

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY — PSYCHOLOGICAL HAZARDS

Statement by Minister for Industrial Relations

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Industrial Relations) [12.05 pm]: I rise to make a brief statement regarding the government's response to significant community concerns about the risk of psychological hazards in Western Australian workplaces. Psychological hazards are a significant, but often unregarded, hazard. Assessing the risk of physical injury has a long history in work health and safety. The risks associated with physical health, and the requirements to control those risks, are well understood. In recent years it has become clear that psychological injuries, their causes, and means to prevent them, are not as commonly known in workplaces. This has resulted in substantial, often silent pain and suffering from our fellow Western Australians. Unregarded, these hazards go often unaddressed.

The WA government is committed to mentally healthy workplaces and the recent publication of the *Code of practice: Psychosocial hazards in the workplace* will provide practical assistance to duty holders. This is the start of the journey to improving mental health in the workplace. The Work Health and Safety Act 2022 defines health to include psychological health. Every requirement of the law should be applied equally to psychological and physical hazards, with a view to preventing injury.

The application of work health and safety laws to psychological hazards was identified by Marie Boland as challenging to duty holders in her 2018 review of the model work health and safety laws. A recommendation in Ms Boland's report proposed amending the model WHS regulations to specifically deal with the identification of psychological risks and the appropriate control measures to manage those risks. Safe Work Australia has recently implemented this recommendation by drafting new model WHS regulations for harmonised jurisdictions to implement. I am pleased to advise that I have approved drafting instructions to amend the work health and safety regulations for mines and general workplaces in Western Australia to implement the model WHS regulations prepared by Safe Work Australia. The new regulations will require a person conducting a business or undertaking to eliminate psychosocial risks, or minimise them, as much as reasonably practicable. This new duty places psychological hazards on the same footing as other significant hazards, such as working from height, hazardous atmospheres and forklifts. It will ensure that workplaces act consciously to address psychological risks to all workers.