



Australian Government

Comcare

Management of psychological injuries

Comcare Research Project

AUSTRALIA'S
SAFEST
WORKPLACES

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Presentation Outline

- Project background
- Best practice
- Preliminary results
 - > Employee survey
 - > Small group discussions
- Next steps

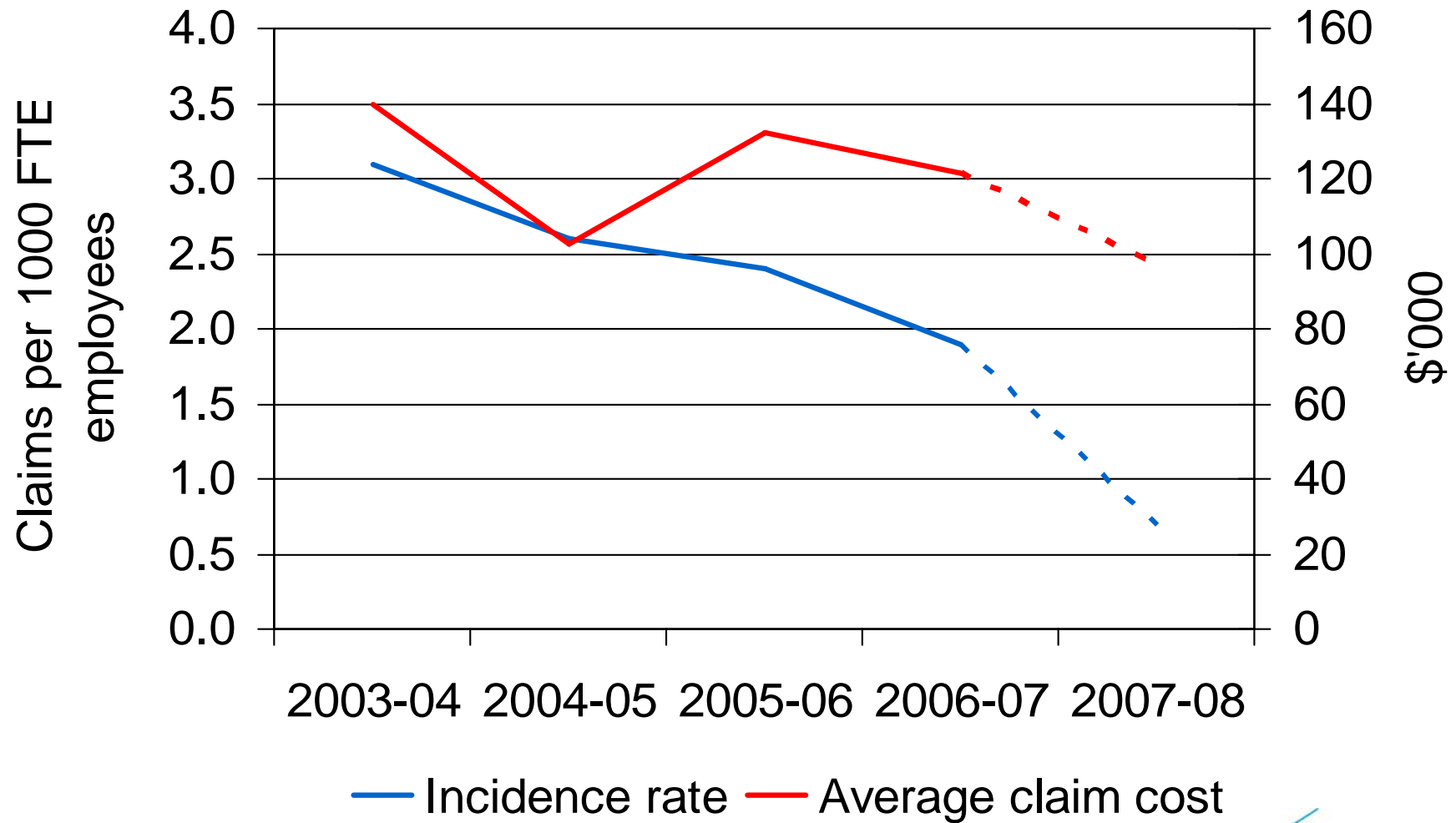
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Project aims

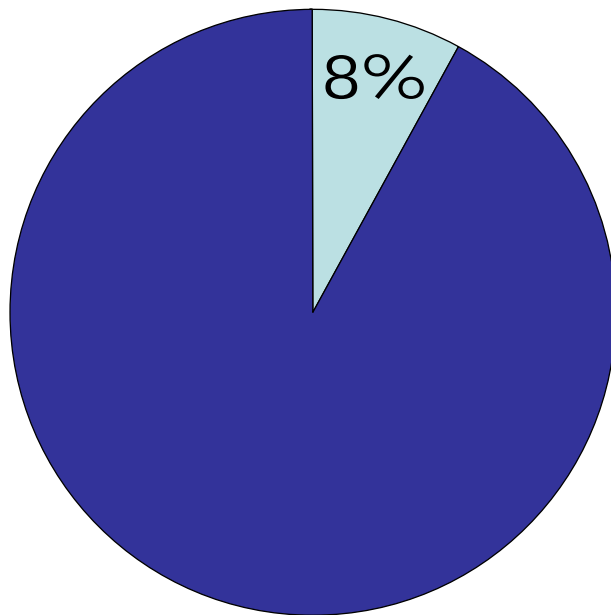
- Identify better practice approaches by employers
- Highlight approaches employers could adopt to enhance RTW outcomes

Rationale

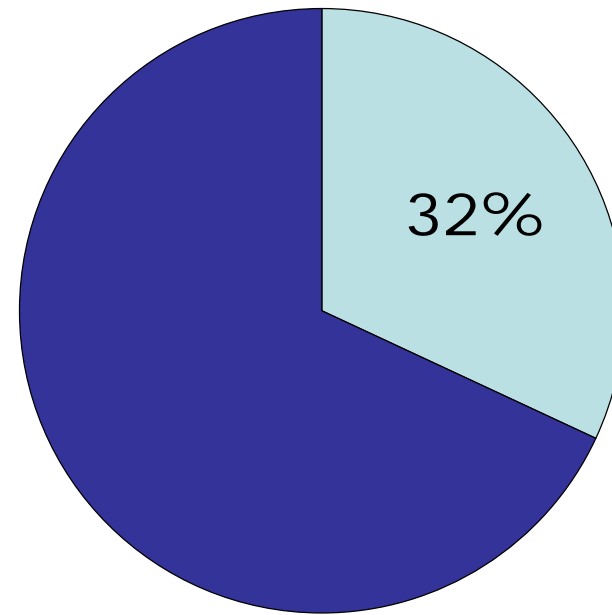


Rationale

All claims



Total claim costs



■ Psychological injury

■ Other injury

Working in **partnership** with
six employers representing
the **diversity** of the jurisdiction

Approach

- Claims data analysis
- Employee RTW survey analysis
- Review organisational policies
- Survey key employer personnel
- Small group discussions

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'individuals for whom outcomes were most negative were likely to be those whose stress continued over time without intervention or management'

Kendall, Guy, Muenchberger, Murphy & O'Neill (2003)

Recognise
early
warning
signs



Respond to
early
warning
signs



Assess
needs &
plan RTW



Enable
recovery &
resolution

Recognise early warning signs

Recognise

early warning signs

- ☑ Policy
- ☑ Workforce mental health aware
- ☑ Managers can identify
- ☑ Employees can self identify

Respond to early warning signs

Respond

to early warning signs

- ☑ Intervene early
- ☑ Contact with employee
- ☑ Manager responds **appropriately**
- ☑ Support is offered

'the organisation's reaction to the situation can, in some cases, influence the prognosis and recovery time.'

Health and Safety Executive (2003)

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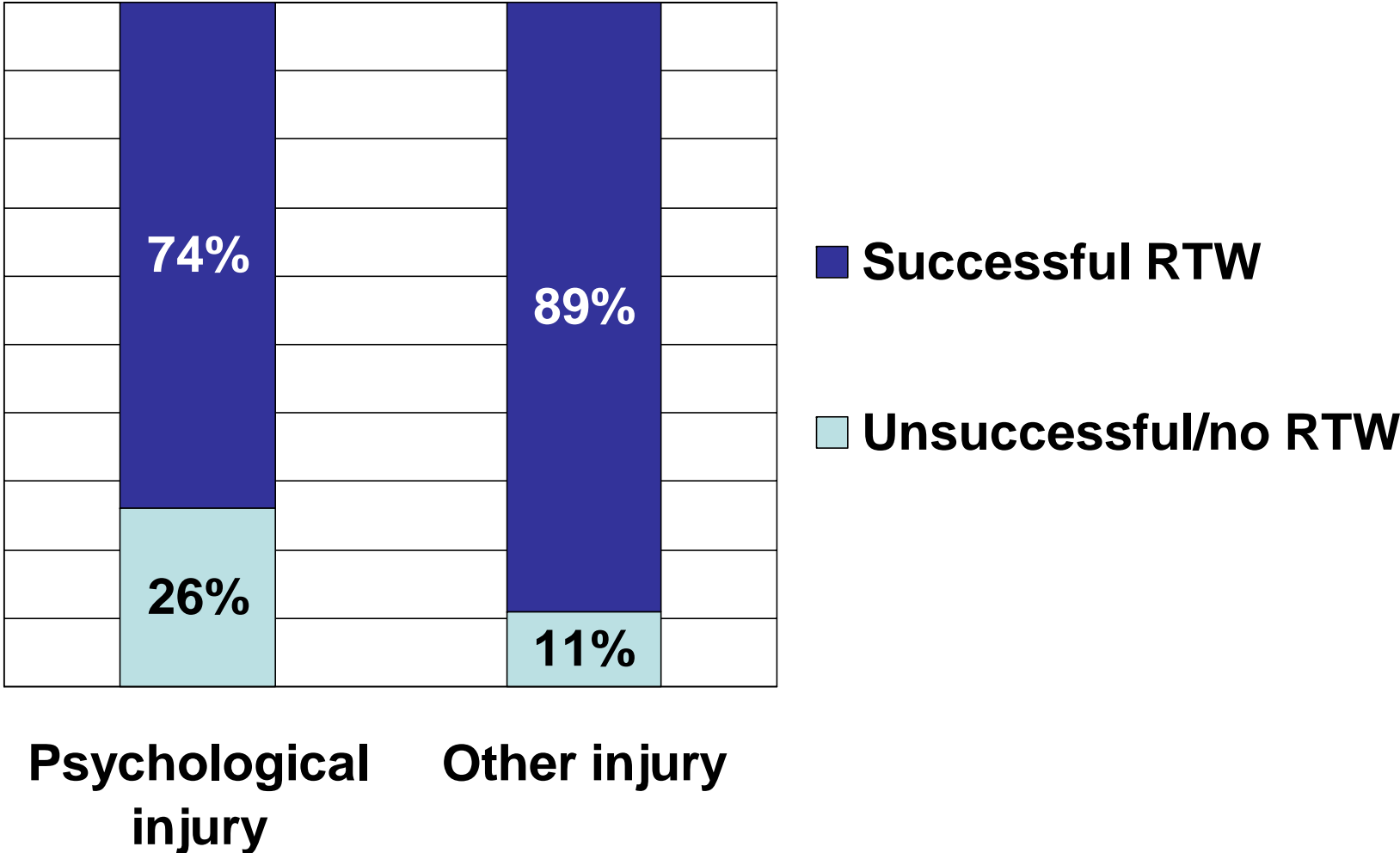
Employees' RTW experiences and perceptions

→ Analysis of RTW survey responses

Survey 244 employees:

- Comcare scheme
- Premium payers and self-insurers
- Psychological injury, 2002–03 to 2006–07
- Ten days or more off work

RTW Outcomes



What factors contribute to
better RTW outcomes?

Perceptions of workplace

- ☑ Employer prepared to invest in OHS
- ☑ Employee valued at work
- ☑ Management will help RTW

RTW process

- ☑ Prompt contact by case manager
- ☑ RTW plan
- ☑ Assistance to follow RTW plan

Perceptions of RTW experience

- ☑ Ready to RTW (and recovered from injury)
- ☑ Case manager skilled to manage case
- ☑ Supervisor skilled to assist RTW
- ☑ Supported by people at work

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Small group discussions

- ☑ Health & Safety Representatives
- ☑ Managers & Supervisors
- ☑ HR Personnel
- ☑ Case Managers

Organisation's greatest strengths in assisting and supporting employees?

☑ EAP

> Assistance

> Education

☑ Formal early intervention

> Proactive

> Case management

> Funding

☑ Supportive working environment

> Genuine interest

> Employee valued

> Team support

☑ Tailored RTW plan

> Manager and employee

> Individual

Creating a supportive climate to promote RTW?

- ☑ Manager support
 - > Communication
 - > Understanding
 - > Contact

- ☑ Team environment
 - > Right conditions
 - > Team briefing

*'Levels of **supportive leadership** & the quality of work **team climate** influence return to work outcomes over and above injury type and the nature of treatment/rehabilitation services.'*

Cotton (2006)

Key messages

- Collective knowledge
- Works for employees
- By design or by chance?

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References

Cotton, P 2006, *Preventing psychological injury: a report for Comcare on the pilot prevention project*, OHS 64, Comcare, Canberra.

Health and Safety Executive 2003, *Best practice in rehabilitating employees following absence due to work-related stress*, HSE research report 138, prepared by The Institute for Employment Studies, HSE Books, Sudbury.

Kendall, E, Guy, L, Muenchberger, H, Murphy, P & O' Neill, V 2003, *Occupational stress: a qualitative investigation of effective injury management*, WorkCover Western Australia, Shenton Park.