



Whitepaper

# From Fear To Confidence

## Debunking Common Executive Fears Regarding Psychosocial Risk Management

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# From Fear To Confidence: Debunking Common Executive Fears Regarding Psychosocial Risk Management

Across Australia and increasingly globally, regulatory expectations centre on **four key pillars** to demonstrate proactive psychosocial risk management: **hazard identification, risk assessment, control measure implementation**, and **ongoing review**. Duty holders must **demonstrate** a structured, proportionate process, showing that actions taken are reasonably practicable based on the level of risk and the organisational context.

In this paper, we outline the **psychology of fear** commonly experienced by **executives in psychosocial risk management**, along with its **typical outcomes and costs**.

We also provide **practical guidance for leaders** to proactively engage in a rigorous psychosocial risk management process, not only to **meet regulatory obligations** but to **foster a safer, healthier, and more productive workforce**.

## Contents

- 03** | **The Psychology of Executive Fear**  
Examines the cognitive biases and misplaced fears that cause leaders to avoid psychosocial risk management.
  - 04** | **Common Pitfalls and Costs**  
Highlights frequent missteps and the legal, financial, and reputational risks of avoiding proper psychosocial risk management.
  - 06** | **Executive Recommendations**  
Defines regulator expectations and guides leaders to manage psychosocial risk through consultation, prioritisation, and continuous improvement.
  - 07** | **Regulator-Accepted System: Mibo**  
Presents Mibo as a proven, regulator-endorsed system that simplifies, strengthens, and scales psychosocial risk management.
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# The Psychology of Executive Fear

Although leaders across industries are increasingly aware that psychosocial risk management is both a compliance imperative and a key driver of organisational health **and success**, many executive teams are still resistant to engage deeply in this space. They fear that comprehensive assessment will “open a can of worms,’ create new liabilities, or overwhelm their capacity to respond.

In reality, these fears are misplaced. For example, a common executive concern is that it presents under performers an opportunity to **weaponise** the environment as an excuse. In practice, when a rigorous approach is undertaken, the **opposite is true**. It helps us understand how the broader staff group is experiencing the environment. This provides data that shows whether an individual’s experience **reflects** a commonly experienced systemic issue or is more likely linked to personal factors best addressed through individual support.

Additionally, leaders are not liable for what they discover, they are liable for failing to **identify foreseeable psychosocial risks in their organisation**. And finally, leaders aren’t expected to fix everything at once, rather the expectation is to develop a risk management process in a reasonably practicable manner.

Fear is powerful and entirely human. In high-stake areas like psychosocial risk, even well-intentioned leaders who want the best for their people can experience fear when faced with uncertainty or perceived threat.

## Subtle cognitive biases often shape these reactions:

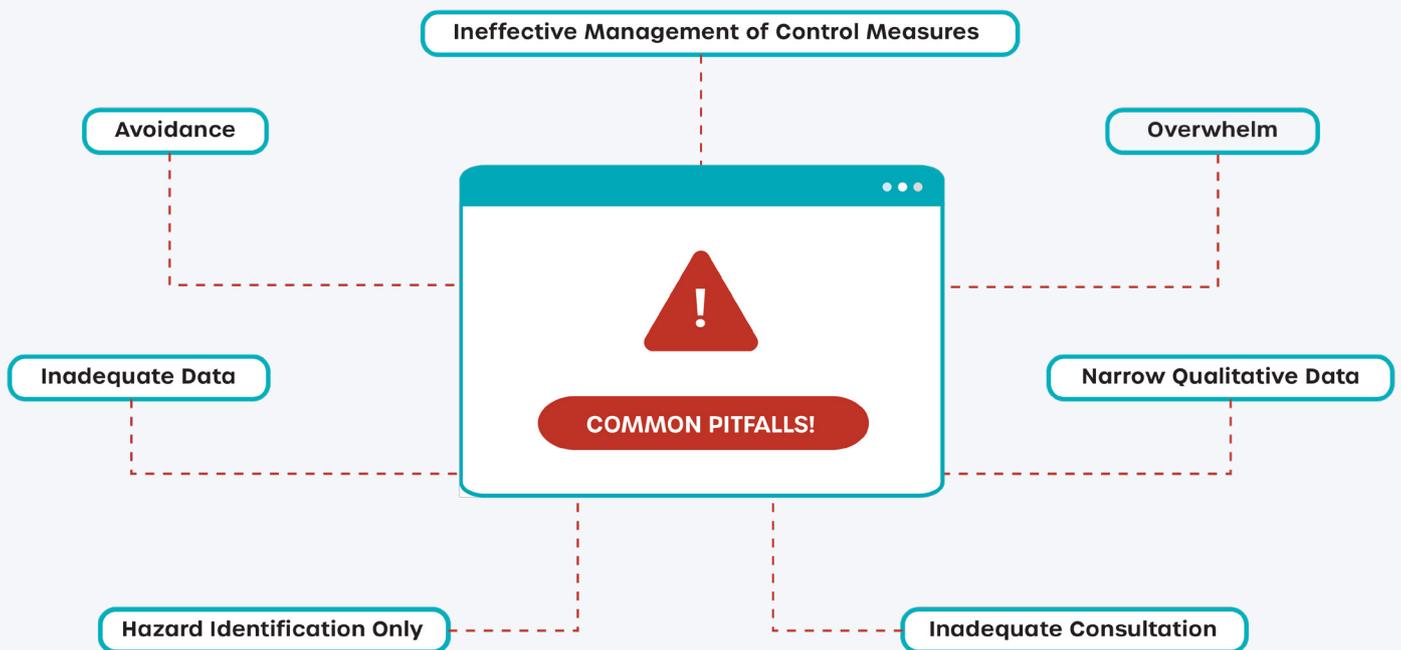


When fear is triggered, instinct may shift from aiming to understand the environment to reducing fear without awareness. This can unintentionally steer leaders away from proactive and systemic risk management toward avoiding both the perceived threat and the cognitive and emotional discomfort it evokes.

## Common Pitfalls and Costs

This results in many common pitfalls:

- Avoiding risk management altogether
- Relying on inadequate internal data sources not specific to psychosocial risk
- Using surveys that identify hazards but do not assess levels of risk or protection
- Failing to adequately consult across the organisation's different working groups
- Depending on narrow qualitative data biased by employees who may not feel safe to speak openly
- Becoming overwhelmed by the misconception that every individual factor must be addressed, rather than analysing the cumulative and interrelated nature of the environment and acting only on the most influential factors
- Failing to effectively measure, monitor and maintain control measures to manage the risk



**This avoidance doesn't protect organisations, it exposes them.**



In psychosocial risk, liability doesn't come from identifying hazards and assessing risk, it comes from **being unaware** or **failing to improve** the psychosocial environment over time.

Offences in the safety legislation are strict liability criminal offences, meaning the prosecution **does not** have to prove a defendant had knowledge of the risk to health and safety, only that they **ought to have knowledge of the risk**.

Pleading ignorance to a foreseeable risk of health and safety is not a defence.

Importantly, a high hazard does not automatically mean high harm.

Protective factors like role clarity, fairness, and supportive leadership can buffer risk.

Without valid, rigorous data to gain insight into these interactions, organisations risk investing in low-impact or ineffective controls, missing root causes, and falling short of regulatory expectations and managing the risk.

The costs of avoidance are predictable:

- Aggrieved staff
- Poor understanding of actual risk
- Misallocated time, costs and resources
- Loss of worker trust through lack of visible action
- Weak defensibility when regulators ask for evidence of risk assessment process, consultation, prioritisation, and a clear plan to implement controls to eliminate or minimise the risk, and continual improvement
- Potential devastating psychosocial harm for workers, reduced productivity, and severe reputational damage to the organisation



## Executive Recommendations

As we have seen, leaders generally **overestimate** the legal and practical risk of rigorously assessing psychosocial risk.

In reality, liability arises from gaps in process, not transparency.

Another common misconception is that every hazard must be ‘fixed’ **immediately**. Instead, regulators expect **progress** that is proportionate and improving over time.

A defensible position demonstrates a clear plan, rationale, and timeline for reasonably practicable improvement.

### Regulators look for evidence that organisations:

-  Proactively identify psychosocial hazards, assess and manage the risk
-  Apply genuine workforce consultation, coordination and communication
-  Progress clear prioritisation from hazard, to harm, to control
-  Allocate time, costs and resource decisions according to risk level and feasibility (the “what is reasonably practicable” test)
-  Measure, monitor and review the effectiveness of elimination/controls to minimise the risk to health and safety ongoing

As the focus of work health and safety regulators expands to include psychological risks, organisations should consider how they adapt to manage this risk. Psychosocial risks are complex and require a multifaceted approach that involves the commitment and support of leadership, effective management within the organisation to collaborate and coordinate (including WHS, HR, Risk, and operations), the engagement of workers and the implementation of effective strategies.

The safe, effective and compliant path, isn’t to avoid what might be found, it’s to build confidence through disciplined consultation, targeted priorities, proportionate controls, and transparent progress.

By **proactively** addressing psychosocial risks, organisations can **not only comply** with regulatory obligations but also create a **safer, healthier, and more productive workforce**.

The journey to managing psychosocial risks is ongoing, but with the right approach, leaders can protect the psychological health and safety of their workers and, in turn, benefit from the increased success of their organisations.

## Regulator-Accepted System: Mibo

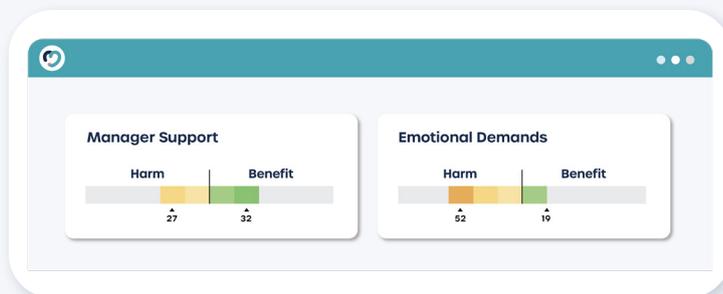
If you're an executive currently considering psychosocial risk management options, Mibo is a proven, regulator-accepted system already used by organisations including those operating under improvement notices. It simplifies and strengthens psychosocial risk management, making it safer, clearer, and demonstrably effective

### Validated, Actionable Data

Effective psychosocial risk management rests on sound foundations. Mibo's validated assessment, independently evaluated by the Griffith University RISE Research Centre, combines hazard identification and risk assessment into one rigorous process.

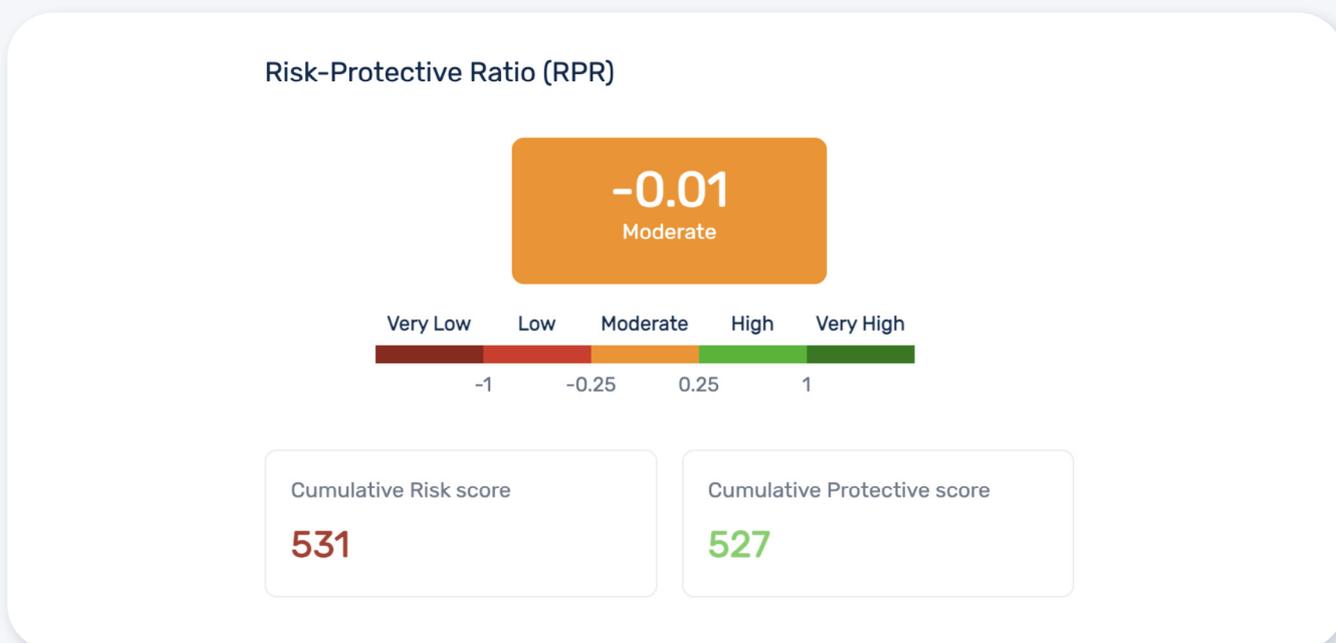
### A Balanced View, Not Just Risk

Mibo assesses both risks and protective factors. Leaders may see, for example, that high job demands does not lead to harm when resourced with strong job control, role clarity, and support. Where demands can't be reduced quickly, strengthening protections becomes a reasonable and defensible priority.



### Reduces Complexity

Psychosocial risk is complex by nature, but managing it doesn't have to be. Mibo's Risk-Protective Ratio (RPR) provides a single, easy-to-interpret metric summarising the balance of each group's psychosocial environment.



And its Factor Influence Prioritisation (FIP) model highlights the factors that are most powerfully influencing the environment encouraging action on a small number of high-leverage priorities. This reduces overwhelm and focuses action where it matters most.

## Practical Risk Register

Mibo delivers a clear, psychosocially specific risk register to demonstrate reasonably practicable steps, prioritisation, and progress over time.

### Risk Register

Workplace risk management and compliance tracking

[ADD ENTRY](#)

#### System Modules

Access different components of the risk management system

Module	Description	Action
 Hazard Controls Track hazards and risks	Centralized tracking of psychosocial hazards and risks	<a href="#">→ ACCESS</a>
 Control Measures Manage interventions	Library of control measures and templates	<a href="#">→ ACCESS</a>
 Actions Tracker Monitor implementation	Track action assignments and progress	<a href="#">→ ACCESS</a>
 Scenarios Manage recurring incidents	Handle recurring workplace incidents	<a href="#">→ ACCESS</a>

## Trust, Buy-in, and Scalability

Mibo also delivers configurable anonymity, confidentiality, and aggregate reporting which promotes trust and participation.

Organisations can start small, with a pilot or cohort, and scale up over time. Early, visible wins help build momentum.

Over time, Mibo helps embed psychosocial risk management as an evolving, sustainable process that improves employee health, safety, and productivity.

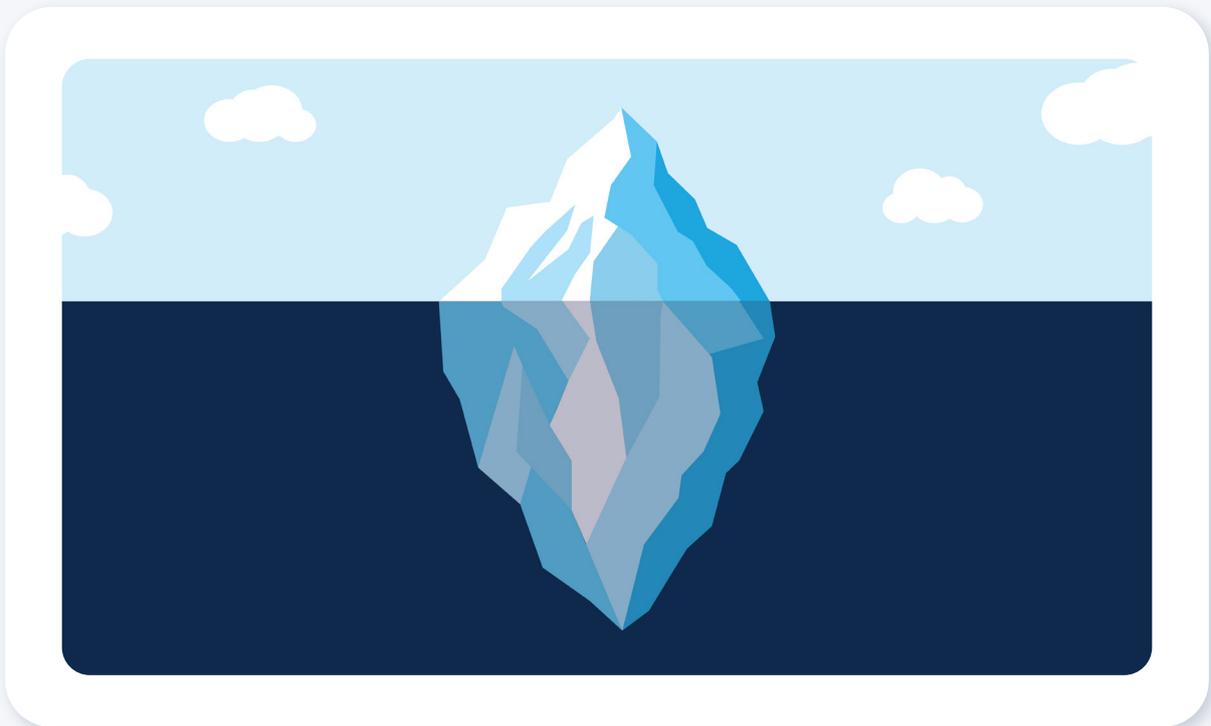


## Conclusion

Executive fear often overstates the risks of psychosocial risk management while underestimating the far greater risks of inaction, and the opportunities lost by not engaging fully.

**The real danger lies not in what is revealed, but in what remains hidden.**

By taking a structured, proportionate approach that targets both risk reduction and the amplification of protective strengths, leaders make a strategic investment in their employees' health and long-term business success.



## Authors



**Dr. Anthony Ross**  
Founder,  
Chief of Psychosocial  
Safety at Mibo



**Tony Morris**  
Founder SafeTM

## Introducing Mibo

Mibo is a **next-generation** Psychosocial Risk Management technology platform helping organisations embrace a rigorous approach to creating supportive psychosocial work environments.

Our solution combines the **Psychosocial Risk Management Assessment (PRMA)**, industry-leading **analysis** and **reporting**, an **advanced Control Measure Module system**, and the leveraging of **emerging technologies** to enhance capability, efficiency, and precision in managing psychosocial risks.

Discover more about Mibo's innovative approach to **Psychosocial Risk Management** [here](#).



-  Enhance Consulting Effectiveness
-  Your records in one place
-  Leading Psychosocial Risk Assessment Tool
-  Achieve Psychosocial Risk Compliance
-  Coordinate Employee Care
-  Build Supportive Psychosocial Environments
-  Manager Support
  - 90** (↑ 50%)
  - Thriving (↑ 10%)
  - Higher score the better
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## Introducing SafeTM

SafeTM Pty Ltd is a specialised Australian business dedicated to providing **top-tier Work Health and Safety (WHS) advice** for business leaders.

Founded by Tony Morris, who brings over two decades of legal and practical WHS risk advisory and consulting experience, SafeTM stands as your trusted partner for **proactive** and **strategic** WHS risk management.

Tony's extensive expertise spans both private and government sectors, enabling executives and leadership teams to adopt a more strategic and practical approach to risk management.

By leveraging health and safety as a catalyst for productivity and performance, SafeTM **empowers organisations** to achieve their WHS objectives effectively and efficiently.

**Our mission is to empower business leaders to take control of their WHS risk management through strategic advice, interactive and realistic training, and comprehensive due diligence actions. We believe a safe workplace is not just a regulatory requirement but a fundamental right for every worker and a cornerstone of business success.**

**Discover more about SafeTM's specialised approach to Work Health and Safety advice [here](#).**

## References

Section 12F(2) of the Work Health & Safety Act, 2011 (C'wth); and Section 12A of the Work Health and Safety Act, 2011 (NSW) as examples

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