

Webinar Transcript

Who sank the boat: A practical guide to governing psychosocial risk in the workplace

So hi, everybody. Welcome to our webinar today titled, Who sank the boat? Great topic, a practical guide to governing psychosocial risk in the workplace. And today we have Kathryn Ruge, Amy Keir, and Phoebe Kitto with us. My name is Sean McDonald, and I shall be your host and moderator in the background for the next forty five minutes.

Firstly, though, thanks so much for attending today. We always appreciate the effort you make to be here for our live webinar events.

During the session, if you have any questions, which of course we hope you will do, please try and use the q and a button on your toolbar. It just enables us to keep a track of the questions as we're going through the session, and we'll try to get through as many of those questions as we have time for.

And finally, if you stay through till the end, which of course we hope you will do, we have a really short one minute survey that we'd like you to consider at the end. Your feedback really helps us bring relevant content to you week after week and enables us to position the wealth of expert presenters that we have for you each week. So please take a minute to complete the survey as you exit the webinar today.

Now, for those not too familiar with BoardPro, we are a board software provider, sometimes called a board portal. And we serve around thirty five thousand users around the globe, and we're represented in about thirty four different countries these days.

And we enable organizations to prepare for and run their board meetings more efficiently and effectively with less time and deliver more impact and value for the organization. And as much as we are a board software provider, part of our wider mission here at BoardPro is to make the fundamentals of governance free and easy to implement for all organizations, but especially those organizations with resource constraints. And one of the many ways we do this is by providing free access to hundreds of governance templates, guides and resources, which funnily enough, you'll find in the resources section of our website. And these webinars that we host every week are also a great way of accessing key governance knowledge without the time commitment and costs associated with in person events.

So for the next forty odd minutes, just relax, sit back and listen and add to the discussion by asking as many questions as you would like. A full recording of the webinar along with the slide deck and transcript will be sent to you twenty four hours after our session today. So let's get started by having the team introduce themselves starting with you first, Catherine.

Thanks, Sean. Kia ora tena te natukoutou katoa, and good morning or good afternoon, depending on where in the world you are. I'm Catherine Rooge, and I'm joining you from the city of Otago Christchurch in Te Wapongamua, the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand, where I'm currently combining Master's study in psychology and neuroscience through King's College London with independent work as a leadership coach and consultant, which is my third career after sixteen years in aviation and then a decade in strategic communication. I also do training for the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand and run various courses on emotional culture, leadership and change.

I've been involved in governance since the late 1900s, and for as long as I can remember I've been fascinated with how people get along or don't in any group context, whether it's sports or volunteering or paid work, and how those relational dynamics make it easier or harder to get the job done. So I'm really looking forward to today's conversation.

Thanks, Catherine. Phoebe, over to you.

Thank you so much, Shaun. Phoebe Kirtow. So I am coming to you from Port Douglas in Queensland, Australia.

So I am the director of human resource dynamics. I am the person that you're often not wanting to call as a board, if you've got a psychosocial claim that is happening, within your business, or maybe with your CEO, or you've got some concerns around some psychosocial safety. So we offer very much a practical hands on assistance to businesses and making sure you're meeting your Fair Work, obligations or your workplace health and safety obligations here in Australia around psychosocial safety in the workplace. And then then there are claims in the workplace navigating through that process as well.

Thank you, Phoebe. And Amy.

Kia ora koutou, everyone. Thank you, Sean. Thank you for having me. My name is Amy Kehr.

I'm a barrister. I specialize in employment and health and safety matters. I'm very much the back of this bus. I'm the person that you call when everything's gone wrong.

Maybe like Phoebe, hope that you don't have to call me. But I give advice to, organizations managing, the consequences of situations where psychosocial hazards have turned into psychosocial harm.

Fantastic. Right. Let me just advance the slide here, and back to you, Catherine.

So you're well covered today. I should have said, call me to help things not go wrong. So, you know, wherever you are in the in the, timeline of your psychosocial risk, you've got a good, good set of options. This is our roadmap for where we're going in the next, forty odd minutes.

As Sean said, we welcome your questions. Please be kind to us, and just an advance request for forgiveness, if we don't get to your question before the end, we're all contactable after the

session if you want to follow-up with any of us about anything. To start with, I'm going to briefly tell you the story behind our title for then we'll look at some definitions. Sorry.

Could just flick back, Sean. Sorry. Some definitions, so we have some common language for, at least for this webinar. We'll look at a framework that gives us some guidance for complex systems, data, and signals to look for.

I'm gonna throw a couple of scenarios at my fellow panelists, and, and then just five governance moves you can make as a board to help you govern psychosocial risk.

So, right, the story. Well, I'm pretty sure that Pamela Allen wasn't thinking about psychosocial risks when she wrote this delightful story about five friends, a cow, a donkey, a pig, a sheep, and a tiny little mouse who were having a nice calm day when they decided to go for a row in the bay.

In this story, we see the animals gingerly and carefully getting into the boat one at a time.

Each of their actions changing the environment for the next character.

There's great suspense as we watch the boat fill up and make predictions about which animal will eventually sink the boat.

The mouse, which is by far the tiniest of all the players, makes smallest impact on its own, but the greatest impact on an already overloaded system.

Next slide.

So how did we get from the beginning scene where it's a beautiful calm day and everyone's walking neatly and capably towards the goal to this dangerous and chaotic ending?

Well, in his book, *The Chairman's Lounge*, Joe Aston references Ernest Hemingway's first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, where a character called Bill asks Mike, How did you go bankrupt?

The response?

Two ways: gradually and then suddenly.

I've anchored this webinar with this story because not only will you remember it, but it's a story about a system and a diverse set of characters whose actions individually are harmless, but whose actions combine to create disastrous consequences.

It can be easy to blame the mouse or even the boat for not being strong or resilient enough to withstand the load and do its job.

But there were warning signs all through this story that each character ignored because they all wanted to go for a row in the bay. The very legitimate goal that they were focused on mattered more than anything else.

And it can be hard in governance to look closely and question things when we're focused on the goal. Often good goals, important goals, and we really want to achieve them.

Can be especially hard if there hasn't yet been an incident and everything seems fine.

How did the boat, or that person, or team, or our organisation sink?

Two ways: gradually and then suddenly.

Some quick definitions to see us on our way: Stress versus harm.

The presence of stress, even high amounts of stress, is not an indicator of an unhealthy or unsafe workplace. There are plenty of high stress jobs.

Stress creates harm when it's chronic, uncontrollable, or unsupported, which is something for boards to be aware of when demand exceeds resources for an extended period of time. In other words, there's no recovery, there's simply no way that people can recover from their everyday work.

Hazards versus risks. A hazard, anything that has the potential to cause harm, and a risk is the chance of that happening.

A hazard, we just have to notice and identify it, but a risk, we calculate based on a heap of variables that affect the likelihood and the severity of harm when people are exposed to the hazard.

That is by definition to be different for every organisation and every team.

Psychological versus psychosocial.

Psychological is internal and it focuses on individual emotions and cognition. My thoughts, feelings and emotions are part of my psychology. Same with Amy, Phoebe.

Psychosocial on the other hand is external. It focuses on the interplay of individual psychologies in a social context.

It's environmental and it's interpersonal.

Baked into this word by definition is the fact that we're dealing with a complex system.

With that I will pause and just invite Phoebe and Amy to make any comments about why psychosocial risk is so important in in your context.

Look. Certainly, for those of you that are coming to this from Australia, if you're not seeing it as just a general something that you're wanting staff to be safe in the workplace because you want to do the right thing, hopefully, that you know, as a board, you have legal responsibilities around this.

There's been some very clear legislation through workplace health and safety about the it is the you have a positive duty requirement to ensure that staff are not only physically safe at the work, but that they are also psychologically safe in the workplace as well.

So there's some good reason from that perspective, from a legislative perspective.

But then, you know, talking through to the cultural aspect as well, if you've got a workplace which is filled with grievances and stress claims, increased absenteeism, low productivity, that's not going to be good for attracting, retaining, or or producing results for the organization as well, reputational damage. Like, it just goes on and on. So this is not a warm, fuzzy, nice to do thing. This is something that is a legal obligation and also makes really good business sense to be proactive and in the forefront of.

For those of you in New Zealand, the situation is not dissimilar to Australia, although we are a little bit behind the Australian environment in a regulatory sense.

In New Zealand, there has been a lot of high profile discussion about this problem, particularly off the back of the the hashtag Me Too movement in the early in the early twenty twenties. And and so what we in addition to the considerations that Phoebe talks about, we now see a workforce that has a language to raise these issues and is ready to bring them to the forefront. Now sometimes when you're sitting on the board or if you're the CEO, that feels like everyone's jumping on this bandwagon.

And you're to be forgiven if that's how you feel. But the reality of business now is that you have to be able to engage with the psychosocial environment in order to effectively lead your people. And a business that can't do that is going to very quickly become a dinosaur if you haven't already.

Great. So lots of, compelling, essential, legal and moral imperatives to to be active in this area.

Can I just add to that, Catherine, too? Like, we've been in a a number of situations when we've had a board that have had some performance management issues in relation to the CEO or some senior members of the leadership team. And when those have tried to be addressed, the person who they're talking to is brings up a lot of was able to demonstrate that their workplace was not safe or reasonable, so they were expected to work unrealistic hours. They were put under unnecessary stress.

You know, they were micromanaged. So there's all these psychosocial issues that have come up. Now the board may say, well, they're using that as an as an excuse, you know, not to deal with what the actual issues are with their performance. But if we can't show that clearly those were issues that, you know, we do have some protocol and some policies and some systems in place to deal with it, you're on on the backfork of being able to issue a deal with what some of those issues are, and I I'm sure, Amy, that's some of the things that that you have seen as well from a practical perspective.

Thanks, Phoebe.

What do we do with a complex system?

Can we have the next slide, please, Sean?

With the rapid adoption of AI to do more and to process vast quantities of data at lightning speed, we might naturally wonder if AI can in fact do a better job of this than we can. I mean it's a pretty it's a pretty hard area, psychosocial risk. Can we not just outsource this to a machine?

My answer to that is you can try, but it won't do a very good job.

To illustrate, I'm just going to share some insight from people far smarter than me with this diagram of the framework.

Cuneven is a Welsh word with many layers of meaning, it doesn't have a direct English equivalent, but it relates to a sense of place and familiarity. I highly recommend following the Knievan company on LinkedIn if you don't already, aren't familiar with their work. This diagram is taken directly from their newsletter last month, and when you get the slides, there's a link to it at the bottom. So they've done a lot of pioneering work in the realm of decision making, sense making, team culture, and change.

A fundamental part of figuring out what to do in any situation is that you have to first understand where you are.

When you're making leadership decisions in particular, if you misunderstand your context, your next move might not be a very good one.

Very simply, many of you on the call will be familiar with this framework, but for those who aren't, the right hand side represents the predictable world and on the left is the unpredictable world.

Machines excel only in the bottom right hand corner, where there are fixed constraints and where cause and effect is obvious.

When things get a bit more complicated as we move anticlockwise around the quadrant, so we're in the top right hand side, in the complicated domain experts might disagree on what the best move is because there isn't a single best move. There are lots of good practices we can follow, but machines still provide a lot of support so they can do analysis and help us weigh our options and so on.

When we cross over to the left hand side, with the unpredictable world, you can't tell what's going to happen next just because it's happened before.

When you get a new board member or new chair, you hire a new CEO. You can't always accurately predict how it's going to go, just because you've hired a CEO before, or you're used to regular rotation of board members at the end of their term.

Remember, we all come with our own individual psychology, the way we think, feel and respond is different. The interplay of our combined psychologies creates this wonderful and rich complexity of human relationships that also create risk.

Leading people, culture change, governing psychosocial risks sits in this domain in the top left, where humans are essential. So good news, you still have a job.

Now the AC in the middle of this framework is not actually half of an Australian seventies rock band or a type of electrical current, but these letters stand for aporia and confusion.

Both of these relate to uncertainty, but the difference is that confusion is generally unpleasant or a negative state that we want to leave, but Aporia, and a side effect of following the Carnivian company is that you will increase your vocabulary.

Aporia is more a state of puzzlement or wondering, maybe doubt.

You might find yourself in this state when existing categories or existing answers, existing ways of working, the way we've always done it, doesn't hold anymore.

Something's off if you're experiencing Aporia and you need to ask questions or probe. Take small actions and observe what changes.

The key in this, domain is small experiments.

Trying, safe to fail actions, and then careful observation.

Observing the whole system. I think boards have a huge advantage, perhaps often over management, because you are supposed to be removed from day to day operations. If anyone should be see things from a systems level, it should be the board who can do that careful observation and probing.

Before going on to the next slide, Amy or Phoebe, thing to add there?

Comments or observations?

That's all good? Okay.

We have heard about the very obviously legislated need in Australia, and that will I'm sure soon become more explicit in New Zealand, about the need to be proactive in managing these risks.

One of the challenges in in governance, advantages and challenges, is that you're not hands on, and you're often making decisions and setting direction based on, depending on your board, maybe a hundred and fifty pieces of paper each month. You trust that paper and those reports and that information to be giving you an accurate picture of the overall health of the entity that you're governing.

In this slide, I just want to draw your attention in particular to the top row, to lead indicators.

We've heard today it's not enough to have a well resourced ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. Boards need to be proactively seeking to reduce these risks.

This might involve looking a bit differently at the data that you are being given, but it also might involve asking for different data and doing different, maybe adopting some different practices to obtain some different data.

Lag indicators, which we most often rely on to fix things, tell us where harm has already occurred or where it might be in the mix. So things like absenteeism, staff turnover, incidents, and so on. But lead indicators are what you need to give you an indicator, of what's happening before harm occurs.

We can use these to reduce the likelihood that harm will occur.

Things like, there's a tool called Fearless Scan, which gives you a snapshot of the climate, psychologically safe that gives you a psychological safety index at a point in time.

Also, worker voice forums.

You might engage, independent external support. You might establish independently facilitated focus groups and so on. Any environment where people can share their stories is going to give you, different data. We're gonna reveal things that data maybe will not. The Knieving company is actually doing a lot of work in this area with stories. They are particularly interested in developing tools and frameworks that help reveal insights inside a system when people are in it as opposed to at the conclusion of something. So they're developing ways that just bring people together in workshops and create rituals around the sharing of experiences, which gives context to the issues, the everyday issues that people are facing.

Amy and Phoebe, is there anything, you wanna add about those indicators and the importance of some of the I I was gonna, reinforce what you said, Catherine, that that that top line is essential.

When when you're a board, if you're relying on report from the CEO or you're relying on the report from the the head of people and culture, you're only seeing the picture that they want you to see, and sometimes you miss crucial stuff. Another comment I wanted to make is that a thing that happens with psychosocial harm that doesn't happen with physical harm is that the instinct is to look to the person to fix themselves.

So and I hear this all the time. A complaint's been raised about burnout or overwork or bullying. And the response is, yeah, but Amy needs to take some time off or Amy needs to delegate better or Amy this. When your tractor breaks down, we don't hear people saying things like, well, that tractor needs to pull up its socks and just fill itself back up with diesel.

The difference in the way that people in leadership think about harm to humans versus harm caused by machines or equipment or environment is really stark. Because the first thing they start saying to me is that, well, this person's a difficult person or this person needs to ask for

more help, that's a culture that we need to move on from. When I first started practicing in the health and safety area, a lecture I used to give to clients a lot was your health and safety system needs to assume that your employees are stupid, not because they are stupid, but because to be a good health and safety system it has to operate even when employees do stupid things.

So it's not enough to say, Don't put your hand in the sausage machine. You have to also have an emergency stop button and a handguard and an override and training and appropriate PPE.

And in the area of psychosocial health, challenge you to think about whether you're doing that or whether you're actually looking to employees to fix themselves.

Now sometimes, I dare to suggest more often than not, employees who are harmed in the workplace and I try to use that term neutrally. Okay? Employees who end up feeling like they've been harmed in the workplace, they don't know enough about how they're managing their own sense of wellness. They may have a mental health issue that hasn't been diagnosed. They may not understand that the way that they're leaning into their job is going to lead to burnout, which is going to cause effectively a brain explosion, which makes them ineffective in the workplace. So not only think about how you're scanning for those problems, but also how you're planning for working with these really flawed machines that are human beings who may not have all the information that they need to keep themselves safe at all times.

Just from Australia, but I think this probably does go across the Tasman and overseas as well, is in Australia we have workers' compensation, which is an insurance for workers.

And the psychosocial stress related claims for them to be accepted, they used to have to be you used to have to the employee had to prove that it was a significant contributing factor of the workplace, which caused their stress factor.

Now it only needs to be a contributing factor. So they've taken away the significant, which is why we have seen a large rise in the number of stress claims and psychosocial claims that have come through in Australia.

Now, that that is going to happen, and we try and get the worker back to work, etcetera.

It comes to a point that if they have a ongoing stress claim with it, they may be able to go for common law to be able to say that you provided an unsafe workplace, which has caused me to have a continual psychosocial stress mental health claim, which is going to impact my life, potentially forever. And that's where in Australia we see these massive payouts. Now in those situations, what you are wanting to do as an organization or as in a board is to show that you have not been negligent in providing an unsafe workplace. Some things happen at work, which causes massive stress claims.

We understand that. Some of it's avoidable. Some of it's not avoidable. But have you created a safe work environment?

And this is where we're wanting you as as a board and as an organization need to be able to demonstrate that you have put in the right policy processes systems and you have appropriate ways of monitoring how effective that was that that you can't be seen as being negligent around it. So it's really to protect yourself and also for the organization to show that you have taken reasonable steps to ensure that this is going to be a safe working environment for people.

We've got quite a few questions in the Q and A, so I'm just going to spend a few minutes seeing if we can answer as many as possible now.

I'll start with the in no particular order. When a non executive director is doing a site visit in meeting frontline staff, what are your top tips for getting a true picture of the workplace psychological health and psychosocial risks? What questions could you ask? Something that, again, thinking about stories, I would simply ask the people, first of all, make sure that you're not doing most of the talking.

Ask the people you meet, what is one story from your last week at work that you would share with someone who doesn't work here? Or maybe ask them for a story which best reflects what it's like to work there. You will be amazed what people are prepared to talk about if they think somebody is actually going to listen to them for a long time.

Somebody else has asked I'm gonna throw this one to Amy. Why does the burden of proof of a psychosocial injury solely rest with the injury?

The answer to that question is easy. When you make money off the labour of other people, you have a concurrent responsibility or a commensurate responsibility to prevent harm to those people.

So, as I was saying before, this tendency to look to people to fix themselves, that's natural. But if you want the privilege of using other people to make you money, you have to take responsibility for the well-being of the people who are doing that. That's part of that's part of the social contract at work.

Thanks. One risk that often occurs is good performers getting loaded with more work while poor performers are often left alone.

Phoebe, any comments on that?

I can get on a complete soapbox on top of this.

We want to put our head in the sand and not have those tough conversations with people early on, and it's it's gonna come back and bite us because if you push your high performers too hard for too long, you know, you they're gonna crack. It's just like a machine. You know, you can't just run it forever without servicing, looking after it, putting petrol into it. You know, it's it's gonna start you're gonna start to get some wear and tear coming through. So it you know, it's very bad leadership practice to allow that to happen, and you just have to lean into it. You you have to

lean into each role, what their expectations are, what they're contributing, how productive are they, and make sure they're meeting that.

Great. And we'll tackle one more for now. The top question is oh, sorry. Top as in first question. Top of the list. As chair of my board, I sometimes have to remind board members of the separation of governance versus issues, which can result in disharmony and conflict within the board itself.

One comment I would make about that is to invest in some governance training. You can obviously spend a lot of money on training, both, I know at least Australia and New Zealand, both of our relevant, organizations, Institute of Company Directors on both sides of the Tasman, offer governance training. There are also, free board pro, I'm sure, would probably have some webinars you can scroll through their extensive library. It can help, I guess the main thing is to get an external independent person saying the same thing as you are, to to just further support and validate the need for people to understand their role. I mean, it's key key to any job, whether you are an employee, a volunteer, in any context, is just understanding the job you're there to do. So that's, all about role clarity.

Right. I've got a scenario. We'll look at one one scenario here, then we'll come back to some questions. So your board receives a monthly people report. Turnover's stable. There's no formal complaints.

Training is completed and up to date, EAP is available, we've got our ambulance there and ready, and then a bullying story breaks publicly. It's on social media, of course. So what was missing? What could the board have asked for from their picture of assurance that they had at the last board meeting?

Phoebe or Amy, any thoughts on that, and what should a board do in that context, if anything?

Phoebe, you go.

Sorry. So I guess, you know, it does appear where the bullying's coming from. So if the bullying is coming from senior leadership or from the CEO, and they're the ones that are providing all of the information, then, obviously, that that is a bit of a concern. So I'd be looking like, you you have to look in and see what is the root cause of this bullying story.

Where has it come from? How long has the staff member been there? And, you know, again, this is really if it's this is part of the CEO's operational responsibility to be managing with these situations on the ground. Your responsibility is to hold accountable the CEO.

So I would really be checking in, you know, were you aware, what were you doing, how were you handling it. So, you know, really managing the CEO to be getting more information as to how this has happened.

That that would be, you know, how did it slip through? And then and it and it happens. It's like, let's we see it happen all the time. We think everything's going really well, and then suddenly we get out of the blue this massive spike.

And and there's a whole raft of reasons as to why you get bullying complaints. Sometimes it's legitimate. Sometimes it's because the person has some own personal mental health issues that's happening outside of work, but they're bringing it into the work and now leaking it through to the media. So, you know, it's not always a result of the workplace.

So don't jump to conclusions. You know, that's where you need to have your good relationships with your CEO and and really get your head around, well, what is happening and how have we got to this point.

I think you can Yeah.

Well, my my questions would be okay. So you get you get your monthly people report. But as we all know, what we measure matters. So what's being measured in that report?

And and I know this is a is a hypothetical scenario, but what you've told me about the report is that turnover is stable. Okay. Well, what what's stable mean? Against what baseline?

What do we know about turnover in different departments? Because that might tell a story that's different to the, hey. Turnover's stable and everything's good. What what do we know about why there's no formal complaints?

Is there no formal complaints because there's no complaint system? How do employees go about making complaints? Where are the safe places for complaints to be raised? Who are the people who are walking around and making it possible for questions to be asked or issues to be dealt with?

So, you know, on the face of it, that monthly report looks really positive. But what questions are you asking? What are you measuring? And and these are your these are your lead factors that that Catherine referred to in the previous table.

Don't be fooled by a nice looking report that's reported in exactly the same format that you've asked for for the same three years because you might have forgotten to scratch behind the surface and see what's really going on.

One question that we always put in our staff surveys is, would you recommend other people to work here? Why or why not?

And I find that is really interesting sometimes as to what people will say.

So yeah, I agree with Amy. Some of those questions can really Are you asking the right questions to uncover the right information?

I'll add to that. I know that in a lot of schools that they're using a well-being monitoring tool where they ask children, this is primary school aged children, to do a weekly, you know, happy to sad face scale about how they sense their own well-being is. And the schools are trying to use that tool to monitor for student well-being. That's a really simple tool that might tell you a lot about change over time.

It doesn't require a survey. It doesn't require any significant monitoring.

But if every Wednesday you ask your staff to rate themselves on a one to five in terms of how happy they're feeling, you might start to get some data that starts to paint a picture that becomes helpful. These are simple tools that could make a big difference.

I'm just gonna throw one more question to you, Amy, relating to this.

If the bullying story relates to allegations about the CEO, so then the board does have a a job to do.

My question actually relates to the word investigation, which a lot of people I've noticed get really hit up about.

I think of the word very in terms of we just have to find out what's happened. First thing is we have to find out what the facts are, but there are a lot of, that word investigation, and I don't know about your context Phoebe in Australia, it's pretty loaded in HR context, like, oh if we're doing an investigation then suddenly it's a whole thing. And, like, how do we just find out what happened without when there's so much, emotional load with that word? Do you have any advice there for people?

I I work really hard to not use the word investigation for that very reason.

You know, it's not a special word in any legal sense, but it's come to have really significant meaning. Very often, the word investigation suddenly creates this connotation of some external examination by some someone high powered and big deal, and and it doesn't need to be like that either. So I like to use words like, I want to ask some questions, or I'm curious about this. I need to find out more information.

It it's silly, but I I completely agree with you, Catherine, that that suddenly we get to this point where we've got we've got to do an investigation, capital I, and it has a whole lot of assumed components to it that aren't always necessary and very often aren't always helpful.

Yeah. I think gathering of facts and gathering of information is a good way to talk about it.

For those of us that live in Australia will know that investigations have just gone off the roof. Like, when I first started the business about eighteen years ago, like, we we had several investigations every year that would come up.

Honestly, I would say that I would have coming an investigation coming through our doors every single week at the moment, call it investigation gathering of facts or information. Like, it has absolutely gone crazy in Australia, which is a good and a bad thing. Certainly, there's an investigation and there's an investigation. Like, there's a discovering the facts, getting some key information, pulling it together, and then these, you know, crazy, you know, forensic, you know, month long investigations.

But, you know, you you do you do need to gather the facts. You need to get the information together, and we are seeing a lot of that happening in the Australian landscape in the workplace, I would say, at the moment.

I can see the question from Kelly Douglas in the q and a. And the the the question is how does the board handle things when they have a sneaking suspicion that the problem is in fact the CEO? That is probably one situation where one of my first recommendations would be maybe you need someone external to come in and and and to do that work to tell you what the CEO is not telling you.

That is a situation where I think Investigation Capital Line might be a good idea.

Yeah.

A three sixty degree report is a really helpful way to do that. Some of you are familiar with it, which is getting a a whole lot of feedback on a person. So often when we think it is the the CEO might be an issue and there's a lack of perception or understanding of their behavior and how they're being perceived by the staff, we find that to be a a great tool, not that expensive to have to do, pretty easy to be able to execute.

So that's also a good way to be able to do it.

Okay. We've been fast tracked to the last slide.

So We promised you practical, manageable steps you could take from a governance perspective.

Here are five: put psychosocial risk on your risk agenda.

This means treating it as a legitimate governance topic, it's not just parked or hidden in HR well-being or something you look at after a complaint. What you discuss gets attention. Remember, what you ignore can drift. Ask where exposure is highest.

Not every part of the organisation carries equal risk. At any different time in your organisation, it might be job design, or the physical environment, or your leadership relationships that are where you are carrying the most risk. It won't necessarily be evenly spread all of the time. Ask for lead and lag indicators.

Remember, you need both. Review, speak up confidence, and trust. A bit of a clunky sentence, but, just a clean dashboard can be meaningless if it means people are actually, afraid to report their concerns or they have no faith in the system that anything will happen. Finally, monitor system improvements, not just individual harm.

Again, if anyone can see things at a systems level, it should be the board. So ask some different questions so that you can get better at preventing harm, as well as providing support after it's occurred. As a board you don't have to be therapists and you don't have to know everything, but you might just need to ask better questions earlier. Sean?

Put myself back off mute. So thanks, everybody. Please feel free to connect with our presenters today on LinkedIn. I'm sure I'll look forward to your connection. If you'd like to be put in touch with any of our panelists, Catherine, Phoebe or Amy for assistance in this particular area, please indicate your interest on the survey as you exit the webinar.

Now just draw your attention to some of the great webinar topics we have coming up over the next few weeks. All of these are listed on our website on the webinar page of our website.

Prompt you to have a great look at those great topics that we have coming up. You'll receive an email from me tomorrow, which will include a recording of today's webinar, the transcript and the presentation slides, and the links to those resources that Catherine described.

They'll also be hosted the recording, I should say, and the resources will be hosted on our library of the website over the next forty eight hours.

Now, of course, if you're considering board management software for your organization, then we'd love to hear from you better still, why not try our free thirty day trial. It's really simple and straightforward. There's no credit card required, and it's simple to get started.

So thank you again, for your attendance. I hope you enjoyed the session today with Catherine, Phoebe and Amy. I know I did. Don't forget our quick survey as you exit.

Thanks again, Catherine for your conversation today. Amy and Phoebe for your attention as panellists. I look forward to seeing you all at our next webinar. Everybody have a great day.