



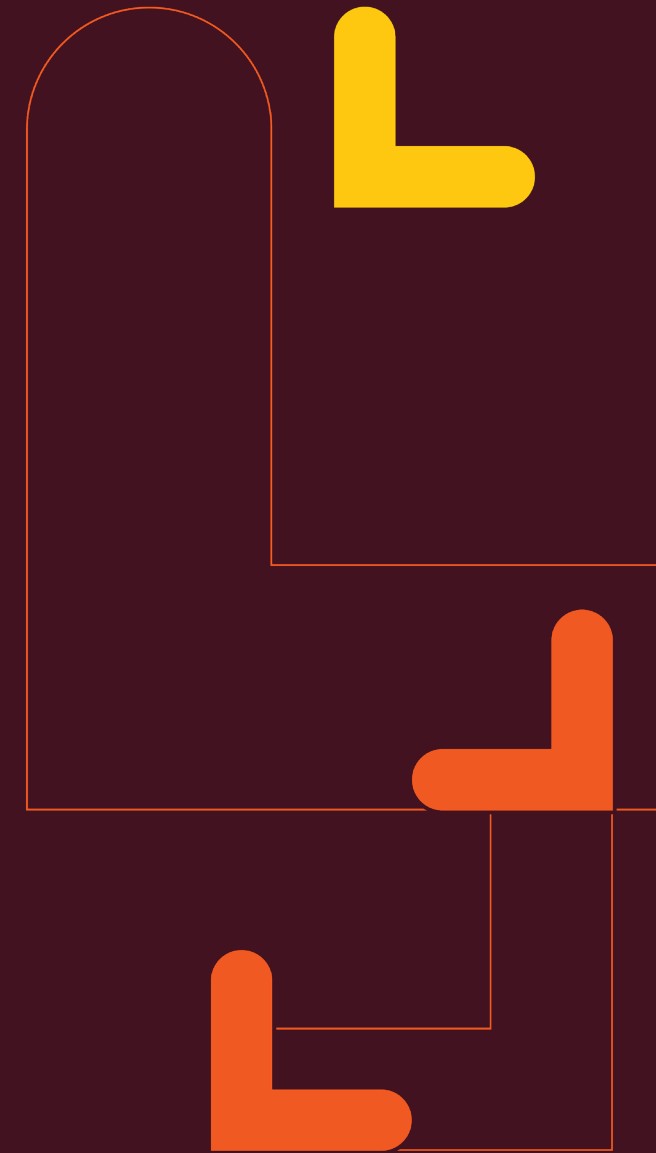
Staff Mental Health and Psychosocial Hazards



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Agenda

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- 2** **The school context – why is a visit from WorkSafe likely?**
- 3** **What are psychosocial hazards?**
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- 5** **Risk assessment: An example**
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Setting the scene

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*
- OH&S Act requires employers to provide a working environment that is safe and without risks to health, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- *Proposed Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Psychological Health) Regulations*
- WorkSafe Victoria have published guidelines made under section 12 of the OH&S Act, which sets out its position on what is 'reasonably practicable' to do for duty-holders to meet their obligations. Duty holders must assess:
 - Likelihood of a hazard or risk eventuating;
 - Degree of harm that would result if the hazard or risk eventuated;
 - What the person concerned knows, or ought reasonably to know, about the hazard or risk and any ways of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk;
 - The availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or reduce the hazard or risk;
 - The cost of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk.

All these factors should form part of your **risk assessment**.



The School context

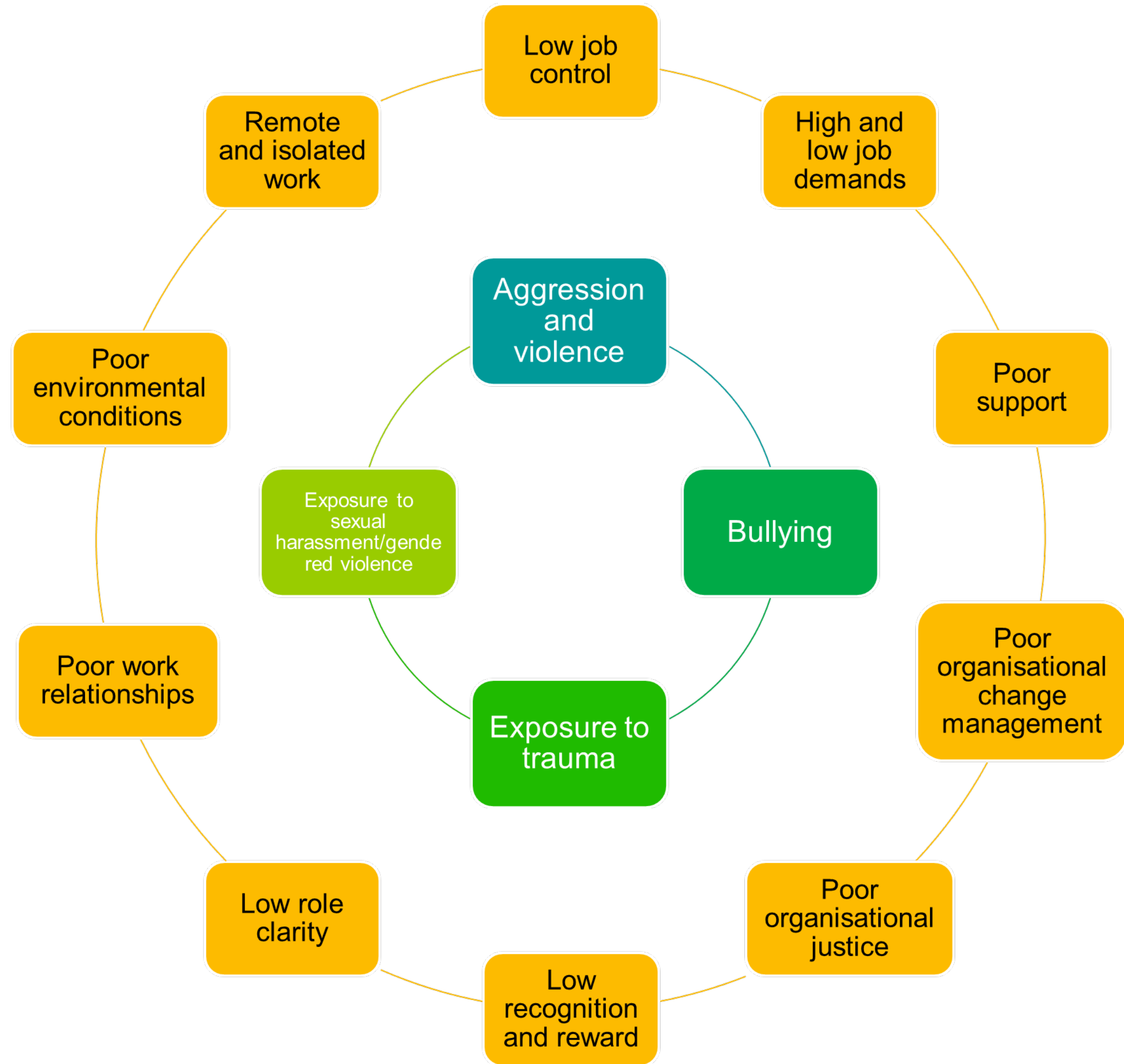
- The Federal Department of Education has predicted that by 2025, demand for secondary teachers will exceed the supply of new graduate teachers by about 4,100.
- Job requirements for teachers have been expanding in recent decades, as society's expectations of what teachers and schools can and should deliver to our increasingly diverse student population have changed (Hunter & Sonnemann, 2022).

Combined with:

- Mental injury workers' compensation claims in Victoria have steadily increased since 2011, from 3,058 to 5,800 in 2023.
- The most common injury and claim in the education sector is psychological: work-related stress, bullying and harassment, account for 19% of all claims.

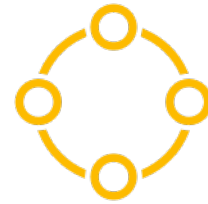


What are psychosocial hazards?





What should schools do?



have a **framework** in place to identify and assess psychosocial risks, implement control measures and systems to assess those control measures (i.e. risk assessment)



consult with employees who are, or who are likely to be directly affected by a work health and safety matter, as well as any Health and Safety Representatives



have **policies and procedures** dealing with inappropriate workplace behaviours, including ways for employees to report those behaviours, in place



establish **clear channels for employees to report** psychosocial hazards, and assess the effectiveness of those channels regularly;



pay attention to the **data** you may be receiving about psychosocial hazards, such as complaints and grievances, and consider whether their framework for dealing with hazards needs to be updated



provide **training** to all staff in workplace psychosocial hazards and policies and procedures



Identify, Assess, Control and Review



Consultation with workers			
Identify	Assess	Control	Review
Work overload	All staff May occur at peak times (for example, end of term), may last 2-3 weeks and severity may be moderate to high. May occur at the same time as risk of student aggression due to students needing a break from school. Look at <u>key indicators</u> such as sick leave, workcover claims and resignations. May result in psychological injuries, stress, burnout. Medium likelihood of harm, particularly at certain times of the year.	Prevent: Reprioritise tasks and renegotiate timelines when situations change, encourage regular discussions about workload, regularly review and discuss staff workload. Do in depth assessments as to how long tasks take and the volume of work. Manage: Staff coaching, identify and remove or improve redundant or ineffective processes, redistribute workloads across staff, recognise signs of workplace stress. Safety net: Encourage use of EAP support, encourage managers and people leaders to contact management support, ensure a good mix of skills and knowledge across teams and the school.	Regular meetings with staff, wider OHS framework review, consultation, information gathering (look for trends, analyse reports, records of injuries, incidents or workers' compensation claims). Any roles that are identified as having a workload issue should be tagged for review and any changes made need to be documented and included in OH&S reporting.



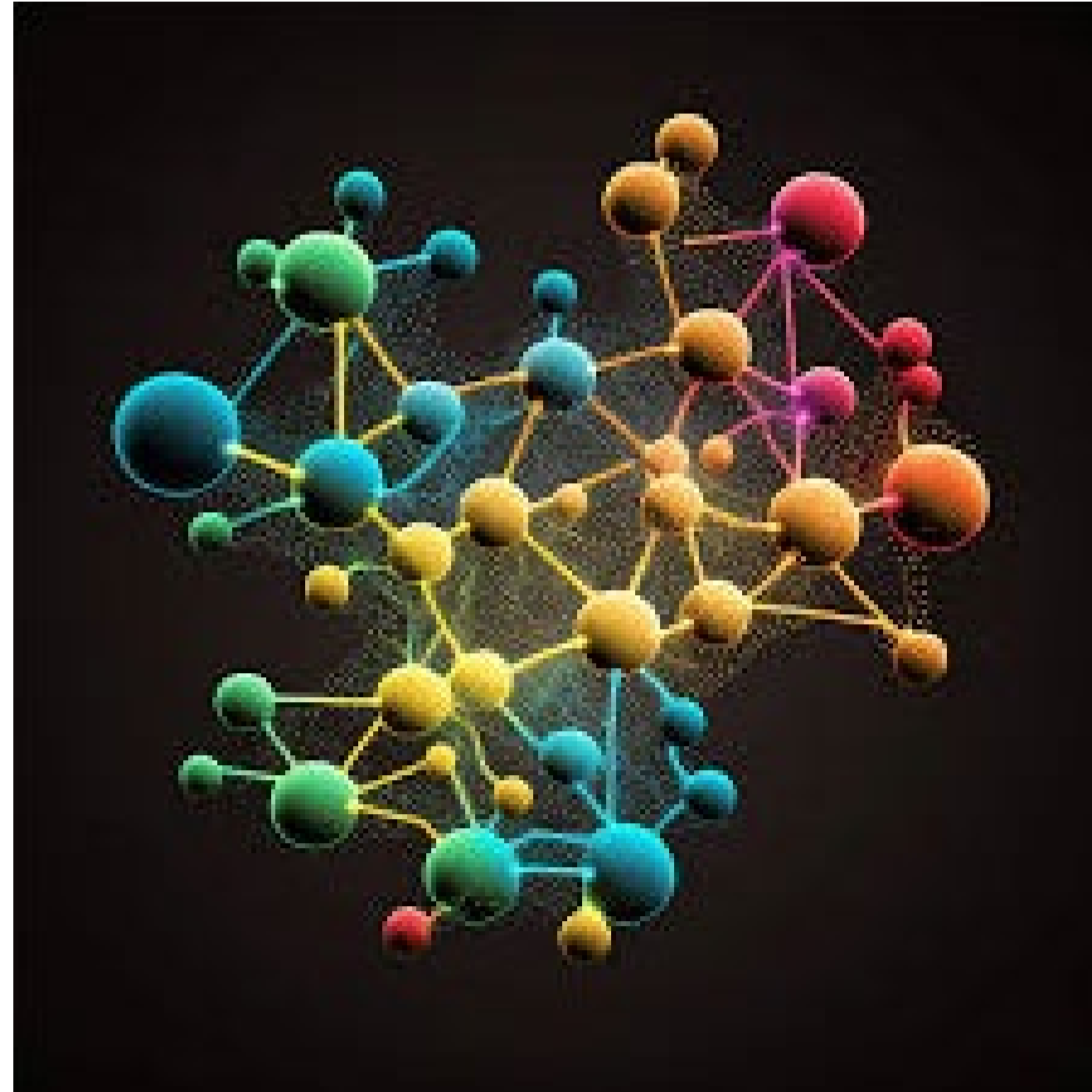
Examples of how psychosocial risks play out in workplaces?

Recent cases highlighting psychosocial issues in workplaces:

- Bersee v State of Victoria [2022]
- Kozarov v State of Victoria [2022]
- Court Services Victoria [2023]



**Connecting
the dots:
What can you
do?**



Who is ‘connecting the dots’ in your school?



Tips for now

1. Know what psychosocial hazards are in your environment, including the less obvious ones.
2. Review your psychosocial safety framework. When did you last review your controls?
3. Is your information gathering and reporting adequate?
4. Ask yourself: Who is 'connecting the dots' in your school? Do you have an OHS Committee who has this responsibility?



Questions?



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