

A woman with curly hair, wearing a dark blazer over a light shirt and dark trousers, is lifting a heavy barbell with both hands above her head. She is standing on a paved road in a desert landscape with mountains in the background. A large red circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title text.

# THE LEADERS LAB 2022

## WORKPLACE REPORT

### THE STATE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY IN AUSTRALIAN WORKPLACES

**THEleaderslab**  
FROM THE MICHELLEMCQUAID GROUP

**AHRI**  
Australian HR Institute

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# THE CHANGING LEADERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Over the last decade as workplace expectations have increased, execution has become increasingly complex, and innovation has never been more critical to sustained success. There is no doubt that our requirements of leaders has become increasingly demanding and difficult. Professor Linda Hill's longitudinal research (HBR, 2022) has found that in this new world, the job of leaders is no longer about getting others to follow them into the future; instead, it requires them to invite others to co-create the future with them.

Studies show that the most successful leaders connect the people they depend on around a shared purpose and common values, as they support bottom-up creativity, initiative, and improvisation while establishing structures, performance metrics, and guardrails to minimise outsized risk-taking and keep everyone aligned. Instead of being at the front of the stage, showing others the way, these leaders set the stage and create an environment in which others are willing and able to do the hard work of co-creation.

Professor Hill notes that it is a daily feat that requires emotional resilience, courage, and patience as leaders try to amplify diversity of thought and navigate potential conflict, experiment and iterate a path forward with many false starts and missteps along the way, and hold options open so that even opposing ideas can be integrated in creative and useful ways.

Add to this the challenge of helping their teams to navigate a global pandemic, a worldwide environmental crisis, unpredictable political upheaval, overdue racial reckoning, rising inflation and the widespread emergence of hybrid work arrangements, and it is easy to understand why many leaders have felt their responsibilities are often overwhelming. So when SafeWork Australia recently updated the model of Work Health and Safety laws to include identifying and doing “everything reasonably practical” to deal with psychosocial risks – aspects of work such as lack of job clarity, low levels of control for work, unreasonable job demands, inadequate support, low recognition and reward that have the potential to cause psychological harm to team members – we set out to research how leaders could meet these additional responsibilities with minimum effort and maximum impact.

The answers outlined in this new report will be unexpected for many Australian workplaces.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## WHEN IT COMES TO WORKPLACE SAFETY, CARE BEATS COMPLIANCE

While many workplaces are training leaders to ensure they are compliant when it comes to managing psychosocial risks, fewer workplaces are leveraging changes in health and safety standards as an opportunity to build on their leaders' strengths and improve their cultures of care. And yet, when leaders often express care for their team members we have found that levels of wellbeing, job satisfaction, performance and safety are all more likely to be higher.

*Are you settling for compliance or helping your leaders often express care when it comes to improving safety in your workplace?*



## THE SILENT HAZARD = THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE GAP

The good news is most leaders are trying to provide the support their team members need to stay safe. The bad news is that there is a significant employee experience gap between the support leaders say they are providing and the hazards team members say they are facing. To close the gap, leaders need to more explicitly communicate about their efforts to care for team members and regularly check-in with team members about the impact of these actions and the hazards they may still be experiencing. It is also worth noting that team members who reported higher levels of psychological safety (they felt safe to bring up problems and talk about mistakes) were significantly less likely to report that they often faced any of the workplace psychosocial hazards, suggesting this may be a pathway to lower the frequency of experience across the hazards.

*How are you identifying and doing “everything reasonably practical” to help your leaders close any experience gaps and minimise the risks of psychosocial hazards in your workplace? How are you helping your leaders build psychological safety for your team members?*





## THE SIMPLE WAYS BUSY LEADERS CAN OFTEN EXPRESS CARE

When leaders often expressed genuine CARE (Compassion, Appreciation, Responsibility, Emotional Wisdom) for their team, levels of engagement, performance, wellbeing, and safety all improved significantly. By integrating CARE behaviours into their existing Routines (their team processes), Rituals (their team practices), Rules (workplace policies) and Role Modelling (their own behaviours) leaders can create a culture of CARE without adding one more thing to their to-do list.

*How are your leaders leveraging existing routines, rituals, rules and role modelling opportunities to often express CARE for their team members?*

# FROM THE AUSTRALIAN HR INSTITUTE

AHRI is delighted to partner once again with The Leaders Lab on this important research that provides unique insights into the impact of a caring leadership style on employee performance. There are two clear conclusions that emerge from the research that will be of significant interest to HR professionals.

The first is that HR professionals who promote compassion and appreciation as key components their leadership are right to make these a priority. This is because the survey findings show a positive correlation between leaders that display a caring attitude and the performance of individuals, teams and the workplace as a whole. Indeed, this research adds to the growing body of evidence that demonstrates such a relationship. It is especially interesting to note that as many as three in ten employees who are located at the physical office report that they do not feel cared for by their employer. One of the possible explanations is a lack of choice over where employees work. One way of overcoming this challenge is to introduce and promote a wider range of flexible working arrangements such as job sharing or term-time working. In other words, if Australian workers have little or no choice over where they work, organisations could consider providing a greater choice over when and how they work.

The second conclusion is how powerful leaders and managers are in protecting employees against psychological hazards. In particular, the survey offers some troubling findings in relation to employee concerns about the way in which change management, and recognition and reward are conducted at their organisation. Change management tops the list of concerns for employees, which suggest that leaders need to better understand employee preferences and needs in key decisions, such as the location of work, through more effective consultation. While the results of staff surveys may be useful, organisations could achieve deeper insights from surveys with focus groups and team-based discussions.

Meanwhile, hybrid workers are the most likely segment to feel that their efforts are not being sufficiently recognised and rewarded. This suggests that more effort needs to be made by leaders and managers to provide timely feedback, build meaningful and regular connections and recognise employees for their individual accomplishments.

This research provides data that HR professionals can draw on to reinforce the need for leaders to continue to encourage the building cultures of care across the organisation. They can do this by inviting leaders to model compassion, appreciation, responsibility and emotional wisdom, reinforcing a sense of purpose and meaning in work and giving equal weight to essential skills (previously referred to as soft skills) in their reward and performance management systems. Given the link between a caring style of leadership and performance, this approach will improve both the emotional wellbeing of Australian workers and the financial wellbeing of Australian organisations.



**SARAH MCCANN-BARTLETT**

Chief Executive Officer, AHRI

# ABOUT THIS STUDY

The Leaders Lab Workplace Survey was first conducted in December 2019. A sample of 1,007 randomly selected team members representative of the Australian workforce completed the survey, which was based on the PERMAH Wellbeing Survey ([www.permahsurvey.com](http://www.permahsurvey.com)) developed by **Dr. Peggy Kern** from the University of Melbourne.

In 2020, as the global pandemic raged, we expanded the survey questions with the assistance of Dr. Mandy O'Neill from George Mason University (a leading researcher in organisational culture and emotional contagion in workplaces) and Dr. Lindsey Godwin from Champlain College (a leading researcher in organisational change and leadership). Data from more than 2,000 team members in Australia and the United States was gathered to understand how leaders and teams might thrive, even in the midst of struggle.

By May 2021 as workplaces and leaders began to navigate the “new normal” of work, we expanded the survey questions further with the assistance of Dr. Meg Warren from Western Washington University (a leading researcher in allyship behaviours). Data from more than 1,750 team members in the United States and Australia was gathered to understand the impact of hybrid working arrangements.

Then in September 2022, as burnout rates, quiet quitting, and the Great Resignation challenged workplaces, we expanded the survey questions once more to include the frequency and impact of psychosocial hazards. 1,009 randomly selected Australian team members and leaders representative of the Australian workforce completed the survey. The demographics of the sample included:

GENDER	
Men	503
Women	505
AGE GROUPS	
24 – 34 years	210
35 – 44 years	185
45 – 54 years	275
55 – 65 years	240
66 – 99 years	99
ETHNICITY	
Asian	127
Indigenous	15
White/Caucasian	807
People of Colour	23
LOCATIONS	
Victoria	253
New South Wales	307
Queensland	214
Western Australia	90
South Australia	94
Australian Capital Territory	19
Northern Territory	8
Tasmania	24

COMPANY TYPE	
Privately funded organisation	546
Publicly funded organisation	127
Government organisation	159
Not-for-profit organisation	84
Other	63
JOB ROLES	
Responsible for leading a team	492
Not responsible for leading a team	517

Industries were representative of Australian workplaces including Agriculture, Banking & Finance, Community & Social Services, Construction, Education, Government & Public Administration, Healthcare & Medical, Technology & Telecommunications, Manufacturing, Mining, Retail, Science, Tourism, and Transportation & Warehousing.

If you would like more information about this report or additional findings by gender, age, location, job role or industry (not reported), please contact: **[chelle@michellemcquaid.com](mailto:chelle@michellemcquaid.com)**

# UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH #1:

## WHEN IT COMES TO WORKPLACE SAFETY, CARE BEATS COMPLIANCE.

While providing a safe environment has always been a requirement for Australian workplaces, updated health and safety laws add a long list of psychosocial risks (i.e., lack of job clarity, low levels of control for work, unreasonable job demands, inadequate support, quality of workplace relationships, low recognition and reward, etc.) that must now be identified and addressed or minimised. While many workplaces have begun training leaders to ensure they are compliant when it comes to the psychosocial risks, fewer workplaces are leveraging this new legislation as an opportunity to build on their leaders' strengths and improve their cultures of care. And yet, when leaders often express care for their team members we have consistently found that the levels of wellbeing, job satisfaction, performance and safety are all more likely to be higher.

*Are you settling for compliance or helping your leaders often express care when it comes to improving safety in your workplace?*



22.6%

OF AUSTRALIAN TEAM MEMBERS  
SAID THEIR WORKPLACE WAS  
SAFE BUT UNCARING.

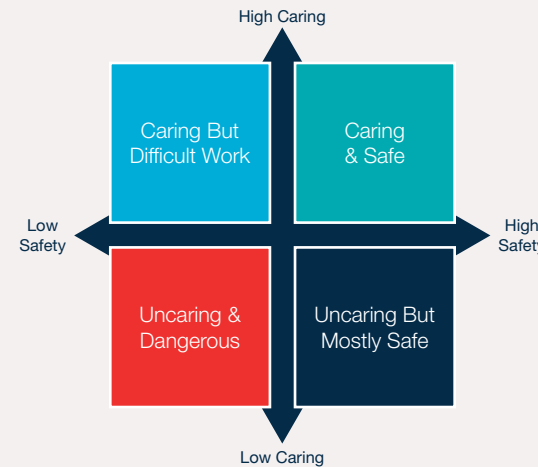
# WHY COMPLIANCE IS NOT ENOUGH

Every job involves some psychosocial hazards that arise from the design, management, environment, plant or interactions that increase the risk of work-related stress and can harm people's mental and physical health. For example, the new international standards (ISO 45003) and the recently updated WorkSafe Australia health and safety code list psychosocial hazards as: unachievable job demands, low job control, lack of role clarity, inadequate reward and recognition, conflict and poor workplace relationships and interactions, poor support, poor change management, poor organisational justice, traumatic events, remote or isolated work, violence and aggression, bullying, harassment, and poor physical environment.

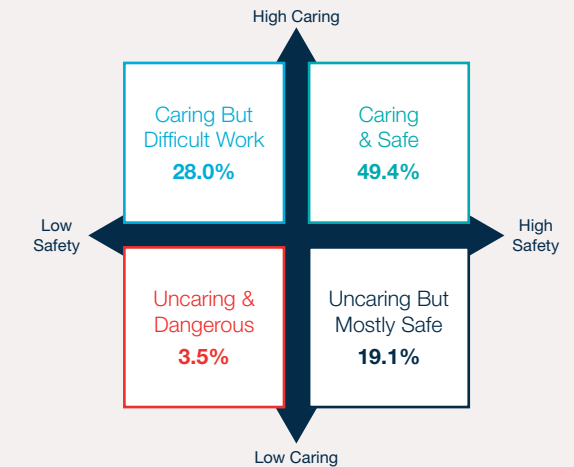
Workplaces are responsible for eliminating these risks, or at least minimising them as far as is reasonably practicable. And leaders are responsible for ensuring these requirements are met as people go about their work.

As a result, many Australian workplaces have begun identifying their psychosocial risks and training leaders to recognize and minimise the hazards. But while these steps ensure compliance, our data found that workplaces who were also investing in building cultures of care were more likely to report higher levels of performance. So, although psychosocial safety is now a legal requirement, building a culture of care is surely the business imperative.

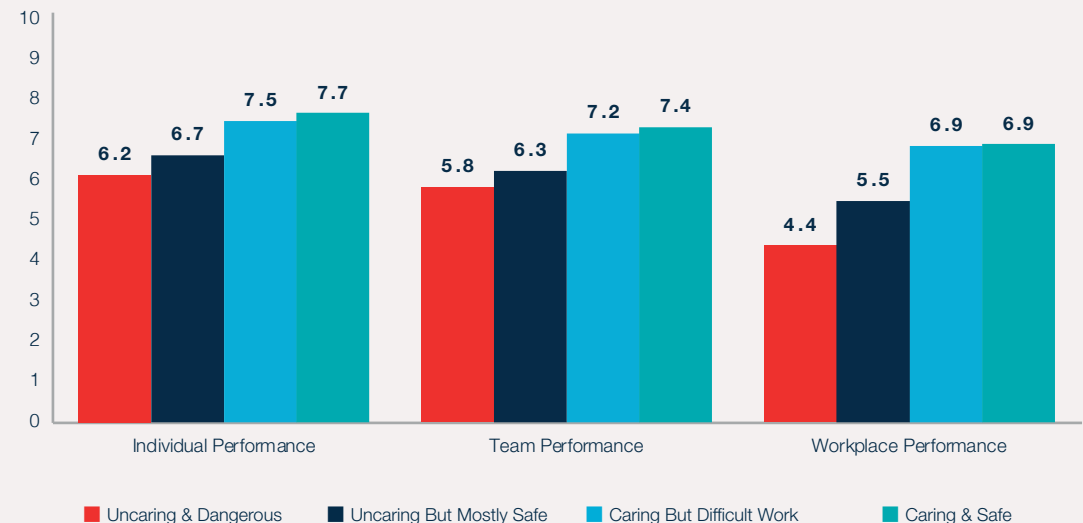
STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY



2022 STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY (%)



2022 STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY BY PERFORMANCE (MEANS)



AH-HA:

Workplaces who invest in building cultures of care are significantly more likely to report higher levels of individual, team and workplace performance.

# THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

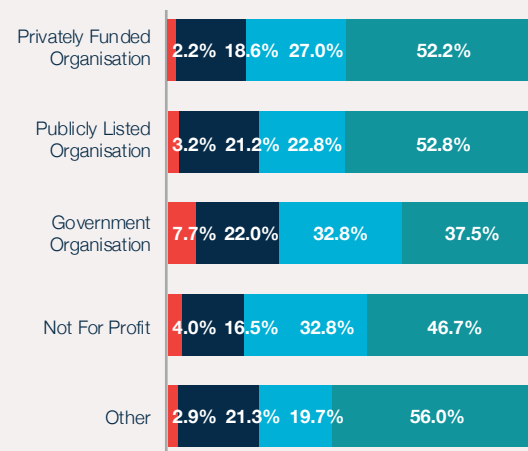
Historically, workplace health and safety requirements were focused on prescriptive measures to reduce injury and illness by managing hazards such as noise, chemicals, machinery, and manual handling. Safety compliance has long been established in workplaces where these hazards were a daily risk and/or public reporting of the hazards was a requirement. However, in other workplaces where these hazards were rare and/or public reporting of the hazards less stringent, safety compliance is less likely to have been a significant focus.

For example, the workplaces that were more likely to have an *Uncaring But Mostly Safe* environment were: Publicly Listed and Government organisations; those with 101 – 1000 people; and those in Manufacturing, Transportation & Warehousing, and Hospitality & Tourism.

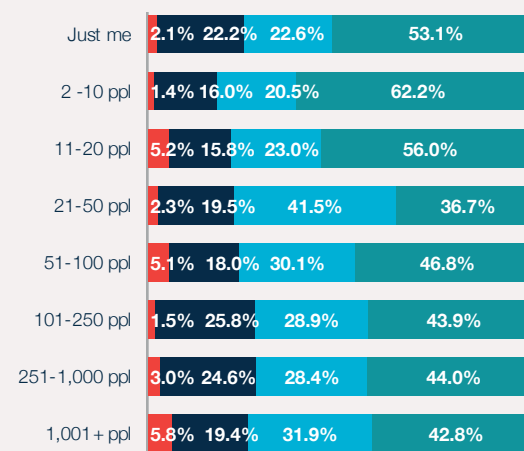
In contrast, workplaces whose competitive advantage has relied on attracting and retaining the best talent were more likely to have a *Caring & Safe* environment. For example: Not-For-Profit organisations; those with 2 – 20 people; and those in Hospitality & Tourism, Consulting & Professional Services, Banking, Finance & Insurance, Information, Technology & Telecommunications.

The organisational data suggests that there are clear system responsibilities for creating a safe and caring workplace environment.

STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY BY COMPANY TYPE (%)

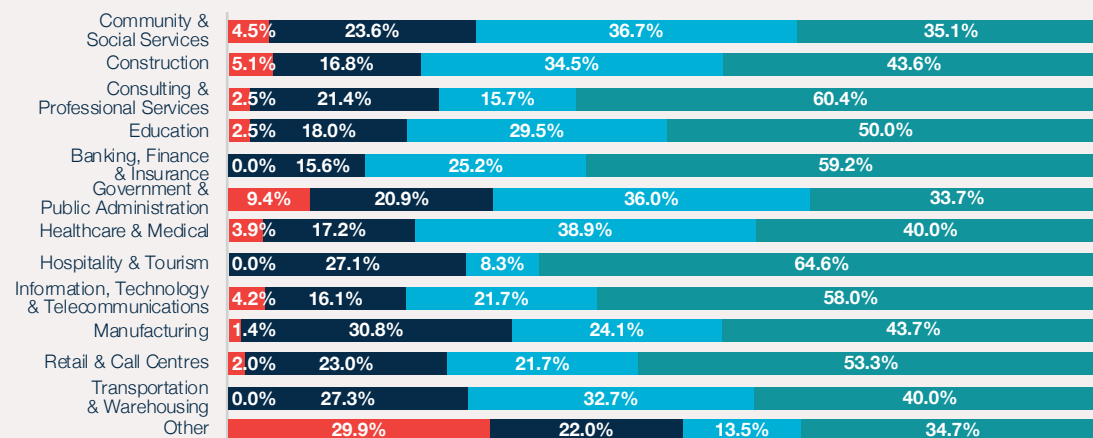


STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY BY COMPANY SIZE (%)



■ Uncaring & Dangerous ■ Uncaring But Mostly Safe ■ Caring But Difficult Work ■ Caring & Safe

STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY BY INDUSTRY (%)



■ Uncaring & Dangerous ■ Uncaring But Mostly Safe ■ Caring But Difficult Work ■ Caring & Safe

AH-HA:

Workplaces who believe their people are an essential factor in their competitive advantage were more likely to have Caring & Safe environments.

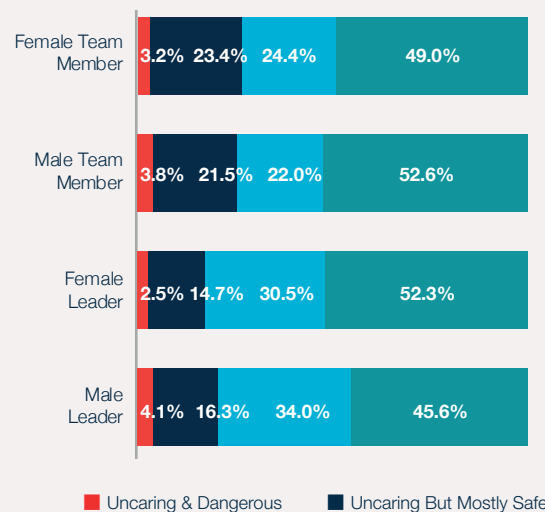
# THE INTERNAL LANDSCAPE

While objectively identifying and managing hazards such as noise, chemicals, machinery, and manual handling in a workplace is possible, minimising many of the psychosocial hazards will be open to subjective interpretation. For example, the hazard of *conflict and poor workplace relationships and interactions* notes that “frequent disagreements, disparaging or rude comments” are considered risks. But while there will be clear cases where everyone can agree a hazard exists, researchers have also found differences of gender, age and ethnicity can determine what may be considered “frequent”, “disparaging” or “rude” for different people.

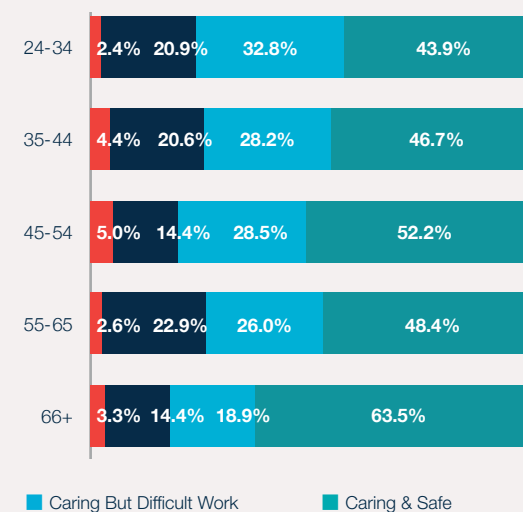
Thus, workplaces need to assess levels of safety and care through both an objective and subjective lens. For example, workers who were aged 66 or older were significantly more likely to report that their workplace was *Caring & Safe*. Could it be that these workers are so much more fortunate in their choice of workplaces than their younger colleagues? Perhaps. Or could it be, as Erik Erikson’s stages of development research suggests, that people over 65 tend to have “the wisdom and sense of integrity strong enough to withstand psychological disintegration” which is minimising the hazards they are experiencing at work? The likelihood is that both factors are shaping the data.

The demographic data suggests psychosocial safety can be subjective, so individual responsibility is a factor in creating a *Caring & Safe* workplace.

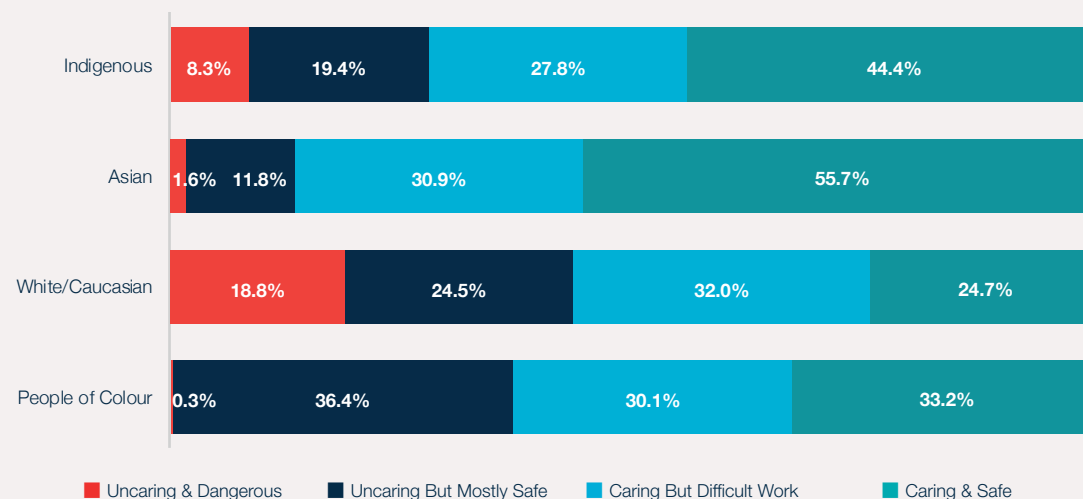
STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY BY GENDER (%)



STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY BY AGE (%)



STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY BY ETHNICITY (%)



AH-HA:

People’s personal expectations, experiences, and psychosocial resources also influence perceptions of caring and safety in their workplace.

# UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH #2:

## THE SILENT HAZARD = THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE GAP.

With the need for Australian workplaces to now identify and do “everything reasonably practical” to deal with psychosocial risks, the question many organisations are asking is: “Where do we begin?” While the Safe Work code provides an extensive list of the potential hazards to monitor, the biggest hazards in your workplace will be determined by several factors that leaders can influence, including team members’ job roles, working arrangements, team interactions, and the daily actions of the leader. The good news is that most leaders report that they are trying to provide the support their team members need to stay safe. The bad news is that currently there is a significant employee experience gap between the support leaders say they are providing and the hazards team members say they are facing. To close the gap, leaders need to more explicitly communicate about their efforts to care for team members and regularly check-in with team members about the impact of these actions and the hazards they may still be experiencing. It is also worth noting that team members who reported higher levels of psychological safety (they felt safe to bring up problems and talk about mistakes) were significantly less likely to report that they often faced any of the workplace psychosocial hazards, suggesting this may be a pathway to lower the frequency of experience across the hazards.

*How are you identifying and doing “everything reasonably practical” to help your leaders close any experience gaps and minimise the risks of psychosocial hazards in your workplace? How are you helping your leaders build psychological safety for your team members?*



28.8%

OF AUSTRALIAN TEAM  
MEMBERS OFTEN EXPERIENCED  
THE HAZARD OF CHANGE  
MANAGEMENT.



# THE MOST FREQUENT HAZARDS

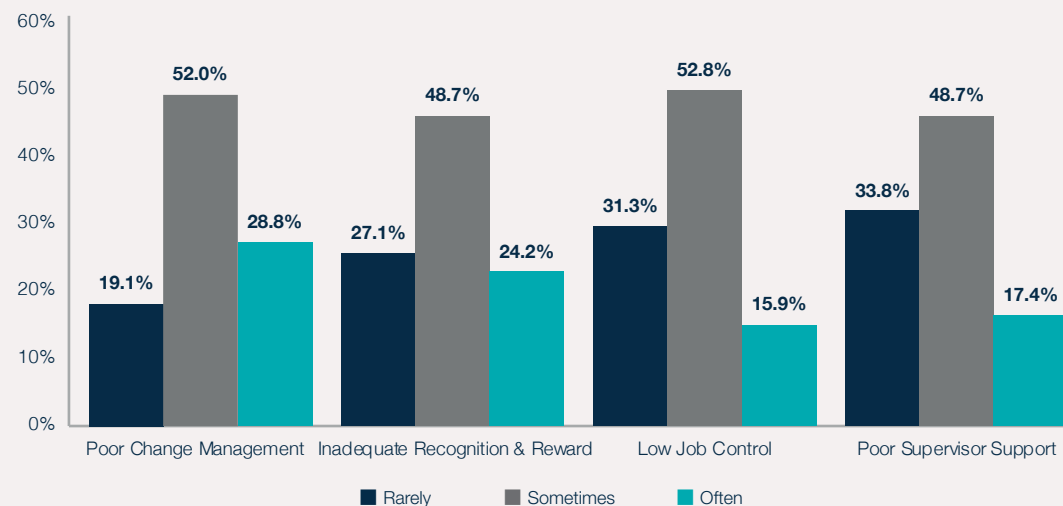
Psychosocial hazards are required to be assessed by duration, frequency and severity. The most frequent hazards Australian workers reported facing were *Poor Change Management* (80.9%), followed by *Inadequate Reward & Recognition* (72.9%), *Low Job Control* (68.7%) and *Poor Supervisor Support* (66.2%).

Most leaders reported they were frequently trying to address these hazards for workers. For example, *Poor Change Management* (92.5%), *Inadequate Reward & Recognition* (93.1%), *Low Job Control* (99.1%) and *Poor Supervisor Support* (95.7%).

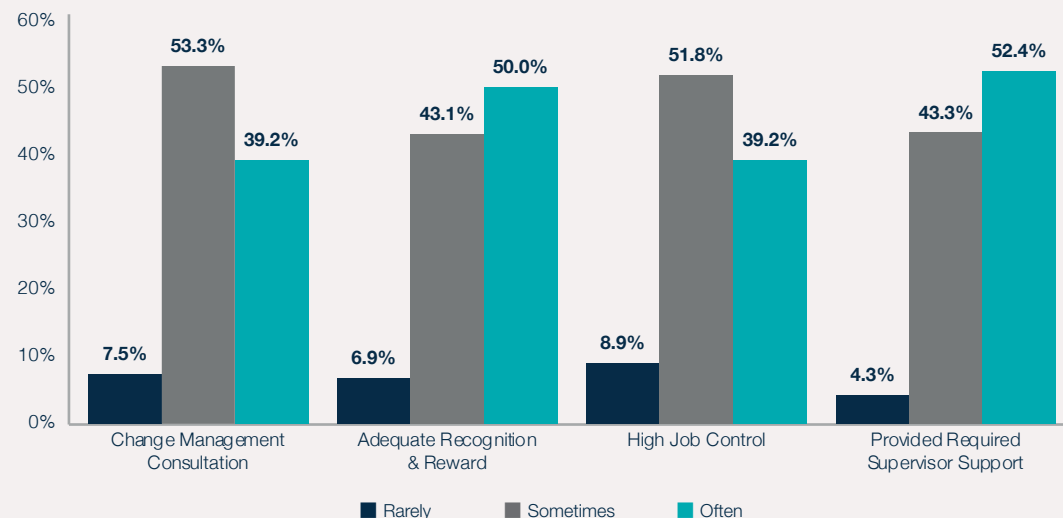
Clearly there is a significant employee experience gap between the safety efforts of leaders and the hazard impact for team members. Could this be that what leaders are doing to reduce the hazards is simply not very effective? Might it be that leaders think they are taking these actions more frequently than their team members experience? Or perhaps that while leaders have done everything they can do as often as they can to remove the risk, the lack of internal safety within team members is creating this safety gap? The likelihood is that each of these factors are shaping these results.

Leaders and workplaces need to be aware that when it comes to addressing psychosocial hazards there is likely to be an employee experience gap. Clear conversations about what leaders are trying and the impact these efforts are having for team members will be the key to closing this gap.

TEAM MEMBER MOST FREQUENT PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS EXPERIENCED (%)



LEADER SUPPORT PROVIDED FOR THE MOST FREQUENT PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS (%)



AH-HA:

Despite many leaders actively trying to address psychosocial hazards, team members still frequently report being exposed to these risks.

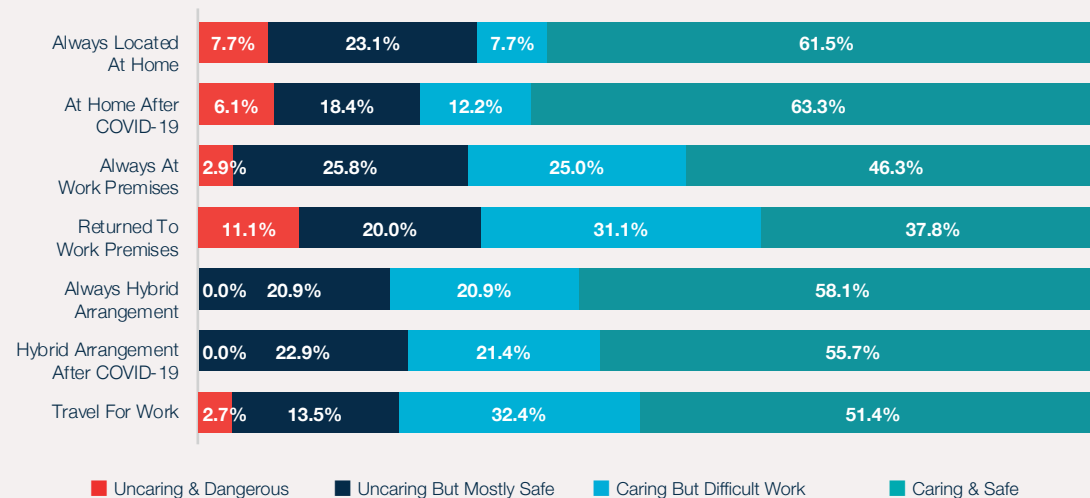
# WORKING ARRANGEMENT RISKS

Having experienced one of the largest and fastest changes to working conditions ever encountered over the past two years, almost one third (31.1%) of workers reported changes to their working arrangements. Team members who had *Returned To Work Premises* were the most likely to report that their workplace was *Uncaring & Dangerous* and the least likely to report their workplace was *Caring & Safe*. They were also the most likely to report frequently being exposed to the hazards of *Poor Change Management* (86.7%) and *Low Job Control* (84.4%). This suggests leaders need to be consulting more about the changes happening for these team members and where possible offering them more autonomy around their work.

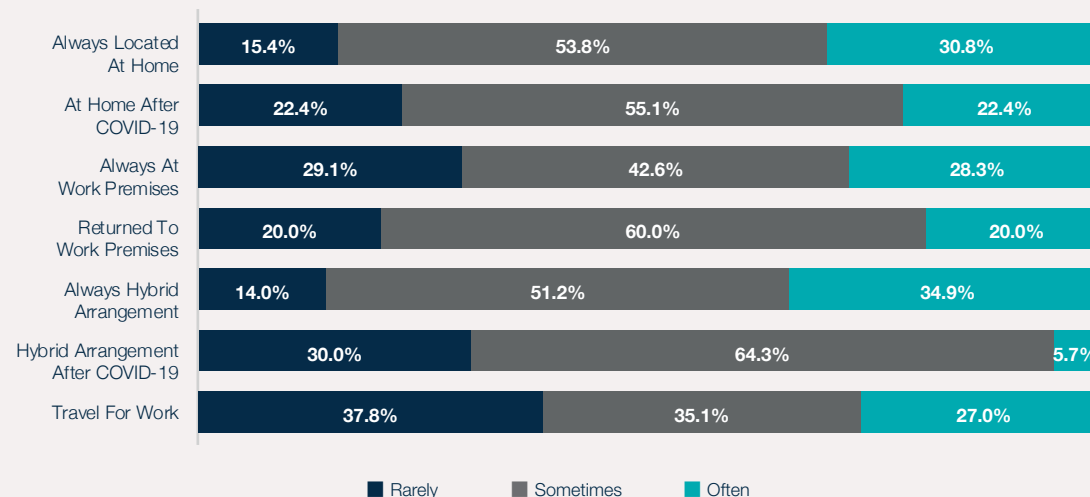
While returning to work premises brings safety challenges, it is also worth noting that when it came to *Poor Recognition & Reward*, team members who *Always Had Hybrid Arrangements* (86%) and those who were *Always Located At Home* (84.6%) were the most likely to frequently face this hazard. This suggests that leaders need to ensure that team members working from home are being regularly appreciated for their efforts and fairly paid.

There is no doubt that different working arrangements create different psychosocial risks that demand different workplace, leadership, and individual responses. As the diversity of working arrangements continues to expand, these new complexities will need to be intentionally navigated.

TEAM MEMBER STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY BY WORKING ARRANGEMENTS (%)



TEAM MEMBER FREQUENCY OF LOW REWARD & RECOGNITION BY WORKING ARRANGEMENTS (%)



AH-HA:

Working arrangements impact the frequency of different psychosocial hazards, requiring workplaces and leaders to adjust their approaches.

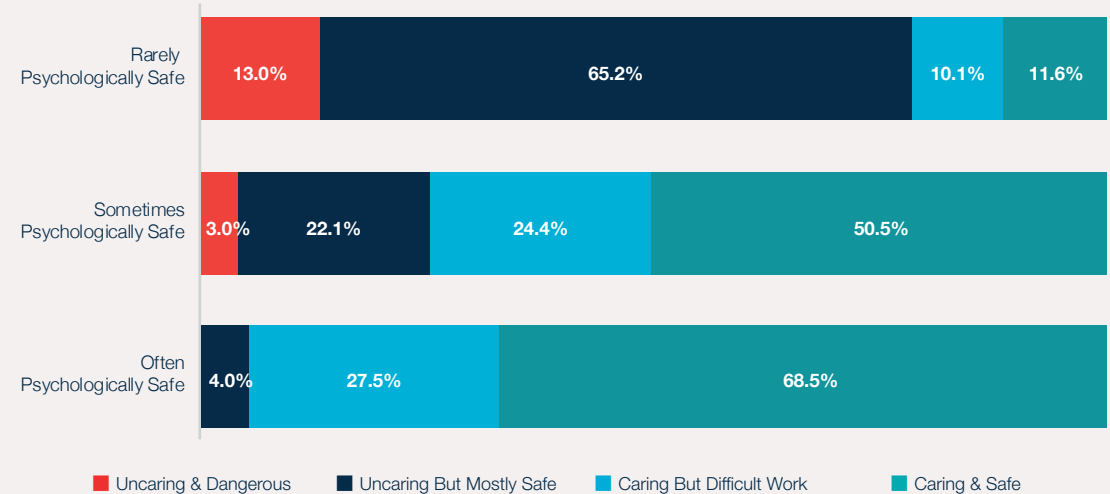
# PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Extensive studies have consistently found that high-performing teams tend to have one thing in common – high levels of psychological safety. Professor Amy Edmondson at Harvard Business School explains that psychological safety exists when team members feel safe to take risks and be vulnerable with each other by speaking up and offering new ideas, asking questions, valuing different opinions, and being willing and able to learn from their mistakes.

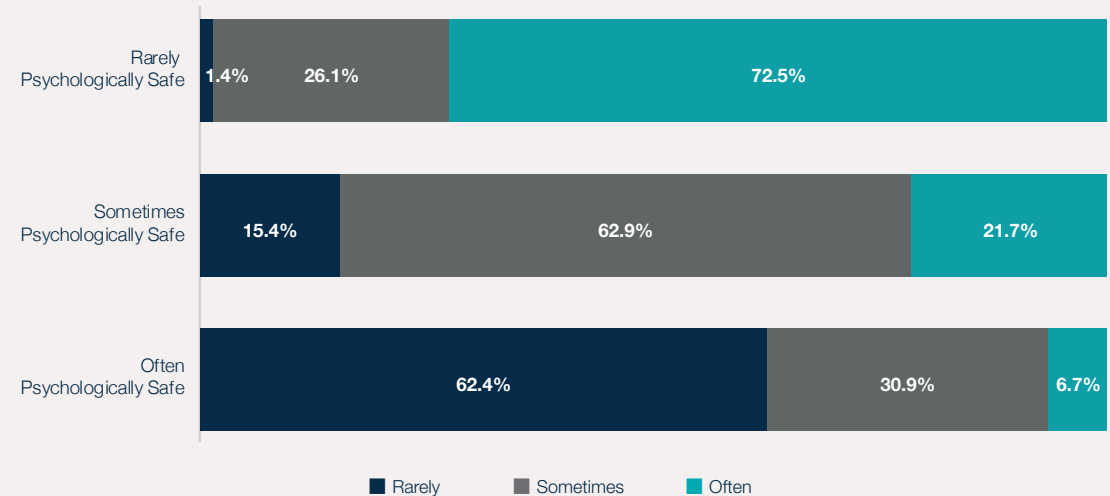
We found that when team members reported that they *often* felt psychologically safe, they were significantly more likely to report their workplace was *Caring & Safe*. They were also significantly more likely to report they were *rarely* experiencing every one of the psychosocial hazards, suggesting psychological safety may be a pathway to lower the frequency of experience across all of the hazards.

While researchers are finding that there is much that can be done at a workplace (Us Level) and with leaders and teams (We Level) to support psychological safety, each person needs help building their own portable psychological safety (Me Level) that can be carried with them. By learning to practice a growth mindset, extend compassion to self and others, ask for help, set boundaries, and hold themselves and others responsible for actions, people can build the thinking patterns and skills that allow them to more confidently navigate the world.

TEAM MEMBERS' LEVELS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY BY STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY (%)



TEAM MEMBERS' LEVELS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY BY LOW RECOGNITION & REWARD HAZARD (%)



AH-HA:

People who report often feeling psychologically safe at work were significantly less likely to frequently experience psychosocial hazards.

# UNCOMFORTABLE TRUTH #3:

## THE SIMPLE WAYS BUSY LEADERS CAN OFTEN EXPRESS CARE.

We all share the same deep psychological needs to be seen, respected, and valued. It's why researchers, including us, have repeatedly found that when leaders *often* expressed genuine CARE (Compassion, Appreciation, Responsibility, Emotional Wisdom) for their team, levels of engagement, performance, wellbeing, and safety all improved significantly. For example, Dr. Mandy O'Neill's research has found that when leaders prioritise the creation of a positive emotional culture, teams are more likely to have better performance, provide better customer service, and be more innovative, and people are less likely to burn out or quit. By integrating CARE behaviours into their existing *Routines* (their team processes), *Rituals* (their team practices), *Rules* (workplace policies) and *Role Modelling* (their own behaviours) leaders can create a culture of CARE without adding one more thing to their to-do list.

*How are your leaders leveraging existing routines, rituals, rules and role modelling opportunities to often express CARE for their team members?*



35.7%

OF AUSTRALIAN LEADERS SAID  
THEY OFTEN EXPRESS CARE FOR  
THEIR TEAM MEMBERS.

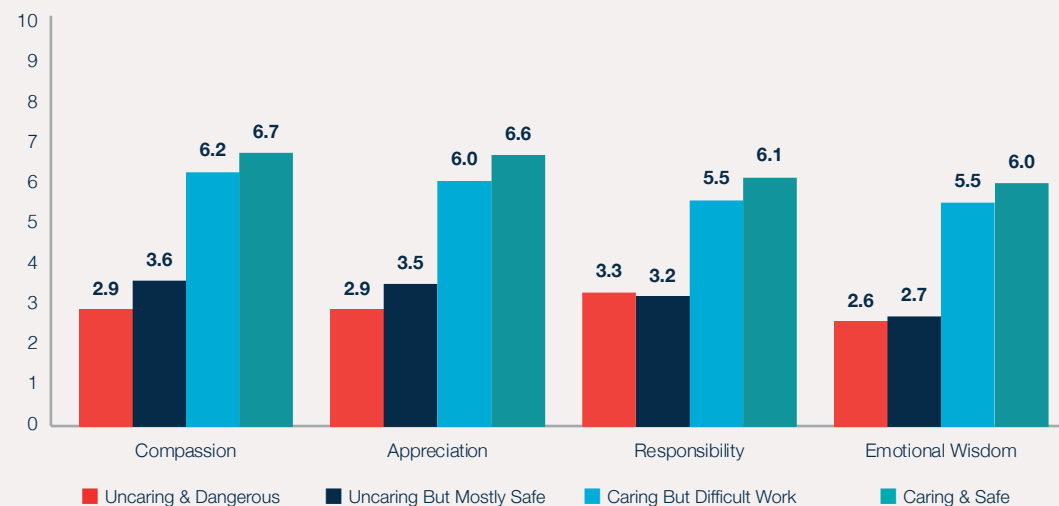
# THE BOTTOM LINE OF CARE

Time and again research – including this study – finds the important influence of culture on worker experience and outcomes. Leaders who build CARE cultures prioritise: *Compassion* (they reach for curiosity and generosity rather than leaping to assumptions and rushing to judgements about people), *Appreciation* (they encourage the asking for and giving of help), *Responsibility* (they invite ownership, clarify commitments, and hold people accountable), and *Emotional Wisdom* (they view emotions – even the uncomfortable ones – as “information” to be understood).

As we have seen previously, when it comes to building a CARE culture it is the frequency with which leaders engage in these practices that shapes the outcomes teams are able to achieve. For example, team members who reported their leader *often* showed compassion, expressed appreciation, encouraged responsibility, and demonstrated emotional wisdom were statistically more likely to report higher levels of wellbeing, job satisfaction, engagement, and individual and team performance.

Not surprisingly, team members who reported that their workplaces were *Caring & Safe* were significantly more likely to have leaders who were more often expressing CARE than other workers. They were also more likely to report feeling psychologically safe, and less likely to report frequently experiencing any of the hazards.

TEAM MEMBERS' STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY BY EXPERIENCE OF LEADER'S CARE (MEANS)



TEAM MEMBERS' WORKPLACE OUTCOMES BY EXPERIENCE OF LEADER CARE (MEANS)



AH-HA:

When leaders often express CARE for their team members, safety, satisfaction and performance are all more likely to be higher.

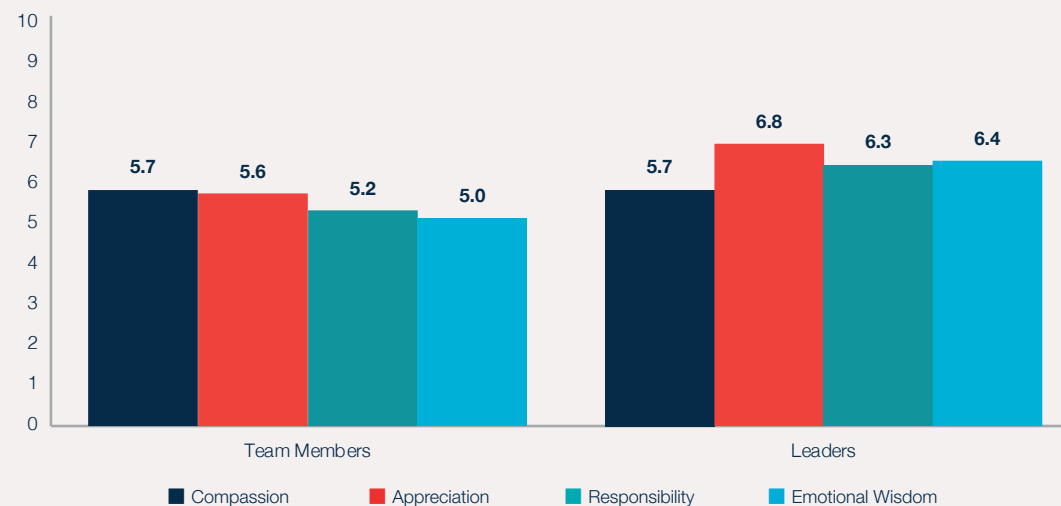
# LEADERSHIP BURN OUT

As we found for the psychosocial hazards, there is a significant employee experience gap between the CARE efforts of leaders and the CARE experienced by team members. Again, this could be because leaders CARE actions are not as effective or frequent as they believe. Or it could be because team members have higher expectations for CARE than what their leaders can provide. And the likelihood is that all of these factors are shaping the gap recorded, which is best addressed through clear conversations about how leaders are trying to express CARE and the impact these efforts are having for team members.

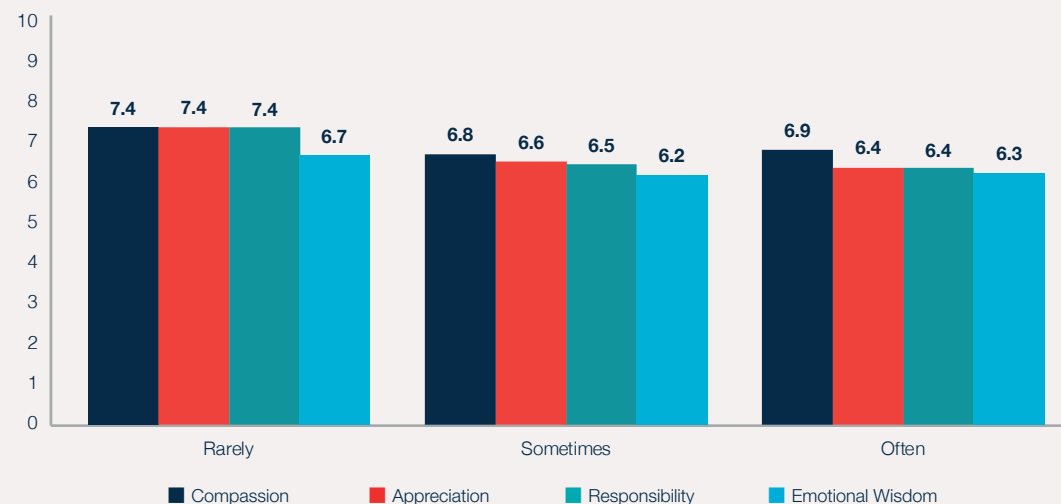
It is worth noting that 59.6% of the leaders surveyed reported feeling burnt out at work. Understandably, the more often leaders felt burnout, the less likely they were expressing CARE for their team members. This may explain the significant decline in 2022 compared to 2021 in leaders reporting their expression of *Appreciation* (6.8 compared to 7.6) and *Responsibility* (6.3 compared to 6.9). In addition, team members reported a significant decline in their experience of leaders' levels of *Emotional Wisdom* (6.7 to 5.0)

Expressing CARE for others often requires time and energy. If workplaces want to enjoy the safety and performance benefits that come with building a culture of CARE, they need to prioritise and support these actions amongst the many other responsibilities leaders are carrying.

TEAM MEMBER CARE EXPERIENCES V/S LEADER CARE PROVIDED (MEANS)



LEADER BURNOUT EXPERIENCES BY CARE FREQUENCY (MEANS)



AH-HA:

When leaders feel burnt out their ability to express CARE for their team members significantly declines, impacting safety and performance.

# WHY TINY IS MIGHTY

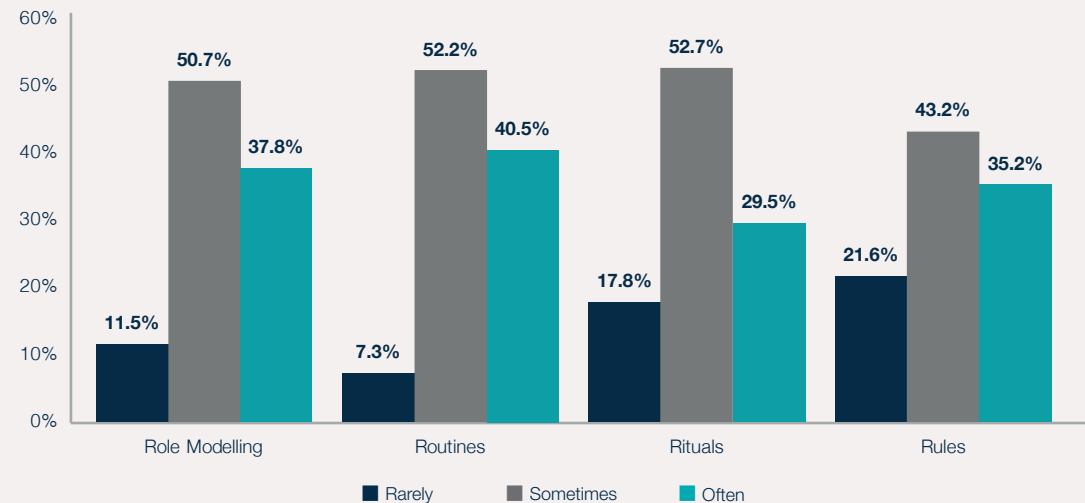
As the list of leadership responsibilities continues to grow in most workplaces, the prospect of having to take on even one more responsibility – even to ensure the safety of their team members - is understandably overwhelming for many leaders.

The good news is that once again our research found that expressing CARE doesn't have to be another action added to the leader's to-do lists. Instead, the most effective leaders are integrating these behaviours into their existing *Role Modelling* (their own behaviours), *Routines* (their team processes), *Rituals* (their team practices), and *Rules* (workplace policies) to create a frequent rhythm of care mechanics and dynamics in their teams. We call these the 4Rs of caring leadership.

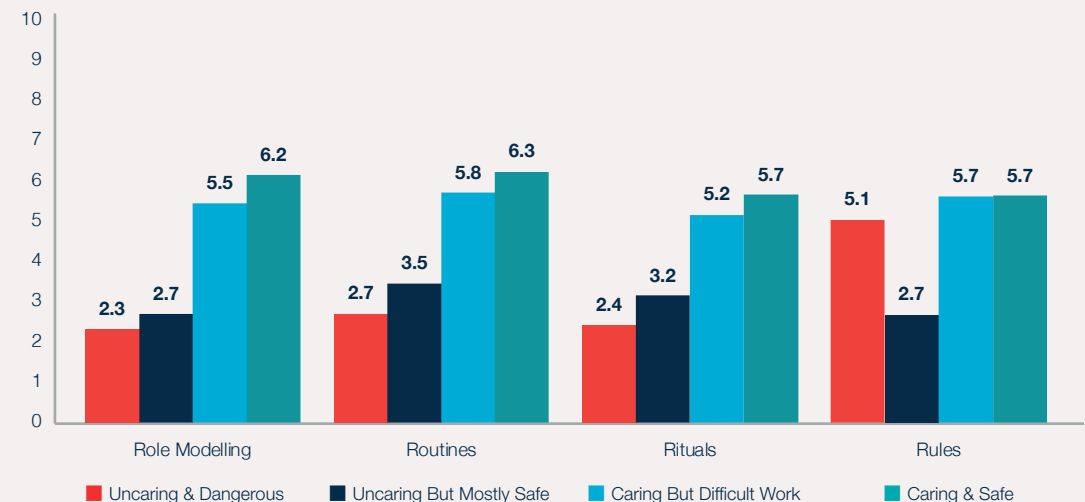
While all leaders were more likely to rely on Rules, those leaders helping to create work environments that were *Caring & Safe* or *caring despite difficult work* also often invested in Role Modelling and Routines. It is worth noting, however, that Role Modelling and Routines were significantly more likely to be associated with higher levels of team members' individual and collective performance.

This data suggests that when it comes to building cultures of CARE, workplaces need to take a systems approach with *Caring & Safe Rules* (Us Level), *Routines* (We Level), and *Role Modelling* (Me Level) to create alignment and reinforcement for their workers.

LEADER'S CARE BY ROLE MODELLING, ROUTINES, RITUALS & RULES FREQUENCY (%)



TEAM MEMBERS' STATE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY BY ROLE MODELLING, ROUTINES, RITUALS & RULES (MEANS)



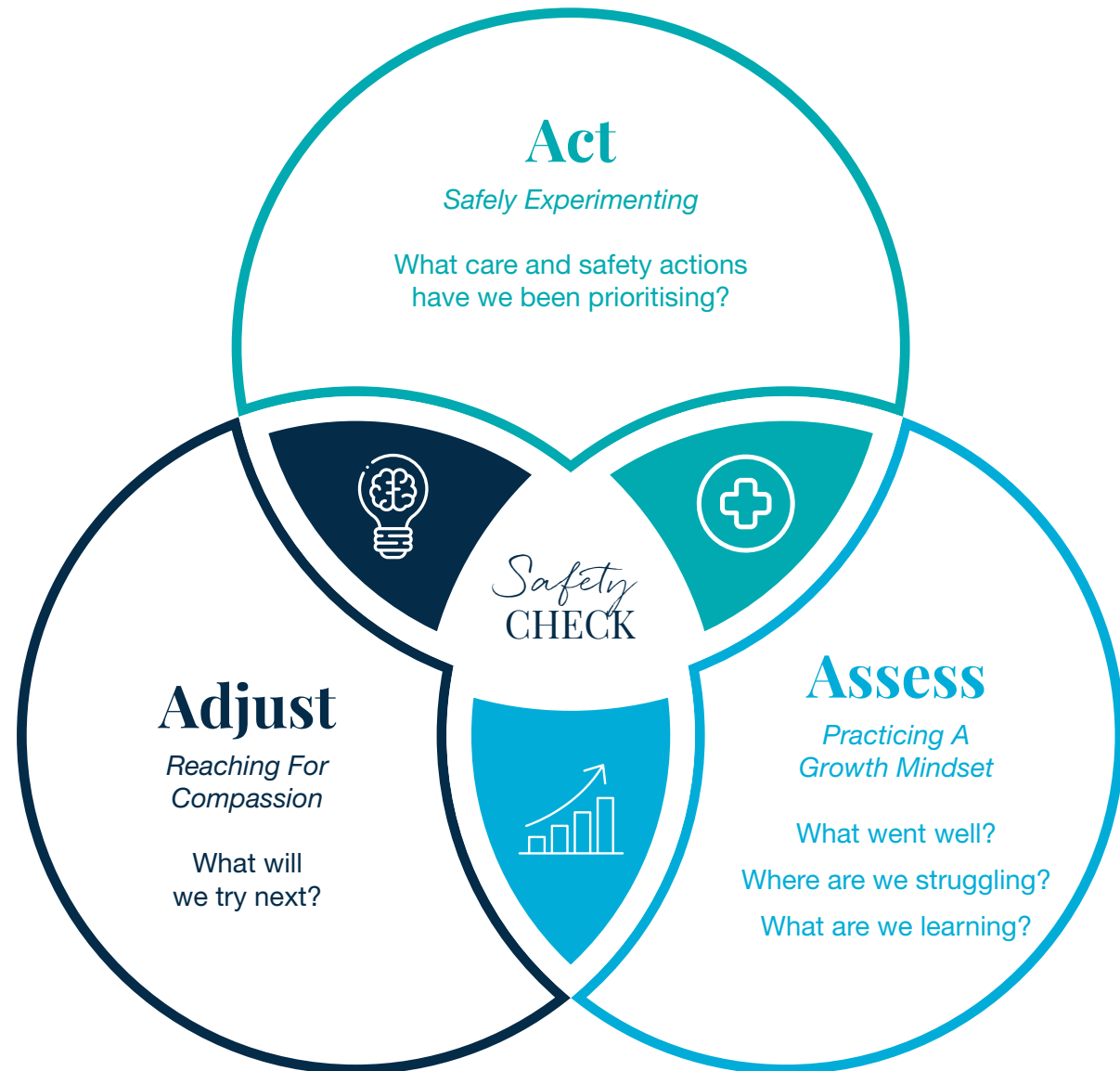
AH-HA:

Leaders who leverage existing workplace routines and opportunities for role modelling can build a more caring, safe and high performing team.

# LEADERSHIP SAFETY CHECK

Creating a *Caring & Safe* work environment is never won-and-done. It requires consistent daily actions at the Me (individual), We (leaders and teams), and Us (workplace) levels that provide certainty and predictability in an uncertain world. And while assessment and training can help minimise the frequency and impact of psychosocial hazards, workplaces, leaders and team members will need to continuously and intelligently adjust their approaches as their contexts and capabilities keep changing.

In our experience, the quickest, most affordable, and effective means of navigating this challenge is to encourage leaders and their teams to take a few minutes for a Safety Check by asking:





# WANT MORE?



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Take a deeper dive into the leadership research and how the uncomfortable truths can be applied to your workplace leadership strategy with our team. This free 30-minute online conversation is designed to give you the confidence, support and actions you need to help leaders build cultures of care and safety across your workplace. [Click here to book your session.](#)



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Our evidence-based, done-for-you workplace leaders tools will save you time and money by putting everything you need at your leaders fingertips to help build cultures of care and safety. Whether you're wanting a step-by-step guide and worksheets to build psychological safety, or everything you need to design and deliver an appreciative inquiry workshop or summit to ensure your people feel consulted around the changes you are making, you'll find everything you need here. [Click here to learn more about our done-for-you toolboxes.](#)



## LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMS

Discover how to improve safety across your workplace by joining our Safe Leaders Program, designed to deliver short, powerful, socially supported micro-doses of leadership training that help leaders to develop a culture of care. Immediately actionable and measurable, there are no passive observers in this program that blends classroom learning, real-world experiments, and coaching to quickly build the knowledge, tools, and support that leaders and their teams need to thrive, even in the face of uncertainty. [Click here to learn more.](#)

# ABOUT THE LEADERS LAB RESEARCHERS



## DR. MICHELLE MCQUAID

Dr. Michelle McQuaid is a best-selling author, workplace wellbeing teacher and playful change activator. An honorary fellow at the University of Melbourne's Graduate School of Education, in addition to hosting the highly acclaimed weekly podcast, *Making Positive Psychology Work*, which features leading researchers and practitioners from around the world, Michelle blogs for *Psychology Today*, *The Huffington Post* and *Thrive*, and her work has been featured in *Forbes*, *The Harvard Business Review*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Boss Magazine*, *The Age* and more. You can find more of Michelle's work at **The Wellbeing Lab**.



## DR. PEGGY KERN

Dr. Peggy Kern is an associate professor at the Centre for Positive Psychology at the University of Melbourne's Graduate School of Education. Her research draws on a variety of methodologies to examine questions around who thrives in life and why, including understanding and measuring healthy functioning, identifying individual and social factors impacting life trajectories, and systems-informed approaches to wellbeing. She has published three books and more than 100 peer-reviewed articles and chapters. You can find out more about Peggy's work at **[www.peggykern.org](http://www.peggykern.org)**.



## KATIA MURPHY

Katia Murphy is the PERMAH Wellbeing Survey Research Manager and is a passionate health and wellbeing advocate. Katia is currently completing her Bachelor of Business, specialising in Management & Leadership, with electives in Psychological Research Methods, Qualitative Research Methods and Psychological Assessment. Her interests are in integrating health and wellbeing concepts to build meaningful lives and enhance performance at all levels. Katia also has qualifications as a coach for exercise and nutrition, with nine years of experience helping a range of clients with health goals. Katia is a qualified PERMAH Wellbeing Survey debriefer and has completed the Certificate in Creating Wellbeing in Small Business Workplaces. You can find more about Katia's work at **The Wellbeing Lab**.



## DR PAIGE WILLIAMS

Dr Paige Williams is a speaker, author and leadership guide, determined to help leaders move beyond just the need for resilience to become AntiFragile. A researcher and Honorary Fellow of the Centre for Wellbeing Science and an Associate of Melbourne Business School, Paige draws on wellbeing, neuroscience, leadership and systems science, and her 20+ years of international business leadership experience to help leaders learn how they can benefit from the dynamic, complex, and uncertain contexts in which they operate. You can find more of Paige's work at **[www.drpaigewilliams.com](http://www.drpaigewilliams.com)**

# ABOUT THE AHRI RESEARCHERS



## SARAH MCCANN-BARTLETT

Sarah McCann is the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian HR Institute. She has extensive, global experience in membership and trade bodies and has held senior roles across a variety of sectors in Australia, the UK and the USA.

Sarah was Director General (CEO) of the British Constructional Steelwork Association from September 2011 to December 2019. In this role, she established a new sector apprenticeship programme, created a new market development programme to drive market share gains for constructional steelwork, and drove rapid growth of the group's certification arm. Previously, Sarah held a number of senior executive positions at the Victorian Building and Plumbing Industry Commissions, including as Deputy Commissioner. She helped lead the Commissions' response to the February 2009 bushfires, and developed and implemented a shared Corporate Services model between both Commissions, including developing and leading strategies to drive the change process.

Sarah has also held roles representing and supporting the Australian wool industry with the Australian Wool Corporation and its successor The Woolmark Company in Melbourne, the UK and New York where she held the role of President and Group Manager, Americas. Sarah holds Commerce and Arts degrees from the University of Melbourne, an MBA from Monash University, and postgraduate qualifications in marketing. She is a Fellow of the UK Institute of Directors. Sarah lives in Melbourne with her husband and teenage son, and their three dogs.



## GERWYN DAVIES

Gerwyn is AHRI's research and advocacy specialist, having moved to Australia earlier this year from the UK, where he was employed as a public policy specialist for the CIPD, AHRI's cousin organisation. Gerwyn was a national media commentator and a member of various government working groups and taskforces in the UK; including the government's EU Immigration Employers' Representative Group. Gerwyn's previous publications have covered migration, the atypical workforce and the National Living Wage alongside the institute's highly influential quarterly 'Labour Market Outlook' report.



## AHRI CERTIFICATION & TRAINING

AHRI offers training and certification programs for both HR and management professionals to suit every stage of your career. Combined with AHRI's research-backed Blended Learning delivery, our courses are designed to help you upskill in critical themes, fast, efficiently and tailored for individuals, teams or entire organisations.

AHRI training offerings include topics such as Mental Health at Work, Mental Health First Aid and Applied Emotional Intelligence.

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– MELISSA ELF, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF  
CORPORATE AT FLIGHT CENTRE



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# ABOUT THE NEUROPOWER RESEARCHERS



**PETER BUROW** 

Peter is the author of the NeuroPower framework - a system explaining human behaviour through the integration of neuroscience, psychology and best practice management theory which he has applied with organisations around the world. He is also the author of numerous books on the application of neuroscience and behavioural economics to business and leadership. With over 25 years' experience, Peter is an expert in business transformation, strategy and leadership. He is internationally regarded as a trusted advisor of senior executive teams who are faced with leading through complex people challenges such as mergers and acquisitions, changes in senior leadership, large-scale restructures, significant cultural performance uplifts and organisational realignments due to changes in markets, policy, leadership or governments.



**MISHA BYRNE** 

Misha is a neuroscientist with experience working in complex, sensitive and rapidly changing environments. He specialises in engaging diverse groups to develop implementable strategies for challenges where problems are poorly defined but clear outcomes are required. He is a Faculty Member of Singularity University (Portugal), where he lectures on the disruptive impacts of technology on our organisations, and how to harness human collaboration during major change. Born and raised in Australia, Misha has worked extensively across the globe (including, for example, Thoughtworks (UK), Siemens, Allianz and Roland Berger (Germany), Emirates Airlines (UAE) and Genesis Energy (New Zealand). In 2019 Misha and his guitar relocated to Munich where he leads the European Consulting Practice for NeuroPower Group.



**PIPPA HAGUE** 

Pippa is a change architect, building systems and behaviours across businesses that enable teams to manage transformative change agendas. With 13 years corporate business experience across finance and healthcare (UK and AU) and five years consulting, Pippa brings high energy and focused delivery experience. Her current obsession is with helping businesses build flow into hybrid practices, as businesses try to make returning to the office worth the individual's effort. Pippa's experience spans Government, Health Sector, General Insurance and Financial Services. Her passions are patient-/customer-centred service design, the application of behavioural economics and social cognitive neuroscience to change navigation, maximising the human value gained through technologies and driving organisational agility in building the capabilities of individuals and teams to thrive in a world of rapid change.



**ANNA WATERS** 

Anna Waters has 12 years' experience working as a psychologist and management consultant, using evidence-based approaches to design, develop, implement and evaluate practical interventions to humanise work – for individuals, groups and organisations. Working across health, education, information technology, professional services, financial services, energy, government and not for profit, Anna translates the insights from psychology and neuroscience research to understand and shift human behaviour and performance in the workplace. Anna has co-authored articles on topics such as leading in a crisis, resilience, focus and cognitive attention; guest lectures at the Monash University Evolving Health Leadership program; and supervises postgraduate organisational psychology and neuroscience students.

# WANT MORE FROM NEUROPOWER?



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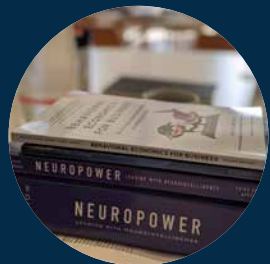
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WANT TO FIND OUT MORE? EMAIL US AT **INFO@NEUROPOWERGROUP.COM**



# ABOUT THE PIONEERA RESEARCHERS



## DANIELLE OWEN WHITFORD

Danielle Owen Whitford is the Founder & CEO, of start up Pioneerera, founded in 2018 to improve mental health by tackling the crippling issue of workplace stress and burnout.

Pioneerera's AI platform combines technology with psychology to prevent workplace stress whilst promoting positive productive cultures and is gaining strong interest across both corporate Australia and small businesses.

Danielle has a Bachelor in Psychology and Masters in Communication and speaks regularly on wellbeing, AI, women in technology, leadership; and preventing burnout.



## BRIAN HAY

Brian is an experienced software engineer manager, with 25 years spent researching, developing, and program managing in mining, telecommunications, ICT services and government. Whilst in Telstra Research Laboratories, Brian led Research & Development in identity, knowledge management and learning and established a project with the Centre for the Mind to investigate human focus and attention for enhancing productivity. More recently has consulted on development in personal privacy management using blockchain. Brian holds a Bachelors degree in Engineering & IT and a Masters in Business & Technology.

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*"The usage of Pioneerera is ultimately reflected in our team's 93% employee engagement score, which is much higher than our company average and up 10% from last year." "*

– ALICIA AITKEN, ANZ