# Beyond the spin: practical steps to integrate mental health in Australian workplaces

## Facilitator: Dr Peta Miller

## Panel: Eldeen Pozniak, Jamie Tooth and Teegan Modderman

### Virtual Seminar Series - Transcript

**Peta:** Thanks for coming along to what's, I'm sure, going to be a really interesting and important conversation, where I'm going to ask these panellists, who are two Canadians and one Australian, to cut through the spin on psychological health and safety, and help guide us to some insights around delivering practical and implementable health and safety in Australian workplaces.

No Australian, we would all agree, deserves to be harmed at work. In fact, it's their right to be safe. And as professionals, we have all worked very hard over the past few decades to ensure that physical health and safety is a part of the automatic considerations of business. Our challenges in the future are now to ensure that the same appropriate focus is also on psychological health and safety.

But Jamie before we start, maybe we better clarify some terminology here.

**Jamie:** Sure.

**Peta:** What are we talking about? When people are talking about stress, what do they mean?

**Jamie:** Well, stress is ... and it's different for everyone. It's very subjective in many respects. But stress means that a person has the experience that whatever event they're currently experiencing, they perceive it's beyond their capacity to manage or control. So there's either they don't have the resources to do what's required, they don't have the knowledge to do what's required, or it's just simply an overwhelming experience. And what is stressful for one person may be simply mildly challenging for another.

**Peta:** And you know, Eldeen what's the evidence saying about psychological health and safety?

**Eldeen:** I think no matter what country or what geographical region you're from, you'll see that a lot of the studies are saying the more that we are affected in a negative way, the more that increases the risk for any type of injury or illness within a work environment. So traditionally, as health and safety professionals, we've often looked at that hard hazard, the physical hazard that's in the workplace. The hazard, the mental health hazard, can increase the risk of being hurt as we interact with that, as well as it can present its own hazard in the work environment that can cause people to become physically ill, no longer be able to work. So definitely the results all across the geographical regions are saying the more people are stressed out, the more psychological health issues are not being dealt with, the higher a risk for injury and illness. And, then, that affects what we do at home, at play, and at work. So that can have some detrimental effects.

**Peta:** So to all of you, are there some factors we know that are more important than others? Is it context specific? What's the evidence telling us about what are the psychosocial hazards that are most important?

**Jamie:** I think a couple that's in my work experience has been role demands and whether they're realistic or not, both in terms of the work required and the time limits in which to complete that, would be a significant contributing stressor for a lot of people in the work environment.

**Peta:** Those role demands and those time pressures seem to be almost universal

**Eldeen:** Yeah. And I think that's definitely on one side of it. You can look at the environmental context of how management manages. And I think, then, another component is, the co-worker environment because we can get poisoned work environments where people are experiencing violence or bullying. And it may come from purposeful wilful or, in the case of health care, when you're dealing with medically induced situations, you can be harassed or stressed out by dealing with a patient that has no other alternative but to act that way. So I think that's also another contributing factor is how people interrelate within the work environment as well.

**Peta:** So hearing about role overloads and people's relationships with each other, and occupational violence, Teegan for you as a regulator that you're seeing is a really common problem, not only in Queensland but across Australia?

**Teegan:** Yeah. Absolutely. I think workplace bullying and harassment, so that comes under the relationships that you spoke about, as well as occupational violence, so being exposed to physical assault or that ongoing verbal assault that customer service operators, for example, would experience quite regularly. We're also experiencing an increase in claims around exposure to trauma, whether that be fatalities in the workplace or distressing events in the workplace. And I think that's the primary, sort of, drivers.

**Eldeen:** And I think it's unique to the industry sector that you're in. So health care may have some production demands and, then, the demands from how they're interacting with their clients. Service or retail may be different. Manufacturing may be more production focused. And I think that's why it's so important to have the right program components in place before you do anything. You have to assess where you're at and what's causing the stress or the negative psychological effects. Is it something that someone's also bringing from home? Because that can affect how we react or what we choose to do or not to do within a work environment. So assessment of individual workplaces is key to find out what can actually contribute to that situation so that you can put the right components in place.

**Teegan:** And the new national guide that we've got really clearly articulates those nicely in terms of role clarity, job, demands, time pressures, issues around relationships, but also, you would know more than me, Peta some of those reward and recognitions.

**Peta:** So I guess that's a long list of potential hazards that businesses need to look at. So how do they work out which ones are relevant, that are context specific for them? Perhaps I might go to you, Jamie.

**Jamie:** Well, I think it starts with, and I'll be careful not to get too evangelical about this. I think it starts with leadership and, you know, it's not surprising that we've been hearing over the last two days the importance of leadership in terms of occupational health and safety. I believe it's the same for mental health as well that leaders have a huge impact in terms of managing wellness within a work environment. They have a huge influence. And I think, if there was one message I could say, is I like to say there's a difference in knowing something and getting it. And I think every leader probably knows that they obviously have an impact and influence their people. But I don't think people really get just to what degree that they can influence. And one of the things that I think leaders need to do when trying to assess what's posing the greatest mental health risk for their people, or psychological safety, is just talking and really listening, and really trying to appreciate that from your observation as a leader it may be quite different from how people in the front line experience that.

I think one of the things we were talking about previously, and I'll be very brief about this, is often times, not always, but often times, particularly more senior leaders, one of the reasons why they've been able to progress to that role is that they have either, through just good genes or through good skill development along the way, have learned to cope with high levels of stress, maybe high levels of uncertainty. And therefore, there's a tendency for them to assume that, "Well, the way I'm experiencing this particular challenge must be the way that my people are experiencing it." And that is not necessarily the case at all. And, so, being willing to actually have conversations with people about how are they feeling, what's working well, what's working less well, and really being able to hear and listen to what they have to say would be a starting point.

**Peta:** So is this something that you've, I'm hearing leadership is an issue. But what other ways are there actually for businesses to hone in on what are the key issues in their workplaces.

**Eldeen:** I think it's just like any other safety initiative or program that you're taking within your work environment. Finding the right assessment tool is necessary. To be able to ask the questions, at times in a confidential way, cause otherwise people, especially if there's some, already, anxiety, and stress, and some pressures they may not feel confident to say in front of a group or a focus group, "Yeah. I'm having some trouble," or "I don't like how I'm being communicated with and it's increasing my stress levels," is finding that right assessment tool and method that’s there. I've seen everything from survey monkey type online paper surveys. I've seen where some organisations have brought in outside to do one-on-one interviews on a variety of levels. So it's finding the right tool and determining the right questions. Cause that's important, too. How you ask them can either increase or decrease stress. Have you ever taken one of those tests where you're like, "Oh, if I don't answer this right I'm gonna have to live"-

**Peta:** What's the right question?

**Eldeen:** I'm gonna have to live with something I really didn't want. Oh, no." So I think that's a right way, is finding the right assessment tool, the right approach, the right questions, based upon the objectives that you want to achieve. And that's to identify what are the hazards that are within the work environment, and what are the other factors that influence that individual that affect the work environment .So there may be some questions about home or, and again, you have to make sure there's a certain amount of privacy within that.

**Peta:** So, Teegan,I know that Queensland led the way with some practical tools around helping employers in what might seem a kind of confusing space. So I wondered if you can share with us what are some of the practical tools that are out there.

**Teegan:** Yeah. Over a ten-year period, we've been developing what's called the People at Work tool. So that's a freely available tool that's available on our website. You can download that and you can use it within your organisation. Now, it is manual. But at the same time, you can implement it and put it into things like survey monkey. But it is a validated tool, it's reliable, and it does ask some really good questions around each of these respecters or hazards that are outlined in the national guide as well as our mentally healthy workplaces tool kit.

**Peta:** Yeah. So I understand it's got demand, and control, and support, and organisational change. And I also noticed, which goes back to, I guess, our opening statement that I made which was around physical hazards as well, is that it picks up some issues around fatigue, MSD, and burnout as well. So it's got some outcome measures.

**Teegan:** Yeah. There's a couple questions around sleeping, fatigue, those type of measures definitely. But it's something you would incorporate in your whole risk management approach. So when you are trying to understand what those hazards are and your level of risk, you can use a tool like that. But then again, afterwards, having those focus groups or having one-on-one interviews with the staff to really understand the context. So the survey results might show you that workload is high, but being able to have those focus groups or interviews will tell you what is high, what is it about the context that people are feeling that their workload is high.

**Peta:** So I guess, since we are looking at you at the moment, what is it that you, as a regulator, you expect of your inspectors are going in to workplaces. What does reasonably practical mean, and how are you going to see whether it's actually being achieved?

**Teegan:** As the regulator, we expect that an organisation actually has a system of work in place that is very much like their physical system, that psychosocial hazards are incorporated into that and that psychosocial hazards are identified, assessed, and controlled to a way that's reasonably practicable. So what our inspectors would be doing is looking for documentation or evidence of a system and that it's actually effective and working. And they may be asking for documentation, then, around data like absenteeism, and injury rates, and injury reports, hazard reports, and those sorts of things.

**Peta:** So we were having some conversations before today about what's reasonably practical may mean that's what the regulator says. But we've heard that leadership has a really important role, what is the system? What's a work system? We as health and safety professionals, it rolls off our tongue, doesn't it? Design a good design of work and work systems. What's that actually mean in practice for ordinary businesses?

**Eldeen:** We've created a Canadian standard, one of the first countries to actually put together a voluntary standard that helps support a safety management system component. So it's based upon all the elements of what you'd have in a normal safety management system for every physical hazard that's there, but it just looks at it within the psychological hazard aspect of it. It actually is a standard that's now going to be the base for a brand new initiative with ISO. ISO is going to take the Canadian CSA standard, create a committee system like they did for 45001, and start to put together more of a global voluntary standard. So that’s kind of exciting.

**Peta:** So they will supplement the 45001

**Eldeen:** Yeah. On that topic specific, just like you'd use 31000 for risk management and you'd use…So it would help support going forward. But it basically outlines the same components that are there. But again, leadership, assessment, hazard and risk assessment, based upon the hazard and risk assessment. What are the components, the training, education that's necessary? What roles and responsibilities, is it of the worker, of the supervisor, of middle management, or the senior executive team? And how do they play within that has been outlined within that standard and, to me, would reflect what you would put into any safety management system no matter what geographical location you were from.

**Peta:** So I think that's going to really be a bit of a game changer. That's the big business though, and people with health and safety professionals to help them, is it?

**Eldeen:** Well, and that's what people often think is, "Oh. Yeah. If I want to use the 45001, it has to be a big business. There's no small and medium aspect to it." One of the things that I liked about the Canadian standards is that we only have, like, a few big businesses and they're really big. And then, everybody else is small mum-and-pop entrepreneurial enterprises and some medium ones that are there. So, often when we look at our standards, we don't target just the big dogs that get to play, but how it can apply. It's just the sliding scale to what you implement, how technical you get, what documents and what kind of resources you may put to it. Every organisation needs to outline roles and responsibilities. They may be different when you have five, or six, or seven, or eight different layers versus when you are a small organisation and there's two or maybe three. But you still need to outline who does what within that program aspect that's there. So you can still use the document, it's just a bit of a sliding rule that's there.

Training, what I want to do for training for a supervisor or an owner of a company would probably be fairly similar. It's just going to be a little bit different in range and how much resources they get versus a larger organisation.

**Peta:** Before I come back to you and ask you to kindly share that story about leadership, which I wouldn't want to lose, I'm just interested in terms of the regulators, in terms that we so often hear about reasonably practicable, but in terms of how you go in and have a proportional response as a responsive regulator to a mum-and-dad fish shop, you know, a fish and chip shop initiative. What does it look like in terms of what your expectations are for a company with 50 versus five?

**Teegan:** Yeah. We are responsive regulators, so we often do look to what is the level of exposure. So what are the consequences of the risk and the likelihood of that occurring? And then, we work with that term reasonably practicable to understand what should they be doing and, in the circumstances or the type of business that they have, what is reasonable for them in those circumstances. So it's hard to say exactly what that would look like cause every business is different, every industry is different. But our inspectors are up skilled to understand how to assess that and how to look at it and determine that.

**Peta:** And I understand there's quite a lot of work going on behind the scenes with the regulators to be nationally consistent about how they actually apply the expectations around this.

**Teegan:** A few of the gentlemen this morning spoke about HWSA, so that's a Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities, and that's a group that we meet nationally. We've got two groups in the psychological health space. One is from the engagement perspective, so how do we engage organisations around this topic of mentally healthy workplaces. But from the inspector perspective, it's about building their capability and their capacity. So been doing a lot of work on developing audit tools, and training, and just up skilling our inspectorate in this space.

So traditionally, if an inspector's come to your work place, you may have seen that they primarily walked through the procedures with you, and perhaps they focus more on bullying. But now we're going them more skills, and education, and training around how to look at a holistic psychological health and safety management system and to give guidance and advice around that.

**Peta:** So even your physical inspectors?

**Teegan:** Yes. For us in Queensland, it's all of our inspectors. We do not have dedicated psychosocial inspectors, we have generalists.

**Peta:** I know you're very passionate about the role of leaders in driving change. But you've also told me a salutary tale about leaders and personalities and how that can be an issue or not. Can you kind of just explain for us about the role of leaders?

**Jamie:** Well, I've experienced this doing coaching. On more than a few occasions where a leader is ... It's not that they're lacking empathy, but they genuinely struggle to try and understand why people are not coping as well as they perceive that they should. And I think part of it comes down to just their own capacity, as I said earlier, to deal with stress, to work long hours, to be very task focused, to be very self-driven , is something that they don't necessarily all their people share that same level. And, so, there's sort of a disconnect and, because there's a fundamental perception on the part of the leaders, they just ... Again, it's not a lack of empathy, but it's more of a curiosity, and it's more like they just need to harden up. You know, I've been through this myself.

And in one of the talks I sat in this morning, we're talking about the importance of emotional intelligence. I go back to my point about leaders have a big influence over their team. You have a big influence over how people experience their work. And I'm not talking about that you need to go around and give people hugs and tell them that they're beautiful people, but understanding that everything from how you manage your stress, how you deal with disappointments, how you respond to setbacks is role modelling to your team how they should respond. And under the banner of emotional contagion, you know, the mood that you're in as a leader will set the tone for the mood that your people are in. So oftentimes, it's about helping leaders understand people may actually experience it different than you are. And we go back to my point about it's important to try and be curious to really get a sense of "Well, how are people experiencing this?" Why do you find this particular situation challenging and stressful?

**Peta:** So that brings us to one of the issues I think Eldeen was challenging me with last night that people can be part of the hazard too.

**Eldeen:** Yeah. And I think, kind of to speak to your point a bit, is that leaders sometimes, again, don't have the tools or skills to deal with it because they've hardened up. They've just said, I'm going to do this, I'm going forward, and that's the tool they've used to survive and to thrive. Which doesn't work for everyone else. So I think the other aspect of them having difficulty in approaching things, is that they don't have the skills then to interact with the individuals that are having the problems, to be able to talk about it or to give them any tips. And, then, there's that fear in them that if they say something wrong because ... "Yeah. Okay. I'm now not reacting properly. That's not giving them a fun and fuzzy. Now if I say something wrong," which sometimes they do, "now is making it worse. And, so, I'd rather say nothing at all or not participate in it because of that fear base that's there."

So that's where we have to support anyone who we see in a leadership position, in a role in the organisation, whether it's the one owner and three workers at the fish shop, or the hundred-employee with the supervisor manager and senior leader, to give them those skills to be able to be empathetic, to be able to be self-regulatory so they're not saying things that are inappropriate. And that they can give good advice or ask the right questions within the environment.

**Peta:** So that's the supervisors...

**Jamie:** I was going to say, the other element that goes to that is often times the leaders themselves are just as stressed as everyone else. They just have their own sources of stress. And so, you've got people who are not coping trying to support people who are not coping.

**Peta:** Yeah. In fact, I've seen some work by Michelle Tuckey where up to 90 per cent, when she's basically done a causal analysis, 90 per cent of the bullying behaviour can be tracked back to the pressures at work, pressures that people are under.

Skirting around one of the sensitive issues here is that when employees have psychological issues, they can behave badly too, can’t they? So what about when our own individual vulnerabilities, and how much does an employer have to actually feel like they need to take responsibility fact that I might be a sleep-deprived grandmother?

**Teegan:** For us, it's all about the systems of work that they have in place. So thinking about that idea of a continuum, what we say is that on any one day you will have people that will come in with signs of stress, or signs of distress, or fatigue and those sorts of issues. But it's how does your system capture those people and support them? And we talk about an idea of, it's based on Tony LaMontagne's model, having a system in place that not only promotes good practices in regards to mental health, and that's things like R U OK Day? and Mental Health Week, for example, but prevention from a risk management perspective, understanding how to identify, assess, and control those hazards and having an effective risk management approach around that. And then, being able to intervene early. So once someone does show those signs of stress, fatigue, having ways to capture that and to be able to support that individual. And then, lastly, if they do happen to have and injury or illness, being able to support them to recovery. So it's more so about the system and being able to support them as far as reasonably practicable, and that's the other-

**Peta:** So you as a regulator, you see there's a limit to what the employer might do. I know, Eldeen, you're an advocate for better practice. So where does that leave off and ...

**Eldeen:** It's difficult for some workers to trust, to be able to say, "I've just had a child. They're colicky. They've been crying every night. I haven't slept very well," because they're worried that the supervisor, or manager, or company is going to say, "We can only tolerate that so long. We can have excuses for a period of time, but there's an undue hardship that comes into play." Now, larger organisations can often take more of that, but if you're one person in a five-man team, and then you don't want to let anybody down, and you don't want to give other pressure, and that increases your stress and pressure cause you feel like you're letting your teammates down, and your teammates feel like they've been holding up the ball for you for, now, too long and they exert pressure. And it gets to be a big ball that's in there. So again, you need to have a system in place to support that. Otherwise, that kind of just keeps going forward.

**Peta:** But what does that system look like?

**Eldeen:** It could be different for every organisation, I hate cookie cutter programs. For three payments of $9.99, you too can take this name out, put your name in, and this will work for you. There is no one size that fits all, especially with psychological health. And that's why assessment is so important. An example of one organisation, that I thought did and amazing job, where they sort of integrated or assimilated their physical hazard and the psychological hazard, cause sometimes, me coming to work in the state that I am in, I'm the hazard. I could be harmful to myself and to other people by what I choose to do or not to do, especially when I interact with the physical hazards within my environment.

**Peta:** Like a crane or a…

**Eldeen:** Yeah. And, so, this happened to be a power generation company in Canada, and they're doing some amazing things under their psychological health and mindfulness programs and such. But one of the things they do is they do a risk assessment before they do any project, especially with the high hazard activities. And they ask about the physical... It's a normal risk assessment that we all have the conversation with. And they do it with themselves at times, small groups with a supervisor, and it asks what are the physical hazards? Are they controlled? Do I have the right tools to do the job?

And then it asks, is there any type of psychosocial hazards that are there. Yeah. We're doing this work in the hood, I don't know, that's what we call bad areas back home... It's going to be in a bad area, and I'm going to set up, so I'm really worried because last time we worked there, somebody was attacked. Or the dog took my bank account and my truck, and they're gone, and I'm really stressed out and ... Where they can have that conversation in a very safe environment, very courageous environment, so that they can say, "You know what? Maybe today you shouldn't be doing this job. And here's our EFAP program. And here, have you ..." But again, that can't be just, "Here's your new check sheet, now go do this." It has to have that system that's set up around it so that everyone's supported to have the right conversations and use the right tools.

**Peta:** So I noticed you put in some comments there about wellness and wellbeing, and I think we should actually talk about that because this is one of the issues about, "Well, what does the evidence say about what's effective and what's not." And I know that you were sharing with me some of the literature that said, around cognitive behavioural therapy, if you're going to do something, which ones to...

**Jamie:** Things like, if you're doing stress management training for your people, you want to make sure it's evidence-based and, generally speaking, if cognitive behavioural therapy techniques are included in the stress management, it's probably going to be reasonably effective. I know that there's some... I was reading some research on things like anti-bullying campaigns can be very helpful. I think one of the things, getting back to conflicts or threats in the workplace, that unresolved conflicts amongst peers or between a leader and a follower can be one of the highest sources of stress for people, that they can become overwhelming quite quickly.

Mindfulness training, those sorts of things, can be very useful in helping people learn to cope a little bit better. I think one of the key things with training, whether we're talking about wellbeing or we're talking about safety as well, though, is really trying to understand that just because you share some information with people does not guarantee they're going to enact it. And this is where everything from messages systems that are in place to support people, for example, lunch breaks where people can practice their mindfulness or whatever it might be, they're encouraged to go for a walk, that there are systems in place to encourage this. And I go back to my point about leaders walking the talk with this as well. Again, I think under the banner of role modelling, leaders who are proactively looking after themselves sends a strong message. One of my leaders heads to the gym at lunch time every day, under the banner of looking after himself. And that sends a message.

**Peta:** How do we balance, though, not going back to the whole blame the worker initiative, and then focus on the individual?

**Eldeen:** That's what I was going to talk about is... That's what I'm so worried about is that resiliency training, or training that's targeted at the worker, is going to be our new PPE. Right? If we slap that on them, then they're going to be safe and it's kind of up to them. And really, in the hierarchy of control, is that training is kind of down here. We have to be looking at some of the systemic issues that are around it and deal with and control those as well. So that's one of the things that I've been seeing and that really worries me, is that we're just going to focus on that, and that's what we do with our people, and then it's done. "Oh. We're doing something." Or we phone the company up next door and say, "What training package are you using?" And we just use the same one, and it may not be for our individuals.

**Teegan:** It really perpetuates that idea that it's an individual issue, and that's what concerns me is that the organisation doesn't have a responsibility, the individual has a responsibility.

**Peta:** And somehow, it's because they're inherently weak.

**Teegan:** Yeah. And it sort of blurs the lines for employers and what their actual role is and what their obligations are. So by kind of selling these individual programs, which is great because they are good things, but they need to be part of a bigger system of work that focuses in the individual, team, and organisational level controls.

**Eldeen:** And as safety professionals, I think it's going to be important that how we communicate that as well, too. Because you're always going to business. Go away. I don't want to talk to you about it. I'm handling it just fine. And I don't want to participate in the programs." Or see it as an invasion of their privacy. And, so, how we look at the bigger wellness programs of what's your blood pressure and all that, I think we have to be just as sensitive with this, if not more so at times, to how people are going to react, and be able to have the skill set as safety professionals and practitioners to communicate effectively what the program is all about, and what those levels are, and be able to address people's concerns on all levels. Whether it's the worker," I don't want to say too much. Next thing you know, I'm going to be fired," or, "If I say too much it's going to be the next new rumour," whether it's the supervisor saying, "I don't want to say the wrong thing," and then he does go out and kill himself or... Whoever it may be, I think we have to have tools in our toolkit to be able to put the program together and to be able to talk about it effectively.

**Peta:** So do you need to be an organisational psych to do this stuff.

**Eldeen:** It'll help. Sorry. Everyone get a psychology degree.

**Peta:** So do you? If we're meant to be incorporating looking at psychosocial hazards as part of a holistic system of dealing with it, are we actually making this too complicated for people?

**Eldeen:** I think we need some education in it. I don't think we should say, "Hey, this is what I want to do." If I was going to go out and do a confined space entry program, I wouldn't want to do that without having some knowledge and base within it, or a scaffolding program, or so forth. I need to have some background. I'm not saying that you need to become a psychologist within it, but definitely understanding the process and the components. I guess that kind of brings me to that there is some courses that are out there in different geographical locations, in different universities, that are putting on to say, "If you were going to put this program in place, this is what you would need to do."

Again, in Canada, they've just started a certificate program for managers, people who are the champions of this program within their workplace, that they can take online through the University of Fredericton, that says, "This is how you would assess. These are the components that are there. These are the things that you need to take a look at." And they actually, then, have a centre of excellency that will support with background information and extra information that you may need to have within it. And that's their advanced program. And, then, they have ones for managers, and supervisors, and so forth.

So, just like we'd say the manager needs to have some training and education and the worker does, I think as safety professionals, we should be attending professional development conferences like this, taking some courses, if this is going to be an area of our responsibility.

**Peta:** And I think you as the regulator would tell us that we all need to be completely across the psychosocial hazards that may actually be impacting other areas that we might consider our specialty.

**Teegan:** Yeah. Definitely. We've got the core skills around identifying, assessing, and managing risks. It's just about understanding that in the context of psychosocial safety. And there's enough guidance out there. There's definitely training programs like you've spoken about. But I'd hate say that you have to be an organisational psychologist to do this type of work, because we talk to our inspectors quite often that have got that skill base, it's just up-skilling themselves in this particular area in terms of what the controls are, and what the most suitable controls are, and then what the hazards are as well.

**Peta:** And of course, under the due diligence requirements, a person conducting a business or undertaking or employer you might use that term, actually has an obligation to know what's going on in their business and what are the hazards and risks. So they can't just say, "I'll leave it to a specialist that'll call in."

**Teegan:** No.

**Eldeen:** I think there's a worry out there, I know that it's in Canada and it may be here in Australia as well, is that this is a new program and initiative. This is going to be something that's new, but yet it's been in our legislation forever and a day, that you're to take care of the physical, social, and mental wellbeing of your employees. And so, a lot of people are seeing this as a new thing on the landscape as well. And it's not. It's already a part of what's regulated. It's already a part of what we need to do. It's just, I think now, we're starting to build up our tools and our resources to be able to support that kind of program and initiative in our workplace.

The one thing that does worry me is that we still, in certain workplaces, are not good at the physical hazards. And that doesn't have sometimes a lot of people in it, it doesn't have the emotionality around it. It's going to be so much harder for us when it is with that people factor. When I can't put a guard on a piece of equipment, how can I help someone who's suicidal? And that's a bit of a worry.

**Peta:** Last night when we were chatting, you were saying it's actually about having reasonable conversations in a reasonable way.

**Jamie:** Absolutely. I think that and first of all, I would say, and I understand when you've got leaders, particularly front-line leaders who are already feeling completely overwhelmed and overworked, that when it comes to things like asking them to be a little bit more vigilant, not just about physical safety but about mental health safety, leaders, again, who are not trying to be uncaring but just kind of say, "Well, where am I going to find the time to do this? A, I don't have the skills. B, it's an area I feel completely uncomfortable with. And C, why don't they just harden up?" And I think one of the things it gets back to is, I believe, in terms of what I've seen on a day-to-day basis, the really good leaders who are keeping their people safe, whether it's from physical hazards or psycho-emotional, they seem to have the capacity to demonstrate care, they have the capacity to be willing to genuinely listen.

I heard a, I guess it's a little bit of a clever statement, on the radio a couple months back, someone asked the question, "What's the opposite of talking?" Any idea what it is? It's waiting to talk. That for most of us, our definition of listening is developing a counter response. And I think that, when we get really good at listening, which is really trying to both hear what people are trying to say to us and actually pay attention to how they're acting, often times people are communicating to us in ways already, that we just need to tune into it. And again, it's not about being a psychologist, but I think it is about being willing to be brave and have conversations going, "I'm not very good at this sort of stuff, but help me understand, how are you traveling? How are you feeling? And what is it that seems to be contributing to that? And is there anything that I can do?" Or saying, "Look, I'm really lousy at this sort of stuff, but it looks like maybe you want to chat with somebody. Here's our EAP number."

But I think it's about being brave and being willing to be a little bit uncomfortable, to at least ask the questions. The other thing that I would say, and I always say this from whether we're talking about OHS or whether we're talking about mental health, taking care of people is your number one job. And again, under the banner of leadership, it's, and, again, these terms were used this morning about transactional and transformational. I think if fundamental leadership development was helping people understand more about this, our job, yes we have to make sure that we're checking the boxes and producing what we need to produce, and we need to be looking after our people and developing our people. And yes, there's certain skill sets that go with that. You have a situation where people are more likely to speak up. You have a situation where leaders are a little more likely to be tuned in. And it starts from senior leaders, though. Because if you want your front-line leaders to be engaging with their team, they need to be engaged by their managers and so on and so forth.

**Peta:** I'm aware we're coming to an end. So one of the things that I'd like to do is to ask you about some take home messages for us all about this topic. So perhaps starting with you Teegan, what are some take homes that you'd like about pushing through the spin to actually get to the core issues?

**Teegan:** I think it's about remembering this idea of the continuum, the mental health continuum, and developing your systems around that. Looking for guidance on our website, so we have recently developed a mentally healthy workplaces tool kit. It is the first of its kind from a regulator, so that's just a little bit of a plug there. But it is true that it's really a practical tool that has everything that you need. So we got a lot of feedback from industry that they were struggling to understand what is evidence-based, and where do they go for these type of resources, being able to bring it all together in one place. So I would suggest, if you haven't had a chance to look at that, look at that as well as the national guide because that really provides the foundation for everything that you need in this space.

**Peta:** So cutting through the spin,

**Eldeen:** Cutting through the spin. I think, as safety professionals, we need to look at what are the tools in our toolbox as well, and what are the tools that we give individuals in the organisation, from front line all the way up to senior leadership, to be able to implement a fully developed system to deal with the issues that are there. So I think that part of it is on us, to be sure that we have the information that's necessary ... may not become the psychologist but the information that's necessary to build the system and give the support to the people who are responsible within the work environment, whether it's small mom-and-pop or large organisation.

**Jamie:** Last thing I'd say is this year alone, three million people will experience mental health issues related to anxiety and depression, two million with anxiety, one million with depression. Another 25 per cent on top of that will go undiagnosed. As leaders, it's not a question of if you encounter one of your team members that may be experiencing mental illness, it's likely a question of when. This is important, and again, under the banner of using the systems that are in place or, in some cases, maybe demanding a system be put in place to support you, to support your people cause, again, I believe that's your number one priority as a leader is looking after your team.

**Peta:** One that came to me as you were talking, and that I'd noted earlier was we're talking about resilience, but what's the difference between personal and organisational resilience? Cause I am hearing those terms used interchangeably a lot, but I believe that they're different. Perhaps I might start with you, Eldeen.

**Eldeen:** Thanks. Well, I think organisations often are set up to be more resilient because it's a part of their planning. You know, if something's going to happen in their organisation that causes stress on it, whether it's a natural disaster, or whether it is a sales issue, a marketing issue, they often have already identified some of the hazards, the risks, and put some controls in place to be able to withstand those types of things.

**Peta:** So it's a business resilience.

**Eldeen:** Yeah. It's a real business resilience aspect to it. Where on an individual basis, we often don't have that built in. Right? One of our close family members is killed in an accident, or we suffer a loss, or something else traumatic happens in our life and it just stops us. We haven't a plan in place most often. We haven't thought about that because we don't want to think about it. And again, some people are hardened enough that they can just kind of go ... and go on. And others don't have that or the tools to cope with it. So I think it's a real different scale that's there. And to me, that's the biggest difference is the planning and the system in place.

**Peta:** So ...

**Jamie:** The one thing I would add to that is that, on an individual definition, resiliency is not about being bulletproof or not getting knocked down, but it is this capacity to be able to pick yourself back up. They oftentimes now using language not just bounce back but bounce forward. Some people seem to have this ability that, when they take a hit, it's very much experienced almost as a learning experience. And I appreciate that when they're in the midst of it, it's not necessarily a learning experience. But they move forward and learn whatever lessons they need to so they're stronger the next time out.

One of the things from an organisational resilience is about this ability for an organisation to, again, take a hit and be able to bounce back. And there is an interesting connection from an organisational to individual resilience. Those organisations that seem to be most resilient to changing economic conditions and such, require a great deal of adaptability and the ability to make changes fairly quickly. To do that, they need people who are good at change, and who are good at adapting. And to be good at adapting at an individual level, you need to be able, again, to have some resilience, and be able to manage stress, and be able to manage uncertainty-

**Peta:** You also need to not be overworked.

**Jamie:** Yeah. Absolutely. And know that there's times, when we're in the change, we're going to be working ... Well, that begs another question about pressure and stress. But, yeah. Being able to respond to the times when you really need to put in the hours, for example. But also knowing that there's going to be and end point to that and you're going to have some recovery time as well.

**Peta:** All right. I think we've probably come to the end of our time. If there's no questions from the audience, I'd like to thank our panellists for coming along and talking today and being part of Safe Work Australia's virtual seminars.

**Panellists:** Thank you.