and government with high quality defensible research to meet urgent needs without compromising rigour. We use qualitative and quantitative research and analysis to develop a strong evidence base to assist organisations in the development and implementation of strategy and supporting change initiatives. Our team consists of highly skilled and experienced researchers and industry specialists including strategists, sociologists, anthropologists, policy, health, economics, STEM and education specialists.

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Executive summary

This report outlines the current mental health and wellbeing profile of the Victorian defence manufacturing sector. Insights gained from the participating workplaces highlight the key work-related risk factors that impact on worker mental and physical health and wellbeing in this sector. These findings provide a comprehensive, relevant, and detailed insight into the challenges faced by the sector making a number of recommendations for action for workplaces to support worker mental and physical health and wellbeing.

This report is informed by insights gained from the workers of four participating workplaces. Across December 2020 – January 2021, 185 workers were given the opportunity to participate in a 15-20 minute self-complete Wellbeing in Manufacturing survey investigating the work related factors impacting on employee wellbeing. Rapid Context also conducted 19 semi-structured qualitative interviews to better understand each workplace's context. Surveys were completed confidentially, and individual respondents are not identified in this report.

This report forms part of the project 4WM: Work, Worker and Workplace Wellbeing in Manufacturing. This project is funded under the under WorkSafe Victoria's WorkWell Mental Health Improvement Fund with the aim to better understand the work-related factors impacting on worker mental health and

wellbeing and to develop tools that manufacturing workplaces can use to prevent mental injury in the future.

The report findings along with a program of co-design have informed the development of an online suite of evidence-based tools, surveys, assessments and tailored action plans designed to address the challenges faced by manufacturing workers.

Stress is high in Victorian defence manufacturing sector with 76% of workers experiencing stress at work [i]. Stressed and disengaged workers negatively impact workplace productivity and profitability. Disengaged workers cost workplaces \$4,594 per worker each year in lost productivity [ii].

The Victorian defence manufacturing sector is well positioned to capitalise on the benefits of creating a psychosocially safe and thriving workplace, by understanding and addressing the causes of work-related stress.

Supervisors are the #1 influencer of worker stress and wellbeing [iii]. Supervisor commitment and action is the key to creating a stress-free, safe, and productive workplace.

We know your supervisors are busy, and their time is precious. That is why we have developed the No Stress M8 toolbox. It has been designed by the sector and informed by best-practice research to create simple actions, tools and recourses that deliver big impacts - that are not time or resource intensive to support you and your workers.

So together you can create a thriving and psychosocially safe and productive workplace.



No Stress

YOUR MOST IMPORTANT
TOOL FOR A THRIVING
WORKFORCE

M8

NoStressMate.com.au



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Australia's mental health

Almost half of all Australians will experience mental ill-health at some point in their life. Work has an important role to play in our mental health and wellbeing. While our workplaces can increase our risk for mental and physical harm, they can also offer us protection and decrease this risk. Work provides psychological and cognitive development, social contacts, feelings of purpose, increased self-esteem and quality of life or life satisfaction [1]. Understanding the different factors that increase or decrease risk is vital to securing worker physical and mental safety.



One in five people experience a mental illness in any year. Depression, anxiety and substance abuse are the most common [2].



Victoria's mental injury rates are rising as a direct result of a physical injury leading to a secondary mental injury.



Work can be attributed to 15-45% of all mental ill-health experienced [3].



Victorian worker's compensation claims for **physical** injury have been in **decline** over the last three years but **mental** injury remains **steady** [4].



Physical and mental health are interrelated. Poor mental health can impact physical health and vice versa [5].

COVID-19



One in five (20%) Australians experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress in March 2021, similar to psychological distress levels experienced in November 2020 [6].

Physical health issues during the pandemic affected productivity for less than 1 in 3 workers (29.8%) [7].

More than half (52.8%) of people who experienced a mental health condition for the first time in 2020 believe their workplace caused their condition or made it worse [8].

The cost of mental ill-health

\$200-220B
PER YEAR

Total cost of mental ill-health on Australia's economy, government, and society [9]

\$60B
PER YEAR

Direct impact on the Australian economy [10]

\$12.8B
PER YEAR

Impact to Australian business [11]:

- \$2.6B in absenteeism
- \$9.9B presenteeism
- \$348M in workers' compensation [12]

12.1%
BURDEN OF DISEASE

Fourth highest burden of disease in Australia [13]

Mental ill-health is on the rise. It is anticipated that by 2030 depressive disorders will become the number one cause of ill health and premature death world-wide [14].

Workplaces are both responsible for, and impacted by, mental ill-health in their workers, with work being attributed to 15 – 45 percent of all mental ill-health experienced [15].

Workers with poor mental health have are more likely to be absent from work, less productive when at work and more likely to leave their job [16]. Mental ill-health is the number one reason for being absent from work for more than five days [17].

Increased absenteeism and presenteeism has a direct financial impact on business productivity, but also has flow on impacts for the macro-economy through reduced workforce participation, lower wages and taxes, lower economic growth, and higher consumer welfare [18].

Healthy Australians are less likely to be absent from work, are more productive whilst at work and are less likely to leave their job [19].

It is anticipated that realistic improvements in mental health could lead to 30 percent greater workforce participation, with greater participation from women and older Australians [20].





Findings: Current state of wellbeing in defence industry

STRESS

Stress is HIGH amongst workers and they lack the right skills to manage workplace stress.



76% of workers experience stress at work

The self-reported causes of workplace stress are:

- work demands, tight and competing deadlines, and shiftwork
- individual and interpersonal conflict
- pressure from management to meet deadlines
- workplace bullying.

Workers are asking for more to be done to prevent workplace stress.

SUPERVISORS

Supervisors are the key to creating a thriving, psychosocially safe and productive workplace.

Supervisors are the #1 influencer of worker performance and wellbeing.

Workers want more recognition. Genuine personal and verbal recognition from their supervisor is valued more highly than financial reward.

STIGMA

Stigma towards mental health persists. Workers are twice as likely to talk about their physical health over their mental health and most likely to turn to a family member for help.

PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY CLIMATE

Workplaces with a low psychosocial safety climate or low worker engagement have higher sickness absence and presenteeism, and staff turnover/intention to leave.

	LOW PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY CLIMATE	LOW WORKER ENGAGEMENT [21]
MORE SICK DAYS	43%	12%
HIGHER PERFORMANCE LOSS	72%	8.1%
COST EACH YEAR PER WORKER	\$1,887	\$4,594

Work-related factors with the highest risk to workers:

- high cognitive & physical demands
- low job control
- hazardous materials
- manual & repetitive handling
- shiftwork
- poor support
- poor workplace relationships
- low recognition & reward
- poor organisational justice
- poor environmental conditions.

COVID-19

The impact of COVID—19 has added an increased emotional and social load:

- AT WORK - Reduced social connection at work and some concern about job security
- AT HOME - Increased worry and responsibility

Key terms

Healthy Australians are less likely to be absent from work and are more productive whilst at work and are less likely to leave their job [19].

It is anticipated that realistic improvements in mental health could lead to 30 percent greater workforce participation, with greater participation from women and older Australians [20].

Key Term	Definition	Impact
Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC)	Psychosocially safe workplaces prioritise and protect worker wellbeing over production demands, supported through workplace policies and practices that respond to workers' concerns and feedback [22].	Directly influences employee engagement and improved work outcomes.
Employee Engagement	A measure of a workers' emotional commitment and connection to their workplace, and its goals. Highly engaged employees are invested in the work that they do with higher levels of productivity and improved quality of work.	Highly engaged employees are more likely to be retained in the long-term [23].
Job Satisfaction	A measure of a workers' emotional response defining the degree to which people like their job, their work environment, and their achievements and experiences. Job satisfaction acts as a motivation to work. It is not the self-satisfaction, happiness or self-contentment – but the satisfaction in the work and workplace.	Job dissatisfaction lowers motivation [24].
Absenteeism	Sick days or other absence from work.	Increases worker stress and lowers work outcomes.
Presenteeism	Non-productive time at work.	Lowers worker morale and work outcomes.
WHS Responsibilities	Workplaces have a responsibility to their workers to provide a work environment that, so far as reasonably practicable, ensures health and safety in their workplace as outlined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (OHS Act)*.	Increases work outcomes and decreases injury and workers compensation claims.

* Further information can be found at:
<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/occupational-health-and-safety-your-legal-duties>

Psychosocially safe workplaces make good business sense

There are clear benefits for workplaces that focus on creating a psychosocially safe working environment. Workplaces with high psychosocial safety have higher profitability. These benefits come from decreased mental injury claims, and increased productivity, employee engagement and reputation, and reduced absenteeism, presenteeism and turnover [26].

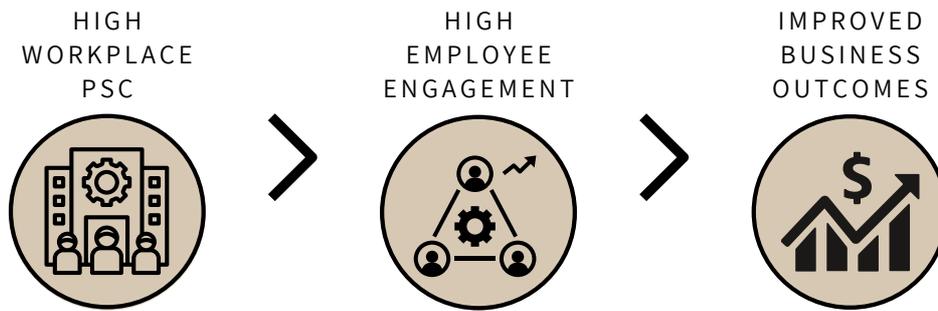
High turnover is costly. Replacing a single worker costs approximately 20% of that worker's salary [27].

The cost each year to workplaces for every worker with mental ill-health: [28]

MILD DEPRESSION	\$2,791 PER WORKER PER YEAR	
SEVERE DEPRESSION	\$23,143 PER WORKER PER YEAR	270% HIGHER PERFORMANCE LOSS
PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS (COMBINATION OF ANXIETY, SADNESS & DEPRESSION)	\$6,309 PER WORKER PER YEAR	154% HIGHER PERFORMANCE LOSS

Workplaces with a low psychosocial safety climate or low worker engagement have higher sickness absence, presenteeism, and staff turnover/intention to leave. The cost each year to workplaces per worker in workplaces with low psychosocial safety climate and low worker engagement: [29]

LOW PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY CLIMATE	\$1,887 PER WORKER PER YEAR	72% HIGHER PERFORMANCE LOSS
LOW WORKER ENGAGEMENT	\$4,594 PER WORKER PER YEAR	8.1% HIGHER PERFORMANCE LOSS



Psychosocial safety and employee engagement are related. Increases in psychosocial safety drive increased employee engagement. But the reverse is not true. Therefore, leaders should focus on improving workplace psychosocial safety – improved employee engagement will follow.

Medium sized workplaces with 100 workers could save \$180,000 per annum in lost productivity alone by improving their PSC from low to high [30].

Not only are workplaces better off; so are workers. It has been shown that workers are financially better off when their workplaces undertake initiatives to improve mental health and wellbeing [31]. There is a significant opportunity for SMEs to see real benefit from workplace initiatives to improve workplace mental health and wellbeing.

The return on Investment (ROI) for manufacturing SMEs is \$3.50 for every \$1.00 spent on mental health prevention initiatives, and an average of \$2.90 ROI for large manufacturing workplaces [32].

Furthermore, actions taken by SMEs to improve mental health tend to be more successful in smaller sized organisations because the most critical success factor is employee participation. For larger workplaces, initiatives are best implemented on a team or group basis [33].

Future of work

A study into workforce investment shows that productivity improvement will be the primary determinant of income growth in the future. Australia-wide, mental health concerns are the most common reason for lower productivity in 2020, affecting 60 percent of workers. However, physical health issues (during the pandemic) affected productivity for less than 30 percent of workers [35].

Maximising workers' capabilities, and minimising worker turnover through improvement mental health and wellbeing (mitigating psychosocial hazards and improving psychological health outcomes) will be essential to secure future workplace prosperity. Traditional methods of increasing productivity through increasing work demands and using rewards as a motivation are typically counterproductive, as any short-term productivity increases are more than counteracted by the physical and mental health problems that are known to arise from increased work demands, leading to reduced productivity over the longer term [36].

Psychosocially safe workplaces



Psychosocially safe workplaces create a climate that nurtures mutual trust, support and respect. Where workers are encouraged to take moderate-risks and feel personally safe and confident to speak freely, challenge existing assumptions and offer creative ideas. As a result, employees don't feel the need to censor themselves before talking and are not afraid to speak up [37].

Psychosocially safe workplaces seek to maximise the positive and minimise the negative work-related risk factors that impact worker stress and wellbeing.

Supervisor commitment, training and action is a key factor in achieving and maintaining a psychologically safe workplace.

Actions taken by psychologically safe workplaces lead to increased health, productivity and profit outcomes.

Workplace interventions are classified as primary, secondary or tertiary

Primary

Primary prevention interventions are proactive, system-level workplace changes, that aim to reduce exposure to psychological and physical risk factors. They are the most effective way to prevent harm, as interventions at this level embed lasting change [38]. Research into stress interventions shows that primary prevention initiatives like work-design, are best at addressing risks to work by preventing workplace stress by managing the work-related factors [39].

Secondary

Secondary prevention interventions are often focussed on the individual, aim to manage symptoms and, in the context of the workplace, are typically implemented after an employee develops symptoms or begins to complain of stress.

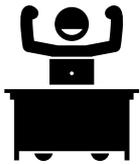
Tertiary

Tertiary interventions are, focussed on the individual, are reactive and aim to minimise the impact that a diagnosed disorder has on daily functioning.

Psychosocially safe workplaces

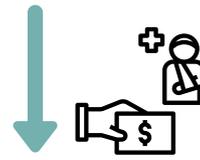


WORKPLACES WITH HIGH PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY HAVE:

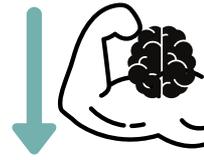


Physically & mentally healthy workers

who are more **highly engaged** at work



Decreased workers' compensation claims



Decrease in physical & mental injury

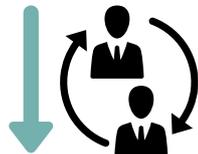


Increased reputation

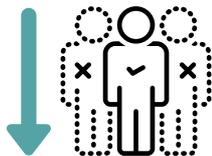
Workplaces with highly **engaged employees** see significant benefits:



Increased productivity



Decreased turnover



Decreased absenteeism

RESULTING IN:



Increased profitability, productivity & performance



The ROI for manufacturing SMEs \$3.50 for every \$1.00 spent on mental health prevention strategies



Health Outcomes

Reduced:

- psychological distress
- emotional and physical exhaustion
- depression and anxiety
- physical ill-health - commonly cardiovascular disease & musculoskeletal injury



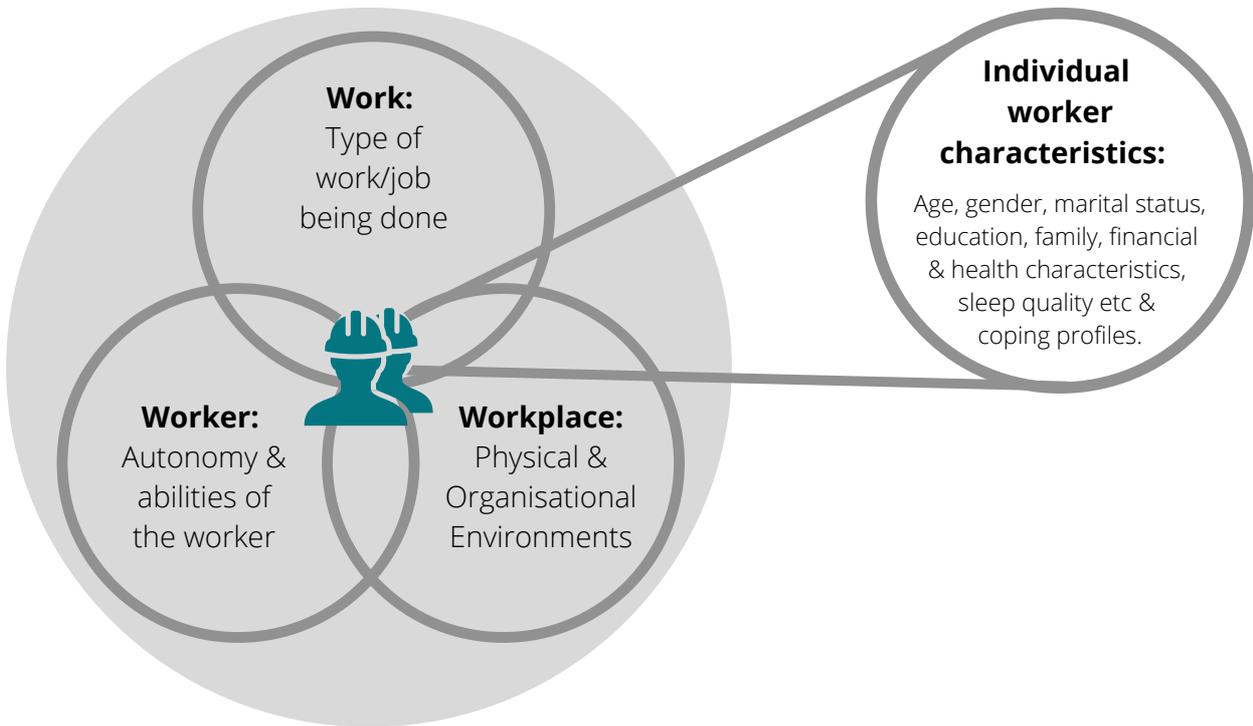
Work Outcomes

- high work engagement
- low intention to leave / turnover
- low job dissatisfaction
- low absenteeism
- low presenteeism
- low workers' compensation claims

How work-related stress impacts our mental and physical health

Work-related stress is both a physical and psychological response when the demands of work or the workplace environment exceed the ability or resources to cope. Work-related stress can result in harm or injury if the stress is prolonged or severe.

Work-related factors:



Worker stress reactions:



Physical:
headache, fatigue, muscle strength & soreness, neck/back ache joint pains, constipation & tummy troubles

Mental:
feeling unsafe, anger, tension, sad, gloomy, short tempered, worried or depressed

When stress reactions are not managed and continue over time:



Long-term stress consequences: Physical & mental injury:



Physical injury:
Cardiovascular disease, diabetes, musculoskeletal

Mental injury:
Anxiety, depression, substance use

Economic work impact:
increased presenteeism & absenteeism, lower performance & productivity, high job turnover

Causes of work-related stress

Long-term stress or strain increases the risk for both physical and mental injury. **Stress occurs when job demands (negatives) exceed available job resources (positives).**

Stress can manifest into emotional burnout and physical exhaustion. If ignored, over time stress can turn into mental or physical injury: most commonly, depression, anxiety, cardiovascular illness and/or musculoskeletal injury.

Thriving workplaces seek to **minimise** job demands / work-related hazards and **maximise** job resources / work-related attributes wherever possible through risk management and work-design discussed further on pages 37-40.

Control job demands

- Work pressure
- Physical, emotional & cognitive demands
- Shiftwork
- Organisational change
- Bullying & harassment
- Work-home conflict

Maximise job resources

- Supervisor & co-worker support
- Skill discretion & job control
- Decision authority & autonomy
- Organisational justice
- Organisational reward

Depending on the type of work and the worker not all job demands can be controlled. In these situations additional positive interventions can be applied both at the individual and organisational level. Individual interventions do not lead to lasting systemic change and should be a last resort for workplaces.

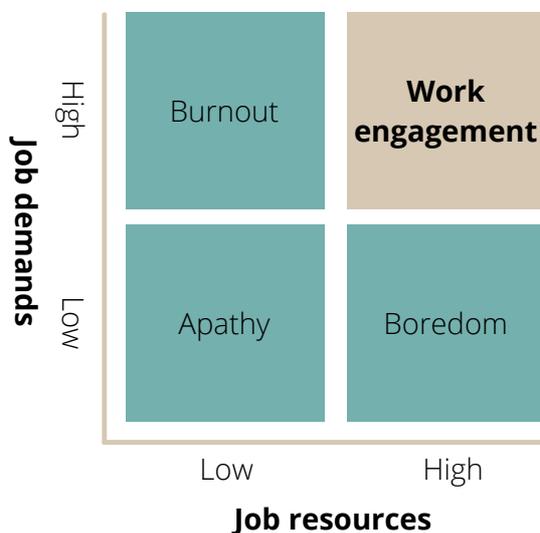
Additional positives

Workplace interventions:

- Additional breaks, job rotation, improved amenities, creature comforts

Individual interventions:

- Exercise, healthy behaviours & mindfulness



Highly demanding jobs can be tolerated or even positive for workers in highly supportive working environments. It is about getting the balance between demands and resources right at the individual and organisational level through good work-design and organisational leadership.

Highly demanding jobs with low resources lead to worker burnout.

Jobs with low demands can result in workers that are apathetic or bored.

The health of Australian manufacturing

Manufacturing is an industry in transition

At its high point, in the post war boom of 1950-51, manufacturing accounted for 29 percent of all employment. Since the 1970s the sector has been in decline: gradually at first and then rapidly from 2008 post the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)[40]. In 2016, manufacturing accounts for only 7 percent of the total Victorian workforce declining from 10.7 percent in 2011 concurrently with the expansion of the service sector [41].

Working in declining industries is inherently stressful. Stress can come from any number of factors including low job security, devaluating of skills, rising employment costs, increased competition, decreased markets and profit margins.

However, change is on the horizon.

Recent data paints a more positive picture. In 2018-19 Australia experienced its second year of consecutive growth of 9.1 percent delivering an additional \$3.3B in earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA). This growth is largely driven by the primary metal and metal product manufacturing, and increased food manufacturing exports.

Victoria as a leader in manufacturing

Victoria continues to be the epicentre of Australian manufacturing, [43] with strength in construction and defence technologies, food and fibre, medical technologies and pharmaceuticals, new energy and transport technologies [44].

Victorian manufacturing is not only a key industry for the Victorian economy it is also an important industry for the Australian economy.

Quick stats:

Victorian manufacturing



Slight positive growth

24,200 businesses in 2019 up from 23,484 in 2015 [45]



Delivers 27% of income

Exports \$17.88B in 2015/16 [46]

Contributes 7.5% (\$25.9B) of Victoria's Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2015/16 [47]



Equal largest state workforce - home to 30 percent of Australia's manufacturing workforce = 270,300 workers (NSW is home to 270,900 workers) [48]

Fastest growing industry category with 40,000 new jobs created in 2016 [49]

Regional strength



Manufacturing remains the biggest economic sector in regional Victoria [50] contributing 12 percent or \$8.2B to the Gross Value Added (GVA). Home to around 4,000 businesses, employing 60,000 workers equating to 9.8 percent of all regional employment [51].

Future focus

The Victorian manufacturing sector is faced with a number of challenges and opportunities in securing its future prosperity.

Challenge: Impending skills shortage

Victorian manufacturing faces an impending skills shortage. Workplaces must invest in worker retention to remain competitive.

The Victorian manufacturing sector is facing an impending widespread skills shortage in key trades across the sector, particularly in metal machining and fabrication, and electricians [52].

Factors impacting the skills pipeline:

- Ageing workforce – the average age of a Victorian manufacturing worker is 43 years compared to the state’s average of 39 years [53]. Ageing workforces have a higher risk of skill loss (workplace skills shortages) as older workers seek to retire and there are no younger skilled workers in the pipeline [54].
- Falling apprentice enrolments, with a five year decline of 13 percent [55].
- Impact of COVID-19 on the sector:
 - In 2020 an estimated 3,000 apprentices lost their job in the sector [56].
 - Reduced migrant workforce contributing an anticipated 108,000 workers to the sector for 2019/20. The impact of COVID-19 on the migrant workforce is likely to be felt for a number of years as international travel remains restricted [57].

Challenge: High-risk of mental injury – ageing and male-dominated workforce

Over 70 percent of workers in the manufacturing workforce are male [58].

The demographic profile of the manufacturing sector workforce (ageing, blue-collar, male-dominated) places them at a higher risk of mental injury. Men working in a male-dominated workplace are not only at a greater risk of experiencing poor mental health; [59] the adverse consequences associated with poor mental health, such as suicide, are also more severe among men [60].

In male-dominated workplaces, such as manufacturing, construction, agriculture, military, professional sports, and trades, the adherence to traditional masculine ideals can be normalised. This can include a stigma associated with mental health, and a workplace culture where men are reluctant to acknowledge mental health challenges, disclose mental health concerns or to seek help [61].

This risk is amplified in blue-collar workers and in industries that include isolated or solitary work, excessive of irregular job demands, poor physical conditions, unsupportive workplace relationships, poor health and lifestyle, lack of job control, and monotonous tasks, experience disproportionately higher rates of mental injury [62].

Machine operators, unskilled manual workers and workers with low job control are even more vulnerable to mental injury [63].

Older workers, are also vulnerable: they are more likely to have worse physical health and are less likely to speak about their mental or physical health [64][65]. Workers who are 50 years of age or older, are at greater risk of mental injury when experiencing high job demands [66]. Yet, there is some positive news for older workers, it has been shown that those in part-time work have the best mental health outcomes (compared to those in full-time work or retired)[67].

The demographic profile of manufacturing sector – ageing, blue-collar and male-dominated workforce – places workers at high risk for mental injury.

Workplaces have a key role in preventing mental injury. Workplaces have existing structures and frameworks that can support prevention strategies as part of wider WHS strategies. Evidence suggests that interventions in male-dominated industries can have a positive impact on mental literacy and help-seeking behaviour [68].

However, the influence of toxic masculinity/highly masculine cultures has been shown to inhibit interest in, discussion about, and disclosure of mental health issues. Where these cultures exist, individuals may fear their co-workers will marginalise them and view them as being ‘weak’ undermining efforts to provide well-meaning mental wellness programs in workplaces [69].

Leveraging existing strengths of male-dominated workforce cultures to reduce stigma, build social cohesion, and to ensure the ongoing support for mental health is key to creating successful interventions in that context. This can be done through targeted interventions for high-risk workforce groups, which could include:

- incorporating physical elements though promoting enjoyable activities
- encouraging pro-social behaviours (eg. helping out a mate)
- a greater focus on stress management and prevention not mental health, to foster increased social cohesion, support and stress management in an inclusive way [70].



Opportunities



The rise of Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs)



Defence Industry Growth



Increased profitability through increased productivity

The rise of Small-Medium Enterprises

Victorian manufacturing is home to many Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

SMEs make up 99 percent of Victorian manufacturing (87% small 1 – 19 workers, 12% medium 20-199 workers and 1% with 200+ workers large)[71]. 95% of all SMEs in Australia have less than 199 employees. The majority are ‘mum and dad’ owned companies or those with 20-30 people [72].

SMEs are highly agile due to their highly-skilled small workforce. Workers often experience high autonomy and job variety [73]. These positive features mean that SMEs are able to pivot faster than larger companies to meet changing consumer demands.

However, the low available capital and time to invest inhibits the availability of additional training or resources to workers [74]. Due to their proximity to their supervisors and management, workers at SMEs are at a greater risk to be impacted by their supervisor’s emotions and state of mind (known as emotional contagion) – this impact can be significant on worker wellbeing.[75].

Increased profitability through increased productivity

Around 30% of the total manufacturing workforce are employed in Victoria, delivering 27% of the income for the sector. This presents an opportunity to achieve increased sector profitability enabled by increased workforce productivity (per workforce size).

Defence industry growth

The defence manufacturing industry is a key component of the Victorian manufacturing sector, contributing up to \$8B annually to the Victorian economy. The sector includes over 400 workplaces employing around 20,000 workers across the supply chain (7,000 in industry and 13,000 in the Australian Defence Organisation) making, supplying and building leading-edge products and service for local and global supply chains [76].

Victorian mental health & wellbeing profile

Across Victoria

National injury rates in manufacturing sector over the last decade [80]:

- Physical injury rates are declining.
- Mental injury rates are increasing.

	PHYSICAL INJURY	MENTAL INJURY
2010	26,772	3,071
2020	23,667	3,532

Median injury claim figures [81]:

	PHYSICAL INJURY	MENTAL INJURY
COST PER CLAIM	\$10,700	\$27,700
TIME LOST FROM WORK	5.8 wks	17 wks

Total cost to workplace per injury claim [82]:

	PHYSICAL INJURY	MENTAL INJURY
TIME ABSENT FROM WORK	44 days	175 days
COST OF LOST PRODUCTIVITY (ABSENCE, TURNOVER, AND PRESENTEEISM)	\$21,000	\$85,000

Over the last ten years physical injury rates have been declining, yet mental injury rates have increased [77]. This increase in mental injury is due to a rise in secondary mental injury, or an injury that occurs as the result of a physical injury, such as through increased physical pain or worry from being absent from work [78].

Workers return to work faster from an injury if workplaces keep in regular contact with them.

Mental injury is costly. On average it costs 4x more and lasts 4x longer than a physical injury claim [83].





Victorian manufacturing

The manufacturing sector records the **second highest rate of injury in Victoria**, both physical and mental, with 4,231 injuries in 2019. The highest sector is Health Care and Social Assistance.

From 2010 – 2017 manufacturing recorded the highest rate of injury, steadily declining year on year from 6,044 in 2010 to 4,231 in 2019 [84]. Overall total injury rates are trending down. This is due to the year-on decrease in physical injury despite the steady increase in mental injury (6.4 percent of all injuries).

The climbing rate of mental injury is concerning as it brings with it a 4x direct cost to workplaces in lost productivity.

Most common mental injuries in the manufacturing sector are [85]:

4% SUBSTANCE ABUSE

12.5% DEPRESSION OR AN AFFECTIVE DISORDER

20% ANXIETY

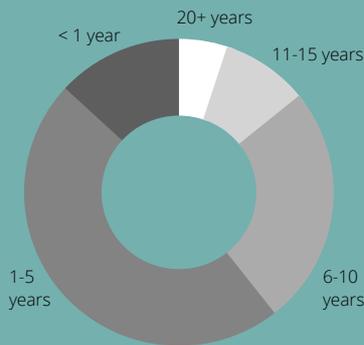
Despite the overall decrease in physical injuries, musculoskeletal disorders are skyrocketing in the manufacturing sector. Musculoskeletal disorders can result from increased physical and mental stress and are more likely to occur in ageing workers, who undertake demanding and repetitive work.

Manufacturing workers are at a high risk of musculoskeletal injuries due to high workplace physical and mental stress [86].

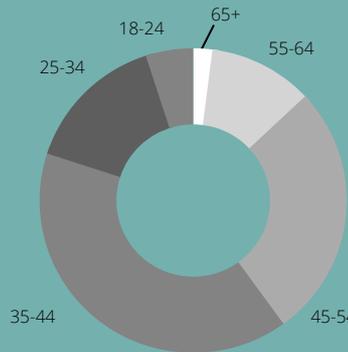
Workforce findings: Victorian Defence Industry

Worker profile

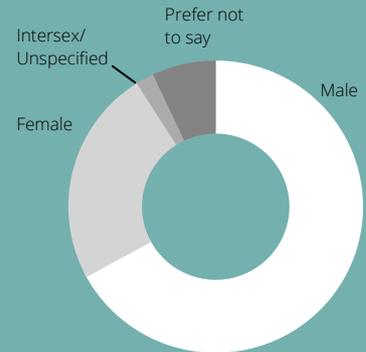
Length of employment
(proportion of workforce)



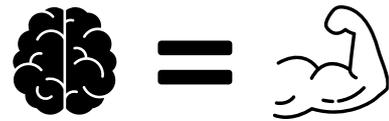
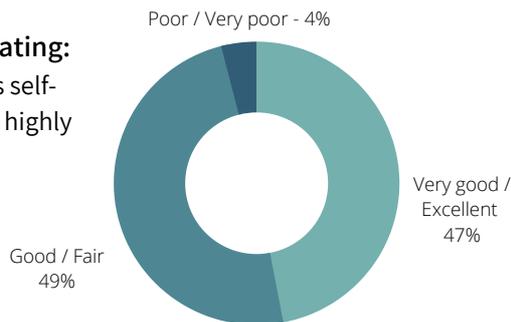
Age profile
(proportion of workforce)



Gender profile
(proportion of workforce)



Overall health rating:
Most respondents self-rated their health highly



Importance of mental health:
Respondents rated their mental health as being important as physical health

Defence industry workplace findings

The **psychosocial safety climate (PSC)** assesses organisation-wide conditions that are known to put employees at increased psychological risk. This is a validated measure of workplace performance in defence industry manufacturing with a score between 4 and 20. A high PSC positively influences employee engagement and improves work outcomes.



Employee engagement is a measure of how strongly an individual is tied to their work. The higher the score out of 5, the more workers are emotionally committed and connected to their workplace. Strong engagement leads to improved work quality and increased retention. It is also protective against worker burnout.



Job satisfaction is an assessment of the degree to which a worker feels self-motivated, happy and fulfilled by their work and feels stable and secure in their workplace. Job dissatisfaction brings an absence of motivation and poor work outcomes. The higher the score out of 5, the more workers are satisfied with their current job.





Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

The year 2020 was one like no other, and the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact on all facets of life, both home and work – blurring the lines between the two.

The pandemic has caused additional stress and strain on workers and workplaces as we continue to respond to the rapidly changing environment.

SMEs and business owners are at a greater risk of experiencing poor mental health

In 2020:

- 3 in 5 workers experienced a mental health condition [87]
- More than a quarter of those had their first experience during the pandemic [88]
- Those most likely to experience a mental illness for the first time are: [89]
 - business owners (24.0%)
 - people working in small-to-medium-sized organisations (20–199 employees)(16.3%).

Impact on Australian workplaces



Worker retention has increased - with workers less likely to leave their job. This is in line with the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Participation, Job Search and Mobility studies that show similar patterns during previous economic downturns: people stay in their job because they need the work, but satisfaction with the work drops [90].



The longer workers have been employed, the less likely they are to leave that workplace. This can be a positive thing for workers who desire skill mastery in their role generating professional and wellbeing benefits [91].



Increased worker retention is good news for employers. However it does present another challenge of decreasing worker satisfaction which can lead to decreased employee engagement and productivity, and profitability.

Workers are less likely to leave their current employment,
despite being less satisfied.
Low satisfaction is linked to low work outputs.

A missed opportunity for Australian manufacturing

Manufacturing's national workplace wellbeing score has remained steady from 2018 – 2020 at 62.7 [92] suggesting that COVID-19 has had little impact on the wellbeing of manufacturing workers [93]. However, across 2020 the wellbeing scores for many sectors improved dramatically with manufacturing dropping nine places from ranking in the top five industries to 14 out of the 19 reported [94].

Impact on Victorian defence industry manufacturing

In Victorian defence industry, the self reported impact of COVID-19 has shown:

- an increase in worry about home life and loved ones getting sick
- increased home stress flowing into work stress
- children doing remote learning
- additional caring responsibilities
- **most** wearing masks at work
- different break times
- less socialising at work & outside of work
- **some** concern about job security
- working from home
- minor changes to hours of work
- **impact** on health - with worse health for some.

Workers reported an increase in emotional and social load during the COVID-19 pandemic, consistent with impacts reported by workers and workplaces across Australia and globally.

Respondents reported increased worry and responsibility outside of work, and reduced social connection at work.

Post COVID-19: the new normal

Post COVID-19, workers would like:

- the same or more hours of work for some
- the ability to work non-standard hours
- the option to work from home **some** of the time
- the option to have different break times
- to keep a virtual/online option for meetings to help improve attendance
- increased opportunities to socialise both inside and outside of work.

Workplace hazards – work-related factors

Work-related factors are the hazards (job demands) and attributes (job resources) present in the design, management or environment of work that can impact the risk of work-related stress that can lead to physical or mental injury/harm [95]. Some hazards might always be present at work, while others only occasionally.

Stress is cumulative. There is a greater risk of stress when work-related factors combine and act together to have a detrimental impact. Workplaces should not consider the work-related factors in isolation.

A psychosocially safe workplace seeks to:

- minimise the harmful risk factors or job demands, such as low job control
- maximise those that are positive factors or job resources, such as high job control or high support
- consider impacts for high-risk workers due to their background, type of employment, stage of life, and current health status [96].

Mind-body connection (physical and psychosocial connection)

Physical and psychosocial work-related factors are connected - where one can impact the other. Workers who feel unsafe due to physical hazards are at risk of developing work-related stress which can manifest into mental injury. Just as workers who experience high psychosocial hazards have a higher risk of musculoskeletal disorders, as their concentration and decision-making abilities can be affected thereby increasing the risk of physical injury [97].

Individual perspective

Just like no two jobs are the same, no two workers are the same. Causes of stress are likely to be specific to the worker, the type of work being done or workplace. Certain worker demographics are more susceptible (are at a higher risk) to work-related harm. This risk is individual and can change across a workers' life.





Work-related factors & at-risk worker demographic profiles

The following table details the psychological, organisational, physical and environmental work-related factors that impact on worker wellbeing, and the at risk worker demographic profiles most commonly seen in the Victorian manufacturing sector.

Work-related risk factors are broadly classified into two groups: psychological or physical. A workers' demographic profile, along with the psychological and physical risks associated with the work, are contributing factors to work-related stress and harm due to their interdependent nature, and should not be considered in isolation from one another.

High or Low Cognitive Demand	High or Low Emotional Demand	Low Job Control	Psychological Risks
Poor Support	Poor Workplace Relationships	Low Role Clarity	
Poor Organisational Change Management	Poor Organisational Justice	Low Recognition & Reward	
High or Low Physical Demand	Poor Environmental Conditions	Remote or Isolated Work	Physical Risks
Manual & Repetitive Handling	Slips, Trips & Falls	Hazardous Materials	
Shiftwork	Fatigue	Violent or Traumatic Events	
Substance Misuse			
Culturally & Linguistically Diverse (CALD)	Migrant Workers	Casual Workers	Demographics at risk
Ageing Workers 50+ years	Young Workers <25 years	First Time Parents	
Carers	Pre-existing Health Conditions / in Poor Health	Financially Insecure	

See the appendix for a detailed description of each of the work-related factors.



Work-related factors risk profile

Workplaces can help their workers maintain a high level of wellness, and prevent work-related stress and injury, by focussing on addressing the work-related factors their workers experience through risk mitigation and effective work-design.

The risk rating for the Victorian SME defence manufacturing sector details the worker demographics profile of the sector; and the psychological, organisational, physical and environmental work-related factors that impact on worker psychological and physical safety.

The relative risk rating against each of the work-related factors is informed by the insights gained from the participating workplaces through interviews with workplace leaders and worker survey undertaken from December 2020 – January 2021.

Worker Demographic Profile	Risk Rating			
	low	low/medium	medium/high	high
Culturally & linguistically Diverse (CALD)				
Migrant Workers				
Casual Workers				
Ageing Workers 50+				
Young Workers < 25 years				
<i>First Time Parents</i>				
<i>Carers</i>				
Pre-existing Health Conditions / Poor Health				
<i>Financially Insecure</i>				

Italicised profiles were not measured.
Leaders should be aware of workers in these at risk profile groups.



Work-related factors risk profile

Work-related Factor	Risk Rating			
	low	low/medium	medium/high	high
Cognitive Demand				high
Physical Demand				high
Emotional Demand	low			
Low Job Control			medium/high	
Low Role Clarity	low			
Shiftwork			medium/high	
Hazardous Materials		low/medium		
Manual & Repetitive Handling			medium/high	
Fatigue			medium/high	
<i>Substance Misuse</i>				
Slips, Trips & Falls		low/medium		
Poor Support			medium/high	
Poor Workplace Relationships			medium/high	
Low Recognition & Reward			medium/high	
Poor Organisational Change Mgt		low/medium		
Poor Organisational Justice		low/medium		
Poor Environmental Conditions		low/medium		
Remote or Isolated Work		low/medium		
Violent or Traumatic Events		low/medium		

Italicised profiles were not measured.
 Leaders should be aware of workers in these at risk profile groups.

Physical workplace environment

The physical workplace environment can pose significant risk to worker safety, through both one-off accidents, long-term exposure and repetitive action. Manufacturing is one of the most vulnerable industries for high-risk physical environments [98].

The overall cleanliness, look and feel of a workplace has been shown to impact on worker satisfaction and productivity, with cleaner workplaces resulting in higher worker satisfaction, productivity and safety.

The physical environment is a work-related factor comprised of a number of smaller elements such as noise, air-flow, cleanliness and equipment. Each of these elements contribute to the overall impact on workers, including mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Understanding the risk rating of the physical elements faced by the Victorian defence manufacturing sector provides insight and guidance into what direct or indirect actions need to be taken to mitigate the risk associated with the physical working environment.

Components of the Physical Environment Work-Related Factor	Risk Rating			
	low	low/medium	medium/high	high
Noise				
Temperature (too hot)				
Vibrations				
Crowded Working Area				
Air Quality				
PPE Frequency of Use				
PPE Ease of Use				
Quality of Facilities - buildings, work areas & tools				
Access to Amenities - kitchens & toilets				

The overall cleanliness, look and feel of a workplace has been shown to impact on worker satisfaction and productivity, with cleaner workplaces resulting in higher worker satisfaction, productivity and safety.



Amenities & facilities

Most workers report having access to amenities (toilets and kitchens) close by; although this is not the case for all workers – particularly those who work in highly controlled or isolated environments. Easier access to amenities for these workers that are unable to leave their prescribed work area easily is an area for improvement.

Workers feel that the access and quality of the facilities (lunchrooms, informal spaces, exercise equipment and spaces) and general workspaces is fine.

The physical work environment as a risk factor for workers' physical and mental health. Overall, the physical environment for the sector is at a medium risk, with scope for improvement across the board. Workers want to see improvements in the general cleanliness of the workplace, and updating of old, tired and run-down facilities and equipment.

Shiftwork

Shiftwork increases the risk of worker fatigue, harms performance and increases the chance of workplace injuries. Workers report that this is a significant challenge – it is one of the highest causes of workplace stress with nights shifts being the most difficult. The biggest impact is on the workers' sleep quality and social life.



Tips to minimise the impact of shiftwork fatigue:

- Schedule safety critical or highly complex work outside the low body clock periods between 2am and 6am, and between 2pm and 4pm.
- Include additional rest breaks for night shifts, low body clock periods particularly if workers wear PPE.
- Offer workers a choice of a permanent roster or rotating shifts.
- Restrict the number of successive night shifts (no more than three to four if possible).
- Avoid early morning starts and move early shift starts before 6am forward (for example a 7am start not a 6am start).
- Avoid long working hours (more than 50 hours per week).
- Build regularly free weekends (two consecutive days into the shift schedule, at least every three weeks).
- Use either a rapid rotation of shifts (a select number of days) or a slow rotation of shifts (a select number of weeks). Shift design should take into account individual differences and preferences as far as possible.
- Use forward rotation (morning / afternoon / night).
- Arrange start / finish times of the shift to be convenient for public transport, social and domestic activities.
- Account for travelling time of workers.
- Avoid work arrangements which provide incentives to work excessive hours.

For further information on how to minimise the impact of shiftwork, see WorkSafe Victoria's guide on work-related fatigue for employers:

<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/work-related-fatigue-guide-employers>

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment is a necessity for ensuring safety when working with hazardous materials, but also time spent in PPE can lead to increased stress both physical and mental.

Those workers who are required to wear comprehensive PPE reported that they understand the importance of PPE for safety, but also considered it to be cumbersome, restrictive and hot. Workers also find the eyewear fogging up frustrating, and the poor quality and variable air temperature uncomfortable and more problematic when wearing PPE.



Tips to minimise the impact of PPE:

- PPE does not address the hazard at the source. It is a control measure that works best when used to supplement higher order control measures such as those in the hierarchy of control on page 37.
- PPE should only be used as a last resort, an interim measure or as a back-up.
- PPE must be suitable for the nature of the work or hazard.
- Use good quality and well-designed equipment. It should be an appropriate size and fit for the individual.
- Involve workers when choosing PPE. Having the right PPE that is comfortable, fits appropriately and does not hinder job performance is important – this may mean that some workers need different types of equipment.
- Soft fabrics are more comfortable to wear and breathable fabrics wick moisture away from the body prevent workers from getting chilled when working in cold environments and overheating in hot environments.
- Convenience is key. Equipment must be easy to put on, easily accessible and have the least number of separate components as possible. The more items a worker needs to put on, the more likely they won't.
- Use items that offer multi-hazard protection, reducing the quantity of PPE components.
- Equipment should be stored appropriately and kept in good working order, clean and hygienic.
- Equipment should be regularly repaired or replaced.
- Include additional rest breaks, particularly for work that requires high focus and concentration and/or is subject to extreme temperature conditions.
- Be aware of heat stress. Workers at risk of heat stress should stay cool, hydrated (ice water and ice slurry) and avoid drinking alcohol wherever possible. Heat stress can increase with consecutive days of exposure.
- Consider reducing the layers of clothing under the PPE or using phase change garments / cooling devices.
- Reduce the time spent in PPE for vulnerable workers, those who are older, with pre-existing health conditions, on certain medications or are pregnant.



Psychosocial environment

Just like the physical environment, the psychosocial environment impacts worker wellbeing. Psychosocially safe work environments have a strong positive organisational culture and are actively supportive of individuals and their overall wellbeing, and minimise the impact of work-related factors of their workers [99]. Work-related factors can have a direct impact – positive and negative – on psychological safety or an indirect impact through secondary mental injury caused by experiencing a primary physical injury.



Mind-body connection

Secondary mental injury is a rising trend in Victorian workplaces. This is a mental injury that occurs after a physical injury, exacerbated by chronic physical pain caused to a worker and the time away from their workplace [100].

Understanding the cause of stress that workers experience enables the development of targeted interventions and risk mitigation strategies tailored to address the specific challenges, wants and needs of manufacturing workers. Further information on mitigation strategies is detailed in the hierarchy of control and work-design approach on pages 37 – 40 and the recommendations on pages 44 – 47.

Workplace insights



18% of staff reported either being witness or target of bullying in the workplace in the past three months.

Of those who experience workplace stress:

57% feel stress at least weekly

77% report work-related causes

14% feel stress every day

26% caused by issues with coworkers

Work demands and deadline pressures are one of the leading causes of workplace stress. Transparent communication of whole of workforce deadlines and worker capacities, not only enhances visibility and improves workflow it also builds comradery and an improved sense of team identity, purpose and connection in workers.

Most common reported causes of workplace stress:

- 1 Work demands, tight and competing deadlines, and shiftwork
- 2 Individual and interpersonal conflict
- 3 Pressure from management to meet deadlines

For help with stress, most workers would turn to:

- 1 Family or Partner
- 2 Friend
- 3 Doctor/GP

Signs of stress at work

Early intervention is the key to minimising the impact of workplace stress by addressing the impacting work-related factors. It is important to never make assumptions, but common signs of stress that may be seen include:

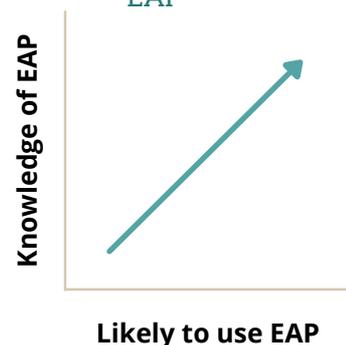


Employee assistance programs (EAPs)

Many workplaces offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to provide workers, and often their families, with free access to confidential, one-on-one counselling and support to help them manage workplace and personal stress.

While EAPs are a great way to ensure workers have access to support services, more than half of workers did not know whether their workplace offered an EAP service. Communicating to employees about the availability of EAPs is essential. Workers who knew of the EAP service available to them were significantly more likely to say they would use one when having a hard time.

54% did not know if their workplace had an EAP





Most common ways workers deal with stress

Workers have a number of positive approaches to stress management, particularly at home. However, the common ‘venting’ and ‘just deal with it’ approach and to stress management is a significant risk and suggests that a number of workers lack the right skills to manage their stress – particularly in the workplace.



Stigma Exists

55% Workers Comfortable speaking about **MENTAL** health with their manager

vs.

78% Workers Comfortable speaking about **PHYSICAL** health with their manager

Workers’ reported attitudes revealed stigma towards mental health. The results show that physical health is twice as likely to be talked about than mental health. While some workers reported attitude reveals a positive awareness of mental health, for the vast majority this is not the case.

Current worker attitudes toward mental health and seeking help are a significant risk. Stigma was reported in two of three workplaces, and is a risk factor leading to negative mental health outcomes. It can make health problems worse and delay or prevent people from seeking help.

The impact of high stigma on workers is seen in their varied attitudes towards seeking help. At the most severe end of the spectrum, almost ten percent of workers indicated that they would not seek help if they are experiencing mental ill-health.

The majority of workers indicate they would not go to their supervisor for help, yet the advice they give to a mate would be to talk to their supervisor. This conflicting result reinforces the essential role supervisors play in supporting workers, but also that alternative support mechanisms for workers needs to be considered.

Of those who experience workplace stress:

49% Already had or intended to speak with their manager

Of those who spoke with their manager:

67% Said their manager took **POSITIVE** action

Greater attention should be paid to workplace relationships and supervisor support, as they are key influencers in creating a thriving and psychosocially safe and productive workplace, and offset the negative impacts of highly demanding work.

Role of supervisors and direct managers on worker wellbeing

A commitment from management is essential to create a supportive, and resilient organisational culture. Supervisors have the greatest influence in terms of putting this commitment into practice within a workplace [101].

Supervisors and direct managers are the key to fostering good workplace relationships and supporting worker wellbeing.



Supervisors and Managers

Supervisor commitment, training and action are the most important factors in achieving and maintaining a psychologically safe workplace.

Supervisor support is one of the strongest influencers of both worker performance and in creating and maintaining a psychosocially safe work environment. Overwhelmingly, workers report that their supervisors have the greatest impact on their day-to-day stress and wellbeing [102].

They also have a central role in preventing work-related stress as they are often in the best position to recognise when a worker might be struggling. Preventing or addressing worker stress at an early stage minimises the likelihood of harm. While the majority of respondents feel safe to raise concerns with co-workers, not everyone feels safe to raise concerns with management.

Almost a third of workers have NOT raised an issue with their supervisor because they:

- **believe nothing will change**
- **thought the supervisor was not interested**
- **felt that it was personal and/or they could handle the problem on their own**
- **perceived lack of confidentiality and/or the supervisor is the problem.**

Supervisor commitment, training and action are the most important factors in achieving and maintaining a psychologically safe workplace. Supervisors who are self-aware, open and approachable are more likely to foster higher levels of inclusiveness, engagement, commitment, performance and wellbeing in their workplaces [103].

In giving feedback it is easy to focus on what went wrong, didn't work or needs to improve. However, it is important to acknowledge what worked, acknowledge difficulties and how they were overcome, and celebrate success in order to avoid generating a constant negative narrative coming from senior leadership.



Coaching and Mentoring

Supervisors need to be equipped with the right skills to be able to confidently address workplace issues, including being able to have difficult and respectful conversations.

Workers have identified the need for personal improvement. They consider access to career coaching or mentoring would be beneficial.



What workers want

Recognition and Reward

Workers want more recognition. It makes workers feel valued by their employer and fosters connection and pride in their workplace and the work they do. This directly impacts employee engagement and performance. But in order to be effective, it has to be the right kind of recognition.

While many appreciated rewards such as lunches and monetary bonuses, most workers want verbal and written recognition. There was a strong sentiment for the importance of "a simple thank you" and "just being told well done".

75% like to be recognised verbally or in writing

24% always felt recognised for the work they do

55% sometimes felt recognised for the work they do

Flexible Work Arrangements

Workers desire flexibility to balance work and home commitments. While many workers already have access to flexible work arrangements, they want greater control over start and finish times, where they work, and to keep meetings online via zoom to enable greater attendance.

78% would/already do access flexible work arrangements

Communication Methods

Face-to-face communication methods are preferred by workers, with 84% reporting they chat with their supervisor or manager when they need information about their workplace. Other preferred methods include staff meetings, chats with co-workers, then emails and noticeboards. Regular communication by telephone, text messages and intranet sites were ranked poorly by workers and are not recommended.

For workplace information:

84% like to chat with supervisors or managers

80% like staff meetings

75% like to be emailed

Physical and Mental Health Programs

Workers want and access to health programs in the workplace including physical health and EAP services.

Leveraging the connection between physical and mental health, these programs could help to create a psychosocially safe, thriving and productive workplace.

64% may or would use an EAP service

47% would/already do use a workplace physical health program

Coaching, Mentoring and Learning Opportunities

There is an appetite for skill development. Workers want more opportunities - both formal education and training and informal opportunities to work in new teams and on new and challenging projects.

Changing work teams not only advances skill development it fosters the creation of new workplace relationships.

55% would/already do access career coaching or mentoring programs

51% would access financial education if they were experiencing financial stress

Thriving work, workers & workplace

The health and wellbeing continuum

Everyone has mental health, in the same way as everyone has physical health. But not everyone has a mental illness.

A helpful way of looking at health and wellbeing is to consider it as a continuum. Under this model, there is no one state for health and wellbeing. It is a continuum [104].

Our physical and mental health is constantly shifting up and down across the continuum, across our lives and even across the day.

The aim is to maximise the time spent at or moving towards a ten, or at 'high wellness & thriving'.

Many people can survive at a five, however this is considered 'false wellness' which overtime is not a sustainable way of being.

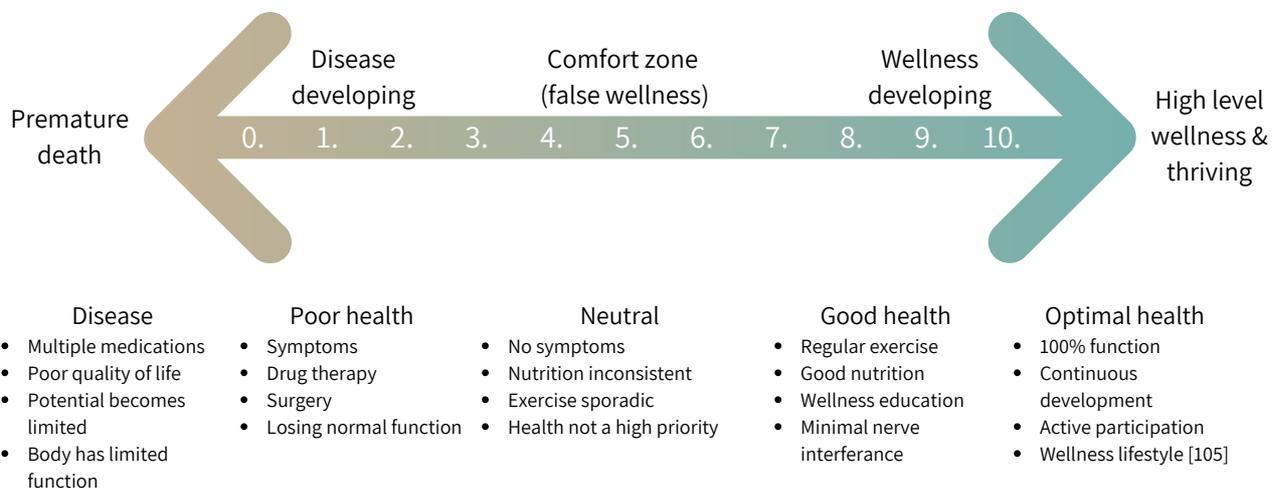
Mental Health vs. Mental Illness

Mental Health

Everyone's general state of wellbeing & state of mind. Something that should be looked after.

Mental Illness

Something that disrupts your mental state & interrupts how you feel, think, communicate & behave.



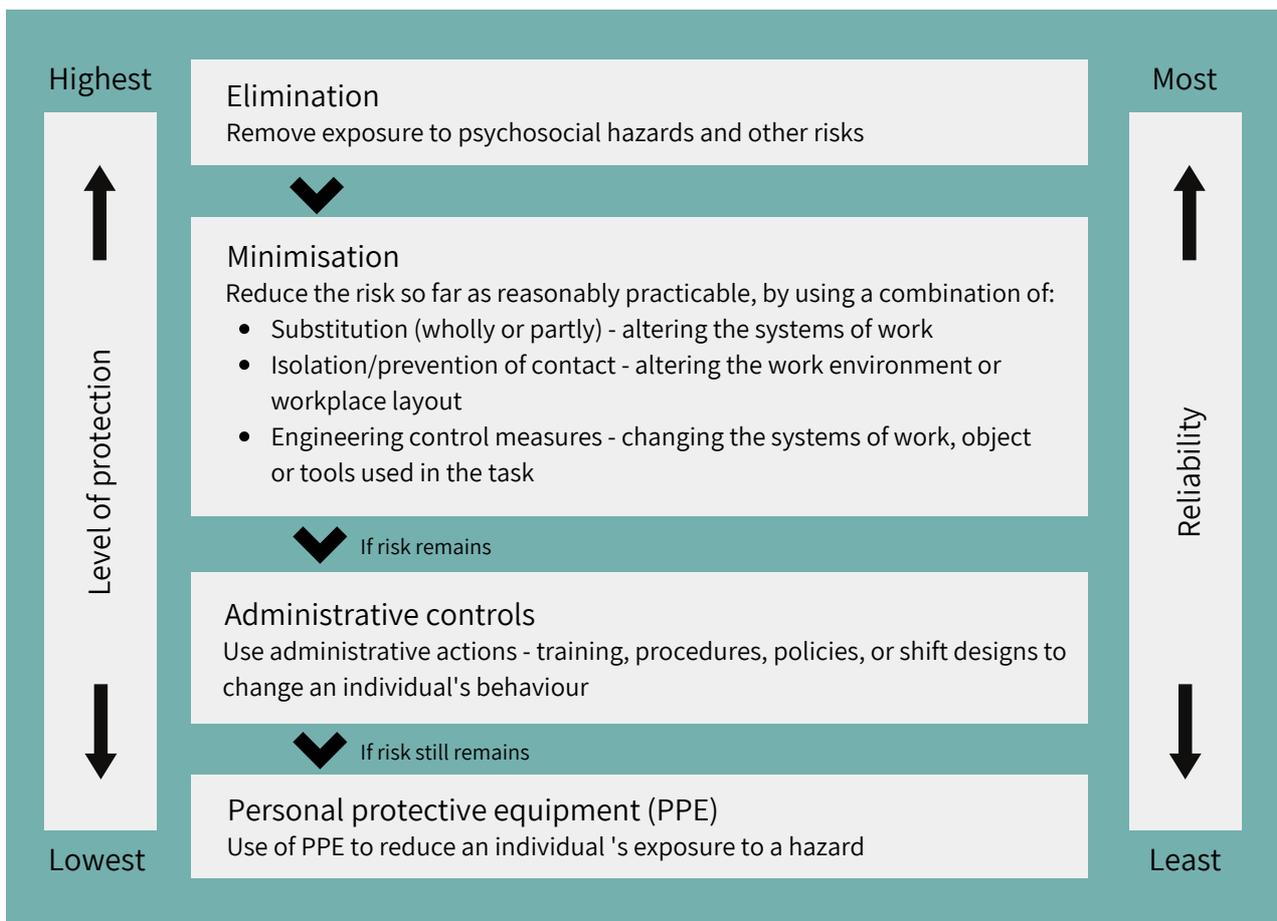
Maintaining good health and high wellness is important for both positive individual outcomes and improved business outcomes.

Workplaces can help their workers maintain a high level of wellness and thrive at work by focussing on preventing workplace stress. Primary level interventions such as a risk management approach together with effective work-design seek to remove, reduce or mitigate work-related hazards, and promote the protective positive work-related attributes. Effective work-design takes an individual 'job' approach to look at all the elements of the work being undertaken to ensure they are optimised, and potential harm minimised.

Risk management: controlling work-related factors

A risk management approach to controlling work-related factors is: a common consultative process used to identify the hazards and control risks, as far as reasonably practicable; and control exposure to factors which might contribute to work-related stress, illness or injury [106].

The risk management process involves the application of the hierarchy of control through the following steps [107]:



Further information about how to take a risk management approach to controlling work-related factors can be found in WorkSafe Victoria's Preventing and managing work-related stress: A guide for employers <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/resources/preventing-and-managing-work-related-stress-guide-employers>

A risk management control approach is a useful first step in managing work-related hazards and should be used in addition to work-design.

Effective work-design leads to the creation of a psychosocially safe and thriving work environment by optimising an individual worker's capabilities to create a work environment where workers are thriving, leading to reduced stress and injury and increased performance outcomes.

Optimising worker wellbeing through work-design

Evidence shows that people are very bad at designing jobs. They design jobs that have little autonomy and task variety.

The aim of effective job design is to minimise or remove job demands, negatives or hazards and enhance the positives in the work, workplace or individual. Effective work-design is a key component in creating a psychosocially safe and thriving workplace [108].

Good work-design makes economic sense.

Good work-design supports primary level change that prevents harm, and is the most effective way to prevent harm. Well-designed work generates worker efficiencies, enables better use of skills, promotes learning, confidence, and creativity, and enhances job performance.

The result? Greater psychosocial safety, high performing teams, increased innovation and creative thinking, increased workplace productivity and profit, and reduced turnover, absenteeism and workers' compensation claims [109].

Psychosocial safety is one of the five key factors necessary to create high performing teams, along with structure and clarity, dependability, meaning, and impact [110].

Highly performing teams do not exist without high workplace psychosocial safety.

The most powerful elements of work-design for the manufacturing sector to support the creation of a psychosocially safe workplace can be categorised under the following work-design framework:

- work
- worker and
- workplace design.

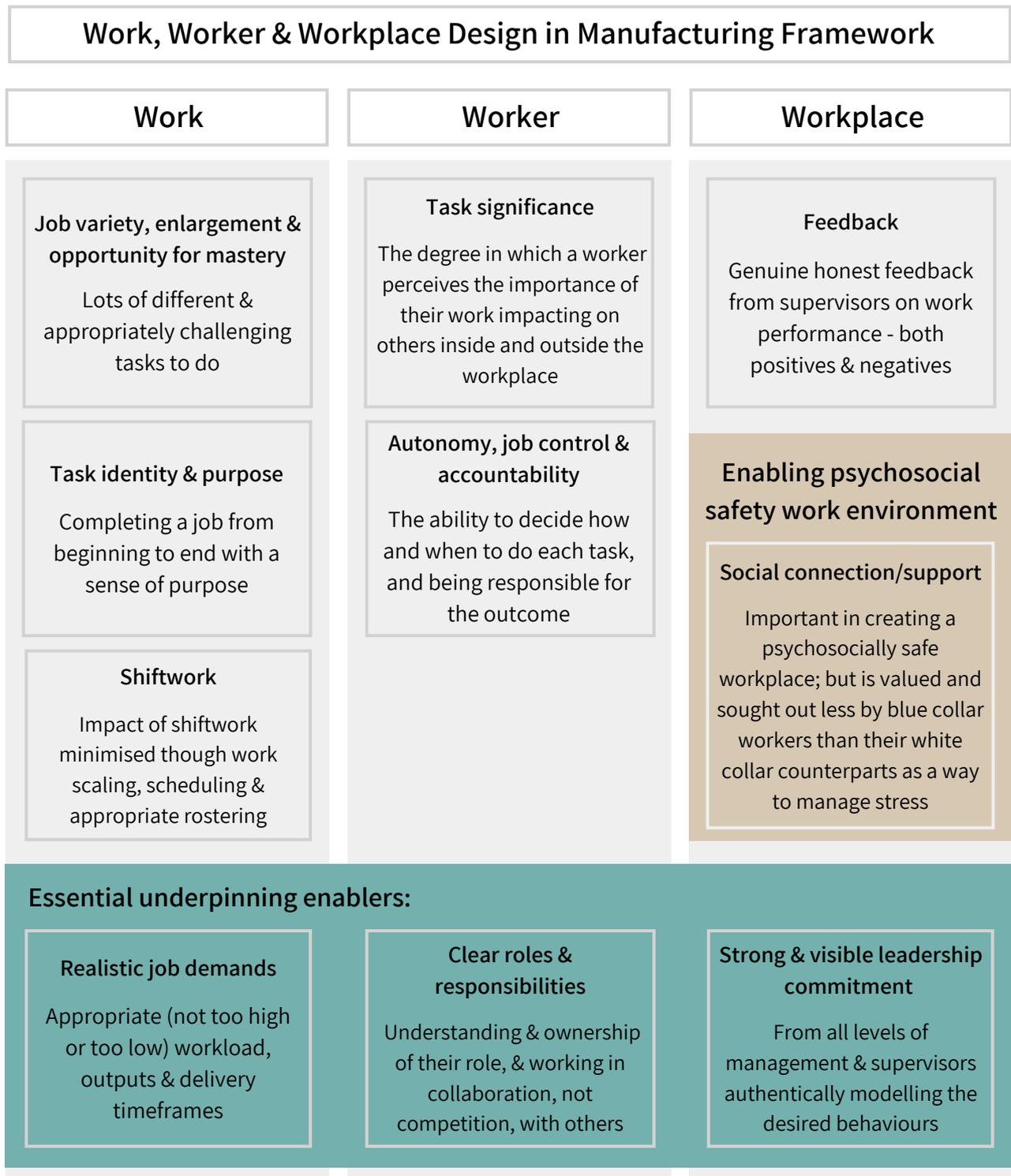
This framework is designed to address the challenges faced by the Victorian defence manufacturing sector, the type of work, how it is done, and for the workers that do it.

The framework has been developed based on insights gained from the participating workplaces through interviews with workplace leaders and worker survey and informed by best practice evidence on work-design and the challenges faced working in male-dominated, high demand, hazardous environments, with a mix of blue-collar, skilled labour and technical workers.



Work, worker & workplace design in manufacturing: a framework

This framework identifies the elements of work that are most impactful to manufacturing workers. Amplifying these elements positively impacts the quality of work and work environment, creating well-designed jobs and a thriving psychosocially safe and productive workplace.



Effective work-design

A psychosocially safe and thriving work environment cannot exist or be created without the key work-design elements of:

- 1 Realistic job demands
- 2 Clear roles and responsibilities
- 3 Strong and visible leadership commitment

These first three elements are core underpinning requirements to enable effective work-design.

4 Social connection and support

Social connection and support from colleagues is often considered a key component of good work-design. However, in manufacturing it has been shown that workers from these industries do not consider social connection as a positive or protective work-related factor or job resource.

The remaining six elements of work-design include:

- 5 Job variety, enlargement & opportunity for mastery
- 6 Task identify & purpose
- 7 Shiftwork
- 8 Task significance
- 9 Autonomy, job control & accountability
- 10 Feedback

These elements contribute to crafting jobs that mitigate the risks to the individual and optimise the positive and protective elements of their job.

The two elements: **autonomy, job control and accountability**, and **feedback** have been shown to have the most impact in the manufacturing context, and should be prioritised to generate early benefits [111].



Workplaces have a responsibility to their workers to provide a work environment that, so far as reasonably practicable, ensures the physical and psychological health and safety of workers in their workplace as outlined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (OHS Act).



Summary & findings

Australian manufacturing is an industry in transition. Victorian manufacturing is an area of economic strength for the nation, the state, and its regional communities.

The sector is operating in an increasingly competitive international environment. Developing nations are building capability. Their reduced labour costs, and proximity to international markets are putting increasing pressure on Australian manufacturing to increase productivity in order to remain internationally competitive.

To remain competitive the sector must capitalise on its most important asset – its workers.

Workplaces that create a psychosocially safe working environments will have greater employee engagement that leads directly to reduced turnover, absenteeism and presenteeism, and workers compensation claims and increased productivity and profitability through improved engagement, teaming, resilience, innovation and problem solving.

Effective work-design is integral to enabling thriving, challenged and engaged workers through work that enhances the positive and protective work-related factors (job resources) and removes, mitigates or reduces the negative work-related hazards (job demands).

Opportunity to thrive

The Victorian manufacturing sector is well positioned to capitalise on the benefits from creating a psychosocially safe and thriving workplace.

Victorian manufacturing has high proportion of SMEs. With their small and dynamic nature, SMEs already have the key attributes of good work-design including high autonomy and task variety. However due to their size, SMEs often do not have the resources (time or money) to be able to invest heavily in workplace initiatives [112]. SMEs are also vulnerable to additional workplace risks due to job insecurity, and importantly emotional load from supervisors that is felt by workers in smaller teams [113].

		LARGE ORGANISATIONS (100+ WORKERS)	
ROI ON MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING INITIATIVES	SMEs		FOR EVERY \$1.00 SPENT [114].
	\$3.50	\$2.90	

The most critical success factor in seeing benefits from wellbeing initiatives is employee participation. For larger workplaces, focusing on a team or workgroup basis will lead to greater benefits [115].



Manufacturing faces a number of challenges in relation to health and wellbeing. As a historically male-dominated industry stigma towards mental health is evident, combined with an ageing workforce. The sector is facing an impending skills shortage as the pipeline of workers dwindles. Decreased numbers of young and migrant workers places the existing manufacturing workforce under increased pressure to maintain productivity, increasing the risk of stress that can lead to mental or physical injury.

Commitment and action from leadership is required to address these challenges. By creating a psychosocially safe and thriving workplace, workers will be:

- more engaged
- less likely to leave
- more productive
- more innovative
- less likely to suffer an injury.

The flow-on impact for workplaces is significant with higher retention, increased team performance and productivity delivering improved business outcomes.

Addressing the work-related factors that impact on worker wellbeing is a key component of creating a psychosocially safe and thriving workplace. This is done through good work-design that seeks to remove or minimise work-related hazards (job demands) and amplify the positive protective work-related factors (job resources).

Points of concern for the Victorian manufacturing sector are:

- the persistence of stigma
- reported high levels of workplace stress
- poor individual awareness of how to effectively manage stress both inside and outside of work
- the role of supervisors/direct managers.

A key area of focus for workplaces should be on the role of the supervisor. Supervisors are the biggest influencer of worker performance and wellbeing. They are the most crucial part of creating a psychosocially safe, thriving and high performing workplace. Supervisors have a significant responsibility as they must deliver work outcomes, while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their workers. They are also most likely to be able to identify when a worker is struggling and have the ability to manage their work.

The importance of supervisors cannot be overstated – they are the voice of the workplace, setting the tone, vision and culture. Workplace relationships with supervisors and/or management is the most significant area of risk for many workplaces. Focussed effort should be dedicated to improving these relationships by ensuring supervisors have the skills they need to lead diverse teams to meet deadlines in complex and demanding physical environments.

Stigma towards mental health and wellbeing remains an issue across the manufacturing sector. Workers are unlikely to talk about their mental health generally. This inhibits help seeking behaviour and impacts the worker and workplace productivity. Generic awareness raising activities are not recommended as the solution to addressing stigma in manufacturing workers. Insights gained from the participating workplaces show that workers have no interest in lunchtime lectures, or information packs. Specific tailored or individual programs may be of more benefit to select at risk workers.

Workplaces with a greater gender balance demonstrated less stigma towards mental health.

The key to reducing stigma is for positive conversations about mental health and wellbeing to become normalised. Supervisors are key to modelling positive health and wellbeing behaviours and supporting workers to do the same.

Highly demanding work, competing and tight deadlines add to workplace stress. It is not practical to remove all sources of stress, and not all stress is bad for us. The concern for the sector is in the frequency of stress and the reported poor individual awareness of how to manage stress. A frequently reported cause of workplace stress stems from the relationship between workers and their supervisors. Workplace relationships are essential in creating a psychosocially safe thriving workplace and to building high performing teams [116].

Workplaces should seek to address points of workplace stress through good work-design, and a focus on improved relationships with supervisors. A focus on improving workplace stress will help to address the points of concern while breaking down the barriers of stigma towards mental health. The notion of 'stress' can be an easier and historically more socially acceptable way to articulate the impact of work on wellbeing.



Areas for future action

Areas for further attention and improvement form the recommendations below. These have been developed in response to insights gained through interviews with workplace leaders and a survey of manufacturing workers. The recommendations are underpinned by the relevant literature and best practice evidence on psychosocial safety, work-design and the challenges faced working in male-dominated, high demand, hazardous environments, with a mix of blue-collar, skilled labour and technical workers.

Workplace recommendations

1. Improved communication between management team and workers

Where workers perceive the management style as directive or "autocratic adversarial" they may feel disempowered and disengaged. This can result in low levels of trust and increased psychosocial risk to workers.

Work-related factors: workplace relationships, organisational justice, support

- Ensure there are multiple different and confidential channels (methods and people) for raising issues within the workplace. For example, HR, supervisor feedback, peer support.
- Acknowledge concerns raised by workers going forward and commit to addressing them, through policies, procedures and visible action.
- Commit to developing positive communication skills in the management team.
- Implement a clear policy that specifically addresses acceptable workplace conduct in terms of gossip and confidentiality, including actions for those who are found to be in breach of the policy; and communicate this across all workers and management.

2. Improved workplace relationships between workers and their supervisor / direct manager

The relationship between a worker and their supervisor is the strongest influencer of both worker performance and in creating and maintaining a psychosocially safe and thriving work environment. Where workers perceive there to be disrespectful behaviour from supervisors and/or management this can damage workplace relationships and lead to a decline in psychosocial safety and workplace productivity.

Work-related factors: workplace relationships, organisational justice, support

- Raise supervisors awareness of the role of power dynamics in workplace conversations and emphasise the need for conversations to involve participatory agreement with workers.
- Develop positive and participatory communication skills of supervisors.
- Develop emotional intelligence and leadership skills of supervisors.
- Acknowledge concerns raised by workers going forward and visibly commit to addressing them, through policies, procedures and visible action.

3. Reduce pressure from competing deadlines

Workers find it challenging to manage the pressure from competing deadlines.

Work-related factors: workplace relationships, job demands, job control, role clarity, support

- Increase visibility on whole-of-workforce deadlines and worker capacities.
- Encourage and support team discussions on project deadlines and workflow, bringing workers in to give them more power and input.
- Develop workforce strategies for preventing and managing pressure and timelines.

4. Recognise and reduce the administration burden

Workers want more time on the tools and less on administrative tasks.

Work-related factors: job demands, job control

- Acknowledge the burden of administration openly with staff.
- Implement a cycle of review for administration processes to ensure continued business improvement. Involve workers in improving the administration burden and workflow process.

5. Ensure consistent equitable verbal recognition of value

Reward and recognition are essential to creating a psychosocially safe workplace. Workers value genuine verbal recognition just as much as financial reward.

Work-related factors: reward & recognition, workplace relationships, organisational justice

- Recognise and celebrate personal and professional achievements (big and small).
- Balance positive and negative feedback. For example, acknowledge difficulties and how they were overcome, and acknowledge when things worked well and why.
- Foster a work environment characterised by respect, equity, fairness and justice supported by policies, procedures and visible action.

6. Empower supervisors as wellbeing champions

Supervisors are the most important influencer of worker health and wellbeing

Work-related factors: workplace relationships, support

- Formalise wellbeing responsibilities as part of annual performance reviews with key performance indicators (KPIs), and consider a 360 degree review for all supervisors and leaders.
- Provide access to training for supervisors and leaders in mental health and wellbeing, having difficult conversations, and in managing performance.
- Foster the development of inclusive and adaptive leaders with high emotional intelligence, particularly empathy, who encourage others to learn from failure. Leaders that aid in discovery and learning, rather than providing solutions, can help create positive behaviour change and increase psychosocial safety.

7. Embrace the ‘mini break’

Workers reveal they most like to de-stress at work by taking time out. Despite best efforts to prevent stress, when it does occur it needs to be addressed to prevent future potential harm.

Work-related factors: job control, support, fatigue

- Supervisors and management modelling behaviours is the most effective way to support uptake by workers.
- Normalise and encourage workers to regularly take ‘time out’ when needed. Expand on existing positive shared environments or consider other experiences such as a quiet room, games room, community garden, walking track, outdoor patio, gym, exercise equipment or program.
- Address reoccurring points of stress through effective work-design.

8. Optimise the physical work environment

The physical work environment impacts on physical and psychosocial safety and workplace efficiencies. Workers reveal that working with old equipment in an untidy, disorganised environment is frustrating and causes them stress.

Work-related factors: environmental conditions, manual & repetitive handling, slips, trips & falls

- Ensure your workplace meets the employer responsibilities for a safe work environment under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004.
- Acknowledge limitations in equipment and keep workers apprised of forward procurement plans for future upgrades.
- Involve the workforce in identifying and prioritising upgrades.
- Reinvigorate interest in maintaining the cleanliness and organisation of the workplace. Clarify lines of responsibility for workplace cleanliness and upkeep and consider ways to enhance worker pride in their workplace setting.

9. Explore ways to minimise the impact of shiftwork

Shiftwork is a significant point of stress for workers, impacting on their quality of life, from feelings of perpetual jet lag and overall high risk of fatigue.

Work-related factors: job demand, shiftwork, fatigue

- Engage your workers in consultation over shiftwork structures, and consider trialling alternative schemes.
- Revisit the shiftwork structure with an emphasis on minimising the impact of night rostering, rotation and duration, and type of work undertaken.
- Minimise the risk of fatigue by increasing breaks for night shifts and first day from coming off from night shift; organise work to ensure that hazardous jobs do not occur in the high-risk time of early morning or late afternoon; forward rotation scheduling; ensure shifts do not exceed 12 hours and 48 hours per week. Further information on prevention and control can be accessed here: <https://content.api.worksafe.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/ISBN-Work-related-fatigue-guide-for-employers-2020-08.pdf>

10. Maximise wellbeing and performance through well-designed jobs

Improve individual wellbeing and performance by embedding the work, worker and workplace design in manufacturing framework approach to work-design.

Work-related factors: workplace relationships, reward & recognition, job demands, job control, role clarity, support

- Integrate continuous improvement to how work is done into workers' annual performance reviews. Workers and their supervisors to review the role with both parties being active in suggesting potential improvements with a focus on minimising the impact of work-related factors (pages 37-40).
- Review the current roles with the lens of the work, worker and workplace design in manufacturing framework outlined on page 39. Initial effort should be focussed on establishing the four underpinning elements of work-design: strong and visible commitment from leadership, realistic job demands, clear roles and responsibilities, and social connection and support. Then amplifying where appropriate the remaining six-elements of work-design; prioritising the most impactful elements of feedback and autonomy, job control and accountability to generate early benefits. Work-design must be undertaken as a participatory process of co-design involving workers. Work-design that is technically good but has not involved the workers in the process fails to deliver a positive impact. Participatory involvement of workers is key to successful change and positive and sustained outcomes.

11. Regular communication and consultation

Regular communication with workers and teams is key to creating trust, building strong supportive and psychosocially safe thriving workplace relationships.

Work-related factors: change management, workplace relationships, support

- Be human, and authentic. Share what you can about the business.
- Have regular one-on-one meetings with your staff, find a rhythm that works for you, it could be 15 minutes a week or an hour a month. This provides a time for workers to raise matters with you that affect them, work and personal. It is essential to building strong working relationships. Try not to cancel these meetings. Doing so sends a poor message that you do not value your worker.
- Involve workers early in discussions about change and/or business improvement, be genuine in seeking their input.
- Once a decision has been made, commit to action, communicate it, and hold leaders to account.
- Keep workers informed of progress and planned next steps, including identifying opportunities for future consultation and co-design with workers.

Further information about how to undertake consultation can be accessed here:

<https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/consultation>

Key areas for future action

- 1 Leadership commitment and action is essential to create a psychosocially safe workplace.
- 2 Supervisors / direct managers are the key. They are the biggest influencer of worker wellbeing. Invest in upskilling your supervisors' positive participation communication skills, emotional intelligence, and leadership skills.
- 3 Focus on causes of workplace stress: identify and address areas of work that cause worker stress.
- 4 Be consultative: ask workers what is and isn't working in relation to what is causing stress in their work or workplace. Workers that are involved in delivering solutions leads to more effective implementation in the short and long term.
- 5 Keep wellbeing on the agenda – keep talking about it, making it a natural part of all meetings. Include both the stressors and also the positives (such as a shout out to a team member who lent a hand).
- 6 Lead by example – leaders should model good wellbeing behaviours including, taking a break, managing their stress, looking after their health, avoiding overtime and working out of hours.
- 7 Meet regularly one-on-one with your workers, providing them with an opportunity to talk to you, it can be 15 minutes a week or an hour a month – find a rhythm that suits you both and don't make a habit of cancelling as it sends the message that you are not interested in them.
- 8 Give regular genuine verbal feedback. Reward and recognition are crucial to showing workers that you value them.
- 9 Design good, interesting and challenging jobs – using the work, worker and workplace design in manufacturing framework and involve workers in designing rewarding and productive jobs.
- 10 Keep an eye on the workplace culture – identify issues and risks, implement new actions to address areas of concern, and review regularly, 3, 6 and 12 months. If something doesn't work – try a new approach – don't force it.
- 11 Structure shifts to reduce fatigue. Schedule challenging tasks out of the dangerous low focus times of late afternoon and early morning. For intensive work, physically and mentally demanding, high concentration or in difficult environmental conditions such as the peak of summer, schedule additional breaks and have a designated quiet place for workers to go.
- 12 Support the development of workplace social connections. Lean into the culture, strengths and diversity of your workplace. Social activities should be held during work time, and volunteering, particularly physical work, is a good option for male-dominated work environments.



Take action today to prevent workm8te stress and physical and mental harm.

We've developed No Stress M8 - a free online toolbox designed by you, for you.

No Stress M8 uses a step-by-step approach to support your supervisors and leaders to create a thriving, psychosocially safe, and productive workplace.

No Stress M8

REDUCING WORKPLACE STRESS FOR YOUR M8TES

Your most important tool for a thriving workforce



No Stress M8 is a tool designed to support you.

So, you can capitalise on your most important asset – your workers.

Leadership commitment and action is essential to create a stress free, safe and productive workplace with supervisors and direct managers #1 influence of worker wellbeing and productivity.

We know your supervisors are busy, and their time is precious. That is why we have developed the No Stress M8 toolbox. This free online toolbox has been co-designed by the sector and informed by best-practice research to create simple actions, tools and recourses that deliver big impacts - that are not time or resource intensive to support you, your supervisors and your workm8tes.

The heart of the No Stress M8 toolbox is its three free interactive online surveys.



Worker
Wellbeing
Survey



Workplace
Risk
Assessment



Job Design
Evaluation

These surveys give you a snapshot of how your workplace, teams and workers are going and deliver you prioritised tailored action plans designed specifically for the manufacturing sector to tackle the causes of work-related stress and improve workplace psychosocial safety and productivity.

No Stress M8 has been developed to prevent workm8te stress and physical and mental harm.

Manufacturing workplaces are under increasing pressure to be productive and profitable.

This pressure is on your m8tes. No Stress M8 highlights the relationship between work-related stress and mental and physical injury. It identifies the common causes of work-related stress in your workers, and the best actions leaders can take to prevent it.

No Stress M8 is a toolbox for you, so that you can take action to stop stress before it happens.

So, no M8 has to go home from work stressed.

NoStressMate.com.au



Appendix

Work-related factors in detail

Low job control

Low job control is where workers have little control or influence over aspects of their work environment, as well as make decisions about their work tasks, how or when their work is done, and freedom from supervision. Situations that can lead to low levels of job control can include:

- micromanaging workers
- work that is machine or computer-based
- work that is tightly managed or highly pre-determined and controlled
- individual not team based production targets
- workers who have little say in the way they do their work, when they can take breaks, or change tasks
- lack of opportunities to develop new skills
- work that requires permission or sign-off before progressing with routine tasks
- not being provided with access to tools, resources or information needed to carry out the job
- workers are not involved in decisions that affect them or their clients

High mental/cognitive job demands

High and low job demands occurs when sustained high or low mental effort is required to do the job.

Jobs with high cognitive demands require very high levels of concentration or sustained attention over time. High-demand tasks or jobs might include the following examples:

- long work hours and shift work leading to higher risk of fatigue
- high workloads, for example, too much to do, too many clients, fast work pace or significant time pressure
- work that is beyond the worker's capabilities or training
- analysing complex/detailed information or doing detailed assembly work requiring high concentration
- making complex decisions in situations with no guidelines or procedures.
- doing complex calculations, such as in engineering
- needing to quickly evaluate complex situations, such as scheduling, competing and conflicting deadlines and production management

High physical job demands

High and low job demands occurs when sustained high or low physical effort is required to do the job.

Jobs with high physical demands require workers to use their body to generate, restrain or absorb forces and movements or expend high levels of energy. The risk of harm increases when physical activity must be completed in a tight timeframe or in difficult environmental conditions. High-demand tasks or jobs might include the following examples:

- high force and sustained exertion
- repetitive movement or sustaining uncomfortable body positions
- long work hours and shiftwork
- high workloads, for example, too much to do, fast work pace or significant time pressure
- frequently working in unpleasant or hazardous conditions. For example, poor environmental conditions such as extreme temperatures or noise, around hazardous chemicals or dangerous equipment
- physical work while wearing personal protective equipment (PPE)

High emotional job demands

High and low job demands occurs when sustained high or low emotional effort is required to do the job.

Emotional demand occurs when workers are confronted with emotionally taxing, upsetting, or disturbing situations inherent in the job that impact on them personally. Emotionally demanding work can also be those in which workers are exposed to emotionally distressing or sensitive situations, and might include the following examples:

- engaging in conflict with customers, clients or co-workers
- emotional effort responding to distressing situations or distressed or aggressive clients or co-workers.
- delivering 'bad news' to customers, clients or co-workers, engaging in performance conversations with underperforming workers
- undertaking disciplinary processes
- exposure to traumatic events or work-related violence. For example, workplace accident and/or injury.



Low job demands

Low-demand tasks or jobs might include jobs where there is:

- too little to do
- little mental stimulation or problem solving
- highly repetitive or monotonous tasks which require low levels of thought processing and little variety; including picking and packing products and monitoring production lines
- long periods of attention looking for infrequent events, such as in monitoring or quality control

Low demand jobs can lead to boredom or 'bore-out' a growing workplace trend that can lead to burnout and illness.

Boredom experienced in the workplace is shown to be associated with various negative consequences for the:

- worker - demotivation, anxiety and sadness that can lead to strong feelings of self-deprecation, depression, and even physical illness [117];
- workplace - low effort and performance, absenteeism, presenteeism, counterproductive work behaviour, and high turnover [118].

Low role clarity

Low role clarity can lead to confusion about what work activities a worker should be undertaking, their responsibilities and what they are required to deliver.

Low role clarity involves jobs where there is:

- uncertainty about job responsibilities
- unclear, ambiguous or frequently changing expectations, standards or tasks
- being asked to undertake tasks that are not typically a responsibility of the position
- lack of clarity about the priorities for individuals, teams and work units including what tasks need to be completed, who is responsible for the tasks and timeframes for completion
- withholding of relevant information
- conflicting job roles, responsibilities, or expectations, such as a worker is told one job is a priority, but another manager disagrees, or frequently changing priorities
- allocation of the same task to two different workers, resulting in duplication of effort
- multiple reporting lines or supervisors
- changing position descriptions and/or areas of responsibility without consultation

Poor support

Support refers to the practical assistance and emotional support that managers or co-workers provide on a day-to-day basis.

Poor support involves tasks or jobs where workers have inadequate:

- emotional or practical support from supervisors and co-workers
- information or training to support their work performance
- tools, equipment and resources to do the job, including sharing resources

Poor workplace relationships

Workplace relationships can positively or negatively affect the way a worker feels. Wherever groups of people work together, it's likely that some conflict will arise from time to time. Poor workplace relationships occur in jobs where there is:

- workplace bullying, aggression, harassment, sexual harassment and gendered violence, discrimination or other unreasonable behaviour by co-workers, supervisors or clients
- inappropriate or personal remarks or jokes
- poor relationships between workers and their managers, supervisors, co-workers and clients or others the worker has to interact with
- conflict between workers and their managers, supervisors or co-workers, exacerbated if managers are reluctant to deal with inappropriate behaviours
- inequality in the treatment of workers, this could be personal or work-related discussions, meetings and activities
- perceptions that co-workers are not pulling their weight
- lack of fairness and equity in dealing with organisational issues or where performance issues are poorly managed

Poor organisational change management

Poor organisational change management occurs in workplaces where there is not enough:

- consideration of the potential health, safety and performance impacts during downsizing or relocations or the introduction of new technology and production processes
- consultation and communication with key stakeholders and workers about major changes
- practical support for workers during transition time

Low recognition and reward

Recognition and reward refers to the acknowledgement provided to workers resulting in increased feelings of confidence, pride, and feeling valued for work contributions. Low recognition and reward occurs in jobs where:

- there is a lack of positive and meaningful feedback
- there is an imbalance between workers' efforts and formal and informal recognition and rewards
- there is a lack of opportunity for skills development
- skills and experience are under-used
- there is uncertainty about or frequent changes to tasks and work standards
- important task information is not available to the employee
- there are conflicting job roles, responsibilities or expectations. For example, an employee is told one job is a priority but another manager disagrees
- others taking credit for work they did not contribute to
- providing recognition or acknowledgement that is not meaningful or not attributed to specific situations

Poor organisational justice

Organisational justice refers to workers' perceptions of fairness at work – both procedural and relational. Poor organisational justice occurs in workplaces where there is:

- the belief that rules do not apply
- inadequate or inconsistent application of policies and procedures
- excluding workers from consultation and decision-making
- lack of transparency – feeling that they are 'kept in the dark'
- unfairness or bias in decisions about allocation of resources and work
- discrimination, harassment and inequitable treatment of workers
- bias, impartiality, favouritism and nepotism
- failing to take appropriate action to address inappropriate behaviour, poor performance or misconduct

Poor environmental conditions

Poor environmental conditions involve exposure to poor-quality or hazardous working environments.

Examples include:

- hazardous manual handling
- poor air quality
- high noise levels
- extreme temperatures
- vibrations, whole body or localised
- crowded working areas
- untidy or cluttered workspaces
- working near unsafe machinery
- poor quality or broken equipment
- poor quality or hard to access amenities, facilities and work areas

Fatigue

Fatigue is more than feeling tired. It is mental and physical exhaustion that reduces your ability to work safely and effectively. Generally, both work and non-work factors can lead to fatigue. Fatigue can be caused by:

- long periods or intense levels of mental or physical activity
- physically demanding or monotonous work
- mentally or emotionally demanding work
- hot, cold or noisy workplaces
- shift and night work
- excessively long shifts
- not enough time to recover between shifts
- long commuting times and travelling for work
- poor sleeping and other lifestyle factors

The long-term physical health effects of fatigue can include high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and depression.

Fatigue can increase the likelihood of incidents and injuries in the workplace, particularly when doing safety critical tasks where significant consequences may arise if errors occur.

Fatigue can result in reduced productivity and an increase in near misses, incidents and injuries, even when the signs of fatigue may not be obvious.

Being fatigued can result in a low mood and shortened temper which can negatively impact on workplace relationships.

Shiftwork

Shift workers and former shift workers show more signs of ill-health than people on fixed day work. They experience a greater likelihood of fatigue, sleepiness, gastro-intestinal issues, depression and other mental health conditions.

A worker's level of tiredness increases with the number of hours worked pronounced between two and six in the morning [122].

Many shift workers actually fall asleep briefly while working. These 'microsleeps' may last from seconds to three minutes and some shift workers may not be aware that they have nodded off.

Increased feelings of fatigue and sleepiness at work may make it difficult for workers to maintain concentration. This has implications for workplace safety, as judgement is impaired and response time slowed.

For shift workers, the impact of one sleepless night can be as great a workplace hazard as someone who has been drinking alcohol.

Remote and isolated work

Remote work is work at locations where access to resources and communications is difficult and travel times might be lengthy.

Isolated work is where there are no or few other people around or where access to help from others, especially in an emergency, might be difficult.

Hazardous considerations for remote or isolated work include:

- limited access to communication devices
- no regular contact with other workers or supervisors
- lengthy periods of time away from others or working in isolation
- work in locations where there is difficulty in immediate rescue or attendance of emergency services
- failure to consider the potential work, health and safety and performance impacts during downsizing or relocations
- where high risk activities are involved

Manual or repetitive handling

Manual handling is work where you have to lift, lower, push, pull, carry or move something. Manual handling injuries are often complex and not caused by one isolated factor. Most jobs involve carrying out some type of manual tasks, but not all of them are hazardous.

A manual task becomes hazardous when one or more of the following risk factors are present:

- repetitive or sustained force
- high or sudden force
- repetitive movement
- sustained or awkward posture
- vibrations, whole body or localised

10,939 people reported manual or repetitive handling injuries in Victoria in 2019. This figure has been relatively stable for the last 5 years, and lower than the 10 year average [119].

Slips, trips & falls

Slips, trips and falls are the second most common cause of serious injuries at work after hazardous manual tasks, with both contributing to musculoskeletal disorders (MSD).

In addition to hazards in the physical environment / workplace, individual factors such as workload and time management, rushing around, fatigue, stress, and workers with disabilities or special needs can also contribute to the likelihood of an incident occurring.

The following factors can contribute to the risk of slips, trips and falls. It is usually a combination of these factors that create the risk:

- contaminants - water, oil or grease, dust, metal shavings, plastic bags or off-cuts
- types of floor surfaces
- cleanliness
- obstacles and other hazards - uneven flooring or cluttered walkways with low obstacles which are not easily visible or noticed
- poor lighting
- poor visibility of other people
- unsuitable footwear

11,465 people were injured by slip, trip, fall or being hit by a moving object in Victoria in 2019. This figure has been relatively stable for the last 10 years [120].

Hazardous materials

Hazardous chemicals are substances, mixtures and articles that can pose a significant risk to health and safety if not managed correctly. They may have health hazards, physical hazards or both.

Examples of chemicals that can cause adverse health effects include:

- toxic chemicals
- chemicals that cause skin damage
- carcinogens

Examples of chemicals that can immediately injure people or damage property include:

- flammable liquids
- compressed gasses
- explosives

Working with hazardous materials requires necessary control measures to limit exposure and minimise risk, where additional care, concentration and individual responsibility is needed. This increases the worker's exposure to stress by placing the working in a situation of inherently higher risk.

Violent or traumatic events

A violent or traumatic workplace event is a workplace incident which exposes a worker to abuse, the threat of harm or actual harm and causes fear and distress which can lead to work-related stress and physical injury.

Substance abuse/misuse

Substance abuse in the workplace compromises health and safety and impacts work performance. Substance use impairs a worker's alertness, concentration and reflexes which can be dangerous for those who operate machinery and other heavy equipment, increasing the likelihood of a serious workplace accident in an otherwise preventable situation.

The culture of the workplace can play a large role in whether drinking and drug use are accepted and encouraged or discouraged and inhibited. Part of this culture can depend on the gender mix of workers. Substance abuse is predominately a greater risk in male dominated workplaces.

Alcohol and drugs misuse cause Australians to 11.5 million sick days annually resulting in a \$3 billion cost to the Australian economy.

A study of the economic impact of substance abuse treatment found significant improvements in job-related performance:

- 91% decrease in absenteeism
- 88% decrease in problems with supervisors
- 93% decrease in mistakes in work
- 97% decrease in on-the-job injuries [121].





Thank you

Rapid Context would like to thank our participating workplaces for their commitment to creating a thriving and psychosocially safe workplace.

The 4WM Project: Work, Worker and Workplace Wellbeing in Manufacturing is funded under WorkSafe Victoria's WorkWell Mental Health Improvement Fund. This project seeks to address the work-related factors that impact worker physical and mental injury in the workplace.

This report is part of phase one of the project, developing the evidence base on Victorian defence manufacturing workers' experiences and perceptions. Phase two has converted these insights into a suite of free online evidence-based resources No Stress M8 designed specifically to address the challenges faced by workers in the Victorian defence manufacturing sector.



No Stress M8 is a free online toolbox has been designed by the sector and informed by best-practice research to create simple actions, tools and recourses that deliver big impacts - that are not time or resource intensive to support you and your workers.

[NoStressMate.com.au](https://www.nostressmate.com.au)

Stay up to date with the project at <https://www.rapidcontext.com.au/4wm>

Further information and enquiries contact:
enquiries@rapidcontext.com.au

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