Safe Space Leadership

ARTICLE

The hazards hiding in everyday leadership

The most common causes of psychosocial complaints depend on how people are led.

Employers reporting psychosocial complaints or claims, by cause

23%	22%	19%	17%
job demands	conflict or poor workplace relationships	lack of role clarity	poor support
AHRI, 2026	AHRI, 2026	AHRI, 2026	AHRI, 2026

When people think of workplace hazards, they may picture machinery, chemicals or a wet floor. The hazards behind many complaints today are harder to see: a workload that keeps growing, a conflict left to settle on its own, a role no one has clearly defined.

These are psychosocial hazards. Australia's work health and safety laws have long covered psychological health, but they said little about how to manage these risks. Since 2022, every state and territory has introduced specific rules requiring employers to identify and control them, as they would physical risks.

What they depend on

The figures at the top of the page show the causes Australian employers most often report. The Australian HR Institute notes that all four are highly dependent on the effectiveness of people management. Each one is shaped by decisions leaders make every day: how work is allocated, how conflict is handled and how much support people receive.

Role clarity is a good example. Safe Work Australia's model code describes it as unclear or changing expectations, not only unclear roles. That clarity comes from regular conversations, not a position description: leader and team member exchange expectations and check they still hold. These are leadership skills, yet only 28% of employers invest in leadership and management training for psychosocial safety.

Where leaders can start

Leaders most directly influence six of the model code's 14 psychosocial hazards. For each, the starting point is an honest question. "What have I added to my team's load this month, and what have I taken away?" "Which conversation am I avoiding, and what is it costing the team?"

Our guide sets out all six, what each can look like day to day, and a question for each. Use it in a leadership meeting or a one-to-one, alongside your organisation's risk management, not instead of it.

Reducing risk where it starts

Safe Space Leadership works with leaders to build the everyday habits that shape psychosocial safety: clear expectations, checked workloads, conflict addressed early and support people can count on. Alongside an organisation's broader approach, this can help reduce risk at its source.

See the six hazards

Our free guide, *The leadership behaviours behind psychosocial hazards*, shows how each appears day to day, with a question for leaders.

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SSL builds leaders people choose to stay for.

General information about leadership practice, not legal or WHS advice. For your obligations, refer to the codes of practice and your state or territory regulator. Sources: Australian HR Institute, Quarterly Australian Work Outlook, June Quarter 2026 (606 employers; complaints or claims over two financial years); Safe Work Australia, model WHS Regulations amendments and Model Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work, 2022; WorkSafe Victoria, Compliance Code: Psychological health, 2025. Published November 2026. © Safe Space Leadership 2026