

Psychological Safety System **BLUEPRINT**™

**Roadmap to systematically
improve psychological safety
in the workplace.**

**Reduce harm, preventable costs,
accelerate workplace learning,
innovation and growth.**



Congratulations on your commitment to more truthful voices and less harm in the workplace!

The Psychological Safety System Blueprint™ turns leading global research and best practice into a clear, practical and scalable solution for workplaces.

It helps organisations:

- Reduce avoidable failures and preventable costs caused by silence, disengagement, and risk exposure
- Build courageous, caring cultures through leadership development and accountability
- Accelerate learning, innovation and sustainable growth by enabling open, feedback-rich environments.

In short, the Blueprint™ makes psychological safety not just a priority—but a practical advantage.

What is psychological safety?

Psychological safety is a shared belief held by members of a team that it's OK to take risks, to express their ideas and concerns, to speak up with questions; and to admit mistakes — all without fear of negative consequences.

[Dr Amy Edmondson, The Fearless Organisation, 2019]

Employment laws have shifted — it's time workplaces do too

Over the past five years, Australian workplaces have undergone a significant transformation. There is now a higher standard—and legal obligation—for managing the emotional and social factors that impact workers' wellbeing.

Like Australia, Canada and the UK have introduced regulations and codes that specifically address:

Job demands – workplace factors that cause stress, and

Job resources – workplace factors that help buffer or protect against stress.

In Australia, new legislative requirements such as the Positive Duty under Respect@Work, the Fair Work Act amendments, and other regulatory changes mandate that employers proactively address issues like sexual harassment, psychosocial risks, and workplace culture. However, despite these legal obligations and growing public awareness, the pace of change in workplaces has been far too slow.

Workers are struggling — and so are workplaces

Today's employees are carrying unprecedented burdens. Societal expectations, rising costs of living, and the pressures of raising families are converging with increasingly complex and demanding work environments. The result? A workforce that's burning out—fast.

Reports from Safe Work Australia, the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI), and the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) paint a troubling picture of escalating:

- Excessive workloads
- Psychological burnout
- Bullying
- Sexual harassment



Poor psychological safety is bad for business

Poor psychological safety is not just a people issue—it's a performance and risk issue. When employees don't feel safe to speak up, challenge ideas, or raise concerns, organisations suffer. Psychological injuries are on the rise, bringing with them escalating costs in:

- Sick leave and burnout
- Workers compensation claims
- Legal challenges and compliance breaches
- Insurance premiums
- Turnover of top talent
- Brand and reputational harm

An unsafe 'speak up' culture often points to deeper systemic issues—how work is designed, how power is used, and how leaders engage (or fail to engage) with their teams.

This isn't an issue that can be solved with surface-level interventions or compliance training. Many current efforts lack the depth, structure and accountability needed to shift behaviours and embed genuine cultural change.

Work with the root causes of poor psychological safety

At its core, poor psychological safety stems from a mix of cultural and leadership shortcomings:

- Abuse or misuse of hierarchical and financial power
- Lack of leadership capability in creating brain safe environments for open, honest dialogue
- Absence of systems or metrics that monitor psychological safety and hold people accountable.

These conditions create a culture where speaking up becomes too risky, and truth is avoided—at the cost of innovation, trust, and performance.





Did you know...

A ‘hit’ to our psychological safety can have a deeper and longer lasting impact than a ‘hit’ to our physical self.

Social rejection has the same impact on the brain as a punch to the face.


[Eisenberger, 2012]

Over time, the pain associated with a physical attack is difficult to recall. However, the memory of social rejection after many years, can elicit the same strength of emotion as on the day it happened.

[Psychological Safety. The key to happy, high performing people and teams, Dr Dan Radecki, Ma & Leonie Hull, 2021]

Psychological safety in the workplace isn't a shield from accountability, niceness, coddling, consensus decision making, unearned autonomy, political correctness or rhetorical reassurance.

Dr Timothy Clark

Three hands are visible, each with an index finger pointing towards the center of the page where the text is located. The hands are positioned on the left and right sides of the frame, creating a sense of focus on the central message.

***Psychological safety allows
staff to have truthful conversations
about psychosocial hazards
like bullying, work overload, low job control or
poor supervisor support,
before an escalation
to more harmful consequences.***

**At a great cost, Australian
workplaces are struggling to care
for their people**

**\$65 400
MEDIAN
COMPENSATION
CLAIM PAID**

FOR WORK RELATED MENTAL
HEALTH INJURIES IN 2022-2023
SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA

**1 in 5
SEXUALLY
HARASSED**

IN THE WORKPLACE IN 2022
AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**4 in 5
FULLTIME
OFFICE WORKERS**

EXPERIENCED SOME LEVEL
OF BURNOUT IN 2024
ROBERT HALF

**37 WEEKS
MEDIAN TIME
LOST**

FROM WORK RELATED
MENTAL HEALTH INJURIES AND
ILLNESSES 2022-2023
SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA

**19.2%
INCREASE
MENTAL HEALTH
CLAIMS**

2022-2023 SAFE WORK
AUSTRALIA

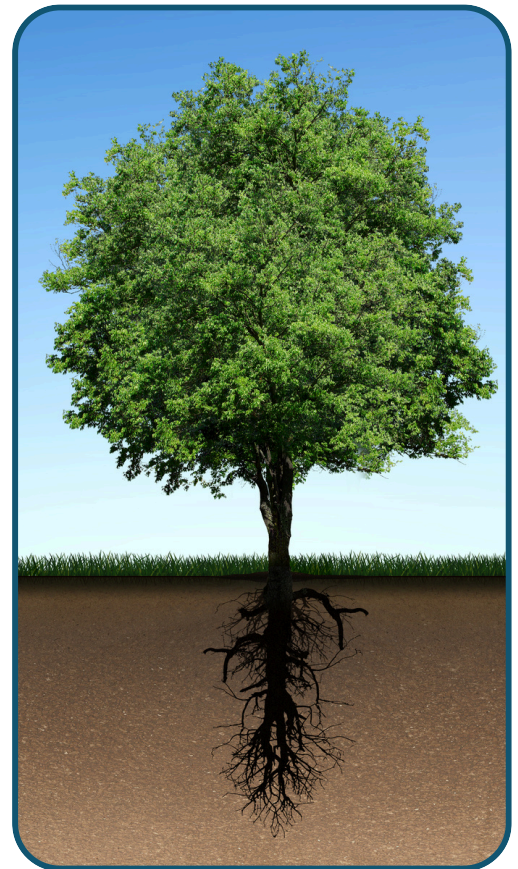
**4 x GREATER
THAN
PHYSICAL**

MEDIUM TIME LOST FROM
PSYCHOLOGICAL INJURY
2024 SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA



Root causes of poor psychological safety in the workplace

- 1 Abuse of power in hierarchical structures**
Leadership dynamics that enable power misuse without accountability.
- 2 Leadership lacking a growth mindset**
Hiring leaders who resist learning, feedback, and adaptability.
- 3 Unclear expectations of safe behaviour**
No shared understanding or modelling of psychologically safe practices.
- 4 Lack of data to identify hotspots**
Inadequate metrics and insights to detect and address unsafe environments.
- 5 Low awareness of brain-based safety threats**
Poor understanding of how psychological threats impair health and performance.
- 6 Tolerance of toxic culture**
Weak consequences for harmful behaviour and lack of feedback norms or boundary-setting.



Conditions of 'fearful' or psychologically unsafe workplaces



- 1 Perceived threats trigger survival mode**
When workers feel threats to security, autonomy, fairness, esteem, or trust, their brain shifts into survival mode, impairing problem-solving and innovation.
[Academy of Brain Based Leadership]
- 2 Leaders lack psychological safety behaviours**
A lack of curiosity, vulnerability, and openness from leaders creates an environment where speaking up feels risky. [Dr Amy Edmondson]
- 3 Silence and overconfidence in authority prevail**
Unsafe cultures foster excessive deference to authority, silence, and costly, avoidable failures. [Dr Amy Edmondson]
- 4 Poor controls lead to real hazards**
Inadequate attention to psychological safety increases psychosocial risks and workplace incidents. [Dr Michelle McQuaid]
- 5 Fear blocks organisational growth**
Staff focused on self-protection can't contribute to learning, innovation, or progress.
[Dr Amy Edmondson]

Preventable costs in fearful workplaces



Companies with poor psychological safety waste \$\$\$ 000's on preventable business costs.



Sick leave lost time
Legal investigations
Fair Work claims
Worksafe prosecutions and penalties
Turnover and Recruitment costs
Productivity loss
Workers compensation claims
Insurance premiums
Reputational damage



Conditions of a 'fearless' or psychologically safe workplace...



1 Brain psychological safety first

People are treated in ways that foster psychological safety, unlocking their brain's ability to think clearly, solve problems, and innovate.

2 Human-centred job design

Roles are tailored to individual needs to support brain health, wellbeing, and peak productivity.

3 Data-informed action

Evidence-based insights are used proactively to identify and resolve psychological safety risks.

4 Leadership that builds safety

Leaders prioritise inclusion, learning, contribution, and challenge—encouraging and rewarding vulnerability (Dr. T. Clark).

5 Truthful, curious leadership

Leaders model curiosity, openness, and fallibility to promote honest conversations and continuous learning (Dr. A. Edmondson).

6 Culture of learning and accountability

Mistakes are embraced as learning opportunities, with systems in place to support feedback, candor, and leadership accountability for team safety and wellbeing.

Foundational pillars of the Psychological Safety System



APPLY NEURO-EMOTIONAL NEEDS

As the core pillar, the workplace designs interactions based on self-awareness and self-knowledge of brain safety needs for humans including the neurodivergent and trauma survivors.

Brain safe environments reduces the likelihood of unproductive reactions and psychological harm. It allows people to think clearly, rationalise, create and innovate.



PROTECT CRITICAL RISKS

As a duty of care, organisations consult, identify and mitigate critical psychosocial risks. Psychological safety is measured and managed to enable truthful conversations about issues like work overload, bullying and sexual harassment.

Safe reporting channels, speak up culture and evidence-based data help to track improvement targets and remedial actions.



UPLIFT ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY

To keep people safe and productive, behavioural expectations are set up front with regular capacity building on legal obligations, psychologically safe behaviours, brain safety needs and smart work design.

People are trained to increase confidence in healthy boundary/feedback conversations and their role as an upstander.

Leaders are skilled architects of psychologically safe culture.



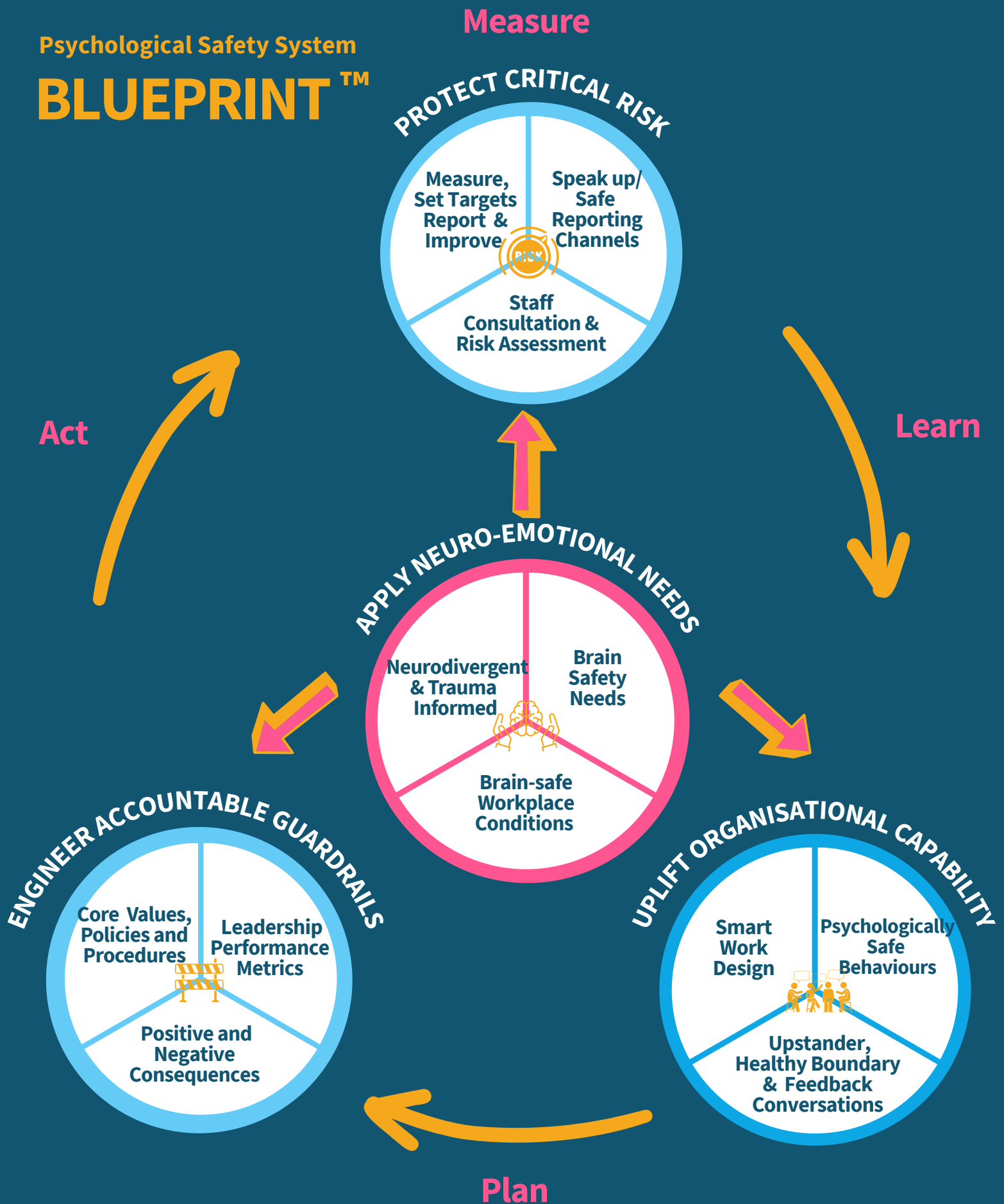
ENGINEER ACCOUNTABLE GUARDRAILS

Guardrails are engineered across the system to hold people accountable with the standards embedded in the core values, policies and procedures.

Candidates are screened for psychological safety and growth mindset. Team psychological safety is linked to leadership performance metrics.

Positive and negative consequences are consistently enforced and progress against critical risk targets are regularly reported.

Psychological Safety System
BLUEPRINT™



How we can help you!

MEASUREMENT



DX Survey organisational psychological safety system

Survey psychological safety in:

- teams
- meetings
- safety to report
- reasons for leaving.

Data mining for trends and patterns.

STAFF & LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY TRAINING



Fit for purpose Face2face and Online Training

- Neuroscience of brain safety
- Psychosocial legal responsibilities
- Psychological safety behaviours
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Healthy boundary conversations
- Empowering bystanders
- Leading safe 'speak up' culture.



PEOPLE AND CULTURE SUPPORT



- Planning and implementation of strategy and action plans for change.
- Mentoring support.

PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT & CONTROLS



- Psychosocial risk assessment staff consultations.
- Focus groups and interviews
- Psychological safety controls
- Evidence based improvement targets

LEADERSHIP COACHING



- 1:1 leadership coaching to develop psychologically safe skills and practices.

ENGINEERING ACCOUNTABILITY



- Cultural values and behaviours
- Recruitment and selection
- Psychological safety induction
- Speak up case management
- Leadership performance metrics
- Setting critical risk and preventative cost targets
- Policies and procedures
- Reward and recognition
- Succession planning.

Our experienced team

Belinda Coghlan (Director, Belindacoghlan.com.au)

Belinda is an experienced and qualified People and Culture Specialist (Grad Dip Bus HRM), ToP Facilitator, Trainer and ICF Coach. She is certified in Barretts Values Centre Culture Values Assessment (CVA) and Academy of Brain-Based Leadership Psychological S.A.F.E.T.Y™ Model.

She is a thought leader in psychological safety and founder of the Psychological Safety System Blueprint™.

Glen Head (betterways.work)

Glen is a 30 year veteran of helping public and private sector leaders be the best they can be. With his BSc, postgraduate business studies, a love of facilitation and empathy for those doing it tough.

Glen is founder of betterways.work platform, to amplify employee voices, identify systemic workplace problems, and facilitate collective action to create more Respect, Trust, and Appreciation at work.

Glen is excited to be empowering individuals and workplaces through the synergy of betterways.work platform and the Psychological Safety System Blueprint™.

Melanie Read, (3DMC Pty Ltd)

Melanie is an expert in Work Health and Safety. She has extensive experience in WHS management systems, designing and delivering WHS workplace training and managing Workers Compensation claims.

Melanie is a qualified Occupational Therapist and holds Post Graduate qualifications in Occupational Safety and Health Management. She holds a Cert 4 in Workplace Assessment and Training.

Linda Devereax (HR in Practice)

Linda brings extensive operational experience as a People and Culture and Communications Executive Leader in mining and construction. Her insight on the practicalities of leading safe culture and speak up case management is highly valuable to the design and delivery of our programs.

Peta Main (Petamain.com)

Peta is an accomplished trainer with extensive experience in leadership training of human skills across a broad range of industries.

She has an MBA in Leadership (UWA) is a trained ICF Coach and currently completing Cert 4 in Workplace Assessment and Training.

A bit about me ...

I'm a qualified People and Culture Specialist, experienced Facilitator, ICF-accredited Coach, and recognised thought leader in psychological safety.

I'm certified in the Barrett Values Centre Culture Values Assessment (CVA) and the Academy of Brain-Based Leadership's Psychological S.A.F.E.T.Y.™ Model.

Like many others, I've witnessed—and personally felt—the damaging impact of psychologically unsafe workplaces. Toxic systems don't just harm individuals and teams; they ripple out to affect entire organisations, customers, and communities.

I genuinely believe our workplace systems are broken. Meaningful, lasting change requires more than a few workshops or tick-box initiatives—it calls for a complete re-engineering of the underlying structures that perpetuate harm and hinder growth.

That belief led me to create the Psychological Safety System Blueprint™—a framework designed to give people a truthful voice, reduce harm, and accelerate learning, innovation, and sustainable performance in workplaces.

Outside of work, I'm married and proud parent of two young adults, a spin class enthusiast, passionate about growing my own food, and absolutely adore Jack Russells.



The bottom line:

Psychological safety Is no longer optional

Workplace leaders must act—not only to meet legal requirements,
but to protect their people, culture, and performance.

The blueprint for psychological safety is clear.

The question is: will your workplace lead, or lag behind?



COMING SOON

A Psychological Safety System Diagnostic (DX)
is coming soon, so keep your eyes peeled!

