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Safe work is for life
national safe work month 2026

WORKER INSIGHTS FROM COMCARE'S PSYCHOSOCIAL INSPECTION PROGRAM

Thursday 22 October 2026

11:00 am – 11:45 am AEDT





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Acknowledgement of Country

Acknowledgement of artist
Healing Hands – Cover artwork by Dion Devow of DDesigns



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WORKER INSIGHTS FROM COMCARE'S PSYCHOSOCIAL INSPECTION PROGRAM



Luka Campbell, Director Psychosocial Regulation Team

Information session: *Worker insights from Comcare's psychosocial inspection program*

Followed by **Q&A session**

Session overview

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1 Background and strategic context

2 What is involved in the inspection

3 Progress of the program, and worker insights

4 Next steps

Background

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2018 - Boland Review

Review of Model WHS Laws
Model WHS Regulations amended to deal with psychosocial risks.

2023 - WHS regulations amended

Commonwealth WHS Regulation amended in line with model law.

2023 - Psychosocial Inspection Program: Pilot + Evaluation

5 PCBUs participated in the Pilot
Independent evaluation (University of Qld).

2024-25 Codes of Practice approved by Minister

Work Health and Safety (Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work) Code of Practice 2024

Work Health and Safety (Sexual and Gender-based Harassment) Code of Practice 2025.

2024 - Psychosocial Inspection Program: ongoing implementation

March 2024 – Comcare commenced full-scale implementation of psychosocial inspection program as ongoing regulatory activity.

Strategic context

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Strategic priority: Prevent work-related injuries

Key activity

Be a leader in prevention of psychological injuries in particular, and increase our influence, appropriately sharing insights to more effectively drive positive change with employers and employees.

2028 aspiration

We are a national leader in prevention of psychological injuries and illness, actively sharing learnings and resources that can be applied by workplaces and used by other regulators. We influence policy and seamlessly collaborate to unify and promote our prevention approach.

Intended results

- Our proactive prevention initiatives drive positive change with employers and employees.
- Our compliance and enforcement activities influence positive health and safety outcomes.

Aims

- **Safe and healthy workplaces**
  Promote and enable psychosocially safe and healthy workplaces across the Commonwealth jurisdiction.
- **Support compliance**
  Assist duty holders to manage psychosocial hazards and risks and comply with WHS obligations.
- **Provide meaningful advice**
  Provide tailored information and advice to duty holders to support practical improvement.
- **Build capability**
  Increase capability and knowledge of PCBUs to effectively manage psychosocial risks and hazards.
- **Monitor performance**
  Understand the level of compliance across the jurisdiction with management of psychosocial hazards and risks.

Each inspection involves input from:

- Workers
- HSRs
- WHS and HR teams
- Senior Leaders

Selection into the program

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1 Risk-based selection

Quantitative analysis of data held by Comcare

- Claims data
- RTW rates
- WHS incidents
- WHS concerns

2 Voluntary participation

PCBUs may request to participate in the program on an opt-in basis.

A small proportion of each inspection tranche is allocated to voluntary participation.

3 Intelligence-driven

Qualitative analysis of information related to PCBUs in Comcare's jurisdiction.

- Public-domain information
- Inspector observations
- Internal and external stakeholders (unions, HSRs, Claims account managers)

All routes lead into the same inspection process.

Criteria

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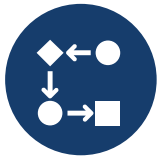
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Organisational environment and psychosocial safety context



Performance of WHS duties



Psychosocial risk management process



Consultation and communication



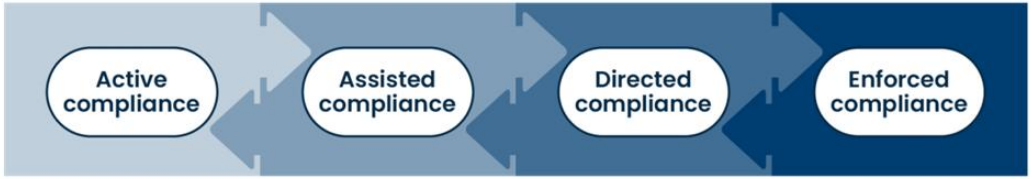
Responding to reports, complaints and incidents



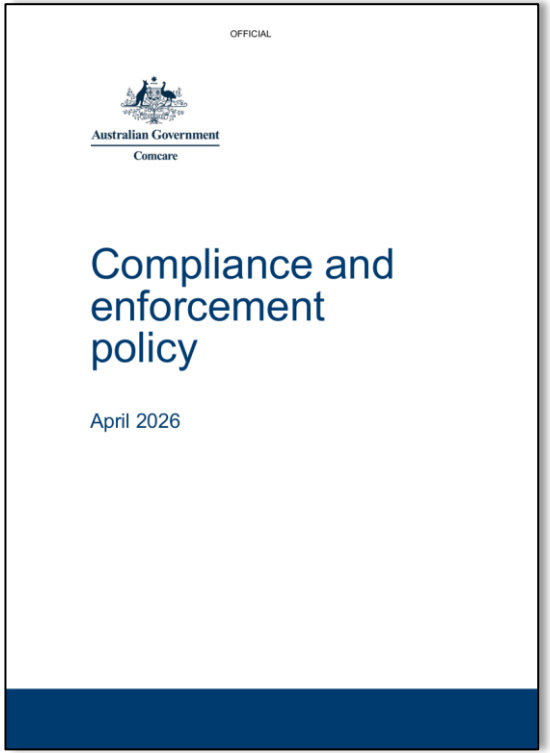
Specific psychosocial hazards

Each criterion tests a different part of the system in practice and is reported separately at the conclusion of the inspection.

Regulatory Posture



[Comcare's role under the WHS Act | Comcare]


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Compliance and enforcement policy

April 2026

Progress

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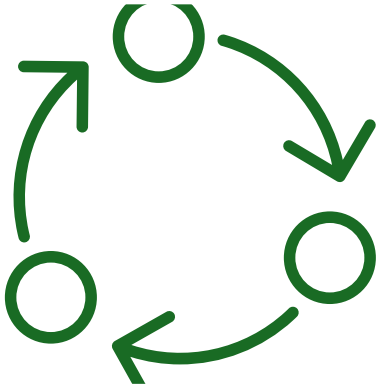
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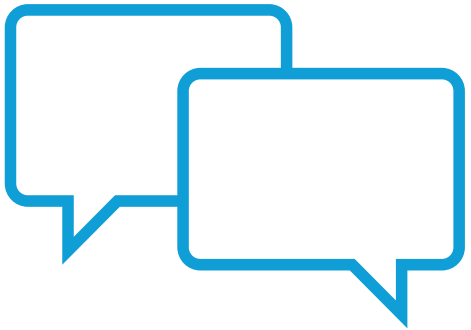
Themes



Genuine commitment



Risk management



Communication and consultation

The impact of consultation

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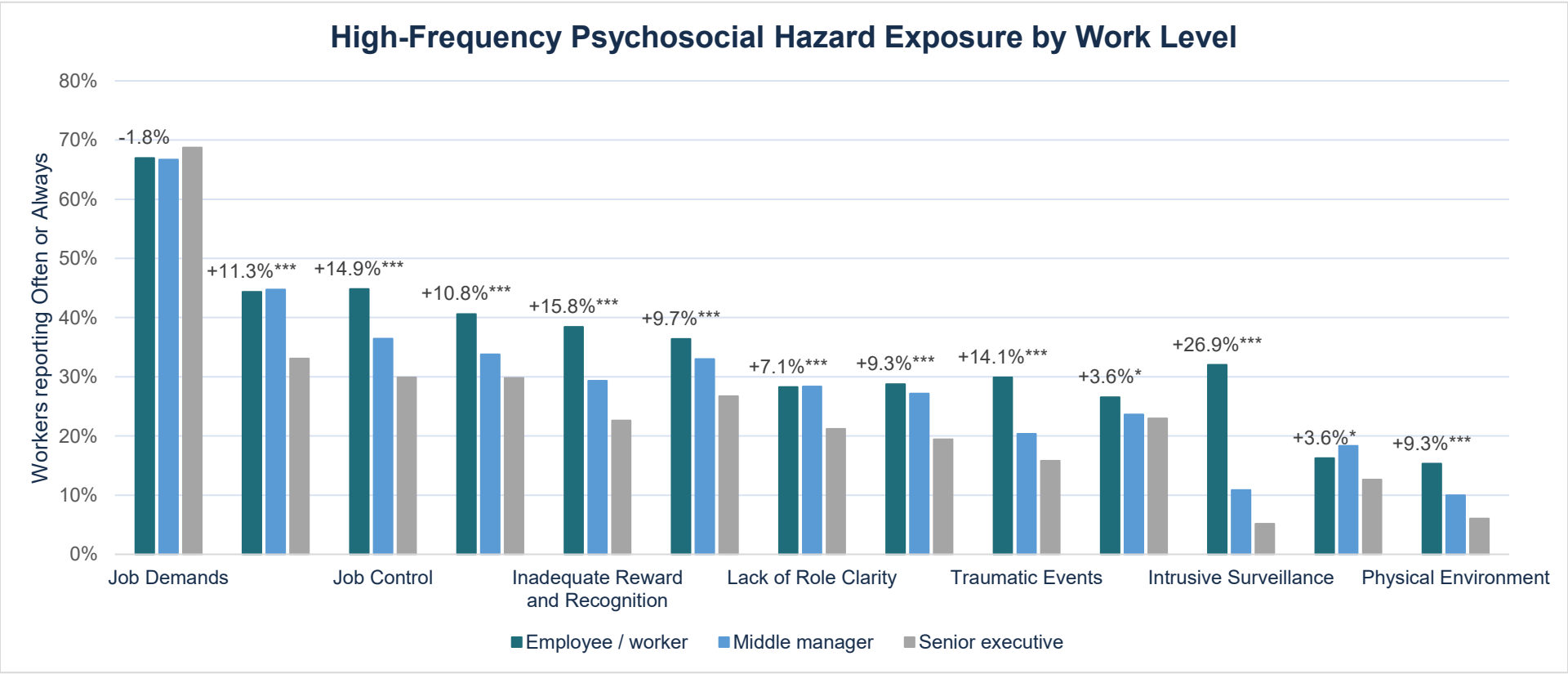
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Hazard	Frequent exposure + consultation	Frequent exposure + no consultation	Relative risk	p value
Inadequate Reward and Recognition	25.8%	38.4%	0.67	***
Intrusive Surveillance	18.4%	26.6%	0.69	***
Poor Organisational Justice	22.4%	29.8%	0.75	***
Physical Environment	11.1%	14.1%	0.79	***
Job Insecurity	14.0%	17.6%	0.80	***
Poor Support	29.7%	36.9%	0.80	***
Poor Change Management	37.4%	46.2%	0.81	***
Job Control	35.6%	43.9%	0.81	***
Fatigue	32.6%	40.2%	0.81	***
Lack of Role Clarity	24.0%	29.3%	0.82	***
Remote or Isolated Work	24.1%	26.1%	0.92	ns
Job Demands	63.6%	68.4%	0.93	***
Traumatic Events	27.5%	25.8%	1.07	ns
Overall (pooled across 13 hazards)	**28.2%**	**34.1%**	**0.82**	

Exposure varies by work level

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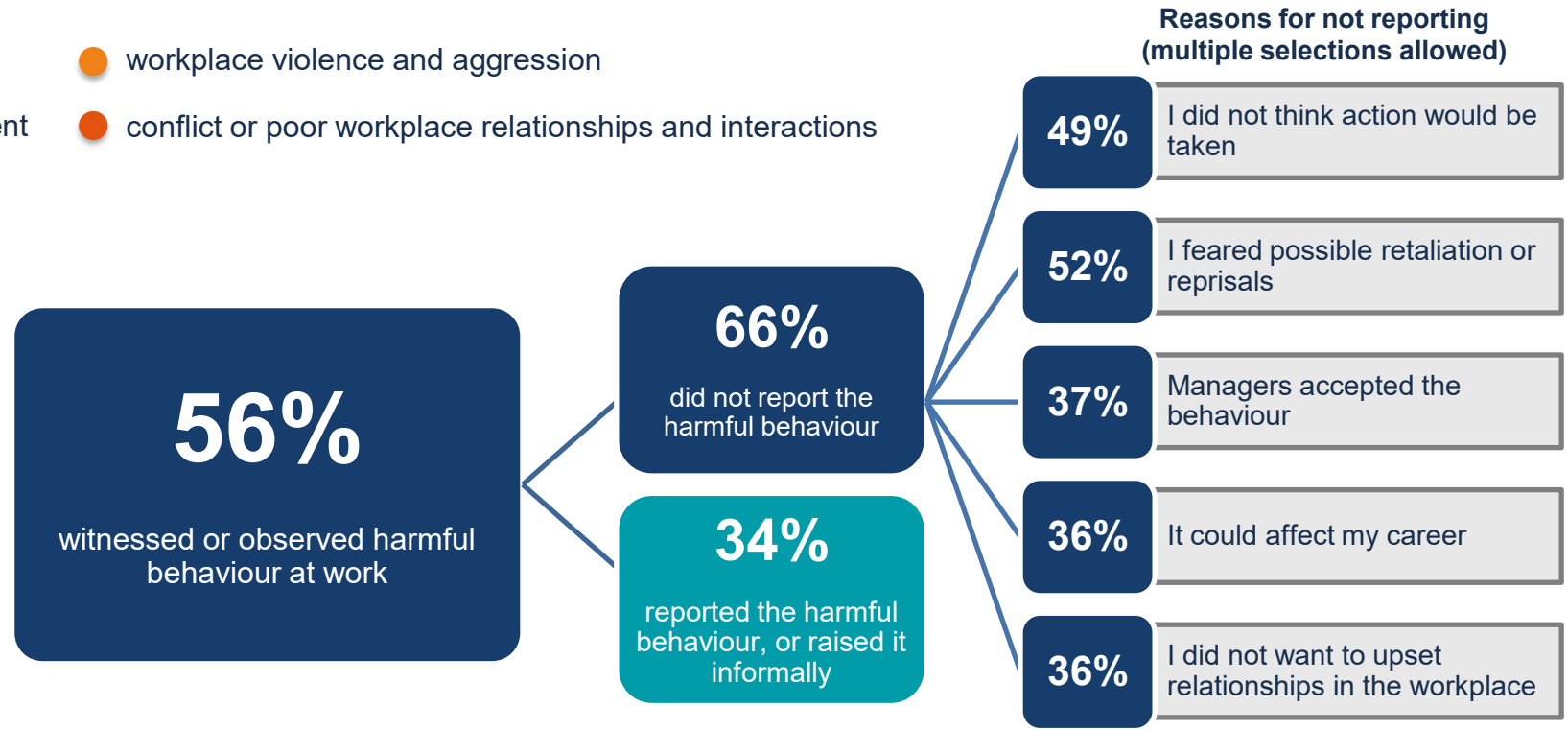


Reporting harmful behaviours

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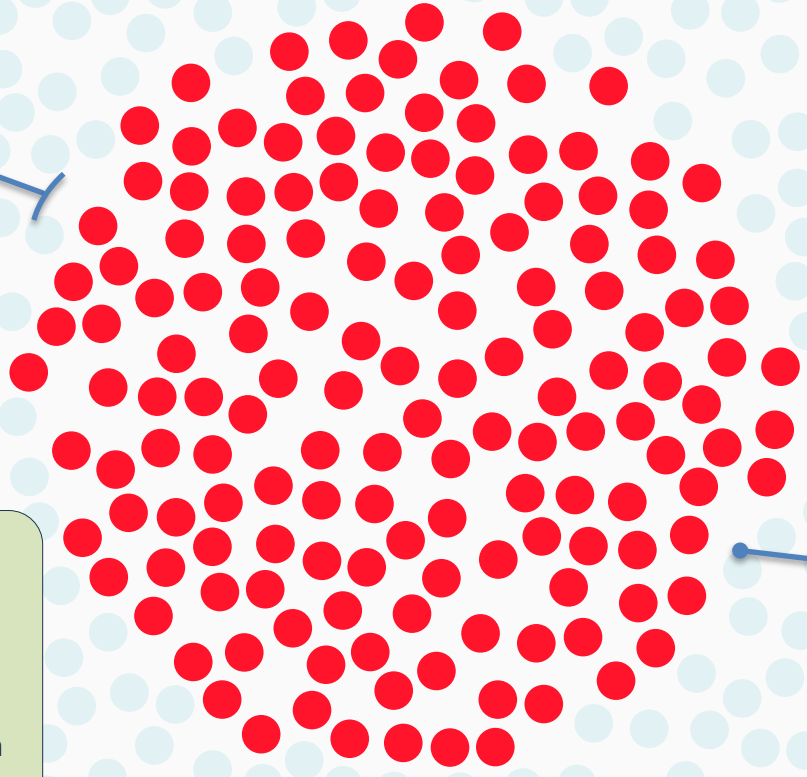
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- bullying
- harassment
- workplace violence and aggression
- conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions



Profile 1:
Worker experiencing harmful behaviour, not consulted about psychosocial risks

39% of population



Key Themes

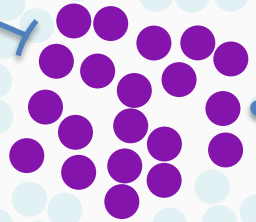
82%	**Management support and trust** Doubts about whether leaders would listen, support staff, or act.
60%	**Change and communication** Poorly explained change and limited influence over decisions were common.
58%	**Role clarity and control** Unclear expectations and restricted discretion.
54%	**Fatigue and burnout** Pressure, overload, stress, and exhaustion frequently accompanied other concerns.

Some solutions

- ✓ consult directly with affected workers
- ✓ address harmful behaviour and work design together
- ✓ protect reporters from retaliation
- ✓ clarify ownership
- ✓ visibly close the loop on action taken

Profile 2:
The HSR with a unique vantage point

3.9% of population



Some solutions

- ✓ make sure that HSRs have sufficient time to perform their duties alongside their substantive position
- ✓ provide HSRs with direct access to decision-makers and clear pathways for escalation
- ✓ involve HSRs early in work design and organisational change

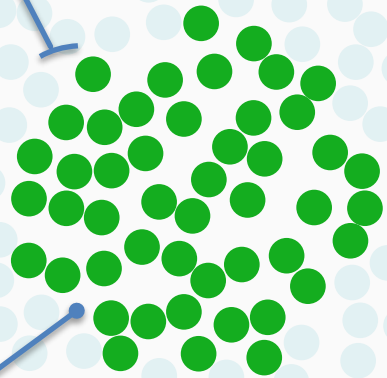
Key Themes

84%	**Management Accountability and Trust** HSRs frequently discussed concerns about leadership accountability and support in performing their role.
58%	**Reporting and follow-through** Escalation, reporting, and whether action followed were central themes.
57%	**Change** Consultation and communication during organisational change appeared as a common concern.

HSR comments reflect a dual role: experiencing workplace pressures themselves while attending to consultation, reporting, and follow-through work for others

Profile 3:
The consulted and well-resourced worker who is aware of risk controls

18.5% of population



Reduced Risk Burden

- Inadequate reward and recognition (-12%)
- Poor organisational change management (-11%)
- Poor organizational justice (-9%)
- Poor support (-9%)

Key Themes

82%	**Management support and trust** Leadership action and support viewed positively.
67%	**Training and capability** Respondents frequently referred to guidance, tools, procedures, and capability.
59%	**Change and communication** Consultation and clear information were repeatedly valued.
58%	**Reporting and follow-through** Comments emphasised accessible reporting and evidence that action follows.

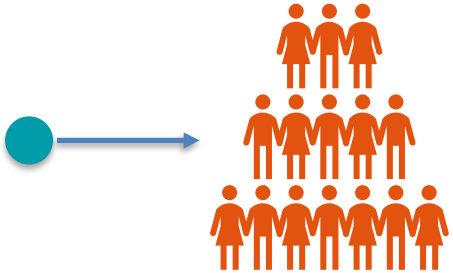
Next steps for the program

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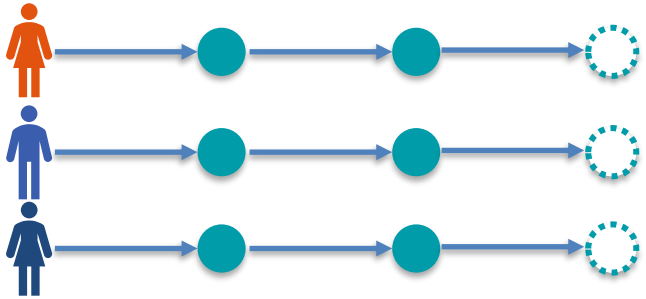
Introduction of a follow-up survey

Cross-sectional



- Point-in-time, descriptive statistics
- Basic correlations between variables
- Thematic and sentiment analysis

Longitudinal



- Predictive capability
- Impact + process evaluation
- Analysis of the relationships between variables over time (e.g. hazards that precede other hazards).

Next steps for the program

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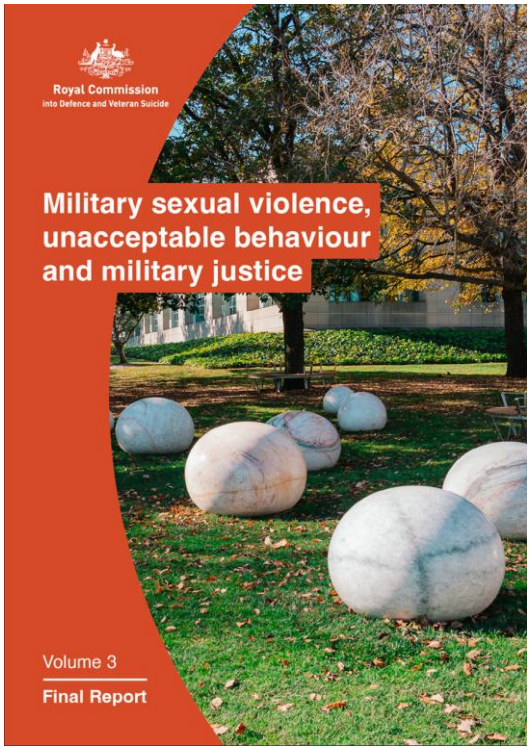
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Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

Recommendation 59:

Defence participate in Comcare's Psychosocial Proactive Inspection Program, once the evaluation has established it is effective.

- Comcare has developed a three-year regulatory program with Defence, as part of the Australian Government Response to the RCDVS.
- A dedicated team within Comcare's inspectorate will implement the inspection, consistent with the intent of recommendation 59.



Resources

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Website – Psychosocial Inspection Program
Guide for PCBUS – Psychosocial Inspection Program
Work Health and Safety (Managing Psychosocial Hazards at Work) Code of Practice 2024
Work Health and Safety (Sexual and Gender-based Harassment) Code of Practice 2025
SMART work design framework

Links to resources are pinned in the chat



Questions