

# TRANSCRIPT OF EVENT

## SHAPING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

**Dr Gordon de Brouwer PSM (host)**, IPAA National President

**Lucinda Brogden AM (Guest)**, Chair of the National Mental Health Commission and Chair of the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance

**Steven Worrall (Guest)**, Managing Director at Microsoft Australia & New Zealand and Chair of the Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia

**Cheryl-anne Moy (Guest)**, Deputy Secretary, Department of Home Affairs

**Alistair Carmichael (Guest)**, Associate Partner, McKinsey & Company

**Kimberley Swords (Facilitator)**, Government Expert, McKinsey & Company

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LEON TATTIS: My name is Leon Tattis, I'm your WebEx host for this session for today. And I'm going to hand over now to our official host for today, who is Dr Gordon de Brouwer, PSM and the National President of IPAA. So he will actually introduce the panel and we'll get going. So Gordon.

GORDON DE BROUWER: Yeah, thanks Leon. My name's Gordon de Brouwer, and I'm your host for today's event. I'd like to start where we should start, is by acknowledging the traditional owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. I'd like to pay my respect to elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander colleagues joining today. So welcome to today's event, "Shaping Positive Mental Health In Your Workplace". The format for today's event involves a panel discussion, an audience Q and A session, and then some reflections and close. I'd like to encourage you all to ask questions in the chat window as we progress through the discussion.

It's my pleasure now to introduce the panellists to you for today, Lucy Brogden AM, is the Chair and Commissioner of the National Mental Health Commission, and is the chair of the Mentally Healthy Workplace Alliance. Lucy has a strong commitment to helping others, her primary areas of focus are issues facing mental health and wellbeing and suicide prevention, particularly in the workplace. She takes an evidence-based approach to problem solving and to social investment. Lucy has more than 25 years of commercial experience and has worked in advisory roles for some of Australia's leading CEOs, managing partners, ministers, and chairs of boards.

We're also joined by Steve Worrall. Steve is the Managing Director of Microsoft Australia and New Zealand, and is Chair of the Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia. Steven's responsible for Microsoft's overall business in Australia and New Zealand, and he's a passionate advocate for diversity and inclusion, with a particular focus on improving indigenous inclusion and addressing wellbeing and mental health in the workplace. In 2020, Steven became the founding Chair of the Corporate Mental Health Alliance in Australia.

We're also joined by Cheryl-anne Moy PSM. Cheryl-anne's the Chief Operating Officer at the Department of Home Affairs. She's an experienced senior executive with a policy corporate program, service delivery and operational background. She's seen everything. She joined the public service after a career in banking, finance and fraud investigations. And Cheryl-anne has a diverse background and has managed large and high profile programs, such as regional processing, children in immigration, ministerial and parliamentary entitlements, and social welfare programs such as retirement, rural, regional, and employment.

We're also joined by Alistair Carmichael. Alistair is an Associate Partner at McKinsey & Company. He's a leader of McKinsey's People and Organisational Performance Practice, and is based in Sydney. He's focused on unlocking potential and performance through operating model transformation, culture, change leadership and leadership development. And Alistair is passionate about mental health and is one of the founders and leads of McKinsey's work on workplace mental health.

So that's a really brilliant panel and we also have a brilliant host today for the panel discussion, who is Kimberley Swords. Kimberley's a government expert at McKinsey & Company, and specializes in economic sustainability and cities related projects. She has previously served as a Deputy Secretary in the Australian and Queensland governments across portfolios, including Premier's planning, transport environment, agriculture, housing, public works, all of government procurement, and in leading the Queensland Responsive Government Digital Transformation Program. She also has a passionate interest in organisational health, impactful change leadership and the wellbeing of staff across Australia's various public services.

So welcome to our panel. Mental health in the workplace is a topic of big and increasing importance across the public sectors, as our workforces grapple with lockdowns, remote learning and uncertainty. While at the same time, delivering for an Australian community, which is equally dealing with lockdowns and also potential economic and social dislocation. So with great delight, I'd like to hand over to Kimberley and let the panel begin.

**KIMBERLEY SWORDS:**

Thank you. Thank you, Gordon, for those very kind and thoughtful remarks to get us started. I'd like to invite everyone who's here in the session today to put down your multitasking and to really lean into joining into this conversation with a really high level of curiosity. We're going to start the panel off by asking some of the close up and personal questions around how they came to be interested in this topic. And we're then going to take a bit of a telescope view out from there to the organisations and to the systems. As Leon mentioned in the introduction, we would love to have questions in the chat, you can send them so that they amplify to everyone in the group, or you can send them directly to me, depending on your preference. So without further ado, we might start with you Lucy, would you like to share with the group just a little introduction of how you came to be interested and passionate about this topic?

**LUCINDA BROGDEN:**

Thanks Kimberley. And thanks for the panel and IPAA for putting it together, because as you said, Gordon, it's a very important topic. I'm coming to you from the lands of the Guringai people today, in the Eora nation, and I pay my respects, along with others, to the first nations people of Australia. And I guess how I ended up here after a career in banking and finance, was actually an underlying and deep passion for psychology and not wanting to throw away a long career in banking and finance and business, I combined the two to follow a passion for organisational psychology, which I have qualifications in.

But I also bring a lived experience, I identify as a carer of someone that lives with mental ill health and suicidal ideation, and I've seen firsthand really how workplaces can be incredibly protective and supportive and support recovery, but I've also seen where workplaces can do harm. And that's something that I really want to prevent, is to identify the best and bring that out and to stop the harm and really enable as many people as possible to participate in a workplace because we know how good work is good for you. So that's my story in a nutshell, thanks Kimberley.

**KIMBERLEY SWORDS:** It's wonderful to have you here, Lucy. Thank you. We might turn to Steven next, you want to take that same question, Steven?

**SETVEN WORRALL:** Would love to Kimberley. Thank you so much, and massive thank you to Gordon and the IPAA team for the invitation to participate in such an important conversation. And it's a privilege to be on a panel with Lucy, Cheryl-anne and with Alistair. But Kimberley, I think I should also say I'm in Cammeray, before I go too much further, in Sydney in lockdown, I'm in the study of mine here, I've been in for about 13 weeks, so getting to know it very well. I'll just pay my respects to the Cammeraygal for their ongoing connection with, and their ongoing custodianship of this amazing land that I have the privilege to live and work on.

But Kimberley, to your question, I think there's two thoughts that float to the surface for me. One is, in business, I've always had this interest in, and I think, focus on the connection between wellbeing in all its forms, physical and mental wellbeing, in relation to the performance. Many people in government and business will understand that connection because we all have our ups and downs through our life, and the personal implication to what's going on in our lives at any point in time, clearly have an impact on professional lives and our performance. And being able to look at the whole person, both at a personal level, but then as a leader of teams, I think has been something of great interest to me for many years.

But perhaps more personally Kimberley, it was about five years ago, I'd just joined Microsoft in fact, and my father was going through the last phases of his battle with cancer. And like many people who had aging parents or parents who are in the end of their life, the difficulties associated with helping dad deal with all of the challenges that we were grappling with at the time in a family context, in helping him to die with dignity, at the same time, I was starting a new job, at the same time as trying to be a dad and a husband. There was a definite period right there where I can look back and remember very directly how painful, tough that situation was. And so very clear understanding of the impacts of mental health and wellbeing, and obviously want to make sure that I can play whatever role I can in business, to help create a safe environment for all of us going through those sorts of challenges, and of course, most recently with the pandemic.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS: Thank you, Steven. Thank you for being so open with regard to your personal challenges. I think that really helps people connect with the topic. It's absolutely front of mind for so many of us at the moment. Cheryl-anne, did you want to share some thoughts with the group to get us started on your connection and interest in this topic as well?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: Thanks, Kimberley. And as with everyone else, very happy to be here today. And I'd also like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people on whose land I'm on today, and acknowledge all first nations people. So my connection to mental health and being a mental health information and services and support, particularly within the APS, came from a very personal with a staff member who had some serious mental health issues. I worked with this person very closely, they worked for me, they used to hide so well and be so high functioning in their roles and still have no support to deal with what actually was the issue for them. So from that point on, which was a large number of years ago now, I very much became the advocate within my organisation to support our staff and their families in how we did this.

And of course, moving through different organisations and now being in Home Affairs, which is no different to any other workplace or any other department, there's a large mix of people with varying mental and physical health issues. But specifically for mental health, we take our support and our responsibility and accountabilities very, very seriously, but also very personally. So I'm still in contact with that ex staff member now, doesn't work for me anymore, and very happy that he has a happy and loving family and now has four children. I'm glad to see them every time I see them. It's an amazing thing. Thank you.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS: Thanks Cheryl-anne. Al, did you want to share some introductory thoughts about your connection with the topic of mental health and your work at McKinsey?

ALISTAIR CARMICHAEL: Yeah, would love to Kimberley. So I would also like to pay my respects to the first nations people, I'm joining from, actually not far from Steve, Cammeraygal people of the Eora nation and pay my respects to the elders past, present and emerging. I'm quite grateful to be here today and with quite an amazing panel, this topic is very close to home for me. My experience around mental health and mental health challenges started when I was in high school and I had a lot more hair than I have now, and over a long period of time, have been passionate about this. I've seen what can happen when people face mental health challenges, how it can destroy lives, and I've also seen how people can flourish with the right sort of support.

In a workplace setting, I've also, similar to what Lucy had mentioned, I've seen what happens when it's done well and also what happens when it's done not so well. I was a lawyer before I came to McKinsey and I saw some healthy and some very unhealthy settings. Now at McKinsey, my journey on this topic has been about six years. About six years ago when I was facing some of my own

challenges, I looked at the support that we were providing our people and although it was good and it was well intentioned, it didn't feel like it was where it needed to be, and as a profession, we weren't where we needed to be. And at that time founded our internal work around workplace mental health, and took the opportunity to get out there and to learn, learn from so many amazing people in the community, Beyond Blue, Black Dog, Lifeline, all of the various parts of our ecosystem, really learn from what works.

And what struck me through doing that is that so many organisations are on the same journey and are not sure exactly where to go. And it's important that that's happening, and it's great that increasingly people are opening up and there's different places to go, Corporate Mental Health Alliance Australia is a powerful one of those. Now with the journey that we went on from McKinsey, from a little initiative that started in Australia, to now we have a global workplace mental health program for all of our employees worldwide, growing out of Australia, because we acknowledge that this is a critical factor for the performance of our people and the experience of our people.

If I look broader than that, and I look at what I do day to day now, I've got the opportunity connected into my day to day work, which is around operating model culture and change. Because I do who believe at the heart of workplace mental health, it's not a HR matter, it's actually an organisational health culture operating model challenge that we're facing, and it's a critical challenge that we're facing now. You look at the striking stats, the 17 billion loss that was called out in the productivity commission, which personally I think is an underestimate, because it actually misses the upside potential of supporting people, and you look at what's happening through COVID, it is so important, it is the issue of our time. So it is wonderful that folks are here and are learning, and I look forward to sharing some perspective. I have the privilege of being able to do that for McKinsey as part of our global external workplace mental health practice and I know the panel members, we're in for a great discussion today.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS:

Thanks Alistair. And that brings us to the very, very important point that started to come up in the chat, as well as in the discussion so far, which is if we start with what are the increase in risks and then move to what should organisations be doing as best practice, that'll come to a lot of the questions that are starting to come through in the chat. So maybe Steven, do you want to kick off with that, what is Microsoft seeing in terms of increased risks and what are you doing and really focusing in on? And perhaps then I'll turn to Lucy and Cheryl-anne and AI again.

SETVEN WORRALL:

Yeah, for sure, be happy to Kimberley. Look, I think the primary lens through which I'll answer that question is the time we find ourselves in dealing with the pandemic. And I don't think there's any doubt at all for us here in Australia or for that matter, any country around the world, that things have changed forever. And as it relates to the workplace, there's no doubt that we're all engaging

more often through a digital mechanism. So it depends on the role that any particular individual may have, and of course, I'm generalizing here because there are many different parts of our economy, and there are many people in essential work whose life continues on, their work life continues on in some cases, in a very similar way to how it was before the pandemic. But for the majority, what we're seeing is much more engagement digitally and online.

And so Kimberley, whether it's at Microsoft or indeed around the world, working with our clients, and in fact, we recently completed a survey of about 30,000 people in different countries and different industries, to get a sense of how they are reacting and responding to this time. And it's a whole other conversation, if anyone's interested in that report. But the key takeaways are that there's been an increase in productivity in many cases, not all, but in many cases, and as people have moved online, there's been this sense that we've been able to get more done, interestingly, because there hasn't been the typical engagement in travel or the issues associated with creating meetings, face to face meetings and the coordination of many people across different parts of our supply chain or an organisation. But at the same time, a very, very direct increase in stress and anxiety and digital fatigue, that I think many are reporting.

And so I suppose as a starting point, Kimberley, there's no question that this mode of operation, I think, is going to continue to be one of the takeaways from the pandemic. We're going to be using more of this technology in future because we can see there are many benefits, yet at the same time, workplaces ours included for sure, are thinking very deeply about how do we avoid the unintended consequences of increased usage of this form of engagement. How do we avoid that sense of fatigue and stress that's created when people roll out of bed and walk straight onto a call to start their day, and then in some cases, 12 hours later or longer, turn off the PC and reengage with the family without any commute, without any break, without any of the normal boundaries that we might have found in a regular day prior to the pandemic. So I think this is a period for lots of introspection learning because things are changing, quite obviously. We're going to need to adapt and we're going to need to find new techniques to ensure we create the most psychologically safe workplaces that we can.

**KIMBERLEY SWORDS:**

Thanks, Steve. And Lucy, interested in your thoughts on what are you hearing from the people in your network about those points, particularly perhaps diving into the ones that Steven was raising around the boundaries between home and the desk, which in my case is through one door from the lounge room, I'm sure it is for most other people as well. The personal contact, the informal corridor chit-chat or waiting chit-chat that you used to have while you waited for things to happen, with groups of people that you worked with. What are you hearing and seeing in terms of the risks to mental health and perhaps some of the exciting, innovative ideas that organisations might be bringing to bear?

LUCINDA BROGDEN:

Look, I think it's been really quite fascinating Kimberley and Steve touched on some of the findings. I think prior to COVID we always had this fear around flex and people working from home, that somehow productivity would go down. And we certainly did see that productivity held or has gone up, although we're starting to see that that may be waning now, that initial enthusiasm and novelty factor is perhaps wearing a little bit thin, and particularly our colleagues in Victoria are reporting that it gets harder every time. And so I think we need to be mindful of this and just because it worked once, doesn't mean it's going to work, and keep finding ways to be creative around that. When we talk about mental ill health, we very much factor that with what we call the social determinants of health, and big elements of that are around safe and stable, secure housing, financial security, connections with people, identity, etcetera, all play into that.

And so what we're seeing is variability across sectors, across industry. I think those of us working in government are somewhat privileged at the moment, most roles have been quite safe and secure for us. But we're seeing others where job security is gone, it's nonexistent. If I look at the small businesses in my own neighbourhood, the number that have closed just because they can't keep the doors open, is really heartbreaking. And so I think we need to be mindful of the diversity and variability of our workforce across the country. What we saw interestingly from super friends, indicators of a thriving workplace study, which looked at 10,000 workers, matched to the ABS profile of employment in Australia, was a lot of people working offsite reported greater connection to their organisation than they'd ever felt before.

So I think that's something that's intriguing that team leaders might want to explore. What was it that was working and how do we hold onto some of that? But we are missing that incidental connection, and I guess what I'm seeing is some really creative things that come through from different teams and organisations on how to connect, how to bring people back to one another. And I think the acknowledgement, this is tricky, you've probably seen doing the rounds, the KPMG Norway video about returning to work and what that's going to look like. And interestingly, our European friends are really tackling this in an organisational way, to recognise what people have endured, what they want to hold onto, and what they want to leave behind. So we're in a very interesting space at the moment and I'm not sure that there's a one size fits all for any industry or organisation.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS:

That's incredibly insightful, Lucy. I think that idea that there's not one size that fits all, there's a variety of different experiences. And Cheryl-anne, you won't be surprised that I have the annoying Senator version of the question for you, given the government's interest in people coming back to work. And I know from talking to the capital city Lord Mayors at various times through this particular set of difficulties, there has been a strong sense in Australia that we would do this once and then we would get back to normal and everyone would come back to work in the CBD and everything would be fine. Interested from



the perspective that you are in now. Government has had aspirations for everyone to come back to work, they probably still do, but given the lockdowns and the vaccination levels, that appears not to be an immediate likelihood. So did you want to pick up that one and run with it wherever you think it can most usefully be run with?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY:

Sure. Thank you. And I've moved, hopefully so that we've got better reception to help Telstra out. You're right, so Government has asked the APS to return to your workplace as soon as possible, as soon as public health orders allow. And that is done a little bit differently across all of the APS, with different departments at different speeds. Being one of the large departments, when we went back originally after the first major wave of pandemic, we were reporting every week, how many staff were in the office compared to how many were still working at home. So Government had a close focus on the APS returning to work so that the small business, transport, everything was back to normal and that those little cafes that sit in our building, outside our buildings that we walked past to get our coffee, still had some business going past.

So that is a definite tension in terms of the number of staff who would still like to spend a period of time each week working at home. So we're doing a bit of balance across the APS with that, and we've just, through the APSC, put out a set of principles with the COO committee, on how that may work and that work was led by Tax and ourselves. So there's a set of principles now gone around to the public service to say, this is how we'll manage it in the future. But interestingly, and I agree with all of the comments of the previous panellists, but the interesting thing is we have seen the separation of employees and that disconnection that is created between teams, but also what staff are saying to us is it's just not the teams they're disconnected from.

And we all know people are disconnected because of borders, time and space from family, sometimes from neighbours, not able to get around in their neighbourhood. They're suffering from a lack of meeting new people, especially younger staff. And also we have a large number of families or staff whose families have lost jobs. So they're going through that stress as well as maintaining their great productivity and doing their job from home. But in the public service, it's also created two class of staff, so we have staff who can do their jobs at home, quite easily. In Home Affairs, we have quite a number of staff and this will be the same for all the National Intelligence agencies, Defence, and a number of other areas where there's secret information or private information held, where those staff cannot work from home because we can't put the systems in their homes that has classified information.

So through these entire pandemics, through New South Wales, through Victoria, through ACT, through all of the other lockdowns we've had earlier, those staff go to work every single day. So what we're seeing is a higher level of fatigue from them because of the fact, not that they didn't do that every day anyway, previously, but because of that psychological rift that other people can

work at home and I can't. So that's another struggle for APS and I'm sure there's some other industries also, will have that issue. And we've been dealing with these in different ways, we know that 37.7% of our presentations to our employee assistance provider are psychologically related and we know that last year's was 7.83% of staff used that service, now we're up to about 8.99%.

So with a large number of staff, that's a decent increase. And we know also that people access services outside of that, where they don't access them at work. So we're well over 10 to 15% at the best, I think, at least. So we've done a fair bit of work with staff this year. I have a health services division in Home Affairs, so we specifically look at immigration health, so what you need to come into the country, but the other side, so half of the division actually looks at staff health and wellbeing. So it's purely attached to fit and well processes, it's attached to physical health tests that the ABF may need to do to be physically fit for their jobs. But a large portion of it is the psychological assistance to staff, because we have staff who do difficult jobs, Home Affairs is sometimes a difficult portfolio you're working, you see some things that you would prefer not to.

So we have psychosocial risk just in their day to day job for looking at countering violent extremism, foreign interference, some of the work that the ABF does at the border, and some of the things they have to see when they arrest people with the AFP. So we've done a fair amount of work this year. One of the things we've really done because people are working at home, is try to assist their families understand what they do. So we have a family package that we put out to staff, to their families to access, to explain what does my husband, spouse, father do when they're working in the ABF? What sort of work are they doing? What sort of work are they doing if they work in intel? What sort of work are they doing if they work here? Because they're actually seeing them do some of this work at home now, and that can be a little bit confusing or confronting. So trying to help the families understand what's going on so that the family construct is supported versus divided.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS:

That's great insight, Cheryl-anne. And one of the private questions that's popped up in the chat has been the slightly weary version of well, is government actually serious and is the public service actually serious about this? I think what you've just been describing, really illustrates the extent to which this topic is incredibly serious for employers. And perhaps also touches on the fact that when all organisations are doing this really well, it's in a way that doesn't identify or unintentionally stigmatize people who are impacted or seeking those support measures. So I think that's excellent that you've been able to share so much of that with us. I might turn the dial just a tiny bit towards the 'and then, and what else' are people finding useful within organisations. And either Al or Steven, I'm not quite sure who wants to jump in on this one, but what are you seeing is useful in the context of big corporate interactions and engagement, that perhaps could also be useful to people working in the

public sector? And then we'll turn to some more of the questions coming through the chat.

SETVEN WORRALL: AI, you go first and I'll add in a few thoughts.

ALISTAIR CARMICHAEL: Look, we're certainly seeing a lot out there, different people, trying different things. And I think we are facing a time of experimentation and that's a healthy place to be, because we don't know necessarily what's going to work. And this is in a context beyond the differing experience by different parts of the economy, or different experience by location or by role. There's also a different experience by your personal context. If you're as individual living in Perth, versus you're locked down with young children in Sydney, it's just a very different experience. So context is all a bit confusing, people are looking around for, certainly the research out of other parts of the world, people are looking for greater sources of meaning and thinking about what that means for their employment.

So it's a time where action, even when we know the mental health challenges throughout there that are growing, action is incredibly important. Now, if you are looking as an employer at this, there's five things that I personally think are quite important here, and that I see employers who are doing well are doing this.

One is they really know what's going on in their workplace. So they know the risks that play out in their workplace. They know how they're manifesting. So we know from research that role clarity is really important in terms of protective and also a downside risk. What does that look like in your workplace? What does support look like in your workplace? How does that play out? Really, what are the facts?

The second thing that leaders are doing in this space is really taking an integrated holistic view across it, across how do they support. So this just can't be a HR program, I work a lot with HR leaders, this is nothing about HR leaders. It's more so that you don't have all of the levers to play with as a HR leader, this is an organisation wide challenge, and you need to be integrated and holistic. And what I mean is they look at every element of their operating model. They look their processes of how they make decisions and how they allocate work. They look at the cultural behaviours they're going to try and drive, so being holistic. And for some of them it's even them re-imagining how they're going to work post pandemic and thinking about managing the return.

The third thing that I think leaders in this space are doing is they are embracing the different experiences of different groups within the workplace, and they're using data to be able to identify it. So have your support package that actually, if you've got someone, like Cheryl-anne talked about, who's working at home on some difficult things, the support you provide them is likely to need to be different than somebody who's working in the office. The support that you've

got, somebody who's navigating an increasingly blurred work/home life with kids at home, which, from personal experience, not fun, it's different to somebody who's living on their own. So how do you personalize the offering and use data to do that?

The fourth thing that I'm seeing leaders do in this space is they're embracing their whole organisation to come up with solutions. I know the number of the organisations that we've got on today, you've got some amazing leaders in your organisations, but they do not have all of the answers, they can't. So how do you actually embrace the broader organisation and co-design, I know it's a bit of a buzzword at the moment, but how do you co-design with your people and unlock their ideas? And I'm seeing some amazing community based solutions come up right across the world actually.

And then the fifth thing, which I actually think is really important, is if you take it up level and take a systems view. Historically, we've fallen into a bit of a trap where if you have someone facing a workplace mental health challenge, once it becomes medical, it becomes the medical systems issue, and they're put over the fence. And most of the workplace doesn't deal with that person now, maybe HR does a little bit on the return to work. We know through research, that's not the best way to do it. You actually need to be thinking with the community and solving with community. And we're seeing that even in Australia, particularly in regional communities where employers are actually reaching out to the community and having more community solutions.

So five things seem to be what leaders are doing. Know the risks that play out in your workplace, be integrated and holistic and take action, use data to personalize, co-design with your people, and really think about your community. And there's literally hundreds of examples of different things people are trying and experimenting. And one of the things that cuts across all of this is that they are trying and experimenting. Don't be scared to get out there and do things because your people will thank you for it. So there's a few things, Steve.

SETVEN WORRALL:

That was a fantastic list there AI, and great comments, thank you so much. And so to perhaps be additive, because a lot of what I'll share here will be variations on a theme, but I remember early on in the pandemic, a professor Genevieve Bell from the ANU, made a comment that really stuck with me, and we've touched on a couple of times already, which is that we can't afford to totalize the reaction or the response that any of us might be feeling at this time.

And so inherent in this conversation as leaders thinking about how do I create the most psychologically safe workplace, is realization that our workplace is made up of hundreds, thousands, in many cases, many thousands of employees who have very, very different responses and reactions to this time. And that their reaction can vary and does vary on any given day based on, as you've just touched on AI, whether you've got kids that you're trying to home school, whether you live alone or whether you've got a parent or a family

member who's ill and you can't visit, 53 other things, it could be 53,000 other things that might be going on any point in time. And so therein lies a challenge.

To the question about the connection here, Kimberley, between the public sector and the private sector. I've not worked in public sector, so I can't make this statement based on experience, but I'm certain there's not a great deal of difference in regards to the challenge and the learnings that we're all having. And hence the reason why this conversation is so valuable and why many more like them are going to be valuable, because if I've learned anything from the Corporate Mental Health Alliance, which as you or Gordon mentioned up front, we've only just formed it. We're just learning so much from each other about what's working and what's not, and the idea that we can be stronger together, I think it is foundational. And just listening to Cheryl-anne talk about the experience in Home Affairs and thought that members of the public service might be taking home material that could create in its own sense, concerns for the family, is another implication that I hadn't thought of immediately.

And so there are so many potential challenges and issues, and as a result, I think that from us in the Alliance, what we've learned is job design, as Al's touched on, is crucial. The culture of the organisation is crucial. Evidence based approaches are crucial because there's too much window dressing, certainly in the corporate environment, I'll put my hand up, around wellbeing strategies and techniques. And I think for too long, that has been the approach that many organisations have taken. And so being much more focused on data, as Al's touched on, and being focused on evidence is crucial. Which leads to the final thought, which is, this is all about leadership, it's all about us as individuals, we all have our own mental health to manage and our own physical wellbeing to think about. And so how do I put myself and how do we put ourselves in a position where we can be at our best so that we can perform as leaders?

I think that's a conversation that has to be had in this sort of dialogue. And then just the realization that it is all about leadership. It starts and ends with us in regards to what is the environment that we're creating? How are we catering for the many different reactions and responses that might be experienced today? How we are opening ourselves up to learning for all the things that we just don't know that we don't know? And then joining together, because as I said, I think we're much stronger together as a result of our shared learnings, than we are any one organisation or any one group, thinking that they can solve this themselves.

**KIMBERLEY SWORDS:**

That's wonderfully inspiring Steven. And it does provide a beautiful segue for all of the panellists to perhaps share some thoughts on how are you bringing your best self to what you're doing? What's your personal preparation? How are you thinking about those one-on-one moments with your peers and your colleagues? How are you thinking about the transitions like return or moving

between phases? And maybe Lucy, do you want to kick off with that line of thinking? I know it's slightly off script, but it's where we've gone.

LUCINDA BROGDEN:

No, not at all, Kimberley. And I think it's a really important point to make, because the way I've personally approached it was to go and look at what the experts were saying. But I guess one of the things I've learned in my carer role is a lot of these things have to become actually very conscious decisions, and we need to take that time to consciously plan how we're going to work in this uncertain time. Identify the elements that we have got our own control over, identify those things that others will control and identify the elements that are just unknown and out of control. And I think a lot of us have learnt to work through ambiguity through our careers, and often that's seen as actually a point of difference for people in their capacity to deal with ambiguity. Now we all have to deal with huge amounts of ambiguity, and the only way I've found to do that is to really be conscious in that, to plan out my day, plan out my structure, really acknowledge what I can control and acknowledge what I can't.

And I think that's what we are trying to do with our teams at the Commission and in other places where I'm involved with staff, and to also create a culture where people can put up their hands and say, "I need to do it differently. I understand your expectations of me, but at the moment, I need to do it differently." And Alistair touched on this, co-design is trite, but if there's something that the health sector and the disability sector can gift to others, is to empower team leaders to actually co-design how your team's going to deliver. How do we shift to really focus on outcomes and outputs, rather than just process all the time? Process is easy, outcomes and outputs are the harder bit, but that then allows people to say, "I can deliver, but I'm going to deliver different." And so I think creating a culture, a safe culture to have those conversations is really important, but you can only do that through conscious steps. I'll let others speak now.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS:

I love that intentionality that I'm hearing you talk about Lucy, the intentionality in time blocking your day, the intentionality in asking people what's going to help them bring their best self to the work that they have to do for the organisation. I think they're incredibly practical pieces of advice for people to take with them. And I have seen in both the public and the private chat, some doubt about whether or not co-design is really a thing, whether or not co-design can actually work, whether or not co-design is truly going to be embraced across the public service. And I think what I'm hearing is that it has to be, that it has to be embraced and that because everyone's working in such different ways, it's necessary for teams to have those open conversations around how do we do our work and how can I help you bring your best self to work today?

LUCINDA BROGDEN:

If I can just wrap up on that?

KIMBERLEY SWORDS:

Yeah, yeah.

LUCINDA BROGDEN: So I think it's important that you can't co-design top down. And so often we try and think about divisions and organisations and big elements of the company or the department. I would be inclined to let that come up from team level and let teams integrate up the system, rather than try and push a model down, even in a co-design structure, let those little teams and groups work it out and see how it filters up onto others.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS: Yep. Yep. AI, do you want to jump in, in terms of some of the ways in which you've seen teams in the different organisations you're working with, embrace this? And then Cheryl-anne, I might turn to you on the personal, how are you making this work, question again.

ALISTAIR CARMICHAEL: Yeah, happy to share there. I think what's equally true at the team level is that intentionality, I can't say the word today, but it's equally true there because a team is a living organism. I know that sounds a bit strange, but if you don't make decisions, conscious decisions about what you're going to do in the team, they don't happen. And that can be, what do you build into your day to day working rhythms? How are you checking in with people? Do you use things like retros, whether weekly, fortnightly, some sort of a way to actually check in on how things are working and how things are not? Can you bring data in? I'm seeing some organisations use simple behavioural pulses about how people are going, to provoke and promote the conversations.

There's also a part of actually in those teams, whether it's the team giving permission to themselves or the leader of the team, giving people permission to raise their hand and actually say, "Hey, I'm not doing okay," but also to have those positive habits formed within the team. So what can you share together? It might be something as practical as we're not going to have meetings on Zoom, Teams, WebEx, whatever you're using, in this certain hour during the day, or we're actually going to do, when we catch up, we're going to do it as a call so we can get out there and walk in a socially distant, appropriate manner. So whatever it is, is actually conscious, practical, actually repeated through the team.

And being able to have that overt conversation up front in any sort of a team session, about what is it that we can control and what we can't control here, and focusing the energy about what you can control. Because there's just so much background noise and stress and anxiety at the moment, and I think that actually it's on all of us as team members, to actually try and minimize how much we're engaging with them, because that's where a lot of the exhaustion comes from.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS: Thanks, AI. And Cheryl-anne, from your perspective, perhaps bouncing off Lucy's points, what's making work work for you, and what are you seeing amongst your colleagues and people that's really impactful in making work work at the moment?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY:

So I think for us, I'll probably start with the fact that my First Assistant Secretary for my Health Services Division, is someone who has lived experience with mental health. And he and I have been working for probably about three and a half years now, on how we make mental health conversational within the department. We were also part of the pilot for the APS Mental Health Capability Framework, which pushed further into the department that conversation. When the pandemic occurred right at the beginning, and people started talking about, in the community and on television and everywhere, that this was impacting people's mental health, we'd already started quite a bit of work in the department, in trying to assist staff who might be struggling with some of the changes. And we already know who some of those staff are because we have a really good early intervention program, so people will put their hand up.

So we actually did quite a bit of positive outreach to those and got them attached to people who could assist them on an on-call basis. But the other thing that we did, because what we recognised is, so two things, that some of the managers were just a little bit still scared about having any conversations about mental health, even though it was quite open and common, and everyone knew that the pandemic was having some of these effects. And one of the things that really struck me right at the beginning of the pandemic when we were still at work, was somebody came back from maternity leave one day, and there was a nice morning tea for this person, because they'd been away for a long period of time. The next day, in the same team, which is just down the hall from me, another person returned from about six weeks leave to do with mental health. Nobody said a word, was all very quiet. And I was like, "No, no, no, no, no, where's his morning tea?"

So quite interestingly, the manager was like, "Oh, I didn't know what to do and blah, blah, blah." So what we actually did was we have some clinical psychologists on staff and on contract, and we got the clinical psychologists to run sessions, and these continue weekly with managers about, "so what are you scared of?" "What language do you think you're afraid of using or how you should approach an issue?" So we run sessions for managers with the clinical psychologists, for them to learn how to talk in a way that they're comfortable with and that other people are comfortable with. And then we also run them for staff who are just nervous about how they talk to a colleague who might have a mental issue that they've declared.

So those have been really successful. So this financial year, we've already run 14 of those, so they run quite regularly. And even during lockdown obviously, we do them by Skype and WebEx. So that's really helped us quite a bit, because it's helped with not only managers getting an understanding of how to deal with issues, and also people being able to put up their hand and say, "Well, that's me, I've got that issue and I need some help," and we can get some early intervention happening. But the one thing that Steven, who's my FAS, and I have backed on very tightly, is people are talking about mental health. This seminar today, talking about mental health is half of our problem in



that it needs to become a normal, comfortable conversation where we can all sit down and be able to acknowledge for ourselves or for our organisation, how we actually deal with mental health, the same way I deal with trips and hazards for falls on boats. It's just something that should be a normal conversation, and the more we talk about it, the better we do.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS: Thanks, Cheryl-anne, and that comment has been validated from a couple of people in the chat.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: We're using the pandemic as a bit of a vehicle to actually get right on in there. Sorry, I've lost you. There you are.

Kimberley Sword...: Yeah, sorry, I spoke over the top of you. You've gone a tiny bit crackly.

CHERYL-ANNE MOY: No, no, that's OK. I lost you. That's okay.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS: We have some people in the chat who are noting with some pride, the intervention that IPAA has made in having this session today. I know we were overwhelmed by the registrations, and certainly there's a lot of people here, which is wonderful. And also some people noting of course, that sometimes the far flung areas of the empire, don't always get the same communication that leaders think they're conveying from the centre, across what all of the speakers have been saying. Perhaps that's a great opportunity to just really hone in on what are the system level interventions or changes that people have seen executed or implemented to great effect recently?

LUCINDA BROGDEN: Happy to jump in on that one, Kimberley, if you like, and I guess one-

KIMBERLEY SWORDS: Sorry, I wasn't passing the question very well, I was looking at the chat again, it's popping, which is excellent. Go Lucy and then maybe, Steven, Al and Cheryl-anne.

LUCINDA BROGDEN: I think what we are seeing is, and this really pleases me in my work, is that we are seeing a big shift from awareness. For a long time, we had to do a lot of work just on awareness of this topic to action. And I think the other thing that we're seeing is organisations are realizing that this doesn't mean I have to go and fix individuals, this is coming back up to look at job and work design, the way we do things, our culture, how the organisation ... and I'm a big believer that our teams are the key to getting this right, that's where we live and breathe. I think Al used the concept of organic and they are. And so lifting up from trying to identify at risk individuals, fix individuals. This is about creating that protective environment and supporting all our people. 100% of us have mental health, some of us will have mental ill health at some time, and so recognizing the important role of work in protection and recovery, has been a big game changer for me in the last few years. And I think has just been

completely amplified with the COVID lens that is making this absolutely critical to keeping our teams functioning.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS: Yep.

SETVEN WORRALL: I'll jump in there, Kimberley, if you like?

KIMBERLEY SWORDS: Yes, please.

SETVEN WORRALL: Awesome. So just off the back of Lucy's comments, one of the great pleasures of having been involved in the alliance has been some of the learnings that have come along. And to your question about what are some of the programs that we're seeing, there's a myriad of them is the answer. I think about CommBank they have a program called 'Thrive', which is a digital platform at its heart, but it has a range of assets that have proven to be a great assistance to the CBA team. And in fact, Andrew Culleton who runs the program at CBA, telling me recently that 98% of the bank's employees, and there's tens of thousands of them, have used Thrive at some stage. It has a whole variety of services.

But one of the comments that Cheryl-anne made just resonated with me, around how do you have conversations that might be challenging? And we'd all relate to the thought that wouldn't it be nice that in any workplace, in government or private or public sector, that we could discuss these sorts of issues, just as much as we can readily talk about someone having a physical health problem, a broken arm or a broken leg. That person coming back to the office, we'd be like, "Well, that's great to see you back. How's the arm?" And there's nothing more natural than asking that question and having that conversation, but how do you handle a conversation with someone whose parent is in the process of dying or has died, or the family's had a miscarriage, or someone has been away with a mental health, reported mental health issue, is now back in the workplace. These conversations that we're not all practiced at, I think and we can just acknowledge that reality.

And then at the bank, they say, "Well, let's go and get some psychologists and some professional help to write out some conversation guides that we might provide on this Thrive platform". So that if you're dealing with the situation that looks like X, Y, or Z, here are sorts of things that trained psychologists or professionals in the space would advise us to use. And at the heart of it, of course, it's just about each of us being a human being, of course, but we all want to make sure we don't make things worse and we all want to make sure we don't say the wrong thing. And I know at the bank, that's been incredibly useful. The two retailers, Woolworths and Coles, they're part of the alliance as well. And it's funny, Kimberley, when we got into a room with Coles and Woolworths early on, they made it very clear that this is the only room in

Australia that they would ever go into together, because they're direct competitors, and yet openly sharing their programs.

Woolworths have a program called "I am here", which is a reaction to the challenges that they have been experiencing over many years in their organisation. But again, normalizing what it means to have a conversation about mental health in their distribution centres, in their transportation network, in their stores. Coles have their own program. And so I think for anyone who's interested on this call, there are lots and lots of resources out there, and lots of things that we're learning from many organisations about their mental health approach. And I think that's what is at the heart of this conversation, it's how do we share so that each of us can improve in each of our workplaces?

**KIMBERLEY SWORDS:** And those questions, being curious and asking those questions with the right frame of mind, is just so, so important. I can see one of the questions in the chat saying, "could we just ask how is someone's mental health?", and probably that's a really, really good question. Another one that's also a really good question is "what do you need right now?" It gives someone permission to say, "I don't want to talk about it", or "I do want to be acknowledged in the same way as the person coming back from having a baby", or "actually, can you ask me again next week because today's just not a good day to ask me stuff." Al, do you want to bounce off that, into the systematic and perhaps really honing on what are good questions for people to use?

**ALISTAIR CARMICHAEL:** Yeah, happy to share some thoughts. I think with any of this, a big part of it comes from preparation and mindset. If you're going to check in with someone, if you've spotted something that just doesn't look right, is making sure that it's the right time to have that conversation, you're in the right place. And one of the simple ways to know whether it's the right time to have that conversation is if they say, "No, I'm not okay," can you continue the conversation? Because if you're going to have to run away to do something else, it's not the right time, or maybe it's worth having a look if you need to really run away. I think that another part of it is the mindset that you take into, and Lucy mentioned this and Steve as well, about, actually everyone's mentioned it, Cheryl-anne mention the same thing as well, is knowing what our role is in having a conversation.

If you're checking in on someone, you're not a mental health professional, I mean, there might be some on the call, mostly you are there as a colleague, a friend, a supporter, a leader, whatever that role is, not a mental health professional, you're not there to solve their problem. And I work a lot with people who their job is to solve problems, and that's been a massive cultural change that we've had to drive, is to actually help people be a supporter, be a guide. Connected to that is actually just acknowledging that we have two ears and one mouth for a reason, we forget that a lot of the time. So if you're going to have this conversation, actually make sure that you're listening. Simple questions are often the best because they're the questions that give the space for the person to say how they are. If you ask a complicated question, you can

actually close off the possible answers. And you can imagine asking “how are you going?”, versus “you’re going okay, aren’t you?”, two very different answers. So keep it a simple question.

I do think that this is a skill, this is a capability. I have seen some organisations, one of the banks, they ran training for all of their people leaders about actually how to have the right conversation. We’ve done it, all of our employees globally go through some basics of how do you have that conversation, because it is a skill, and that can help overcome some of the discomfort. And the massive amount of work around awareness building, also helps overcome that because as Lucy mentioned, everybody has mental health. I often, when I’m speaking to different audiences, I’ll ask the question about, have you faced challenges, immediate family, whatever, and just get people to stand up. And it’s very rare to find an audience where everyone is not standing up after three questions, because it’s everywhere. So keep it simple, know what you don’t know, get smart on it, but make sure you’re going in with the right mindset and right preparation.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS:

And AI, I might give you a follow up. I’m not sure if you’ve seen it in the chat, but the follow up is, and so when someone says, “Actually yeah, no, it’s not working for me,” where would you go as a colleague, as a manager, as a peer, as an employer to buttress that person in the next steps for them?

ALISTAIR CARMICHAEL:

I think what this touches on is a really important part of preparation, is knowing what support is out there in that organisation, because you don’t need to know, if someone says they’re not okay, you don’t need to know exactly where they need to go, but it’s good to know where they can go. So know if you’ve got an employee assistance program, know the relevant HR contact that’s appropriate, know what other relationships that you have as an organisation, what information do you have on the intranet site. Again, you’re not seeking to provide medical care to them, but it’s important to be able to know what’s out there. There will be times where somebody is in actually a crisis point and knowing that there are incredible services, I can see the football behind Lucy and I declare that I’m also a volunteer for Lifeline, there are some fantastic services out there, and for a reason. And so if you’ve got somebody who is at a crisis point, it’s a different conversation, it’s making sure that they are actually safe and being supported.

And then the final thing I’d say on that is just if somebody really is not okay, and you’ve had that conversation, it’s really important to check in with yourself after you’ve supported somebody. Vicarious trauma or vicarious harm is very real, so making sure that if you need to debrief and talk through with somebody or get some support from one of your support services, that’s okay too. The carers load that a lot of leaders are actually facing at the moment is very real. They’re looking out for their teams, are they actually stopping and checking in with themselves? So there’s a few things.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS:

Great point, Al. And Lucy, I might turn to you, I know that you have some particular resources that people might find helpful. Did you want to touch on those?

LUCINDA BROGDEN:

I will Kimberley, but I'll just add to some of the stuff that Alistair said, because it's so important. And I think one of the things that we know around the issues of stigma and the National Mental Health Commission's got a big mandate at the moment to look at the national stigma reduction strategy. And this is a lot more than just can community service announcements around mental health. It's looking at issues around structural stigma, particularly for example, in workplaces, in financial services, in the justice system, etcetera, that can be that barrier to help seeking. So we have to acknowledge these things are real, but I think one of the things that often ... we know that fear sits very close to stigma, and so if we can unpack some of that fear that Cheryl-anne's talked about and Alistair's talked about, that's really important.

And most of us in our workplace will encounter someone probably at the more mild end of the mental illness spectrum, mood disorders, etcetera. And one of the things that I think, if you are in that team environment, that can be helpful to remember is that often when you're experiencing anxiety, depression, it's your own self-awareness that can be the first thing to go. So if you and your colleagues are saying something to the effect that "can you believe Kimberley's turning up late to every meeting? She's never done that before". "Can you believe that Alistair just gets grumpy at the smallest things?" Well, you know what, no, they probably can't see that for themselves at the moment. And so the greatest gift you could give to a colleague, a friend, a loved one is to actually notice that.

And then to follow Alistair's suggestion of pick your time, plan your conversation and notice, and be curious and caring, know what services might be available in your organisation. Be ready to have those at hand, but be curious, inquire if that person, and then check back in every so often. Do you mind if I call you next week and just see how you're traveling, etcetera, can be gold. But stepping up now, Kimberley, to your more direct question, we know that workplaces are finding this really hard, across the government sector, the public sector, not for profits, everywhere. This is hard. Most jurisdictions have a legal requirement to provide psychologically safe workplaces. That's really easy to say, a little bit harder to do. So the National Mental Health Commission was funded by the Commonwealth Government to look at a nationally consistent approach because as many of you work across nine governments, nine jurisdictions, nine sets of rules and regulations, it can be tricky.

So National Workplace Initiative has created a blueprint that we are asking you to all go and have a look at, see how it fits to your team, your organisation, and provide us with that feedback. But it's really around protecting, so looking at the risks and the hazards within your organisation, responding, building our capability to support people, either with illness or returning to work, whatever

that might look like, and promoting various schemes to really lift our capacity across the board. Our colleagues at Comcare couple of years ago, did a big study of organisations of all sizes, including government, called the Employee Mobilization Report and disturbingly, less than 50% of HR practitioners felt confident in return to work for anyone with a physical injury or a psychological injury. And we have to look at how we build competence across our organisations, to really manage these issues. And so that's part of the challenge. I saw someone talk in the chat, if I can just add a comment around resilience, I'm not a fan of resilience training programs, and I'll tell you why.

There are absolute roles, and Cheryl-anne would have key roles, where you need that resilient support. People are in out-of-control situations where they can't control. But too often, I see organisations saying, "Let's do some resilience training to help people overcome the toxic nature of the work that we're asking them to do." If your gut is saying we need resilience training, ask yourself what could we do about the nature of the work first, and then think about resilience training. So our first responders absolutely need it, but for those that have got issues around culture in their team, issues around work design, tackle those first. Tony Lamontagne, one of the leading academics in Australia says you have to address the negative before you can bring in the positive. So I just took my soapbox to mention a number of things and we'll share those resources afterwards, but I know Steve's laughing, because I never miss the chance. Thanks Kimberley.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS:

Thanks Lucy. And Steve, did you want to stack on those points that Lucy's been making? I mean, what I heard was your primary responsibility as a leader of people is actually in identifying hazards and making sure that you minimize them to the extent that is practical and feasible to enable people to work really, really well. What have you heard from the Corporate Mental Health Alliance in the past 12 months, what have you learned, what advice would you have for leaders across Australia?

SETVEN WORRALL:

Well, first of all, I'm smiling, in fact, I was on mute, so I was laughing because I have been on a few panels with Lucy and Lucy is one of our guides at the alliance. She's been very generous in helping us from the get go, but very, very consistent about this topic around addressing the challenges in the workplace. Because if you do have a toxic culture, or if the environment isn't positive, then no number of yoga classes or fruit bowls, that's another Lucy phrase that I've borrowed there, is going to make up for that. And as simple as the statement is, and as clear as Lucy has just described the thought, it's so vitally important because our learnings.

Kimberley, to your question, we have a number of legal firms in the alliance. And as you might imagine through the Royal Commission a couple of years ago, there was a massive conversation in the industry about the environment that the legal firms were asked to work within. It's just one example, you could pick many examples across many industries. The banking Royal Commission would be another one,

I suppose, in relation to the banks themselves. But I think that this thought around job design and about creating positive cultures, is at the heart of this conversation. And it comes back to that thought we were talking about earlier, which is the fundamental role that leaders play, for all the leaders on this call, it starts with each and every one of us. Because we can look around us and think the environment that we're in, isn't perfect, or there are things that we could do better, or we don't have all the resources that are necessary if and when I am aware of a mental health issue inside my team.

But I think if I could offer any advice, it just starts with each leader just reflecting on their own perspective on the topic, how vulnerable they are to the conversation. What environment are we all creating inside our organisations, with our teams, to have this conversation, and start there, and I think that's a wonderful place to commence the work that needs to be done.

**KIMBERLEY SWORDS:** Thank you, Steven. And Al I might pass to you, I know you have some thoughts on the ingredients that make people feel more comfortable within their roles and their work environments, as compared with not. And then I might turn to each of the panel members for a set of final remarks before we pass back to Gordon at about 10 to the hour. So Al, did you want to kick off with two things: one is your advice around what helps people with the jobs, and then perhaps some closing remarks and then I'll pass to Cheryl-anne. My table's got Al, Cheryl-anne, Lucy and Steven in that order, so we might close out like that.

**ALISTAIR CARMICHAEL:** Yep, happy to Kimberley. From being a junior lawyer once, I can certainly echo some of that experience. The point about the elements, there's some fantastic research out there around job design. And there's some work that we had done with Black Dog Institute as well, just looking at what sort of factors and looking at around organisational culture and organisational health. So there are a number of things that seem to matter. One of the factors is actually around support and the support is a risk factor, and that's not the support of I'm having a rough day, how you're doing, that's actually, do I get the support I need to do my job, to actually perform my job. That's a major, major risk factor.

Another thing is around effort or reward imbalance. So is there some sort of recognition or reward for the work that I'm doing? It doesn't have to be monetary, but that's an important one there as well. Skill discretion, so can I actually use what I'm capable of doing. We've all been in environments where you know how frustrating it is if you can't. Job insecurity does come into it, flexibility comes into it. And one of the most important factors, which Steve has certainly touched on, the shadow that we cast is actually our role as a leader, because the leader plays a critical role in creating in their workplace, the level of psychological safety, which is a big factor here. And I do find with leaders that I interact with, that they both over and underestimate their impact when it comes to culture and this topic. They overestimate their ability to change it quickly, they underestimate their impact on it every single day.

And so I think if there's a few thoughts that I would close on, one, before the pandemic, this was a big challenge, during the pandemic, it's a bigger challenge and it's only going to get bigger. We know the economic consequences will flow on for time, we know the societal dislocation, there's massive challenges we're facing. So thank you to everyone who's turned up today and has listened, thank you for doing that, because you're showing that you're interested, you're showing you're learning, because it is going to take all of us to navigate through this. I would also thank you to the panel, it's quite a wonderful group of people to join with and have shared some of amazing insights that hopefully each of you, and I know people have joined from right around Australia, there's different things that you can take away.

For me, I do come back to those, if you're thinking about your organisation, those five things that seem to matter. Really get to know how risk plays out in your workplace, be holistic and integrated in how you approach it, the full operating model. Use data to personalize it, design it with your people. I didn't say co-design that, but work with your people to come up with solutions and work across your communities. Now more than ever, we're going to need our communities as we come in and out of lockdowns, it's critical. Take the opportunity wherever you can to do evidence-backed, or at least evidence-informed action. There's so much good material out there, Lucy's mentioned some of them, the Corporate Mental Health Alliance has got some of it, there's so much stuff, you don't need to be creating a lot of things from scratch.

Then the final thing is just your critical role as a leader, and everybody is a leader in their workplace in some way, you all cast a shadow, choose to cast a positive shadow. Don't just accept that things have to be a certain way, let's actually drive the change. And then my very, very final thing, and I know I spoke for a little bit longer, is I'm, as you guess, very deeply passionate about this topic. So I'm more than happy to continue the conversation online, on LinkedIn, on email or anything. I just think it's working together that we can overcome what is going to be the great challenge of our times. So thanks.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS:

Thanks Al. And I might pass to Cheryl-anne your final reflections, how do you see this conversation evolving, any closing thoughts that you wanted to share with the group?

CHERYL-ANNE MOY:

So I agree entirely with everything Alistair said, so I won't repeat that because he said it particularly well, and I think it applies no matter where you work, no matter what sort of team you have, no matter what sort of organisation you have, you need to understand your organisation. We're doing a lot of work at the moment, I think we've done about 87% of all of our job roles, looking at what the psychosocial risk is of each of those. So being able to go down and actually understand your whole organisation, is really important. Can I say I entirely agree with Lucy, you can't give someone resilience in a three hour training session. It frustrates the crackers out of me when people say that, so great to hear, and everyone should keep saying that. We do resilience testing



before we put people in certain jobs, through our clinical psychologists, for particular reasons.

Obviously, if we're going to give you a gun, we'll do some psychometric testing, we'll do some resilience testing, if you're going to be looking at violent extremism literature and terrible things, or if we're sending you overseas to work in a post that may be not London, which might be a little bit easier than North Africa or Nauru or somewhere else. So know your organisation. And the thing that I would again say in terms of mental health, is just keep having the conversations, keep talking. And everyone who attended this today, congratulations to you for putting up your hand and being interested in being able to look at how important mental health is in the workplace and just in our lives in general. And if each of you go away and have a conversation with two people about them attending the next type of function of this type, where they can listen and hear what's happening in other organisations so that they can have a broad spectrum of understanding and lead from where they are.

Alistair's right, you can lead from wherever you are in an organisation on any issue, and you shouldn't be afraid to do that. So congratulations to everyone who attended, I think it's fabulous, and to IPAA for putting this on, and also thank you to all the panel members. I too have learnt things, and I've taken notes about some other things that I'll be doing in the organisation and suggesting through the APS Mental Health Framework. So thank you all.

**KIMBERLEY SWORDS:** Thanks Cheryl-anne. Lucy, did you want to share some final thoughts with us before I pass to Steve and Gordon to wrap up?

**LUCINDA BROGDEN:** Very quickly, thanks Kimberley. And I too have been taking notes, so if you see me looking up and down, I'm scribbling all over my notebook, because I've learned so much today. Look, I've worked in both public and private sector and I've worked in the not for profit sector, and one of the things I find intriguing is I don't think the public sector recognises the great leadership that you already have in a lot of this space, and the great work that you are doing. And I think that the private sector has a lot to learn from a lot of public sector programs. When it comes to employment practices around diversity and inclusion, you mightn't feel that, trust me, if I look at programs on both sides of that divide, which unfortunately is seen in Australia, we create a divide in that space - it's great work that you're doing.

And I would only encourage you to do more of it, to perhaps share some of your learnings more widely across to colleagues in other sectors, where you can, to participate in some of the great research that is going on in this country. We have some of the leading academics in this space who are desperate to participate in good applied trials. Look at the Centre For Transformative Work Design, for example, to look at some of the great resources, academic resources that we have, the great studies that they're doing. There are others around the place. And please, as a final pitch, when you're finished here, we'll

be sending you the link to the blueprint for mentally healthy workplaces. Have a look, see what you can use and provide your feedback to us. And thank you all for your interest in the topic. Thanks Kimberley.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS: That's wonderful, thanks Lucy. Steven, your closing remarks.

SETVEN WORRALL: I'll be very brief, thank you Kimberley. One of those academics that Lucy's referring is Professor Ian Hickie, and he, in fact, Lucy touched on this theme earlier, but a thought I wanted to end with is Professor Ian Hickie is particularly vocal about the positive role that work plays, and that the workplace can play in establishing the conditions for strong mental health. And so a sense of optimism or a positive way to end this call, is the vital role that we all have to help our communities and the society at large to grapple with the many pressures that we're all feeling, work is central to that. And so there's a massive opportunity, I think, for workplaces and all of us in the private and public sector, to acknowledge that we can contribute very positively to mental health, given the vital role that work and employment offers.

And then the second thought would just be that theme that Lucy's touched on as well, in fact, I think Al touched on it, the sense of collectivism, because there's no question when we look back over the last 18 months, our government, state, federal, and both sides, I think, have come together so remarkably well. I mean, it hasn't been perfect, I think we could all acknowledge that, but there's so much for us as Australians to be proud of, in how our country led by government has got through what has been a really, really difficult time. And I just think there's so much potential for us to continue that sense of collectivism by learning from each other, by engaging together, acknowledging the leadership position that government has in so many ways. And so I would just encourage us to continue that conversation, I really appreciate the opportunity to join in this session today.

KIMBERLEY SWORDS: Thank you, Steven. And just as we pass to Gordon, that point that's come up a couple of times in the chat, the importance of making time for these kinds of connections, particularly when everyone's under so much pressure, are really, really important. This is the work of leadership at this kind of time, and it's been so wonderful to have heard all of you and been able to facilitate the conversation. Dr Gordon de Brouwer, would you like to make some closing remarks for the group today?

GORDON DE BROUWER: Well, thank you very much, Kimberley. So wow. Thank you so much to the panel, to you Lucy and Steve, Cheryl-anne, and Al, that's been a very substantive, very clear and a very warm conversation on mental health. So thank you so much on behalf of IPPA and the ATO, please let me thank you. Also thank you, Kimberley, that was masterfully and beautifully chaired and so really nicely done. And I'd also really like to thank the IT and other support, for making today happen, these things don't happen by themselves. I'd like to

close with just maybe three of very quick observations that I take from listening to you and the way you've engaged.

The first is that, and this is for public servants, really thinking about for public servants, but you get so caught up in your professional lives, and there's such an immediacy around that in a pandemic, and all the things that you've faced over the past couple of years, that you think less about yourself. And I think what today, maybe you've heard, you have heard, it's not selfish to look after yourself and it's not selfish to look after to your mental health. In fact, that's a responsibility you have to yourself, so do it. And it's not selfish to think about yourself and look after your own wellbeing.

But the second is that you often hear from public servants, we've got some leaders here, but many public servants feel that they fit in a machine, they're part of a system, something big. And they think it's the system that has to repair and deal and fix these things or address these things. And that's a huge fallacy because you are the system, you are it. And if it's not you, who is it?

And if you can't determine how someone treats you, you can certainly decide how you treat other people and how you work with other people. And having that responsibility, that empathy, the two ears as Alistair said, but for other people around you, that is your responsibility. And you can change, you can change things, you can have an enormous, frankly, a big impact on people there.

And I think the third element for public servants, and I think it's very much still with Steve in talking about the Corporate Mental Health Alliance, there's a lot of purpose in your work and a lot of meaning, and that purpose actually gives you power and energy. And I'd really encourage you to draw on that, knowing your own health and your own wellbeing and your responsibility for the people around you, including your family and the people you love, but of focusing on that purpose and that meaning.

And that can give you frankly, a lot of energy in difficult times. And you can keep your eye on the prize here, which is that you are changing the world, you are making it a safer place, a better place for people and for the natural environment, and looking after yourself is part of that and looking after the people around you is as well. So thank you so much, I've really liked it that the people who've been doing from home, you've kept your own world in there and you haven't dulled it or faded it out. So you can see these are people who are authentic, who are themselves, and happy to show who they are to you. So again, thanks very much to the panel and thanks very much to you, Kimberley, and the organisers for today.

