

Aligning HR & OH&S

As we take a leap forward into 2025 we consider our new state with provocative propositions which capture a satisfying result to some of our key current challenges. We discuss the personal, professional, and organizational impacts of the new state in 2025.

Discussion Statement 1 - As an employee, I understand my role in managing and sustaining a psychologically safe and healthy workplace, for myself and other workers.

- How do we instill accountability for employee?
- How do we create a safe space and empower the bystanders?
- HR & OHS can be role models.
- They can create a successful return to work program that provides the appropriate supports for those returning.
- Managers should have training and education in the area of psychological health.
- There should be measures in performance management systems to encourage managers to have empathy and good PH&S skills.
- If there is a safe space, employees feel like they can bring things forward. A safe space to make mistakes. No fear of reprisal.
- Focus on trust – not fear. Trust is like a ladder and each rung represents an action, a conversation, an agreement.

Discussion Statement 2 - We have robust informal and formal processes for managing harassment complaints. We are confident that we can assess when a complaint requires a formal process, and our informal processes support psychological health and safety in the workplace. Our employees understand the difference.

- Ensure employees know where to go to find out more information on informal services.
- Don't forget about ethics, privacy, security.
- What informal services do you have to offer employees – coaching, training, consults. Are they impartial and confidential?
- Does your organization need a culture shift to focus on informal options instead of formal?
- Know how to respond in specific situations, contact people from other avenues, be prepared.
- Move from black and white
- Supervisors should support a help ourselves attitude
- Supervisors need training, supplementary documentation - tools and tips
- Demonstrate action – back to work – look through a restorative lens

- The intake is crucial, so that we can determine the appropriate process: informal or formal, for managing complaints and act with integrity.
- In legislation, harassment is described as “unwelcome”. Often, performance is seen also as unwelcome. To understand the difference between harassment and performance we must consider if the action is necessary, or unnecessary.

Discussion Statement 3 - *We have a reliable investigation process for harassment complaints which reflects best practices gleaned from Occupational Health & Safety and Human Resources processes. Our senior leaders set the tone and cultivate an environment that breeds trust and lowers the risk of employees not speaking up.*

- What can HR use from the OH&S world , using the safety bowtie. The incident in in the centre of the bowtie. Preventative controls are on one side, and reactive remediations on the other. How do we examine theses? Can we look back at the incident and talk about how we could do better next time? What controls do we have in place to prevent harassment? What new controls can we introduce as a remediation which will help prevent this from happening again?
- How does thinking about harassment as an incident, change our thinking?
- We should capture ‘near miss’ events when it comes to harassment or PH&S incidents. How will that help us be more proactive and preventative?
- We might need to change our tracking system when it comes to incidents involving poor PH&S.

Discussion Statement 4 - *We have continuity and alignment in our processes between Human Resources and Occupational Health & Safety for addressing psychological safety and harassment in the workplace. We promote mental health and reduce the risk of psychological harms through an integrated total worker health and safety management system that fosters joint-responsibility and continual improvement.*

- Can we include our OH&S committees in managing these events or does confidentiality and privacy play a role?
- Ensure our formal and informal systems are integrated.
- Create performance management systems to reflect the competencies our employees and managers need for effective PH&S. Empathy, knowledge.