

*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.

## The wicked problem of risk assessing mental health & wellbeing impacts

The risk assessment of mental health and wellbeing impacts at an organisational level is useful to identify potential system weak points that need improving, but it fails to provide anywhere near the full picture of how the workers are impacted by psychosocial hazards.

The [Managing the risk of psychosocial hazards at work Code of Practice 2022](#) provides guidance on this, starting with a list of 14 'Common Psychosocial Hazards' to be used as part of identifying the causes or factors that need to be managed.

Hazard identification in the area of mental health and wellbeing is the easy part; the complication comes when starting to assess the risk impacts.

The Code gives neatly packaged examples with one hazard/risk impacting a worker – providing advice on what potential controls could be implemented.

But what happens if we have a scenario whereby three or more of the 'common psychosocial hazards' are present and potentially compounding to impact a worker or a work team?



The Code states that "... a combination of psychosocial hazards can increase the risk of harm". That seems to be a statement of the obvious, but what is the best approach for combining the separate risks to gain a more complete profile of the combined risks?

- Is the combination of two risks simply a linear addition?
- Does that aggregation of four or five low-level risks exceed the threshold for a medium-level risk?
- Or do the risks compound or magnify each other?

Consider this as part of a scenario: You're working remotely. You're already under the pump with high job demands, and then on top of that one of your colleagues is in a serious MVA, the cause of which appears to be fatigue after a long work week. In isolation, the remote work and the job demands were probably manageable, but now everything has crescendo-ed and you are up at the hospital checking in on Jonesy. It's no longer straightforward to assess the mental health and wellbeing impacts like the examples that are so neatly laid out in the Code.

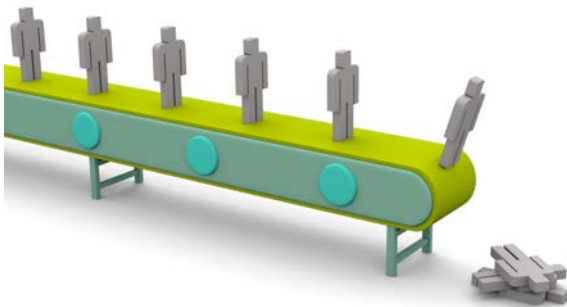
To properly consider the mental health and wellbeing risk(s), it's necessary to undertake the assessment at an individual personal level, exploring the 'context' of that worker, their personal strengths and susceptibilities, and considering this as a total package. On top of this, there needs to be a focus on the 'aggregation' factor – considering the accumulation of stressors (because as we all know, nothing ever happens in isolation).

It is extremely challenging to come up with a one-size-fits-all formulated approach to quantifying the risks in the real world. Context matters when assessing risk, and individual worker context is paramount for consideration in the risk assessment of psychosocial risks. The risk impact to the worker/work teams has to be contextualised, and in this instance, the context is an individual [worker] context.

This realisation does highlight the need for a quick, dynamic assessment tool that considers the individual's personal rating of their own susceptibility to each of the risk factor hazards, and it also highlights the need for the output of this process to indicate any 'red flags' when an employee's wellbeing is starting to decline. This kind of information then provides management a basis upon which to make appropriate efforts to reduce the risk(s).

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

## Labour Hire, Workload and Fatigue Risks in Modern Workplaces



Labour hire arrangements have become a core feature of many Australian industries, particularly in construction, logistics, mining, and healthcare. While these arrangements offer flexibility and scalability, they also introduce complex WHS risks – especially in relation to workload and fatigue management.

A key challenge with labour hire workers is the shared responsibility between the host employer and the labour hire agency. Under the various Australian jurisdictional WHS laws, both parties have a duty to ensure that workers are not exposed to health and safety risks. In practice, however, gaps can occur where responsibilities are unclear or have been poorly coordinated or communicated. This can lead to important WHS information not being received by the worker, such as via inadequate site inductions, insufficient training, and limited supervision. These factors significantly increase the likelihood of an incident occurring.

Workload is a critical issue in labour hire environments. Temporary workers are often engaged to meet peak demand or fill staffing shortages, which can result in high job demands, tight deadlines, and pressure to perform. In some cases, whilst labour hire workers may wear the same employer logo on their work shirt, they may also feel compelled to work harder or faster to secure ongoing employment, creating an environment where risks and incidents are underreported and safety procedures bypassed.

Fatigue is another major concern, particularly where labour hire workers are engaged across multiple employers, multiple worksites, or work irregular and extended hours. Without proper consideration and coordination between the labour hire agency and the host workplaces, workers may accumulate excessive hours, leading to physical and mental fatigue. It is now well understood that fatigue impairs concentration, slows reaction times, and increases the risk of errors and injuries, making it a significant WHS hazard, and in the case of machinery and vehicle operation, potentially fatal.

These risks are further compounded by psychosocial factors. Labour hire workers may experience job insecurity, lack of control over their work, and reduced access to workplace support systems. These conditions can contribute to stress, anxiety, and disengagement, which in turn can impact safe work behaviours and decision-making.

Regulators are increasingly focusing on these issues, emphasising the need for effective consultation, coordination, and communication between all duty holders. Organisations are expected to implement robust systems to monitor working hours, manage workload, and identify fatigue-related risks. This includes ensuring that labour hire workers receive the same level of protection, training, and supervision as direct employees.

Ultimately, managing labour hire, workload, and fatigue risks requires a systems-based approach. By prioritising worker wellbeing and implementing practical controls, organisations can reduce risk and create safer, more sustainable workplaces.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.



## Mandatory WHS Standards to be made available for free

The Federal Government's budget delivered on 12 May 2026 included an important new funding initiative that will make a substantial difference to businesses large and small across the country.

Funding of \$42.7 million over the next four financial years has been allocated for grants to Standards Australia to provide "[free public read-only access to Standards](#) referenced in Commonwealth and state

and territory legislation". Until this development, standards required by law to be complied with had to be purchased, at significant cost to small businesses in particular.

This change means that organisations who have struggled to stay abreast of requirements as detailed in key WHS-related standards will be able to access the current standards at no cost.

The new arrangement will cover all mandatory Australian Standards that pertain to WHS matters, the construction industry, and product safety.

QRMC applauds this initiative as one that will benefit many organisations and support the ability of management to achieve compliance in WHS matters. We look forward to the detailed list of affected standards being made available in the near future.