



JOB DEMANDS





Balance in the Workplace is designed to equip organisations in the health and community services sectors with practical tools and resources to mitigate **psychosocial hazards** and create safer, healthier work environments. These freely available documents, which can be used in digital formats or printed as needed, aim to address challenges such as **workload management**, **work-life balance**, and mental health monitoring.

The mission of this initiative is to foster workplaces where health and wellbeing workers feel **safe** and **supported**, enabling them to provide effective care to those who depend on their services. By adopting these resources, organisations can actively promote a culture of care, **resilience**, and **sustainability** within their teams.

Queensland
Workforce Strategy
2022–2032



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Overview

Understanding Job Demands as a Psychosocial Hazard

High job demands such as excessive workloads, emotional strain, extended shifts, and administrative overload are a leading cause of psychological harm and workforce attrition in the health and community services sectors.

The Managing the Risk of Psychosocial Hazards at Work Code of Practice 2022 identifies job demands as a critical psychosocial hazard that must be systematically identified, assessed, and controlled under Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws.

This issue is particularly acute in care-based environments, where workers frequently face:

- Crisis exposure and trauma-related care responsibilities
- Chronic understaffing and unpredictable workloads
- Emotional labour, including vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue
- Digital intrusion and limited ability to disconnect after hours

When left unmanaged, excessive job demands contribute to:

- Burnout and emotional exhaustion
- Cognitive overload and reduced decision-making quality
- Physical fatigue and stress-related health conditions
- Decreased morale, satisfaction, and team cohesion
- Higher rates of sick leave, turnover, and psychological injury claims
- Diminished quality and safety of client care

Framing Job Demands as a WHS and Psychosocial Risk

Under Queensland WHS legislation, employers have a legal duty to manage risks to psychological health, as well as physical health. The Code of Practice defines psychosocial hazards as any work factor including workload that may cause harm through a prolonged or severe stress response.

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Understanding Job Demands as a Psychosocial Hazard

In practice, job demands encompass more than workload volume.

Risk factors include:

- High time pressure and unrealistic performance expectations
- Repeated exposure to distressing client stories or events
- Administrative burden layered on top of frontline responsibilities
- Lack of recovery time between high-intensity shifts
- Remote work or technology that extends work beyond normal hours

Employers must consult with workers to identify these risks and implement controls that are both effective and reasonably practicable.

The Role of This Toolkit

This document provides a suite of evidence-based tools to support organisations in:

- Conducting structured workload assessments and demand reviews
- Monitoring both physical and psychological load across teams
- Creating flexibility and recovery time within rosters
- Building capability in supervisors to manage demand-related risks
- Embedding work-life balance strategies into day-to-day practice
- Meeting legal and ethical obligations under WHS law

By proactively addressing job demands, organisations can reduce psychosocial risk, support staff wellbeing, and foster a culture of safety, care, and sustainable workforce engagement.



Time Management and Prioritisation Training

Purpose

To equip employees with practical tools and strategies to manage their time effectively, prioritise competing demands, and avoid overload. In high-demand environments, clear prioritisation and realistic workload planning are essential for reducing stress, preventing burnout, and maintaining quality service delivery.

Why It Matters

In the health and community services sectors, employees often balance competing priorities across direct care, reporting, crisis response, and team obligations. Without adequate training in time management and boundary-setting, this complexity can lead to chronic stress, missed deadlines, and unsafe work practices.

High job demands are not always about the number of tasks—but about how they are structured, prioritised, and emotionally weighted. Helping staff to manage time more strategically reduces decision fatigue and builds resilience in dynamic work settings.

Core Training Areas

SMART Goals and Daily Planning

- Support employees to set daily or weekly goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.
- Encourage 15-minute daily planning windows to reduce chaos and mental load.
- Provide templates for goal tracking and reflection.

Prioritisation Frameworks

- Teach staff how to use visual frameworks like the Eisenhower Matrix (urgent/important grid) to triage tasks.
- Include prompts for identifying “emotional weight” of tasks (e.g. difficult client conversations vs. routine admin).
- Encourage staff to flag emotionally demanding work that requires recovery time.



Workload Assessment and Management Tool

Purpose:

Identify areas where employees may be overburdened and ensure equitable task distribution.

Instructions:

1. Each employee fills out their current workload weekly.
2. Supervisors review and adjust task allocations based on estimated hours and priority.
3. Use patterns from completed checklists to address workload discrepancies.

EMPLOYEE NAME	DEPARTMENT	CURRENT TASKS	ESTIMATED HOURS/WEEK	PRIORITY LEVEL (high med low)	COMMENTS
Example: Sarah Jane	Human Resources	WHS compliance	16 hrs over 2 weeks	HIGH	Check compliance with psycho-social risk

Time Blocking Techniques

- . Introduce practical strategies for batching tasks to maintain focus.
- . Promote protected time for documentation, debriefing, and meal breaks especially after high-intensity client work.

Managing Digital Distractions

- . Offer tips for minimising tech overload (e.g. email batching, turning off notifications).
- . Include “Right to Disconnect” guidance for setting digital boundaries outside work hours.

Respecting Time Limits

- . Provide guidance to supervisors on how to support staff who regularly exceed their hours.
- . Integrate task review into regular supervision to identify and remove non-essential tasks.

Integrated Tools and Templates

- . SMART Goal Planner (weekly)
- . Time Audit Log (for reflecting on energy vs. time spent)
- . Personal Prioritisation Map
- . Daily Focus Worksheet
- . Email Triage Tipsheet

Leadership Role

- . Leaders and team supervisors should:
- . Model healthy time management and refusal of unnecessary overwork
- . Recognise when staff are overwhelmed by task volume or intensity
- . Regularly check that expectations align with role capacity
- . Encourage staff to renegotiate priorities rather than silently absorb overload

Outcome

Effective time management training improves staff confidence, autonomy, and wellbeing. It reduces reactive work habits and supports a culture of psychological safety, where employees can speak openly about capacity and ask for support without stigma.



Purpose:

Equip employees with skills to handle tasks efficiently.

SMART Goal Template:

SPECIFIC: (What do you want to accomplish)	MEASURABLE: (How will you track the progress?)	ACHEIVABLE: (Is it realistic?)	RELEVANT: (Does it align with objectives?)	TIME-BOUND (What is the deadline?)

Training Feedback Form:

TRAINING DATE	TRAINER NAME	PARTICIPANT NAME	SESSION RATING (1-5)	KEY LEARNINGS	SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Policies and Guidelines for Workload Distribution

Purpose:

To establish clear, enforceable policies that ensure workload distribution is equitable, transparent, and responsive to changing circumstances. In psychosocial risk management, poor workload allocation is a significant hazard that must be mitigated through structured systems and leadership accountability.

Why It Matters

Uneven workload distribution—where some staff consistently carry more complex, high-intensity, or emotionally demanding tasks—can lead to burnout, resentment, disengagement, and workforce attrition. Without policy guidance, staff may feel unsafe to raise concerns or may internalise overload as a personal failure rather than a system issue.

Organisations that prioritise fair and transparent workload allocation build trust, foster resilience, and support sustainable performance.

Key Policy Commitments

- All employees should have a manageable workload that allows them to meet expectations without sacrificing well-being.
- No staff member should regularly exceed contracted hours unless formally approved and risk-assessed.
- Emotional intensity, travel time, and administrative burden should be factored into workload planning—not just client contact hours.
- Managers must act within 48 hours when staff report unmanageable workload or unsafe demand levels.

Workload Distribution Guidelines

- Weekly check-ins must include a review of capacity, task load, and emotional toll.
- Use workload tracking tools to inform redistribution, especially after complex or crisis-driven cases.
- Consider “emotional labour equity” avoid assigning all grief, trauma, or conflict-heavy cases to the same staff.
- Maintain visibility of non-client-facing tasks such as debriefing, supervision prep, training, and reporting.
- Ensure part-time or flexible workers are not expected to carry full-time caseload intensity in fewer hours.



Escalation Procedure for Overload

Step 1: Immediate Reporting

Employees should report workload concerns directly to their supervisor or team lead without fear of judgment or reprisal. Early reporting should be normalised as a proactive act of professionalism.

Step 2: Supervisor Action (within 48 hours)

Supervisors must assess the concern by reviewing task lists, emotional load, and recent work patterns. Staff must be included in the solution planning process.

Step 3: Escalation to Senior Management

If supervisors cannot resolve the issue (e.g. due to structural or resourcing limits), it must be escalated to senior leadership with a formal summary of the risk and proposed solutions.

Step 4: Resolution and Monitoring

Managers document all actions taken and track patterns of overload over time. Resolved issues should be revisited within two weeks to confirm the solution is holding.

Guidelines for Managing Peak Periods

- . Use historical data to forecast high-demand times (e.g. public holidays, school terms, disaster season).
- . Establish access to temporary staff pools or casual teams with minimal lead time.
- . Cross-train staff across similar functions to enable responsive reallocation.
- . After peak periods, hold debriefs to refine future resource planning.

Manager Support Requirements

Managers must be:

- . Trained in psychosocial risk identification and response
- . Supported to say no to unreasonable external pressures
- . Held accountable for timely workload reviews and staff feedback

Outcome

A policy-based approach ensures workload decisions are not left to chance or goodwill. It protects staff, enhances psychological safety, and reduces organisational risk under WHS law.



Internal Support Networks

Encourage collaboration between teams or departments to share resources or reallocate tasks during high-demand periods. Cross-training employees can ensure critical tasks are completed without overburdening any single individual.

Review and feedback

After peak periods, conduct a debrief to assess the effectiveness of additional resources. Gather employee feedback on workload management and use insights to refine future strategies.

Monitoring & Feedback form:

EMPLOYEE NAME	WORK HRS THIS WEEK	OVERTIME HOURS	REASON FOR OVERTIME	SUPERVISOR NOTES

Regular Workload Reviews and Adjustments

Purpose

To embed consistent, collaborative practices for monitoring workload levels, identifying risks early, and making timely adjustments. Regular workload reviews are a key control measure under WHS obligations for managing psychosocial hazards.

Why It Matters

Workload is dynamic. Staff capacity and service demands shift weekly due to crisis events, staffing changes, leave, or case complexity. Without routine check-ins and structured review points, workload risks can escalate unnoticed, leading to burnout, disengagement, and safety issues.

A culture of open, proactive workload review fosters trust, supports team cohesion, and enables continuous improvement.

Core Practices for Effective Review

1. Weekly Team Check-Ins

- . Use a standing agenda to review individual and team capacity.
- . Include emotional and cognitive load not just task volume.
- . Allow staff to name tasks that feel unsustainable, emotionally heavy, or unclear.

2. Supervisor One-on-One Reviews

- . Each staff member has a monthly check-in focused on workload, role clarity, and well-being.
- . Supervisors use a structured template to record insights, adjustments, and follow-up actions.

3. Caseload and Task Mapping

- . Supervisors maintain visibility over task distribution using simple mapping tools (e.g. workload dashboards, visual grids).
- . Highlight high-complexity or high-volume weeks in red, prompting early mitigation.

4. Flexible Redistribution Protocol

- . When a staff member identifies unsustainable workload, tasks are reassigned in consultation with the team.
- . Redistribution considers not only availability but recent emotional load and recovery needs.



5. Post-Crisis or Peak Demand Debriefs

- After surges in demand (e.g. trauma events, service expansion), hold debriefs focused on what worked, what failed, and how to improve.
- Use feedback to adjust systems not just thank staff for pushing through.

Best Practice Principles

- Reviews are safe, blame-free, and participatory.
- Emotional load is considered just as important as time-on-task.
- Staff are empowered to raise concerns without stigma or fear of reprisal.
- Actions are tracked and closed out, not left unresolved.
- Patterns are analysed over time, not just in the moment.

Leadership Role

Leaders must ensure that:

Time is protected for workload reviews—not skipped during busy periods

Supervisors are trained in active listening, emotional load detection, and trauma-informed dialogue

Trends in overload, burnout, and fatigue are reported at management level and re-sourced accordingly

Outcome

Regular workload reviews enable real-time adaptation to dynamic pressures. They reduce the risk of crisis fatigue, foster mutual accountability, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to psychological safety and sustainable workforce wellbeing.

Ensure that workloads remain manageable over time.

1. Opening Discussion: Overall workload feedback.
2. Task Review: Discuss ongoing tasks and potential bottle necks.
3. Redistribution: Reallocate tasks as needed.
4. Feedback: Suggestions for process improvements.

MEETING DATE	TEAM MEMBERS	KEY DISCUSSIONS	ACTION POINTS	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	DEADLINE

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)

Purpose

To provide employees with timely, confidential access to emotional, psychological, and practical support services in response to workload-related stress, burnout, or personal difficulties that may affect workplace wellbeing.

Why It Matters

High job demands and emotional labour can significantly impact mental health and workplace performance. Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are a key component of an organisation's psychosocial risk control strategy and help meet WHS obligations to mitigate harm.

Research shows that early access to counselling, coaching, or peer support can reduce the severity of stress-related illness, improve retention, and foster a culture of care.

What EAP Services Should Offer

- Free, confidential counselling (in-person, phone, or online)
- Access to trauma-informed clinicians or psychologists
- Manager support line for responding to staff distress
- Critical incident response following traumatic workplace events
- Financial, legal, and family advice where relevant
- Referral pathways to external services if required

Best Practice Features

- Staff can self-refer without manager approval
- Service is promoted regularly and visibly—not just during crises
- Sessions are available outside of standard hours
- Providers are culturally responsive and skilled in working with health and community services staff
- Confidentiality is strictly protected and staff trust is upheld

Workload-Related EAP Referrals

- Encourage EAP access when:
- A staff member shows signs of burnout, fatigue, or emotional exhaustion
- A traumatic client case or incident occurs
- An employee expresses being overwhelmed or unable to cope with demand
- A pattern of absenteeism, presenteeism, or disengagement emerges



EAP Usage Promotion

- . Include EAP contacts on payslips, intranet, and all staff communication templates
- . Reinforce availability during team meetings and onboarding
- . Train managers to raise EAP options early—not as a last resort
- . Ensure posters and wallet cards are available in all workspaces and break areas

Monitoring EAP Impact (De-identified)

- . Use high-level tracking data to:
- . Monitor uptake across time periods and services
- . Identify peaks in usage following demand surges or internal changes
- . Evaluate staff feedback (anonymously) about service quality
- . Guide training, resourcing, or additional interventions

Leadership Accountability

- . Leaders and supervisors must:
- . Be trained in psychological first aid and EAP referral procedures
- . Actively model help-seeking behaviours (e.g. using EAP themselves if needed)
- . Never penalise or stigmatise EAP access

Outcome

A strong, well-promoted EAP provides essential support for managing the psychological impacts of job demands. It signals to staff that their wellbeing is valued and ensures access to early intervention before risks escalate.

EAP Usage Tracker:

MONTH	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES USING EAP	PRIMARY ISSUES ADDRESSED (Eg Workload, personal)	FOLLOW UP ACTIONS



Flexible Work Arrangements

Purpose

To enable employees to manage their workload in ways that support personal wellbeing, family responsibilities, and recovery from high job demands. Flexibility is a proactive control measure to reduce psychological hazards associated with fatigue, emotional overload, and lack of autonomy

Why It Matters

Rigid work structures are a major barrier to managing job demands safely especially in sectors characterised by shift work, crisis response, and unpredictable service needs. Flexibility supports employees to navigate these demands while preserving their mental health, family roles, and physical recovery time.

Flexible work is not a privilege it is a WHS-informed practice that allows employees to meet their professional obligations without undue psychological harm.

Types of Flexible Work Options

- . Adjusted start and finish times
- . Compressed work weeks (e.g. four 10-hour days)
- . Part-time or reduced hours during high-stress periods
- . Self-managed rosters or shift swaps
- . Remote or hybrid administrative days for recovery
- . Staggered rostering to reduce cumulative fatigue
- . Temporary workload reductions following burnout, trauma exposure, or care responsibilities

Best Practice Implementation

- . Flexibility should be offered as a standard part of workplace culture not only upon request or after crisis
- . Staff should be encouraged to proactively discuss flexible options before reaching burnout
- . Use a Flexible Work Plan Template that includes purpose, duration, review date, and supervisor agreement
- . Ensure access to flexible arrangements is equitable across roles and not based on favouritism or position



Supervisory Role

- . Delegation Tracker: Lists assigned tasks, deadlines, responsible staff, and status updates
- . Task Clarity Form: Used by staff to confirm expectations, dependencies, and reporting lines
- . Emotional Impact Tag: Allow staff to flag emotionally heavy tasks that may require adjustment or recovery planning

Monitoring and Adjustment

- . Track requests and approvals to ensure equity and consistency
- . Review flexible arrangements quarterly for effectiveness and impact
- . Monitor links between flexible arrangements and reduced absenteeism, turnover, or stress leave
- . Integrate feedback from staff on barriers or unmet needs

Legal and WHS Considerations

- . Under the Fair Work Act and WHS Act, employees have a right to request flexibility in many circumstances, and employers must reasonably consider such requests
- . Failure to provide or review flexible work options can contribute to psychosocial injury risk and potential non-compliance
- . Flexible work also supports compliance with fatigue risk management guidelines under WHS

Outcome

Effective flexible work arrangements allow employees to recover from workload stress, stay engaged, and manage competing demands safely. When embedded into organisational practice, flexibility enhances retention, equity, and sustainable service delivery.



Flexible Work Plan Template:

Purpose:
Help employees manage their work during peak times

EMPLOYEE NAME	FLEXIBILITY TYPE (eg. remote, compressed hours)	PROPOSED SCHEDULE	SUPERVISOR APPROVAL	REVIEW DATE



Task Delegation and Resource Allocation

Purpose

To ensure that tasks are delegated fairly, transparently, and in alignment with employee capacity, capability, and wellbeing. Effective delegation supports psychological safety by preventing task overload, unclear responsibilities, and unaddressed resourcing gaps.

Why It Matters

Unstructured delegation is a major driver of stress, especially in high-demand settings where staff may absorb excess tasks without discussion or control. When roles are poorly defined or task allocation is inequitable, employees experience confusion, emotional exhaustion, and reduced job satisfaction.

Clear, supported delegation reduces uncertainty, promotes team trust, and ensures essential work is completed without compromising health or performance.

Principles of Safe and Effective Delegation

- Match tasks to role descriptions, skill levels, and current capacity
- Consider emotional load when assigning complex or trauma-related work
- Communicate expectations clearly—what, when, how, and to what standard
- Encourage staff to seek clarification without fear of judgement
- Avoid assigning 'invisible tasks' informally (e.g. admin, mentoring, unpaid overtime)
- Rotate high-intensity duties equitably across the team to prevent fatigue clustering

Delegation Checklist for Managers

Before assigning a task, ask:

- Is this within the person's scope and training?
- Do they have enough time to complete it within hours?
- Have they recently taken on emotionally demanding or high-risk work?
- Is this task essential, or can it be delayed, simplified, or reassigned?

If the answer to any of these is "no," reassess the allocation.



Use of Delegation Tools

- . Delegation Tracker: Lists assigned tasks, deadlines, responsible staff, and status updates
- . Task Clarity Form: Used by staff to confirm expectations, dependencies, and reporting lines
- . Emotional Impact Tag: Allow staff to flag emotionally heavy tasks that may require adjustment or recovery planning

Cross-Team Resource Allocation

- . Identify opportunities to share capacity across teams during peak periods
- . Use shared digital platforms (e.g. Trello, Monday.com, Microsoft Planner) to visualise workloads and prevent task duplication
- . Where staffing is limited, reprioritise non-essential work rather than stretching individuals beyond safe limits

Backup Planning and Redundancy

- . For high-risk or time-critical tasks, assign a trained secondary team member as backup
- . Build redundancy into rosters to reduce single-point stress and allow for leave or illness

Supervisory Follow-Up

- . Check progress on delegated tasks at scheduled intervals, not only at deadline
- . Ask reflective questions like: “What part of this task has been most challenging?” or “Is anything unclear or unrealistic?”
- . Adjust or redistribute where pressure is building

Monitoring and Evaluation

- . Review delegation patterns monthly to detect overuse or underuse of team members
- . Track time spent on delegated tasks using workload logs
- . Gather anonymous feedback on perceived fairness and clarity of delegation

Outcome

Structured delegation and resource planning reduce uncertainty, prevent overloading, and support team cohesion. When paired with supervision and transparency, task allocation becomes a source of trust and efficiency not stress.



Delegation Tracker:

TASKS ASSIGNED TO	START DATE	DUE DATE	RESOURCES NEEDED	COMPLETION STATUS



Monitoring Physical and Mental Health Indicators

Purpose

To detect early signs of stress, fatigue, or psychological distress among staff so that appropriate interventions can be offered before harm escalates. This supports duty of care obligations under WHS law and helps maintain a safe, productive, and compassionate workforce.

Why It Matters

Work-related stress often builds gradually and invisibly. Without structured health monitoring, early warning signs may go unnoticed especially in high-demand care environments where staff prioritise others over themselves.

Routine monitoring empowers leadership to act before risks become incidents. It also signals to staff that wellbeing is taken seriously and support is available.

Physical and Mental Health Indicators to Monitor

- Persistent fatigue or physical complaints (e.g. headaches, sleep issues)
- Emotional withdrawal or irritability
- Changes in punctuality, productivity, or accuracy
- Missed breaks, skipped meals, or extended unpaid overtime
- Sudden increase in sick leave or unplanned absences
- Avoidance of certain tasks or teams
- Expressions of overwhelm, hopelessness, or burnout

Tools and Processes

1. Quarterly Wellbeing Survey

- Tracks perceived workload manageability, energy levels, and emotional exhaustion
- Uses anonymous responses to encourage openness
- Includes short answer prompts like: “What’s been hardest about work recently?” or “What support would help most right now?”

2. Self-Assessment and Check-In Tools

- Provide optional personal checklists that employees can complete alone or with a supervisor
- Include reflection on stress symptoms, sleep quality, work satisfaction, and emotional wellbeing



3. **Workload and Wellbeing Tracker**

- . Staff log weekly trends in workload, emotional demand, and time for recovery
- . Patterns inform flexible work decisions and resource planning

4. **Visual Dashboards for Managers**

- . De-identified summary data helps team leaders spot patterns across teams
- . Alerts when multiple staff in one area show similar stress indicators

5. **Burnout Risk Flags**

Any three of the following within one quarter may trigger a proactive review:

- . Two or more sick days without a physical illness
- . Reported feelings of being “barely coping”
- . Missed supervision or EAP referral uptake
- . Long stretches without time off
- . Emotional breakdown at work or disengagement from team activity

Manager Responsibilities

- . Hold regular, proactive wellbeing conversations not only after incidents
- . Recognise that stigma and workload may prevent staff from disclosing problems
- . Normalize help-seeking and model self-care behaviours
- . Offer immediate adjustments (e.g. lighter duties, additional supervision, schedule change) if risk indicators arise

Team Culture Considerations

- . Make check-ins routine not a sign that something is “wrong”
- . Encourage peer support and noticing signs in each other
- . Frame wellbeing monitoring as safety, not surveillance

Outcome

Regular monitoring of health indicators enables organisations to respond early to psychosocial hazards. It reduces injury risk, improves retention, and helps create a culture where people feel safe to speak up, rest, and receive care when needed.



Employee Survey:

1. I feel my workload is manageable

☐

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

☐

DISAGREE

☐

NEITHER AGREE OR
DISAGREE

☐

AGREE

☐

STRONGLY
AGREE

2. I have adequate support to perform my job.

☐

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

☐

DISAGREE

☐

NEITHER AGREE OR
DISAGREE

☐

AGREE

☐

STRONGLY
AGREE

3. I feel mentally and physically healthy

☐

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

☐

DISAGREE

☐

NEITHER AGREE OR
DISAGREE

☐

AGREE

☐

STRONGLY
AGREE

4. I have the tools and resources needed to perform my role effectively.

☐

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

☐

DISAGREE

☐

NEITHER AGREE OR
DISAGREE

☐

AGREE

☐

STRONGLY
AGREE

5. I feel that my concerns are heard and addressed by my supervisor.

☐

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

☐

DISAGREE

☐

NEITHER AGREE OR
DISAGREE

☐

AGREE

☐

STRONGLY
AGREE

Recovery and Debriefing Practices

Purpose

To ensure staff have regular opportunities to recover from the physical and emotional demands of their work, especially following periods of high intensity, trauma exposure, or organisational change. Recovery and structured debriefing are critical for preventing burnout, managing psychosocial risk, and sustaining a healthy, high-functioning workforce.

Why It Matters

Health and community services roles often involve repeated exposure to grief, trauma, crisis, and human suffering. Without time to recover and process these experiences, staff may develop compassion fatigue, moral injury, or chronic stress.

Workload recovery is not just rest it is an active process of emotional regulation, meaning-making, and reconnection with purpose. Debriefing helps prevent emotional build-up and reinforces that staff wellbeing matters as much as client outcomes.

Core Recovery Practices

1. Scheduled Recovery Time

- . Embed low-intensity administrative or non-client-facing days after high-demand rosters
- . Allow staff to schedule remote “quiet work days” following complex care tasks or major incidents
- . Encourage use of annual leave before exhaustion becomes acute

2. Structured Emotional Debriefs

- . Offer optional, facilitated sessions following critical incidents or emotionally demanding cases
- . Use trauma-informed debrief models (e.g. defusing, reflection rounds, group validation)
- . Include peer-led options for those who prefer informal formats



3. Team Reflection Sessions

- . Hold monthly or bi-monthly team sessions focused on:
- . What's been challenging?
- . What have we learned?
- . What support is needed now?
- . Use these reflections to inform policy, resourcing, and training

4. Recovery Room or Quiet Space

- . Provide a dedicated space in the workplace for short breaks, decompression, or brief guided relaxation
- . Equip with low-stimulation materials (e.g. dim lighting, water, seating, wellbeing resources)

5. Recovery Conversations with Managers

- . Train supervisors to ask: "What would recovery look like for you this week?"
- . Provide space to request temporary adjustments without shame or resistance
- . Integrate recovery planning into return-to-work or post-crisis supervision

Recommended Tools

- . Recovery Time Request Form
- . Emotional Debriefing Prompt Sheet
- . Manager's Guide to Trauma-Aware Check-Ins
- . Weekly Recovery Journal for Staff Use
- . Roster Planner with Built-In Recovery Buffers

Leadership Role

Leaders are responsible for:

- . Modelling recovery practices e.g. using leave, attending debriefs, avoiding overtime
- . Approving recovery-related flexibility without delay
- . Advocating for resourcing that enables sustainable workloads, not just short-term fixes

Cultural Shift Required

- . Recovery is not a reward for hard work it is a safety measure for high-risk work
- . Debriefing should be seen as routine not a sign of weakness
- . Staff who use recovery time are protecting their health and their clients

Outcome

Embedding recovery and debriefing into workload systems reduces burnout, improves retention, and strengthens team culture. It ensures that staff can continue to care for others without sacrificing their own wellbeing.



Conclusion and Action Plan

Summary

Managing job demands is a core requirement for maintaining a healthy, high-performing workforce especially in the health and community services sector. When job demands exceed employee capacity without appropriate supports, the result is often burnout, turnover, psychological injury, and diminished quality of care.

This resource has outlined a practical, WHS-aligned approach to managing job demands through structured workload reviews, supportive supervision, equitable task delegation, flexible work arrangements, and access to recovery strategies. It reflects the latest guidance from the Managing the Risk of Psychosocial Hazards at Work Code of Practice 2022 and responds to the specific challenges of emotionally demanding, people-centred work.

Key Takeaways

- . High job demands are a legally recognised psychosocial hazard and must be controlled through structured risk management.
- . Staff must be involved in shaping workload policies, raising concerns early, and helping to design solutions.
- . Regular monitoring of workload, fatigue, and emotional strain helps identify problems before they become crises.
- . Flexibility, recovery time, and debriefing are not extras they are essential protections for frontline workers.
- . Leaders must be trained, resourced, and held accountable for creating psychologically safe, well-balanced work environments.

Organisational Action Plan

1. Establish Governance

- . Assign responsibility for psychosocial risk and job demands management to a WHS or leadership representative
- . Create a cross-functional working group to oversee implementation

2. Conduct a Baseline Risk Assessment

- . Use existing workload, wellbeing, and psychosocial survey data
- . Identify high-risk teams, roles, or time period



3. Roll Out Key Tools and Templates

- . Launch workload tracking, flexible work planning, and team check-in templates across teams
- . Ensure tools are embedded in existing systems, not added as extra burdens

4. Train Leaders and Supervisors

- . Provide training in trauma-informed supervision, workload monitoring, and supportive delegation
- . Equip managers to respond compassionately and consistently when staff raise workload concerns.

5. Promote a Recovery-Focused Culture

- . Normalise recovery time, EAP use, and emotional debriefing
- . Recognise and reward teams that model healthy workload practices

6. Monitor and Adapt

- . Set quarterly review points to evaluate what's working and what needs adjusting
- . Involve staff in reviewing trends, sharing feedback, and co-creating improvements

Final Message

Workload management is more than a staffing issue it is a human rights, health, and safety issue. When organisations take job demands seriously and put systems in place to monitor, adapt, and support their people, they build not only resilience but trust, retention, and excellence in care.

Let me know if you'd like me to compile this entire overhauled document into a single editable format or create supporting visuals (e.g. summary flowcharts or toolkits).





Balance in the Workplace is an Employee Assistance Program developed by **Centacare FNQ**, a local organisation committed to delivering quality **Mental Health and Wellbeing Services** since 1981.

For more information about Balance in the Workplace and how it can support you or your team, please contact:

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