Insight aims to provide useful information, links and tips in the areas of Risk Management, Work Health and Safety, Business Continuity Management, and other areas relating to management systems and corporate governance.

Sorry, I can't answer your email right now as I am having a work-life balance crisis…

International research has recently confirmed that after-hours contact from Management heightens employee stress levels. Now this probably isn't ground-breaking news, but it is interesting to consider on the back of the growth in hybrid working arrangements springing from the Covid pandemic, and the shift away from time in the office where you used to actually speak with your Manager and work colleagues whilst physically at work.

Modern technology and the continual accessibility to emails and other electronic communication channels has enabled us to stay connected; but it has also blurred traditional work arrangements, times and processes.

Flexible work arrangements have fostered flexible starting and finishing times, and this has prompted emails to be sent well into the evenings and on weekends, generally at times that suit the 'now-flexible' work from home Manager.

The research looked at whether after-hours intrusions were leading to stress and depressive moods among employees; and yes, on days where there were 'electronic intrusions' (i.e. email pings that were looked at on one our various devices), there was a heightened level of job tension reported.

This sits at odds with organisations espousing a growing concern for the employee's mental health and wellbeing.

And we are not even considering the heightened expectation by workers to respond sooner rather than later, nor the subtly implied expectation in some roles that workers must also prove committment to the organisation by being seen to be working day and night.

Organisation Psychologists advocate that to overcome this intrusion issue, there is a need to establish boundaries, as well as exploring when it is acceptable for someone to contact another employee after standard work hours (like in an emergency).

At the very least it is important to do these things:

- For both the 'sender' and the 'receiver', work out what works best for & set boundaries for themselves at work, and clearly communicate these.

- From the 'sender's' perspective, do not expect a response and clearly state that a response is not expected out of hours (e.g. "I am working late hours because it suits me, but I do not expect a response out of hours").

- From the 'receivers' perspective – turn off notifications on all devices for after-hours periods.

A good work-life balance is required even when working from home or in a hybrid model. This translates to having a routine, establishing boundaries, having these boundaries respected, and allowing downtime after work.

Please contact QRMC for more information.

Australia's New WHS Strategy

Safe Work Australia (the Australian Government's statutory agency representing the interests of workers and employers to improve work health and safety [WHS]) recently released its national vision for WHS for the next 10 years. The **Australian WHS Strategy 2023-2033** (the Strategy) is now available on the Safe Work Australia website with its stated national goal to reduce worker fatalities, injuries and illnesses.

Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023–2033

The Strategy is cognisant of the recent and ongoing changes that have occurred in Australian workplaces, including acceleration towards services, increasing exposure to global trade, rapid adoption of digital technologies, shifts in workforce demographics, climate change, and changing expectations around family care and work-life balance. It identifies three key factors that are required for the Strategy to be a success:

- Enablers that embed good WHS practice, innovate and deepen WHS understanding, and collaborate collectively to respond to WHS challenges;

- Introduction of specific WHS Targets for reducing fatalities, serious injury claims and work-related injury and illness; and

- Actions that increase WHS knowledge, coordinate and cooperate, gather valuable data and information, provide WHS leadership and enforce compliance.

The Strategy is targeting the most common causes of workplace illness and injuries in Australia:

- Vehicle incidents;

- Slips, Trips, Falls;

- Hit by Moving Objects; and

- Body Stressing/Manual Handling.

The Strategy is also targeting the most common causes of workplace psychosocial illness:

- Work Pressure;

- Harassment and Bullying; and

- Occupational Violence.

Lastly, the Strategy has identified 6 industries that face the highest rate of serious workplace harm and where a high priority and focus must be given:

- Agriculture;

- Construction;

- Road Transport;

- Manufacturing;

- Health Care and Social Assistance (psychosocial claims); and

- Public Administration and Safety (psychosocial claims).

If you haven't already had a look at the new **Australian WHS Strategy 2023-2033**, there is some valuable information and guidance that every organisation can adopt, share and promote on its journey to a safer workplace and improving Australia's overall WHS performance.

Please contact QRMC for more information.