Appendix 4: Examples of control measures for psychosocial hazards

The examples provided in the table below are not exhaustive and may be used to help inform risk management processes.

Under the WHS Act psychosocial hazards that are a risk to psychological health and safety **must** be eliminated so far as is reasonably practicable, or if that is not reasonably practicable, the risks **must** be minimised so far as is reasonably practicable in accordance with the hierarchy of controls.

Focusing on higher level control measures that address work design will ensure the risk of harm is addressed at the source, as opposed to using measures that only reduce the impact of harm after it has occurred. In most cases a combination of controls will be needed to eliminate or minimise psychosocial risk. The examples in the table have generally been ordered from the highest level of controls to lowest. There are also additional controls at the end of this table that apply across all psychosocial hazards.

Psychosocial hazard	Example control measures
High and/or low job demands	**Time pressure, role overload** • Design the work to ensure manageable workloads with achievable performance standards. • Implement self-check-in processes for customers/patients to reduce staff workloads. • Rotate tasks and activities so that workers are not overexposed to time pressured or excessively demanding work. • Negotiate reasonable deadlines for completing tasks. • Provide workers with sufficient time, resources, and appropriate equipment to perform the tasks assigned. • Schedule regular breaks throughout the day and ensure that workers are taking breaks to get adequate rest and recovery. • Monitor and manage workloads during periods of peak demand (e.g. end of financial year, seasonal peaks). Use this information to plan and provide additional resources where required. • Ensure work tasks and cases are matched with the worker's capability level. • Ensure sufficient cover for workers who are on leave. • Implement flexible working arrangement policies and practices. • Implement workload reporting and review systems and schedule regular opportunities to review workloads with staff. • Encourage work practices and systems that allow workers to disconnect from work outside of work hours. **Challenging hours of work or shift work** • Ensure the roster provides for a continuous seven to eight hours sleep in each 24 hours. • Implement systems to manage and limit overtime. • Do not allow work to regularly exceed a 12-hour shift. • Minimise safety-critical tasks during the early hours of the morning (2am to 6am). • Ensure adequate work breaks and, where practicable, allow some flexibility in the timing of breaks, if possible. • Provide reasonable notice of shift rosters to allow workers to plan recovery activities.

Psychosocial hazard	Example control measures

	• Ensure there is consultation about shift rosters with workers and provide communication and consultation when designing or changing rosters.
	See more information in the *Preventing and managing fatigue-related risk in the workplace* guide available on the WorkSafe Queensland website.
	
	Emotional demands
	• Where practicable, ensure workers are not required to approach difficult client situations on their own.
	• Ensure there is sufficient supervision available.
	• Implement systems to support workers when they are required to make difficult decisions or when there are negative consequences to decisions they have made (e.g. child safety workers).
	• Provide workers/managers with safe spaces where they can have physical and psychological distance from events and/or debrief about emotionally demanding situations.
	• Design work so it can be conducted in pairs or teams where practicable.
	• Rotate work or activities to have adequate breaks from roles that involve exposure to emotional demands.
	• Implement file flagging for potentially distressing files or cases to avoid inadvertent exposure to distressing content.
	• Ensure there is a reporting system for exposure to distressing events and that managers or others check-in with affected workers following events.
	• Where emotional demands are an unavoidable part of a worker's role:
	   o ensure these are captured in a position description and that applicants are informed at the pre-selection stage
	   o monitor the psychological health through active supervision and provide training to managers/workers to understand and be alert to the early signs of mental health conditions/distress and how to offer support if identified
	   o provide training and practical support regarding how to diffuse difficult or confronting situations (e.g. conflict management skills) and implement escalation and supervisory support systems for staff.
	
	Low job demands
	• Design work tasks and activities so workers aren't overexposed to monotonous work.
	• Implement processes to allow opportunities for job rotation to enable skill development and job variation.
	• Engage in career planning conversations with workers to identify work that provides them with a sense of meaning/purpose.

Low job control	• Where reasonably practicable, avoid insecure, precarious and contingent work arrangements (e.g. move long-term casual workers to permanent contracts, consult and provide advance notice of work arrangements). • Consult workers when determining goals, objectives, work hours, performance indicators, work requirements and deadlines. • Facilitate discussion and input into what work tasks need to be achieved and how. • Involve workers in decision-making processes and encourage suggestions for continuously improving work practices (e.g. in performance reviews, team meetings etc.). • Implement processes to allow workers to have some control over workflow, customer queues, and task intake etc. • Implement policies and practices for flexible working arrangements.

Psychosocial hazard	Example control measures
	• Ensure systems are in place to provide adequate training to managers on strategies that empower workers rather than micro-managing.
Poor support	**Supervisor support** • Establish clear reporting lines within teams so workers know where they can go for help with work problems. • Ensure supervisors are provided with sufficient resources and support to undertake their supervisory duties (e.g. ensure that supervisors have a manageable workload, and their span of control is not so great it prevents effective supervision). • Assist workers with practical solutions for any task-related issues that arise (e.g. ensure adequate backfilling of roles or redistribution of work when workers are out of the office or away on leave). • Provide leadership development that emphasises the importance of task and emotional support from leaders and supervisors and how to connect workers to professional mental health support when required. • Schedule and prioritise time for regular and open discussion between workers and supervisors about support needs (e.g. foster a culture of collaboration and support by discussing any pressures and challenges within the work unit). • Provide psychosocial advice to supervisors conducting disciplinary processes – particularly for the purpose of being aware of processes and support needed. **Co-worker support** • Design work in such a way as to emphasise team collaboration rather than independent working and allow opportunities for incidental peer discussion about work tasks during the workday. • Decrease factors within work roles that are likely to increase competition. • Develop a team charter that emphasises expected behaviours. • Structure reward and recognition programs around team achievements rather than individual achievements. • Develop a peer support network and/or a mentoring/buddy program for new starters. • If responding to highly publicised issues (e.g. an incident picked up by the media or in social media), ensure procedures are established to support workers involved or affected.
Low role clarity	• Establish clear role expectations for individuals, including their role within their immediate work team and the broader organisation. • Implement a comprehensive recruitment and induction process (define role purpose, reporting relationships and key duties, tasks, responsibilities, and role expectations). • Avoid making workers accountable to more than one immediate supervisor to reduce potential conflict in work demands. • Avoid placing inconsistent or incompatible demands on workers. Identify issues such as duplication, insufficient work instructions, errors, missed deadlines, and problems with work task allocation. • Ensure roles are clearly understood via the provision of training and supervision, and a current role description. • Ensure that management structures and reporting lines are clearly defined. This can be supported by an organisational chart. • Implement a timely performance feedback system.

Psychosocial hazard	Example control measures
Poor organisational change management	• Ensure there are systematic approaches for conceiving, planning, developing, implementing and evaluating changes. • Implement robust consultation and engagement practices (e.g. group information and/or feedback sessions) as part of change projects. Give workers the background and reasons behind changes and check understanding. • Ensure the person communicating the change has the skills and authority to do so. • Train managers or supervisors to support workers through periods of change. • Ensure workers receive enough training for them to be confident and competent in new roles.
Low reward and recognition	• Implement a performance review system that ensures workers are provided with positive and constructive advice for future performance, including opportunities for skill development. • Recognise workers for their work outputs, but also for their ideas and behaviours. • Ensure praise and recognition is built into leadership training. Provide supervisors and workers with a range of strategies to recognise others, understanding that people like to be acknowledged in different ways. • Implement recognition programs that provide all workers with equal opportunity to be recognised for their contributions. • Ensure that workers are being provided with feedback that is timely, practical and specific to their work tasks.
Poor organisational justice	• Design fair procedures and implement procedures consistently over time and across all workers and work groups (e.g. a structured performance review and recruitment processes so all workers are reviewed and recruited using consistent processes). • Apply processes and procedures (e.g. recruitment, performance management) in a transparent and consistent manner. To do this, ensure managers and supervisors are provided information and training. • Ensure procedures are explained to workers in situations where the procedure will be applied to them (at the commencement of disciplinary procedures or complaint processes) • Provide workers with a mechanism to manage complaints or appeal the result of a procedure. Where a worker may perceive unfair work practices, encourage them to access the appeal process. • Review decisions to ensure that they are fair and free of bias. • Train managers in how to have difficult conversations with their workers in a fair and just way. • Foster a culture of transparency, openness, respect, fairness and equity. • Provide support and communication mechanisms for all parties to complaints and those going through disciplinary or investigative procedures.
Poor workplace relationships including interpersonal conflict	• Identify and minimise work design issues that may negatively affect team communication (e.g. competition or isolated work groups). • Provide sufficient opportunities for workers to get to know each other and build positive relationships. • Develop a code of conduct so that everyone is aware of appropriate work behaviours. • Implement and maintain a system to manage inappropriate workplace behaviours in accordance with the Code of Conduct. • Monitor the work environment for potential disagreements, factors or situations that may result in conflict and address these promptly. • Encourage respectful discussion and sharing of differing views and ideas among workers and within the team.

Psychosocial hazard	Example control measures
	• Clarify team rules of communication or develop a team charter. • Provide managers with the knowledge and skills to identify and manage conflict and respond to inappropriate behaviour, including accessing third-party professional support when required.

Remote or isolated work	• Ensure emergency communication systems in place are suitable for the location.
	• Ensure accommodation is lockable, with safe entry and exit, meets all relevant structural and stability requirements, and has all fittings, appliances and equipment in good condition.
	• Use a buddy system, particularly where there is a risk of violence or misadventure, or risks to physical safety.
	• Ensure workers are trained in, and carry out, situational risk assessments of the safety of their work location before commencing duties (e.g. when they are working in a client's home or in the community).
	• Ensure there is appropriate supervision/monitoring systems in place when workers are working in isolation, in the community, or away from the workplace such as:
	    o monitored CCTV and enhanced visibility
	    o schedule periodic visits by supervisors to visually observe workers and provide appropriate support and assistance
	    o procedures to maintain regular contact between workers and supervisors using suitable communication devices
	    o automatic warning devices that raise the alarm in an emergency
	    o a 'check-in' at the beginning and 'sign-off' at the end of the working period
	    o use satellite tracking systems or devices.
	• Design emergency response procedures in consideration of location and access to services available (e.g. relevant for medical emergencies and response time, consult with emergency services about possible rescue scenarios and what would be involved).
	• Implement opportunities for regular organisational communication/consultation to ensure workers are provided with up-to-date information and opportunities/avenues to connect with the organisation regularly.

Poor environmental conditions	• Design and maintain plant, equipment and work environments to eliminate or minimise risks associated with stressful environmental hazards (e.g. stressful vibration, lighting, nuisance noise, thermal discomfort, poor air quality, biological or chemical hazards). • Ensure appropriate PPE and resources are provided to workers. In addition to other control measures, utilise PPE to minimise residual risk (e.g. use face shields where workers are at risk of exposure to COVID-19 and spitting is a risk, or hearing protection if nuisance noise cannot be eliminated). • Ensure workers are trained in work systems to manage risk associated with stressful environmental hazards. • Ensure systems are in place for workers to report the presence of poor environment conditions that may create a stress response.
Exposure to traumatic events	• Rotate roles or activities to ensure adequate breaks from roles likely to involve exposure to traumatic events. • Implement file flagging processes on potentially distressing files or cases to avoid inadvertent exposure to distressing content. • Ensure procedures are in place to respond to critical incidents including practical support for workers, counselling/professional support services, appropriate information about available resources. • Ensure systems are in place to regularly monitor workers' exposure to traumatic events and workers' psychological health.

Psychosocial hazard	Example control measures
	• Where repeated high-risk exposure to distressing events is an unavoidable part of the role, consider additional risk controls including reducing workload to decrease exposure, increasing breaks and recovery time, or implementing periodic health assessments. • Design procedures to support workers in response to exposure to traumatic events. • Ensure managers are provided with adequate information, training and instruction in how to respond and manage reported exposure of workers, including how to identify early signs of distress or psychological injury and how to offer support if required. • Ensure workers are provided with information on how to report exposure to traumatic events and other procedures in relation to support options available.
Violence and aggression	**Physical work environment and security** • Ensure the building is secure, maintained and fit for purpose. Control access to work areas. • Use secure service windows, CCTV, timer safes, and anti-jump screens where appropriate. • Prevent access to dangerous or heavy implements or objects that could be thrown or used to injure someone. • Increase visibility of who is coming into the premises/work area through access, lighting, positioning of furniture. • Fit communication and fixed or personal duress alarm systems (e.g. personal duress alarms could be used in community services work where there is a risk of aggressive behaviour. Duress alarms should be attached to clothing but not worn around the neck). • Use safe glass (e.g. laminated, toughened, or glass alternatives like Perspex), including in picture frames and mirrors. • Provide a safe space for workers and others to retreat to in order to avoid violent or aggressive situations. • Ensure vehicles are fit for purpose and well maintained (e.g. have central locking, tracking devices with GPS to allow drivers in distress to be located, lighting inside the vehicle to see passenger behaviour). • Engage security consultants/professionals to conduct security assessments and/or provide security services. **Work systems and procedures for:** • Empowering workers to restrict, refuse or suspend service if other people fail to comply with the expected standard of behaviour. • Reducing frustration levels of clients (e.g. readily available assistance, alternatives to queues, or waiting areas with entertainment). • Managing the handling of cash and valuable products (e.g. limit the amount of cash, valuables and drugs held on premises and store them securely, vary banking times, or utilise security personnel). • Responsible service of alcohol. • Communication with clients about violence and aggression control measures (e.g. signs at the workplace such as zero tolerance of aggression and violence, security cameras are in use, or holding limited cash on the premises). • Safe opening and closing of the business. • Assessing individual client needs (conditions, triggers, care requirements) and the provision of appropriately skilled workers. • A trauma-informed approach and management plans for clients known to have a history of aggression and regular handover of information (with workers, other agencies, carers and service providers that includes safety components, in addition to clinical care plans). • Identification systems such that workers and authorised visitors are clearly identified (minimisation). • Working in remote or isolated locations (see risk controls for this hazard noted under 'Remote or Isolated work' in this table).

Psychosocial hazard	Example control measures

	• Worker and manager training in:
	   o Violence prevention measures (including trauma-informed approaches, use and testing of communication/alarm/duress systems, emergency drills etc)
	   o Positive behaviour expectations, de-escalation and emotional regulation
	   o Incident investigation and WHS risk management
	   o Monitoring the health of workers for managers and supervisors
	   o Work policy and procedures, including emergency response systems and reporting of incidents.
	
	See more information in the *Preventing and responding to work-related violence guide,* available on the WorkSafe Queensland website.

Bullying	• Empower workers to refuse or suspend service if other people fail to comply with the expected standard of behaviour. • Design work to minimise psychosocial hazards that increase the risk of work-related bullying (see for example, risk controls noted under 'Poor workplace relationships', 'work demands', 'poor support', 'low role clarity', and 'poor organisational justice' in this table). • Develop and implement a bullying policy (see example in **Appendix 5**). • Communicate in-person and online behavioural expectations to all workers and clients via training and other methods, including role modelling of appropriate behaviours by leaders and line managers. • Implement effective reporting processes, and actively monitor staff welfare through regular consultation. Encourage staff to report any inappropriate behaviour they witness towards themselves or others and address these reports in a timely and consistent way with feedback provided. • Implement and maintain a system to manage inappropriate workplace behaviours in accordance with the Code of Conduct. See more information in the *Preventing and responding to workplace bullying* guide, available on the WorkSafe Queensland website.
Harassment, including sexual harassment	• Empower workers to refuse, restrict or suspend service if people fail to comply with the expected standard of behaviour. **Physical work environment and security** • Provide facilities that give privacy and security. • Ensure the layout of the workplace provides good visibility of work areas and avoids restrictive movement. • Ensure there are no areas where workers could become trapped, such as rooms with keyed locks. • Provide communication systems like phones or duress alarms (and provide workers with information, instruction and training on how to use these). • Ensure a safe working environment for workers during access and egress from the workplace, during travel, at client or customer premises and any other location where work is performed. **Work systems and procedures for:** • Responsible service of alcohol policies at work and at work events. • Standards of behaviour and procedures for what a worker should do if they experience or see harassment at work or work-related events or from third parties to the workplace (including sexual harassment).

Psychosocial hazard	Example control measures
	• Addressing reports of harassment consistently and in accordance with procedures, including the provision of sufficient, appropriate and timely feedback to workers who have raised concerns. • Avoiding sexualised uniforms and ensuring clothing is practical for the work undertaken. • Regularly monitoring and reviewing work systems and practices, to evaluate effectiveness in minimising the likelihood of harassment occurring. • Collecting de-identified details of all harassment complaints, including those that are not pursued, to help identify systemic issues. • Effectively reporting and monitoring staff welfare through regular consultation. See more information in the *Preventing workplace sexual harassment* guide, available on the WorkSafe Queensland website.

While the table above provides examples of control measures specific to each psychosocial hazard, there are a number of control measures that apply across all psychosocial hazards. The list below provides example lower-level controls, which are common across all psychosocial hazards:

- Ensure there are workplace specific policies for any psychosocial hazards identified as creating risk in your workplace. For example, see the workplace bullying policy in Appendix 5.
- Ensure there is training for leaders and line-managers about their role in the design and management of work and psychosocial hazards and in providing support, particularly if their workers have experienced demanding, distressing, or traumatic events or have been exposed to bullying, violence, aggression, or sexual harassment.
- Build capability of workers by providing training relevant to any high-risk hazards identified (e.g. conflict management skills, dealing with aggressive behaviour, high work demands, working alone or in remote locations, emotional competencies, or interpersonal skills).
- Provide clear guidelines and expectations about respectful workplace behaviours and ensure leaders and line-managers model these behaviours.
- Ensure professional psychological support is available to workers who are directly or indirectly exposed to traumatic events or other emotionally demanding work.
- Provide clinical supervision in addition to managerial supervision to those who are exposed to work that has risks of occupational violence and traumatic events to manage risks of burnout and PTSD.
- Create an environment in which workers feel comfortable raising concerns about any psychosocial hazards.
- Provide clear guidelines and expectations on how to report psychosocial hazards or concerns in the workplace and respond in a timely, empathic, and effective manner to these concerns.
- Ensure there are appropriate mechanisms to manage any poor performance of workers or supervisors.
- Educate workers and managers about early warning signs of stress and fatigue and how to respond when they recognise them in themselves or others.