



Wellbeing Guidelines



For Legal Workplaces

Victorian Legal Services
BOARD + COMMISSIONER

Foreword

Every day across Victoria, lawyers play a vital role in the community by providing legal expertise, advocating for justice and promoting legal rights. They offer crucial support in navigating legal systems, ensuring access to justice, and promoting the rule of law.

While they are performing such a critical role, lawyers should reasonably expect that they will be both physically and psychologically safe in the workplace. Also, through a shared commitment with their organisation, lawyers should be able to sustain their wellbeing throughout their careers.

We know from recent research that there is work to do to improve lawyer wellbeing. Lasting change will require action at all levels of the system – sector, organisational, interpersonal and individual. The co-designed Lawyer Wellbeing Systems Theory of Change framework provides a roadmap for this change and a vision for the future of lawyer wellbeing: that ‘the Victorian legal system fosters a connected and empathetic legal profession that values wellbeing while delivering services to a high standard for clients’. This is a legacy that many of us as leaders in the profession aspire to pass on.

These Wellbeing Guidelines are a practical tool to support targeted wellbeing action at the organisational level. They were developed by psychologist, lawyer and wellbeing expert Dr Carly Schrever. She has drawn on her deep research and understanding of lawyers and wellbeing and has consulted extensively with the Lawyer Wellbeing Community of Practice to test the guidelines’ practical applicability within legal workplaces. WorkSafe in turn provided their expert review to confirm the Guidelines align with current and upcoming obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic). As workplaces and legislative requirements evolve, so will these guidelines.

Many legal workplaces are taking significant steps to improve lawyer wellbeing, and they’re already seeing benefits. Beyond merely meeting OHS legislative requirements or doing the right thing, evidence is clear that better lawyer wellbeing means people are less likely to leave legal workplaces leading to lower turnover costs, increased talent retention and consistency in client service.

Better lawyer wellbeing also correlates with fewer reports of workplace incivility, higher engagement and purpose at work, and a more ethically engaged culture.

For workplaces already reaping the rewards of better lawyer wellbeing, these Guidelines will confirm you’re going in the right direction – from good to better, or even best practice – and setting a standard for the profession. For others, they will show you how to take, document and celebrate your next, manageable step.

The Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner is committed to supporting and shaping the legal system to improve lawyer wellbeing. We will continue to work alongside the profession and Victoria’s health and safety regulator, WorkSafe, to ensure lawyers can do their work safely and to a high standard. I encourage all leaders in the law to use these Guidelines and be part of the change.



Fiona McLeay
Victorian Legal Services Board CEO
and Commissioner

Introduction

Taking steps to safeguard lawyer and legal support staff wellbeing is an essential aspect of meeting psychological health and safety obligations for all legal workplaces.

There is now overwhelming evidence that the legal profession in Australia, and internationally, experiences elevated levels of psychological distress and mental ill-health regarding their work. Recent university-led research involving lawyers from Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia found nearly one in three lawyers reported elevated psychological distress.¹

Unacknowledged and unmanaged stress in legal workplaces impacts lawyers directly, can reduce service delivery to clients, and can also underlie some unprofessional conduct that brings lawyers to the attention of legal regulators. These outcomes can have harmful impacts on clients and the broader profession.

Research has consistently shown that lawyer stress is linked to cultural, organisational and systemic features of legal workplaces, including:

- long hours
- unmanageable workloads
- unrealistic expectations (from clients, superiors and courts)
- targets that ignore non-fee-earning achievements
- poor communication and management
- hypercritical, competitive and combative cultures
- stigmatisation of stress and mental ill-health
- negative interpersonal behaviours, including incivility, bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination
- exposure to potentially traumatic content and experiences with insufficient support.

Recent system-effects research identified 45 factors that drive poor lawyer wellbeing. The research also highlighted the need for action

across the sector, given 39% of respondents reported that working in the legal sector has a negative impact on their wellbeing.² Using this research, the [Lawyer Wellbeing Systems Theory of Change framework](#) has been co-developed with the legal profession in Victoria to provide a set of shared outcomes to guide action at the sector, organisation, interpersonal and individual levels.

While lawyer wellbeing is a shared responsibility between the individual lawyer and their workplace, and one that sits within the broader legal sector context, principals and those with leadership roles in legal workplaces of all sizes have particular responsibilities. These include to establish structures and implement practices that mitigate the risk of psychological harm to their employees.

The Wellbeing Guidelines for Legal Workplaces (the Guidelines) have been developed by drawing on local and international empirical research on lawyer wellbeing, input from wellbeing specialists working in legal workplaces, resources and advice from WorkSafe Victoria, and the Victorian Government's [Mentally Healthy Workplaces Framework](#) (the Victorian Framework). The Guidelines aim to help you identify the tangible actions you should take within your legal workplace to safeguard lawyer and legal support staff wellbeing, and the additional actions you can work towards as you progress the wellbeing maturity of your legal workplace. The Guidelines will help the profession to take tangible action aligned with the Systems Theory of Change, particularly at the organisation level.

1. [Australian National University and University of Melbourne – Lawyer wellbeing, workplace culture and ethics research: Interim results October 2024.](#)

2. [2025-03-26 – Systemic Drivers of Poor Lawyer Wellbeing – System Effects Report.pdf](#)

Who are these Guidelines for?

These Guidelines are principally intended to provide specific guidance to employers and leaders in legal workplaces who have a responsibility for employed lawyers and support staff, including:

- principal practising certificate holders in private law practices and firms of all sizes
- executive and leadership lawyers within government legal teams, community legal services, legal aid offices
- chief legal officers, general counsels, and other leadership lawyers within in-house legal teams
- human resources managers, and other health and safety duty holders within legal workplaces

Sole-practitioners, barristers, and leaders in other legal professional environments such as courts and tribunals are encouraged to treat these Guidelines as a resource for adaption to their specific context.



Principles

In line with the Victorian Framework, the Guidelines are intended to support the following workplace wellbeing principles:

Strengths-based

- considering different needs, preferences and strengths
- encouraging help-seeking and normalisation of wellbeing challenges
- reframing mistakes as learning opportunities

Integrated approach

- recognising that lawyer wellbeing is a shared responsibility between the individual lawyer and the legal workplace and exists within the broader legal sector
- emphasising that a holistic approach to lawyer wellbeing will involve a combination of activities that promote the wellbeing-enhancing aspects of work, prevent avoidable risks to wellbeing, and respond to the inherent demands of legal work

Co-design

- consulting and collaborating at every stage with the people most affected by workplace conditions and decisions, including people with lived experience of work-related stress where possible

Actions

- prioritising action and implementation, rather than aims, aspirations and policies
- embedding wellbeing actions into business as usual
- measuring outcomes over time

Consistency

- emphasising that interventions and actions must be evidence-based and have a level of standardisation across the legal workplace and across time

Continuous improvement

- encouraging self-reflection
- being willing to adjust initiatives and respond to the evolving environment
- evaluating actions taken
- reporting progress and outcomes.

Three levels of intervention

As recommended by the Victorian Framework, the Guidelines reflect the need for an integrated approach to legal workplace wellbeing, which recognises the need for legal workplaces to:



Promote

lawyer and staff wellbeing and the positive aspects of legal work.



Protect

lawyers and staff from psychosocial hazards by identifying and managing risks to a fair and safe legal workplace.



Respond

to early warning signs of lawyer and staff stress, with effective systems, interventions and skills.

The Guidelines recommend actions and strategies at each of these levels and provide accompanying resources for implementation.

Good, better and best practice

As a description of a minimum standard, the Guidelines suggest tangible actions that could and should be taken to implement 'good' practice in supporting lawyer wellbeing. The Guidelines also suggest a range of additional 'better' and 'best' practice actions that legal workplaces could consider as they progress in their wellbeing maturity. These practice levels are defined in this way:



Good practice

involves a learning mindset on the part of legal workplaces, in which staff are consulted proactively, and wellbeing risks are identified and assessed systematically.



Better practice

involves an engaged mindset on the part of legal workplaces, in which wellbeing risks are directly controlled, and improvements are planned and executed within a culture of organisational responsibility



Best practice

involves a dynamic mindset on the part of legal workplaces, in which wellbeing controls are embedded in organisational systems, and continue to evolve in a continuous improvement cycle of risk identification, control, evaluation and knowledge-sharing.

A 'living' document

The understanding around what constitutes 'good', 'better', and 'best' practice in the management of psychosocial risks in legal workplaces is an evolving space. These Guidelines will be regularly reviewed and updated as the research evidence and legislative landscape develops.

Use of the Guidelines

How to use the Guidelines

You should consider the 'good practice' actions recommended for legal workplaces, and take steps swiftly to implement and embed any actions that are not already established within your legal workplace. To further enhance wellbeing within your legal workplace and the broader legal profession, consider those actions recommended under 'better practice' and 'best practice'. All actions should be co-designed with your staff.

How the VLSB+C may use the Guidelines

The primary purpose of the Guidelines is supportive, rather than regulatory. They are designed to assist legal workplaces to implement actions that will benefit the wellbeing of their employees. However, when wellbeing risks remain unaddressed within legal workplaces, unethical and other non-compliant behaviour on the part of lawyers is more likely. Employers and others who manage or control legal workplaces have responsibilities under Victoria's occupational health and safety laws (OHS laws) to identify and control psychological and physical risks to employees.

Given this relationship between workplace wellbeing, professional behaviour, and OHS regulation, the VLSB+C will use the Guidelines to:

- inform VLSB+C staff and auditors on good practice wellbeing actions for legal workplaces
- support system improvements in lawyer wellbeing and drive change in legal workplaces
- assist in identifying potential breaches of Victoria's OHS laws that should be referred to WorkSafe.

Additional resources and links to help with implementation of the guidelines can be found on the VLSB+C website.

Wellbeing Guidelines - Good, Better and Best Actions

	 Good practice wellbeing actions	 Better practice wellbeing actions	 Best practice wellbeing actions
 Promote	Wellbeing plan	Wellbeing commitment statement and leadership visibility	Facilitated reflective practice groups
	“Managing for wellbeing” training	Designated wellbeing champions	Integrated policies
	Wellbeing induction, education, and resources	Mentorship programs	Knowledge-sharing and collaboration with the broader legal sector
 Protect	Regular one-on-ones with leaders or managers	Commitment to a no-blame culture	Professional in-house support
	Psychosocial risk assessment and early intervention	Workload management system	SMART job design
	Reporting system and risk register for psychosocial incidents	Health and Wellbeing Committee	Ethical compliance training
 Respond	Access to confidential counselling	Return to work policy	Proactive wellbeing supervision sessions
	Critical incident response policy	Designated peer supporters	Tailored wellbeing support
	Wellbeing response training for managers	Trained contact officers	Flexible leave and work arrangements

Foundational Element 1:



Promote

Snapshot

Mentally healthy legal workplaces actively recognise and promote the positive aspects of legal work by:

- looking for ways to support the mental health and wellbeing of their lawyers and staff
- identifying and building on practices and initiatives that are already successful
- empowering legal professionals and teams to leverage their strengths in their work
- offering ongoing learning and development opportunities.

Why is this important?

Work can and should be good for us. When legal workplaces promote the positive aspects of work, lawyers and support staff are more likely to be engaged and satisfied in their work, which reduces burnout and fosters a positive workplace culture.

How does this help the workplace?

Engaged lawyers and staff with higher levels of positive wellbeing are more productive, creative and efficient. When the positive aspects of legal work are promoted, legal workplaces get the best out of their people, which leads to better retention, productivity and team morale.

Where do you start?

Start by implementing the 3 'good practice' actions:

- wellbeing plan
- 'managing for wellbeing' training
- wellbeing induction, education and resources.



Foundational Element 1: Promote

Actions



Good practice

Wellbeing plan

- Ensure, through a process of consultation and collaboration, that leadership co-designs a wellbeing plan for the legal workplace with lawyers and staff. This plan should articulate the shared vision for creating a mentally healthy workplace, action areas and initiatives that will be delivered, and the roles and accountabilities for delivering these goals. It should also include metrics and procedures to continuously monitor, evaluate and improve outcomes.
- Ensure the wellbeing plan and any associated policies are reviewed annually.

‘Managing for wellbeing’ training

- Ensure principals and others with management roles undertake training on supportive management practices. This should help them to understand and address psychosocial hazards, understand effective supervision and reflective practice, recognise and reward effort and performance, and detect and address wellbeing issues in staff and teams.
- Include these responsibilities in position descriptions.

Wellbeing induction, education and resources

- Provide structured wellbeing education and resources for lawyers and staff across the employee lifecycle to promote awareness of how wellbeing affects an individual’s legal practice, to empower individuals to develop self-management strategies and to encourage help-seeking.
- Provide this support at induction and refresh resources annually.
- Provide other awareness events and regular skills-based training in areas such as stress management, de-escalation and resilience.
- Reinforce key messages through easily accessible resources – such as tip sheets, tools and support service contacts – that are hosted on the staff intranet or similar platform.
- Ensure all content aligns with workplace policies, the wellbeing plan, and risk assessment framework.
- Ensure leaders model participation in wellbeing education and awareness-raising events.



Foundational Element 1: Promote



Better practice

Wellbeing commitment statement and leadership visibility

- Ensure principals and other leaders publicly commit their firm or practice to improved employee mental health and wellbeing through a formal statement. This can be stated on the legal workplace's website and/or promoted internally.
- Ensure principals and leaders are visible in their unequivocal support for wellbeing initiatives and are aligned with the commitment statement.
- Ensure all lawyers and support staff are aware of this commitment.

Designated wellbeing champions

- Appoint wellbeing champions responsible for promoting and supporting mental health initiatives within the legal workplace. Wellbeing champions should be thoughtfully appointed, ideally following an expression of interest process.
- Provide wellbeing champions with appropriate training, supervision and allocated time for activities.

Mentorship programs

Establish mentorship programs or buddy systems to support the professional growth of younger employees and employees with diverse identities, and to provide an informal route to discuss issues when things go wrong.



Best practice

Facilitated reflective practice groups

Establish peer reflective practice groups, ideally facilitated by a skilled mental health professional, through which lawyers and support staff can share experiences, challenges and advice in a confidential and structured environment. Reflective practice groups should come together for approximately 90 minutes in-person or online monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly.

Integrated policies

- Integrate mental health and wellbeing policies into broader organisational policies and practices, including measuring and rewarding performance.
- Consider whether the legal workplace's performance management system motivates ethical behaviours and people to do their best.
- Establish mechanisms for staff to provide feedback on policies and practices related to mental health and wellbeing.
- Identify the business case for improvements.

Knowledge-sharing and collaboration with the broader legal sector

- Contribute to the system-wide enhancement of lawyer wellbeing and evolve your workplace's approach by sharing knowledge, ideas and successes with other legal workplaces.
- Support staff to participate in external forums, wellbeing initiatives and cross-sector working groups.
- Share internal practices and learnings with the broader profession and invite guest speakers or collaborators from other organisations to contribute to internal wellbeing efforts.
- Foster regular dialogue with peers across the legal sector.

Foundational Element 2:



Protect

Snapshot

Mentally healthy legal workplaces take steps to protect their lawyers and support staff from physical, environmental and psychological harm by:

- understanding legal obligations to identify and control hazards, including psychosocial hazards
- identifying and evaluating risks to psychological health that are specific to legal environments
- proactively assessing and managing psychosocial hazards within the workplace
- implementing effective work design, allowing legal professionals to have input into how they manage and perform their tasks
- conducting regular consultations and reviews of the broader workplace environment to ensure it meets safety standards.

Why is this important?

Many risks to lawyer wellbeing can be prevented or mitigated through strategic adjustments to workplace systems, practices and tasks. Eliminating or reducing unnecessary work demands and hazards, increases lawyers' and staff members' resilience for the inherent demands and challenges of legal work.

How does this help the workplace?

Proactively addressing risks and hazards enhances employee resilience, reduces absenteeism, and improves productivity. It promotes a safe and supportive environment where legal professionals and staff can thrive, which ultimately improves overall team performance and morale.

Where do you start?

Start by implementing the 3 'good practice' actions:

- regular one-on-ones with leaders and managers
- psychosocial risk assessment and early intervention
- reporting system and risk register for psychosocial incidents.



Foundational Element 2: Protect

Actions



Good practice

Regular one-on-ones with leaders or managers

- Ensure leaders have regular (ideally weekly or fortnightly) one-on-one supervision meetings with all lawyers and support staff who report to them. In these meetings they should discuss workload, role clarity, work challenges, feedback, development aspirations and overall wellbeing. This is also the best mechanism for building trust with and knowledge of staff, so that leaders can detect wellbeing changes and offer support.
- Ideally, ensure an individual leader has no more than 8 direct reports.

Psychosocial risk assessment and early intervention

- Conduct a regular psychosocial risk assessment to identify and mitigate potential hazards, including excessive workloads, long work hours, lack of support, traumatic case content, interaction with people with challenging behaviours, and negative workplace behaviours.
- Seek feedback from all lawyers and support staff about their satisfaction and experience of psychosocial safety and wellbeing at work.
- When hazards are identified, design and implement evidence-informed controls.
- Ensure these controls are periodically assessed for their effectiveness in eliminating or reducing the risk.

Reporting system and risk register for psychosocial incidents

- Implement a clear, confidential reporting system for psychosocial incidents, such as bullying, harassment, or work-related stress.
- Maintain a risk register to track these incidents and monitor trends, examine existing controls to determine why the incident occurred and revise, where appropriate, to minimise future risks. This enables the legal workplace to identify issues early and take appropriate corrective actions.



Foundational Element 2: Protect



Better practice

Commitment to a no-blame culture

- Ensure leaders articulate and internally publicise a commitment statement for promoting a 'no-blame culture'.
- Actively foster a culture where lawyers and staff feel safe to speak up about mistakes.
- Consistently speak of mistakes as learning opportunities rather than indicators of incompetence.
- Reward and encourage lawyers and staff who speak up.
- Call out blaming behaviour.
- Share personal stories of mistakes and near misses.
- Use any near misses as learning points for training.
- Advocate for high standards, not perfection.

Workload management system

- Create good workload management practices by implementing the 'good practice' actions.
- Further systematise the practices by establishing a policy and process to monitor and manage workloads throughout the legal workplace. The policy should include solutions to:
 1. track distribution of tasks to ensure an equitable spread within and across teams
 2. require regular workload review
 3. promote flexible working arrangements
 4. promote open communication about workload and capacity
 5. monitor and act on overtime data.

Health and Wellbeing Committee

- Establish a committee with representatives from all teams and business units, including any health and safety representatives. The committee's role is to oversee the application of the legal workplace's wellbeing plan, monitor implementation and evaluation of health and wellbeing initiatives, and establish processes for internal reporting and investigation of incidents and near-misses.
- Ensure the committee takes a continuous improvement approach to psychosocial risk prevention, and regularly updates strategies based on internal investigations, new research and feedback.



Foundational Element 2: Protect



Best practice

Professional in-house support

Depending on the size of the legal workplace, either employ or engage an appropriately trained mental health professional (e.g. psychologist) to provide expert guidance to leaders and managers, deliver training, develop relevant policies, and implement other actions suggested in these Guidelines.

SMART job design

Review all roles and expectations of lawyers and staff through the lens of SMART job design – to ensure, where possible, that work is Stimulating, promotes Mastery of skills, offers Agency in decision-making, fosters Relational connections, and remains Tolerable to prevent burnout. When implemented alongside systems to manage the quantitative extent and equity of lawyers' workloads, SMART job design helps manage the qualitative experience of workload pressure.

Ethical compliance training

Ensure principals, lawyers and relevant support staff are supported to participate in ethical, compliance and regulatory concerns training. The training should provide clarity on obligations, expectations, and response pathways for breaches and near misses. It should also include discussions about professional values, the risk and protective factors for ethical compliance within organisational settings, and the inter-relationship between wellbeing and ethical behaviour.

Foundational Element 3:



Respond

Snapshot

Mentally healthy legal workplaces actively identify and respond swiftly to warning signs of distress, declining wellbeing, or mental ill-health among their lawyers and support staff by:

- knowing their staff and detecting changes in behaviour and performance
- being ready and equipped to provide timely and appropriate support to lawyers and staff
- acting swiftly on any early warning signs to increase the chances of positive health and wellbeing outcomes, which can also contribute to improved workplace performance
- providing sensitive support to lawyers and staff recovering from or returning to work following incidents, illness and injury
- understanding incident notification and response obligations under OHS laws.

Why is this important?

Even when legal workplaces implement best practice in promoting and protecting wellbeing, lawyers and staff will occasionally have difficult periods and experience distress. Responding promptly to early signs of distress helps prevent more serious health issues, reduces the impact of stress or illness, and supports overall employee wellbeing. It demonstrates the legal workplace's commitment to the health of its staff.

How does this help the workplace?

Quick identification and support of mental health concerns boosts employee confidence, reduces downtime, and improves overall productivity. It creates a culture of care by fostering loyalty and improving team morale while reducing the risk of long-term mental health issues.

Where do you start?

Start by implementing the 3 'good practice' actions:

- access to confidential counselling
- critical incident response policy
- wellbeing response training for managers.



Foundational Element 3: Respond

Actions



Good practice

Access to confidential counselling

- Ensure all employees have 24/7 access to confidential mental health and critical incident support services, through an employee assistance program (EAP) or other source.
- Create suitable communication and feedback mechanisms to ensure awareness of available supports and that services continue to be relevant and effective to lawyers and staff needs.

Critical incident response policy

Establish and implement a critical incident response policy to swiftly address significant workplace events that impact lawyer and staff wellbeing. The policy should outline clear procedures for immediate response, support and recovery following a critical incident, and ensure all personnel receive the necessary psychological and professional assistance during crises.

Wellbeing response training for managers

- Provide training for principals and others in management roles to equip them to recognise and respond to early signs of stress and mental illness in lawyers and staff. This should include understanding symptoms, enhancing communication skills, learning basic intervention strategies to provide timely and appropriate support, reducing bias and stigma, and developing confidence and competence in assisting lawyers and staff to return to work post-injury.
- Include the training as part of new managers induction and provide refreshers annually or biennially.
- Highlight wellbeing response as a manager's responsibility in relevant position descriptions.



Foundational Element 3: Respond



Better practice

Return to work policy

Develop and implement an effective return to work policy that facilitates the gradual reintegration of lawyers and staff recovering from stress, mental illness, injury or crisis. This policy should include flexible work arrangements, tailored support plans, and ongoing communication between the individual, their healthcare providers, manager and HR / return to work coordinator to ensure a smooth transition back to work.

Designated peer supporters

- Ensure selected representatives from across teams and work groups receive training for identifying and responding to a colleague in distress. Through this training, peer supporters should learn how to recognise signs of distress among colleagues, basic counselling techniques, and how to connect peers with professional help. This will help foster a supportive and vigilant workplace culture.
- Ensure peer supporters receive regular supervision by a trained mental health professional.

Trained contact officers

- Select staff members representing all levels of the legal workplace as contact officers.
- Ensure they receive specialised training in assisting colleagues who experience inappropriate workplace behaviour, such as bullying, harassment and occupational violence. In this way, contact officers will learn basic skills in conflict resolution, legal compliance, workplace policies and procedures, to provide guidance on available options for resolution.



Foundational Element 3: Respond



Best practice

Proactive wellbeing supervision sessions

- Establish a program of proactive wellbeing supervision for lawyers and support staff engaged in complex or emotionally demanding work. These proactive wellbeing supervision sessions are regular, confidential meetings with a mental health professional, in which lawyers and staff are supported to reflect on the human dimension of their work, monitor its personal impact, and learn strategies to manage known workplace stressors effectively. They should also allow for staff to build a therapeutic relationship that they can call on if they are acutely impacted by the demands of work.
- Ensure these sessions are regular (e.g. monthly, quarterly or biannually). Set clear expectations about participation, preferably using an opt-out approach.

Tailored wellbeing support

Provide tailored mental health and wellbeing support services for diverse groups that address the specific needs and challenges of individuals with intersectional identities. This could include culturally competent counselling, support groups, and training sessions for all staff to promote inclusivity and understanding across the legal workplace.

Flexible leave and work arrangements

- Offer flexible leave and work options that support lawyers and staff during family and life events and respect their lives and interests outside of work, including caregiving responsibilities.
- Provide additional days in lieu for extra hours worked to acknowledge the importance of rest and recovery after periods of high demand.
- Incorporate these options and arrangements in the legal workplace's leave policy.

Definitions

Contact officer

A trained, designated employee within an organisation who serves as a confidential and impartial point of contact for colleagues experiencing workplace issues like bullying, harassment, discrimination, and provides support and guidance on available resolution pathways.

Critical incident

A traumatic or stressful event that has the potential to cause significant harm, either physically or psychologically, to those involved. These events are often unexpected and outside the realm of normal experience, and can disrupt a person's sense of safety and wellbeing.

Culture and conduct

The shared values, behaviours, and norms within a workplace that shape how individuals interact. A healthy culture promotes trust, respect, professionalism, and wellbeing.

Evidence-informed

An approach that uses the best available research, expert knowledge, and practical experience to guide decisions—while also considering context, relevance, and feasibility.

Health and safety duty holders

Individuals or organisations responsible under work health and safety laws for ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, the physical and psychological wellbeing of workers.

Legal support staff

Non-lawyer professionals who contribute to the delivery of legal services, including paralegals, clerks, administrative assistants, and legal practice managers.

Legal workplace

Any organisation where legal services are delivered or supported—such as law firms, in-house legal teams, community legal centres, and legal aid services.

“One on one’s”

Scheduled supervision meetings between two individuals, typically a manager and an employee, to discuss workload, work-related topics, career development, wellbeing and build stronger relationships.

Peer supporter

A trained staff member who provides support to others in the workplace based on shared experiences, particularly in the context of mental health or other health conditions. They have wellbeing conversations with colleagues in need, and help them navigate next steps including accessing other available supports.

Performance targets that ignore non-fee-earning achievements

Workplace benchmarks that focus only on billable hours or financial outputs, overlooking meaningful contributions such as mentoring, pro bono work, supervision, business development, or internal leadership roles.

Protective workplace factors

Aspects of the work environment that promote wellbeing and reduce risk of harm, such as supportive leadership, fair policies, workload balance, and a positive team culture.

Psychological distress

Mental or emotional suffering often marked by symptoms such as anxiety, low mood, and overwhelm, which can impair a person's ability to function at work or in daily life.

Psychological health and safety

A workplace condition in which psychological risks are actively managed to prevent harm and promote mental wellbeing, trust, and safety.

Psychosocial hazards

Workplace conditions or practices that may cause psychological harm, such as excessive workload, bullying, poor support, or exposure to traumatic content.

Psychosocial risk assessment

A systematic process used to identify, evaluate, and control potential hazards that can negatively impact the mental health and wellbeing of workers in the workplace.

Reflective practice

A process of intentionally and critically thinking about one's experiences, actions, and decisions to learn and improve, often undertaken in regular, facilitated group settings.

Risk register

A document that systematically identifies potential risks, their likelihood and impact, and the actions being taken to mitigate them, as well as records harmful events, accidents and near misses, and the organisational response.

Stigmatisation of stress and mental ill-health

Negative attitudes or beliefs that discredit or marginalise individuals experiencing stress, anxiety, or other mental health conditions, discouraging openness or help-seeking.

Sustainable work practices

Work approaches designed to support long-term performance and wellbeing, such as reasonable hours, adequate rest, inclusive policies, and proactive stress management.

Systemic change

Deep, structural transformation in workplace practices, policies, or culture aimed at addressing root causes of poor wellbeing, rather than surface-level symptoms.

Theory of Change

A strategic framework that maps out how specific actions are expected to lead to desired outcomes, based on evidence, lived experience, assumptions, and a clear sequence of change.

Unmanageable workload

A level or pace of work that consistently exceeds a person's capacity to manage it effectively, leading to chronic stress, fatigue, or burnout.

Wellbeing

A holistic state of positive physical, mental, and emotional health that enables individuals to thrive in their work and personal life.

Wellbeing supervision

A structured process where a supervisor (often a qualified therapist or experienced professional) provides regular, confidential support to an individual. It offers a space for reflection, processing experiences, and developing coping strategies.