

# Psychological Safety at Work

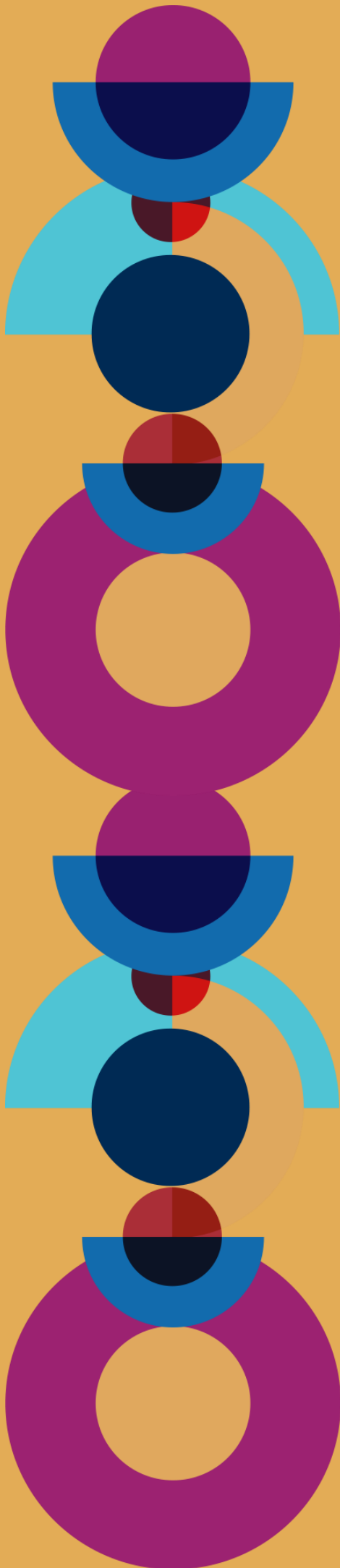
An Intersectional Lens

PILOT EVALUATION REPORT



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## Acknowledgements

This report acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Australia and pays respect to Elders, both past and present. We recognise their continual connection to land, waters, and community, and acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded: this land always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

CPSU and MindTribes would like to thank the participants of the pilot *Psychological Safety at Work: An Intersectional Lens* for their engagement, time, and feedback.

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# Glossary of Terms

For this report, we have adopted the following definitions:

**Cultural safety** is a concept that originated in the field of health care but has since been applied to other settings such as education, social services, and workplaces. It refers to an environment in which individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds feel respected, valued, and understood. A culturally safe environment recognises and respects the cultural diversity of all individuals, and actively works to address the power imbalances that can exist between different cultural groups <sup>1</sup>.

**Discrimination** occurs when a person, or a group of people, are treated less favourably than another because of their background or certain personal characteristics <sup>2</sup>.

**Intersectionality** refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation <sup>3</sup>.

**Psychosocial hazards** are factors in the design or management of work that increase the risk of work-related stress and can lead to psychological or physical harm. Examples of psychosocial hazards might include poor supervisor support or high job demands <sup>4</sup>.

**Psychological safety** is the shared belief among team members that they can express their ideas, opinions, and concerns without fear of negative consequences such as ridicule, rejection, or retaliation. Psychological safety is essential for effective communication, innovation, and collaboration within teams and organisations, and it is often considered a critical component of a healthy workplace culture. When people feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to be open and honest, share ideas freely, and work collaboratively towards common goals <sup>5</sup>.

**Racism** is any prejudice, discrimination, or hatred directed at a party because of their colour, ethnicity, or national origin that prevents the party from enjoying dignity and equality because of their race. Racism can manifest in many forms. While overt racism is explicit and intentional, covert racism is subtle and disguised beneath any visible or tangible event <sup>6</sup>.

**Woman of Colour** is a term based on individual self-identification and typically refers to women who do not self-identify as 'white'. It is used fundamentally to unite women who may experience multiple layers of marginalisation and inequality based on race, ethnicity, and gender <sup>7</sup>.

# Introduction

This report provides an evaluation of the pilot program *Psychological Safety at Work: An Intersectional Lens*. The program was developed by the Community & Public Sector Union (CPSU) and MindTribes as part of the Safer Workplaces for Women of Colour project.

The project first received funding in 2020 to investigate the workplace experiences of workers from minority backgrounds, and the barriers to reporting issues of racism and discrimination in the Victorian Public Service (VPS). This work culminated in *the Safer Workplaces for Women of Colour Research Report*, following extensive stakeholder consultation with employees from diverse backgrounds, Peer Support Networks, Human Resources (HR) and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) professionals, and senior leaders in the VPS.

Based on the research findings and national and international best practice, the six-session program *Psychological Safety at Work: An Intersectional Lens* was developed to address psychological safety from a human-centric and intersectional perspective. It was tailored specifically for Human Resources practitioners. i.e., HR Business Partners, Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) professionals, and other representatives from People & Culture departments, who are often the first point of contact for employees experiencing poor psychological safety at work.

To support learning, assessment tools were developed to help participants measure organisational and individual capability across the six sessions. These tools provide a way to review workplace systems, processes and policies that impact on psychological safety in the workplace. In addition, the program features 18 fully intersectional case studies to help participants apply learning and identify strategies for improving psychological safety for people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, psychological harm in the workplace.

The program was piloted from May to August 2023 and delivered online in a Community of Practice model to facilitate peer-to-peer learning. Participants were HR and OHS professionals from six VPS departments and agencies. Following the pilot, participant feedback was collected via an anonymous online survey and a sample of qualitative participant interviews.

This report provides an overview of the design and delivery of the program, and an evaluation based on participant feedback, including suggestions for improvements and tailoring for delivery to line managers and senior leaders.

For a comprehensive overview of activities funded as part of this project, this report should be reviewed in tandem with the *Safer Workplaces for Women of Colour Research Report* and the *Safer Workplaces for Women of Colour/Psychological Safety at Work: An Intersectional Lens Project Summary Report*.

# Program Design

*Psychological Safety at Work: An Intersectional Lens* is a learning program built upon a prevention and early response approach to addressing psychological safety in the workplace. The program represents the first time that learning on psychological safety has included real life examples and lived experiences of employees from diverse backgrounds in Victoria, making it the first fully intersectional learning program of its kind.

The content of the program is based on research and listening sessions conducted by MindTribes across 2020 and 2021 with a range of VPS employee groups, and on examples of national and international best practice.

## **The objectives of the program are:**

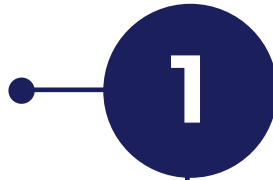
1. To develop a human-centric approach that places the cultural and psychological safety of a person experiencing harm in the workplace at the centre of an organisation's response.
2. To build the capability and knowledge of people responding to workplace incidents and issues where psychological safety is at risk.
3. To build a consistent approach to managing, assessing and controlling risks to psychological health and safety at work.
4. To build capability and provide opportunity for individual and organisational assessment to identify where further knowledge and skills are necessary.
5. To create learning organisations through the promotion of data collection, policy and process reviews, learning from and sharing best practice examples, and through giving participants the skills and confidence to advocate for reform in their organisations.
6. To encourage all employees to speak up/report negative behaviours.

The program is comprised of six facilitated sessions supported by a Community of Practice to facilitate peer-to-peer learning outside sessions. Participants are asked to commit to act, which means applying their learning to real world situations outside the course and then sharing insights from their work to support the group's learning.

The program's six sessions are broken down into capability assessment, response, continuous assessment and proactive prevention topics. These allow participants to evaluate structures and systems that govern psychological safety and consider what can change, or should change to proactively prevent harm, and to deal with an immediate duty of care to restore and rebuild psychological safety.

# Sessions & Community of Practice

The curriculum is a **program** in a 'Hub' environment, [a group of 10-12 participants] who together form a **Community of Practice**.



The **ideal participant** is either an HR leader or a line manager. Members meet virtually and have a project coordinator to organise the group and access facilitator support in between sessions. The six dates are set once the group is formed.

The style of learning is facilitation and coaching of core content by an external lead and learning is further supported by **peer-to-peer learning** [each member contributing to each other's growing knowledge and capability].



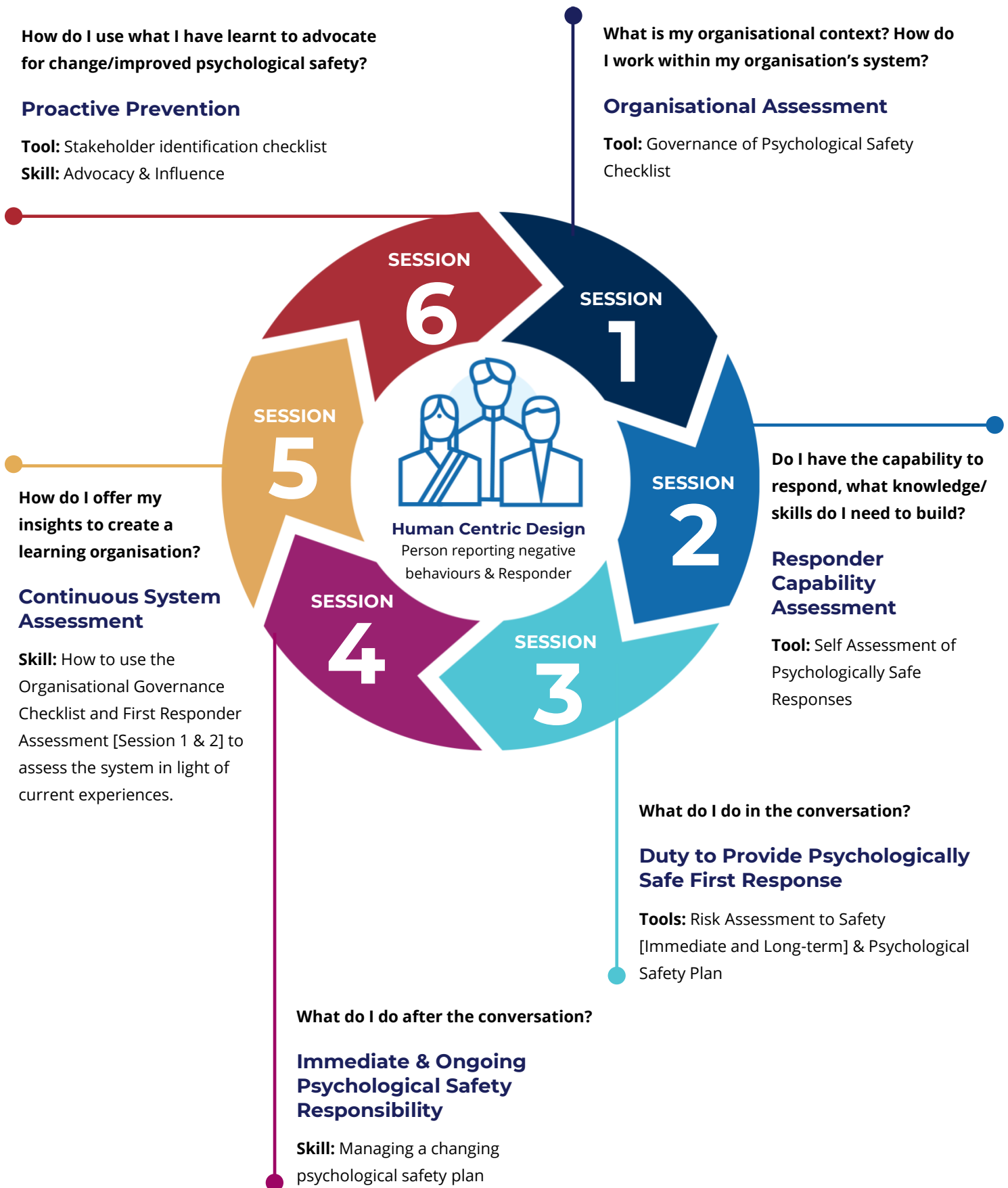
The group members should belong to different organisations, or different areas of an organisation if possible, to enrich the group dynamics and provide opportunity to learn from different 'case studies in action'.

All participants must have the **overall aim** of improving psychological and cultural safety in their organisations.



In between sessions, participants **must commit to act**, which means they must apply learning from the session in a **real world** context, bringing back insight from the application to the group and facilitator, for further coaching and support.

# Curriculum Outline





# Session Objectives

Each session has a suite of learning objectives and outcomes.

## Session 1: Organisational assessment

**Pre-Assessment Tool:** Organisational Governance of Psychological Safety Checklist

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

**Participants learn how organisations govern psychological safety by learning best practice criteria in:**

- Assessing Psychological and Cultural Safety
- Decision points linked to severity, e.g., when it is appropriate to contact the police [becomes an external matter of safety]
- Assessing trauma informed and culturally responsive practices with Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) and other counselling services
- Auditing psychological safety within the reporting and complaints process and the barriers to reporting from an intersectional diversity perspective
- Assessing governing body [Boards, Executive teams] responses to duty of care obligations and psychological safety when knowing negative behaviours have harmed individuals, e.g., maintaining a risk register

## Session 2: Individual capability assessment

**Pre-Assessment:** Self-Assessment of Psychologically Safe Responses

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

**Participants learn about:**

- Intersectional needs of a person sharing negative behaviours experienced at work through various case studies
- The skills and competencies required to respond to safety needs immediately, and on an ongoing basis, to show and maintain psychological safety
- Influencing skills required to advocate for change in the system with senior decision-makers
- How to create an individual development plan to build capability in skills required to demonstrate psychological safety

## Session 3: Duty to provide psychologically safe first responses

### Input:

- Individual Self-Assessment of Psychologically Safe Responses
- Case studies 7, 8, 9

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

#### Participants learn about:

- Lived experience listening with empathy and no judgement
- Guided lived experience listening with stem questions to ascertain the Situation, Behaviours and Impact on the Individual
- Intersectionality and the compounding impacts to psychological safety
- Creating a safe physical and psychological space
- Principles of privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent
- A trauma-informed model of Knowing, Being, Doing
- A Psychosocial Risk Severity Assessment [Immediate]
- A Psychological Safety Plan codesigned, communicated and agreed on prior to leaving the conversation

## Session 4: Psychological safety management plan

### Pre-work - Actions from workplace consultations and progress:

- How to apply lived experience listening techniques to the current process/scripting when meeting with someone who has experienced negative behaviours at work
- Apply a psychosocial risk severity rating/assessment to current processes
- Implement or improve a psychological safety plan

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

#### Participants learn about:

- Record-keeping of situations, behaviours, and impact to allow for proactive investigations in the future
- Psychological Safety Management Plan: What happens three, six, nine and twelve months post the initial discussion?
- Re-assessment of risk to the person
- How to assess indirect psychological safety risks e.g., vicarious trauma to others

## Session 5: Continuous system assessment

**Prework:** Participants will have to analyse patterns and trends across case studies 1-15 as if this is part of their organisation. Participants will have to form some key insights about structural and system gaps where psychological safety is poor.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

#### Participants learn about:

- Assessing their employee experiences through a system and structural view to test whether psychological safety is inherent in the system
- Critically analysing whether, in the absence of case studies [1-15], there are systems to capture and regularly monitor employee voices

## Session 6: Proactive prevention through advocacy

**Pre-Work:** Stakeholder Identification List [based on who has governance over psychological safety]

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

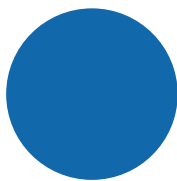
#### Participants learn about:

- What proactive prevention is and means
- How to prepare an influential evidence-based case for change and select the right stakeholder/advocate to take it to
- How to present the key messages by applying the Influence Model

# Assessment Tools and Resources

Participant learning is supported by a suite of assessment tools and resources to measure individual and organisational capability and to identify gaps where further capability is required. These are mapped across the six sessions.

Sessions	Tool/Resource
<b>Session 1: Organisational Assessment</b>	Session 1: Governance of Psychological Safety Checklist – Organisational Assessment and Governance of Psychological Safety Checklist – Actions to Address
<b>Session 2: Responder Capability Assessment</b>	Session 2: First Responder Capability Assessment
<b>Session 3: Duty to Provide Psychologically Safe First Responses</b>	Session 3: Psychosocial Safety Risk Assessment
<b>Session 4: Immediate and Ongoing Psychological Safety Responsibility</b>	Session 4: Psychological Safety Plan
<b>Session 5: Continuous System Assessment</b>	Refer to Session 1: Governance of Psychological Safety Checklist – Organisational Assessment and Governance of Psychological Safety Checklist – Actions to Address
<b>Session 6: Proactive Prevention through Advocacy</b>	Session 6: Stakeholder Identification Checklist



# Intersectional Case Studies

In addition to the assessment tools, the program features 18 intersectional case studies, derived and de-identified from MindTribes' consultations conducted across the VPS. These real examples of lived experience encourage a move from a process-centred approach to a human-centred approach supported by early risk assessment. Three cases are leveraged for each of the six sessions; participants assess psychological risks and hazards, proactive prevention and duty of care responses and discuss and apply learning to each story.

The case studies cover the following issues:

1. **Bullying, sexual harassment**
2. **Aggression or violence**
3. **Exposure to traumatic events or content**
4. **High job demands, low job demands, low job control, poor support, low role clarity, remote or isolated work**
5. **Low recognition and reward**
6. **Poor workplace relationships**
7. **Sustained levels of high physical, mental, or emotional effort**
8. **Poor organisational justice**
9. **Poor environmental conditions**
10. **Poor organisational change management**





## Example Case Study: Racism – Racial Stereotyping


Amanda is an associate lecturer in Strategy and Transformation and a senior public servant. She has been in Indigenous-facing roles for most of her career, is part of the Stolen Generation and was in the first cohort of Indigenous students to attend Victorian public school. She is in her first Director role that is non-Indigenous facing, and she is looking forward to it.

While Amanda is warmly welcomed into her new team, the fact that she is a First Nations woman, and the first to take on the Strategy Director role, is over-emphasised. After a few weeks in her new role, Amanda feels isolated. She is often excluded from meeting invitations and less formal gatherings of the senior leadership team.

Amanda's voice is welcome on First Nations matters and on the development of the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). She is also consulted on developing a more meaningful Acknowledgement to Country, asked to recommend First Nations cultural competence training, and to contribute to the organisation's NAIDOC plans. However, on other matters she is on the periphery, often talked over, or her contribution and the issues she raises are dismissed quickly. Amanda is also provided with a more junior Anglo person to 'help' her write her papers for the leadership meeting; this person is often invited to the senior leadership informal and formal meetings without Amanda.

Amanda decides to speak up. In the next senior leadership meeting, she tells her colleagues about her experience and states that she is being over-valued for her First Nations status, but not recognised for her knowledge and experience in Strategy and Transformation. The room is quiet. Amanda's manager acknowledges that Amanda is upset and calls the meeting to a halt. He meets with Amanda immediately after the meeting and advises that she has handled the issue inappropriately. He advises that there is a certain level of professionalism that she needs to maintain.

Amanda is devastated that her manager does not address her colleagues' mistreatment of her. When she asks him for an explanation, he advises that the matter is one of perception and that onboarding mistakes occurred that she 'needn't get heated over'. Amanda tells him that this is passive aggressive bullying and racism. He says that she is welcome to raise it with HR and see what they say, but he is doubtful that this will 'stick' as racism.



# Implementation

Recruitment for the pilot was communicated via presentations to VPS leadership forums and direct outreach to HR professionals across the VPS. A total of 17 participants were recruited for the pilot from the following departments and agencies:

- Department of Health (DH)
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
- Victoria Police
- Department of Government Services (DGS)
- Department of Premier & Cabinet (DPC)
- Victorian Equal Opportunities & Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)

The pilot was conducted online from May to August 2023. Sessions were convened every three weeks for a duration of two hours and were facilitated by Div Pillay from MindTribes.

**A typical session entailed the following:**

## **30 mins: Facilitated group peer discussion (Community of Practice)**

- Review of last week's topic
- Learning from pre-work assessment. Exchange of learning between participants.

## **30 mins: New content delivered**

- Best practice tools, thinking, frameworks, models
- Learning through intersectional case studies

## **30 mins: Facilitated peer discussion in break-out sessions**

- Application of new content to an intersectional case study
- Assessment of participants' context/organisation to the case study

## **30 mins: Commitment to Act**

- Supported decision-making of next steps to be taken by each participant
- Close of session and links to the next session (explanation of pre-work)



# Evaluation

This evaluation was developed to assess the performance and impact of the six sessions and Community of Practice for *Psychological Safety at Work: An Intersectional Lens*. To develop a comprehensive understanding, the approach was formalised during the design phase to include planning, data collection, analysis, validation, and reporting.

## Evaluation scope

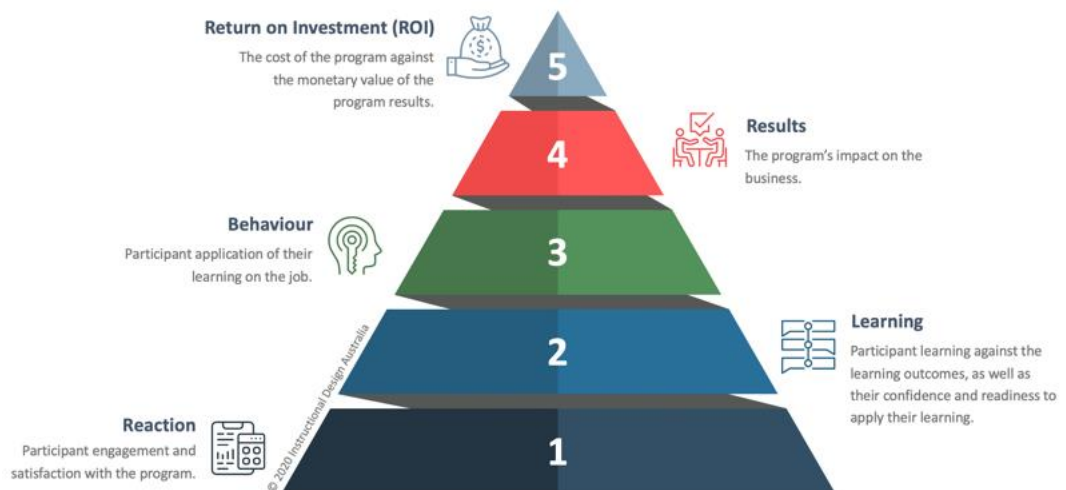
The following elements were within scope for the purposes of evaluation:

- The content of the sessions
- The Community of Practice model
- The assessment tools and resources
- The intersectional case studies

## Evaluation model

The evaluation used the Kirkpatrick Model as a framework for evaluation and design. The program is inherently underpinned by an audit and assessment approach so that each participant is constantly evaluating system, structural and humanistic variables that lead to improving psychological safety at work.

### LEVELS OF EVALUATION



Learning, Application and Transference are key components of measuring the impact of the learning and these are built into each of the six sessions. The aim was to understand how effectively participants engaged with the content and if it enhanced their core capability development and enabled them to apply the skills to their roles. Furthermore, the evaluation sought to capture actionable insights aimed at improving the program.



In addition to the quantitative and qualitative post-program evaluations, there are 22 built-in learning self-evaluations [Kirkpatrick 2-4] during sessions, with Level 1 catered for in the overall design of a Community of Practice (every session starts and ends with 30 minutes of connection, clarity and engagement).

SESSION	EVALUATION OF LEARNING BY DESIGN DURING THE SESSION
<b>Session 1: Organisational assessment</b>	1. Human Centric Assessment of Organisational Governance of Psychological Assessment [Case Study 1] using 5 Inclusion Metrics <b>[level 2]</b> 2. Application of learning via case studies 2 & 3 <b>[level 3]</b>
<b>Session 2: Individual capability assessment</b>	3. Accountability check of commitments to act from session 1 <b>[level 4]</b> 4. Application of learning: Inclusion Metrics to case study 4 <b>[level 3]</b> 5. Application of individual capability assessment to case study 4 <b>[level 3]</b> 6. Assessment of immediate and ongoing psychological safety needs within case study 4. <b>[level 2]</b> 7. Consolidation assessment: application of content to case studies 5 & 6 <b>[level 3]</b>
<b>Session 3: Duty of care first responses</b>	8. Accountability check of commitments to action from session 2 <b>[level 4]</b> 9. Application of lived experience listening techniques to case study 7 <b>[level 3]</b> 10. Application of inclusion metrics to case study 7 <b>[level 3]</b> 11. Application of psychosocial risk assessment to case study 8 <b>[level 3]</b> 12. Application of co-design of psychological safety plan to case study 9 <b>[level 2]</b>
<b>Session 4: Psychological safety management plan</b>	13. Accountability check of commitments to action from session 3 <b>[level 4]</b> 14. Assessment of data storage and management of early indicator data – application to case study 10 <b>[level 2] [level 3]</b> 15. Assessment of voice data integration <b>[level 2]</b> 16. Re-assessment of risk and indirect risk to others <b>[level 2]</b>
<b>Session 5: Continuous system assessment</b>	17. Accountability check of commitments to act from session 4 <b>[level 4]</b> 18. Assessment of system gaps for psychological safety using case studies 1-15 in aggregate. <b>[level 2] [level 3]</b> 19. Critical Assessment of systems to collect voice data continuously <b>[level 2]</b>
<b>Session 6: Proactive prevention through advocacy</b>	20. Accountability check of commitments to act from session 5 <b>[level 4]</b> 21. Assessment of stakeholder strength in context of case studies 16-18. <b>[level 2] [level 3]</b> 22. Assessment of individual capability to influence key stakeholders <b>[level 2]</b>

# Participant Feedback

After the six sessions concluded, feedback was gathered via an anonymous online survey and qualitative interviews with participants.

## Quantitative feedback

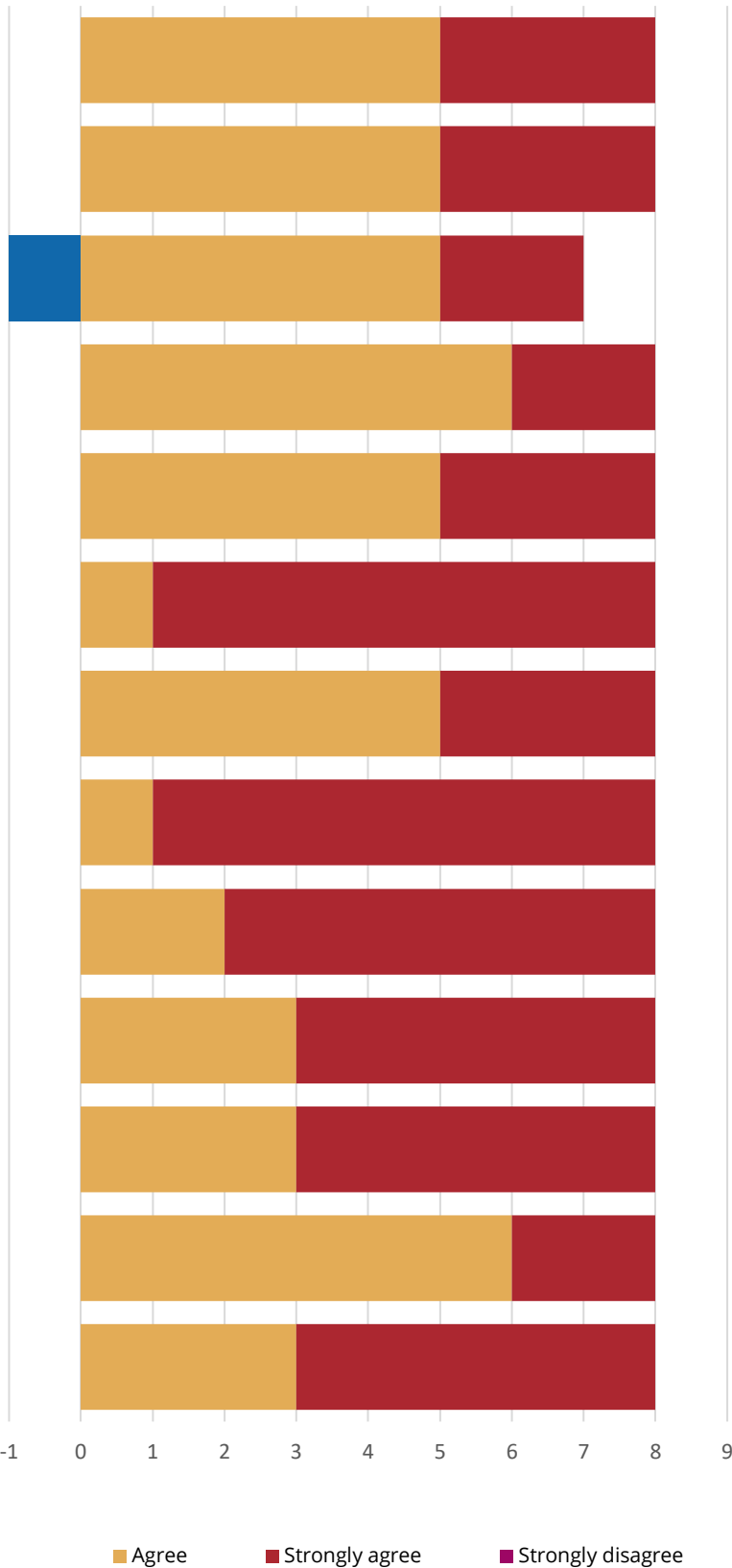
The online survey (refer to Appendix 1) measured participant experience and learning by presenting a list of 13 statements about the pilot program, to which participants had options to strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree. These statements sought to measure how well the program had met its objectives in building individual and organisational capability, which aspects or parts of the program were most useful to participants, and if participants felt that the pilot had potential for adaptability and tailoring for different audiences.

With the exception of one statement regarding peer-to-peer learning in a Community of Practice, all respondents marked the program as 'strongly agree' or 'agree' with the statements (see page 19).

Of particular interest, participants responded favourably regarding the potential expansion of the program. To the statements: "To what extent do you agree that it could be tailored effectively towards senior leadership?" and "To what extent do you agree that it could be tailored towards line managers?", all participants responded 'strongly agree' or 'agree'.



# Participant Feedback



This iteration of the program was aimed at HR and OHS professionals. To what extent do you agree that it could be tailored effectively towards line managers.

This iteration of the program was aimed at HR and OHS professionals. To what extent do you agree that it could be tailored effectively towards senior leadership.

The model of peer-to-peer learning in a community of practice encourages shared learning across departments.

The stakeholder assessment tool helps to identify potential allies and supports to improve psychological safety

The organisational system assessment tool evaluates the whole organisation, not simply reporting and complaints-handling processes.

The program's intersectional case studies help me to better understand the risks to psychological safety and the barriers to reporting experienced by minorities in the workplace.

The program provides tools and resources that can be utilised after the program's completion

The approach is person-centric, humanistic, and intersectional

The program aims to increase my personal capability, knowledge and skills

The program encourages continuous assessment of psychological safety from an organisational and individual perspective

The program is focused on prevention and early intervention to minimise the risk of harm occurring

The program is grounded in practical, operational experiences

The program aligns with the principles of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and the Victorian Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004

## Qualitative feedback

Three participants were available to be interviewed about their experiences on the program. Interviews were conducted for a duration of 30 to 40 minutes following a prepared interview guide (see Appendix 2).

All interviewees had some level of prior experience or understanding of psychological safety, but from different perspectives and of varying degrees. All interviewees noted varying levels of organisational maturity regarding psychological safety in their workplaces and identified a need for improvement. One interviewee made the point that organisational maturity varied across areas of her organisation, and across VPS organisations in general dependent on individual managers and their knowledge of psychological safety.

Interviewees advised that their experience on the program was informative and valuable. The most successful aspect cited by all three were the intersectional case studies, which stimulated thinking and discussion and enabled participants to apply their learning to real examples.

The collaboration platform Trello, which was used to store tools, resources, case studies and supplementary reading, was deemed valuable for its use to engage with participants outside of the program and as a reference point to support participants who were not able to attend every session due to personal commitments.

Two interviewees advised that they had been able to put the skills developed on the program into practice in their jobs. One interviewee who had not yet found the opportunity to apply skills due to workload issues advised that she would expect more of a personal impact to occur over time, when she was able to review learnings and re-engage with the resources as needed.

The following is a selection of specific comments about the program on what worked well:

**“ The program provided a good opportunity to hear about and share different perspectives and approaches based on specialist areas and the case studies were diverse enough to generate good conversations.**

**“ I think that one of the highlights around the course was those case studies...some of them challenged me as a manager at times, because I think sometimes having to weigh up the business needs and the individual needs can be difficult, and I thought that there were some really good illustrations of that.**

**// I really liked all the topics and I think it's a nice journey. The organisational assessment and the psych management planning is so important.**

**// There are some great templates. There's lots of stuff that can be used and tailored to whatever organisation our HR colleagues work in.**

**// I really loved the case studies. I thought they were very useful. The conversation we had in the breakout rooms would be really, really positive.**

**// I found the case studies really useful, particularly because they were real examples that brought to life some of the issues that we're trying to manage and deal with.**

The aspect of the program that interviewees suggested the most improvements for is the Community of Practice model. Whilst all three were accustomed to operating in a Community of Practice, they felt that some participants, who had not engaged as actively, expected more directive learning. The model therefore favoured those with more experience and those who were more comfortable sharing verbally with a larger group. Interviewees offered several suggestions for minimising the impact of this through improvements to the model and delivery method, which will be discussed in the next session.



## Suggestions for improvement

### COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MODEL AND PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT

- A self-assessment in the recruitment phase could be developed to ensure that participants have the same expertise and similar expectations before joining the program.
- Participants felt that the Community of Practice model of learning and engagement could be better explained during the recruitment phase. This would set expectations for the learning experience and help participants better understand what behaviours are required in a Community of Practice.
- The establishment of small working groups or a 'buddy system' in between sessions could help maintain participant engagement and provide additional opportunities for discussion and applying learning. This would mitigate a sense of disconnection some participants may experience between sessions if they are unaccustomed to proactive learning styles.
- For those participants less comfortable contributing verbally in a Community of Practice setting, the use of quick online polling software to gauge feedback, e.g., Mentimeter, could be effective.
- Consideration could be given to the sustainability of the Community of Practice after program completion. An alumni network could help interested participants maintain their learning and share workplace examples.

### TECHNICAL SUPPORT

- For participants new to using Trello, reminder emails in between sessions about accessing program materials on the shared board may be useful.







## NEW/ADDITIONAL CONTENT

- An additional module that helps organisations openly discuss and address their shortcomings in psychological safety would be a useful addition to the program.
- A deeper focus on addressing negative behaviours within the modules would be useful.
- One interviewee suggested the inclusion of potential best practice solutions to the case studies would provide additional learning.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR EXPANSION AND TAILORING TO NEW AUDIENCES

- The interviewees agreed that the program could be adapted and tailored for managers and senior leaders. A version could be specifically geared to, and as a prerequisite for, managerial roles (particularly VPS 5's).
- For line managers the program could have a more practical focus and provide a suite of strategies for use in the workplace.
- Training could be tailored to offer more individualised or department-specific recommendations for improving psychological safety by focusing on specific business areas like Health and Safety and Wellbeing.
- Modules could provide an exploration of prevention controls that can stop issues from occurring.
- The program could be developed into shorter online courses for a broader implementation. A self-paced version would be particularly useful for those with higher workloads and time commitments.

## EVALUATION

- The inclusion of an ongoing evaluation component would be useful to assess the program's effectiveness over time.



# Conclusion

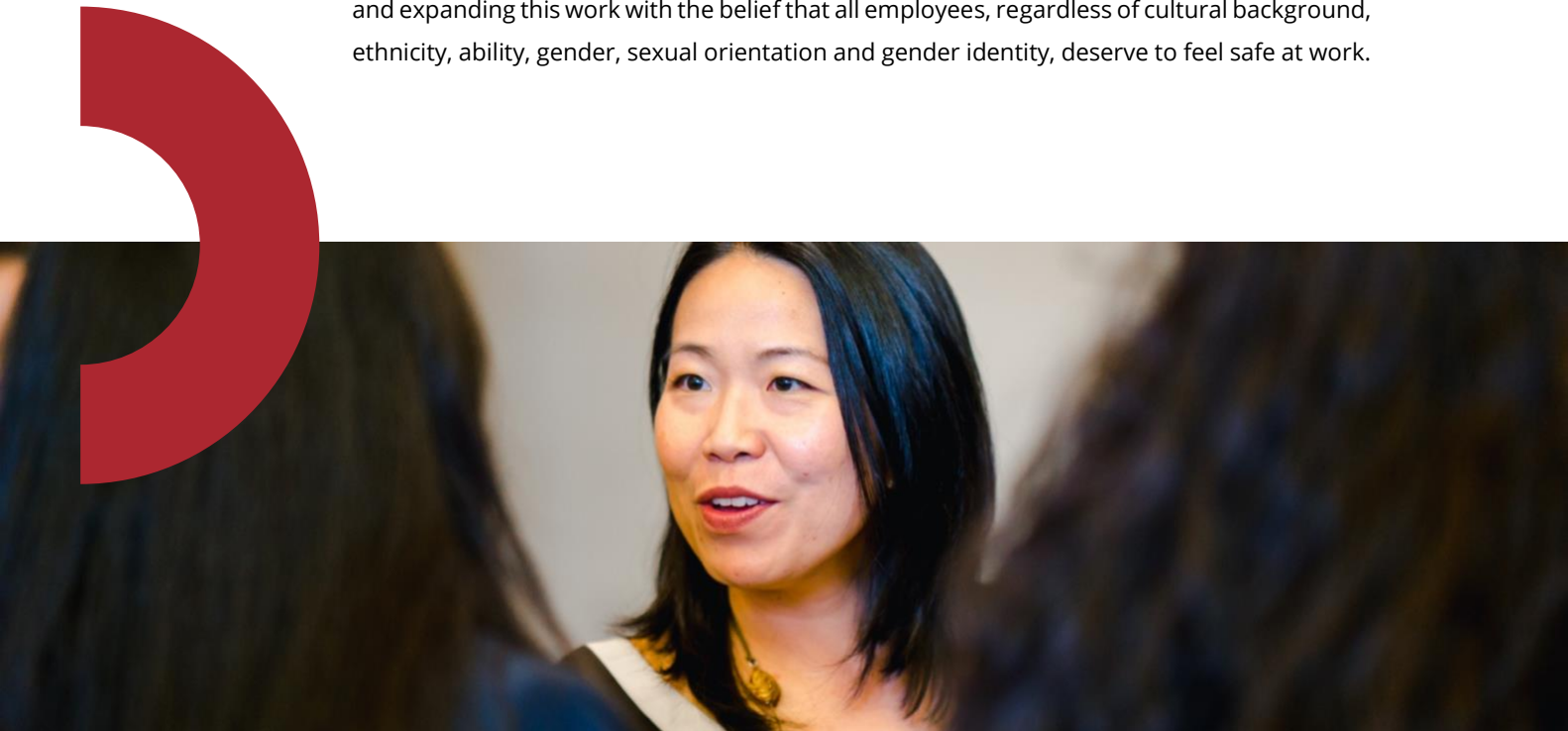
*Psychological Safety at Work: An Intersectional Lens* aims to help employers take a proactive approach to reducing psychosocial hazards in the workplace, to improve reporting experiences for employees who speak up, and to develop workplaces that are psychologically and culturally safe for Victoria's diverse workforce.

The pilot version of the program received overall positive feedback from participants, who cited the use of the intersectional case studies and the relevance of the content to their work as program highlights. Suggestions to improve levels of engagement within the Community of Practice by providing a more detailed explanation of the model in the participant recruitment phase and promoting the use of a buddy system in between sessions were valuable and worthy of consideration for future iterations.

For a broader uptake that would go some way to embedding psychological safety skills and capabilities across the VPS, the program could be tailored to align with different job roles and functions and scaled for impact. It can also be delivered face-to-face or online, with modular adaptations available to focus on specific content areas.

Furthermore, the program provides a useful suite of assessment tools and case studies to explore psychological safety issues from the lived experience of people from diverse backgrounds. These can be used as discussion aids and guidance materials and adapted for use within a range of workplaces.

*Psychological Safety at Work: An Intersectional Lens* is a culmination of research and consultation over a three-year period, directly informed by people who have experienced psychological harm in the workplace. CPSU and MindTribes remain committed to continuing and expanding this work with the belief that all employees, regardless of cultural background, ethnicity, ability, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, deserve to feel safe at work.





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# Appendix 1

## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK QUESTIONNAIRE

Feedback from participants can be collected via a range of methods. The following is a questionnaire used to measure participants' experience of the pilot course and can be adapted accordingly.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
The program aligns with the principles of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act 2006 and the Victorian Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004.				
The program is grounded in practical, operational experiences.				
The program is focused on prevention and early intervention to minimise the risk of harm occurring.				
The program encourages continuous assessment of psychological safety from an organisational and individual perspective.				
The program aims to increase my personal capability, knowledge and skills.				
The approach is person-centred, humanistic and intersectional.				
The program provides tools and resources that can be utilised after the program's completion.				
The program's intersectional case studies help me to better understand the risks to psychological safety and the barriers to reporting experienced by minorities in the workplace.				
The organisational system assessment tool evaluates the whole organisation, not simply reporting and complaints-handling processes.				

	<b>STRONGLY AGREE</b>	<b>AGREE</b>	<b>DISAGREE</b>	<b>STRONGLY DISAGREE</b>
The stakeholder assessment tool helps to identify potential allies and supports to improve psychological safety.				
The model of peer-to-peer learning in a community of practice encourages shared learning across departments.				

Please share any additional comments, insights or feedback to improve the program.

# Appendix 2

## Interview guide

### START OF THE INTERVIEW

1. Be online 5 minutes prior to the interview
2. Welcome the interviewee at the start of the interview
3. Offer an Acknowledgement to Country
4. Commence the interview with an introduction to how time will flow [what will come first, second, and in closing]
5. Reiterate psychological and cultural safety
6. Reiterate confidentiality, privacy, and how the information from the interview will be used
7. Open the space for questions from the interviewee; allow them to feel comfortable before proceeding into the main part of the interview
8. Share with them that they can stop the interview at any stage if they would like to
9. Share that they need only answer what they can; that there is no obligation to answer all questions posed. They can simply say, "I prefer to skip this question altogether" or "I can't comment on this question, as I don't have enough information"
10. Share that they can email any further thoughts post the interview if they prefer

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. What was your experience level [before attending this program] with psychological safety from an individual capability and organisational perspective?**

*[Purpose of the question: To assess individual and organisational capability and maturity prior to attending the program]*

#### **Prompt questions:**

- First, share your individual experiences [some participants are working in the health and wellbeing space, have been trained as mental health first aiders or have lived experience of being in psychologically unsafe environments, have reported it previously, etc.] Ensure that you open the space to both formal and informal experiences
- Next, share your organisation's maturity with psychological safety [Is there a dialogue about it? Are health and safety officers looking at it from a safety policy and protocol perspective? Are there action plans underway?]

## 2. Share your thoughts on the use of intersectional Victorian Public Service case studies throughout the program [across all six modules]

*[Purpose of the question: To assess the value of the human centric design technique]*

### Prompt questions:

- How did it make you feel engaging with these case studies?
- Did it make you think differently when it comes to practically driving psychological safety and health in your organisation?
- Did it make you think about the individual skills required to address and restore psychological safety for the person and within organisational systems?
- What did it prompt you to do next back in your organisation? [Did you start conversations with others using the case studies?]
- What worked and what did not work with the use of the case studies?
- Were the case studies representative of real negative behaviours that can cause psychological harm?

## 3. Share how you felt about this program being run as a Community of Practice, i.e. not a webinar or formal training session style

*[Purpose of the question: To assess whether this style is valuable to participants]*

### Prompt questions:

- What worked and what did not with the Community of Practice style/type of facilitation?
- Would you have preferred more of a formal training session style and more on the formal parts of policy updating and procedural updates for psychological health? (Why or why not?)
- Were the members of community valuable to you in terms of their experience, roles etc, across the public sector, or would you have preferred a mixed cohort of private and public sector professionals or the same type of cohort? (E.g., all leaders)
- Would you prefer a more hands on follow up? (E.g., additional coaching session or 30 minute check in?) Or do you think that pairing participants up to do this more formally would have assisted the community connection?

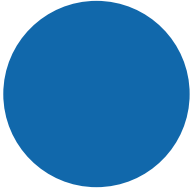
#### 4. Reflecting on the topics of this program, share your thoughts on what was valuable, what you wanted more or less of and what, if anything, was missing

*[Purpose of the question: To assess content that is valuable or less valuable to improve delivery next time - assessing whether the content of this program is a differentiator in the market]*

##### **Prompt questions:**

- Remind interviewees of the session topics:
  - Session 1: Organisational Assessment
  - Session 2: Individual Capability Assessment for Psychological Safety
  - Session 3: Duty of Care First Responses
  - Session 4: Psychological Safety Management Planning
  - Session 5: Continuous System Assessment
  - Session 6: Proactive Prevention Through Advocacy
- Which one was the most impactful in terms of helping you create change back at your organisation, or in sparking conversations with your peers?
- Overall, did the the topics provide you with a different way of thinking about psychological safety?
- What were the sessions that needed more content and were the least impactful?
- Were the tools, resources and articles shared useful to complement the facilitated sessions?
- Did you find the Trello board useful in terms of accessing information when you needed to?





## 5. Has your practical knowledge and assessment skills of psychological safety systems and behaviours improved?

*[Purpose of the question: This program was designed to give leaders and HR professionals a way to question their environment and to influence change for the improvement of psychological safety. There is no one rule book to implement psychological safety and there are many variables owing to organisational and leader maturity, investment, resources, etc]*

### **Prompt questions:**

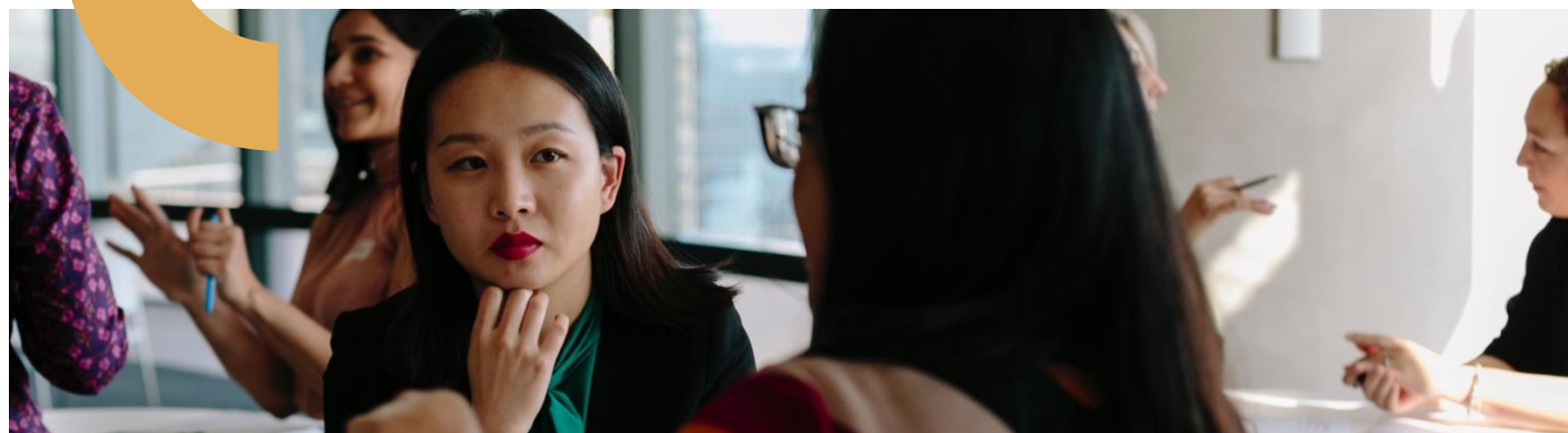
Did this program make you think and rethink:

- If psychological safety is embedded in the way people work in your organisation? (Noting that the intersectional case studies covered different scenarios from field work, office work, health care workers, hybrid working, supervision, and different relationships at work) B
- If current training on psychological safety is adequate, if all diversity and inclusion learning has psychological safety embedded?
- If learning is building skill or just knowledge? (Will people know how to react, respond and restore psychological safety in the moment?)
- How psychological safety is reassessed on an ongoing basis? Also, are vicarious impacts to others psychological safety assessed?
- If there is a co-designed psychological safety plan?
- If there is a way you can continuously assess psychological safety in systems?
- How proactive prevention can be operationalised?

### **CLOSING THE INTERVIEW**

Open the space to ask for any other comments, insights, and additional feedback the interviewee has to share.

- Ask about their overall experience, the experience with the facilitator, etc. Did they feel safe, included and respected?
- Ask if they are willing to be contacted in the future and if they would be open to guest speaking at future sessions
- Offer that they can share any other information via email if they wish to (follow up with an email thanking them for their time)



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