

30 May 2017**WORLD-FIRST STUDY INTO WORKPLACE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY LAUNCHED**

[icare](#) and [R U OK?](#) today launched a world-first study into psychological safety¹ in the workplace, which showed that frontline lower income-earning staff feel less safe and permitted to take risks at work than higher income-earning employees.

*The Australian Workplace Psychological Safety Survey*² canvassed 1,176 Australian employees and found that only 23 per cent of lower income-earning frontline employees felt their workplace was “psychologically safe” to take a risk, compared to 45 per cent of workers on significantly higher incomes.

A “psychologically safe” workplace is characterised by a climate of interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people feel comfortable being themselves to make mistakes or take risks in their work.

“This is the first time a country has ever measured psychological safety in the workplace,” said R U OK? board member and workplace mental wellness expert, Graeme Cowan.

“Google’s research of its own workforce revealed that psychological safety was the most important team norm for high-performing innovative workplaces – those norms are: Psychological safety; Dependability; Structure and clarity; Meaning and purpose; and Impact,” he said.

“While all five norms are important to team performance, psychological safety has been shown to be the most important attribute - if this attribute is strong, the other four norms are so much easier to achieve.

“If CEOs want their organisation to thrive in today’s digital economy, team psychological safety must be paramount, as well as striving for and monitoring of employee wellbeing,” Mr Cowan said.

icare CEO Vivek Bhatia said: “In a growing climate of uncertainty and increasing stress on workers, families and communities, mental health is one of the biggest societal challenges of the 21st century. One in five people in Australia will experience a mental health issue in their lifetime.

“Employee mental wellbeing must be at the top of every CEO’s agenda. Untreated mental illness costs Australian businesses \$11 billion every year off their bottom line from absenteeism, lost productivity, stymied business growth and compensation claims,” he said.

“An investment in psychological wellness is an investment in now and the future.

“Employers should also recognise that this investment extends beyond their employees. We all bring our work home with us, including our state of mind.

“Mental wellbeing is not isolated to the individual – it has a flow-on effect to families, loved ones, and friends, who are at the heart of our social fabric.

“I urge all employers to ensure their people have a mentally safe environment to work in, one which respects differences, welcomes diversity and encourages employees to feel comfortable talking openly about how they’re doing,” Mr Bhatia said.

icare and R U OK? will also partner up to hold the *Senior Leaders Workplace Mental Wellness Breakfast* at the Westin in Sydney today with 200 CEOs and senior leaders from more than 80 organisations convening to understand and help define as a community “*Why Mental Health Should be on Every CEOs’ Agenda*”.

Organisations attending include: Ernst & Young, PwC Australia, Lendlease, CapGemini, CBA, Westpac, NAB, ING, AIA Insurance, EML, QBE, the Black Dog Institute, Virgin, Bayer, CoreLogic, Altius Group, BridgeClimb and the NSW Mental Health Commission.

The Australian Psychological Safety Survey is the result of a collaboration between R U OK? and Amy Edmondson, the pre-eminent global thought leader on psychological safety and Novartis Professor of Leadership & Management at the Harvard Business School.

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¹ The concept of “psychological safety” originated from Amy Edmondson, Professor of Leadership & Management from Harvard Business School and is defined as a team climate characterized by interpersonal trust and mutual respect in which people are comfortable being themselves.

² Conducted by Colmar Brunton for R U OK?, the Australian Workplace Psychological Safety Survey was based on an independent online survey of 1,176 Australian full-time and part-time employees across all states and territories in March, 2017.

Key Results of the *Australian Workplace Psychological Safety Survey*:

Survey question:	Result
<i>"It is safe to take a risk at work"</i> .	<p>By Gender: 38 per cent of men strongly agreed or agreed that it was safe to take risks at work, which was significantly higher than the 29 per cent of women who strongly agreed or agreed.</p> <p>By Income: 45 per cent of respondents on incomes of \$156,000 or more a year strongly agreed or agreed, which was significantly higher than the other income groups. Those on less than \$52,000 a year were significantly less likely to strongly agree or agree (23 per cent) on feeling comfortable taking risks.</p> <p>By Employment status: Employees working full-time or part-time were significantly more likely to strongly agree or agree (37 per cent and 46 per cent, respectively), compared to 25 per cent of part-time employees; taking risks.</p>
<i>"My work colleagues often reject others for being different"</i> .	<p>By age group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents aged 25-34 (Millennials) were significantly more likely to agree or strongly agree that their colleagues rejected others for being different (28 per cent), compared to between 7 per cent and 18 per cent for older groups); • Respondents aged 55-64 (Baby Boomers) were significantly more likely to disagree or strongly disagree that their work colleagues rejected differences (69 per cent), compared to an average of 58 per cent.
<i>"It is difficult to ask my work colleagues for help"</i> .	<p>By age group: Respondents aged 25-34 found it significantly more difficult to ask their work colleagues for help (24 per cent agree or strongly agree, compared to an average of 18 per cent). Whereas respondents aged 55-64 found it significantly easier to ask for help (73 per cent disagree or strongly disagree, compared to an average of 62 per cent).</p>
<i>"If you make a mistake at work, it is often held against you"</i> .	<p>By age group: Respondents aged 25-34 were the most concerned about mistakes being held against them (36 per cent strongly agree or agree), and respondents aged 45 and over were significantly less concerned (ranging between 12 per cent and 21 per cent agree or strongly agree).</p>
<i>"Working with my colleagues, my unique skills and talents are utilised"</i> .	<p>By Income: Respondents on the lowest incomes (less than \$52,000) were the least likely to strongly agree or agree with this statement (50 per cent), compared to between 64 per cent and 72 per cent for the other income groups.</p> <p>By Education: Respondents with graduate degrees or higher were most likely to agree with this statement (68 per cent, compared to 59 per cent and 61 per cent for other groups).</p>

About icare

icare (Insurance & Care NSW) is a Public Financial Corporation governed by an independent Board of Directors that delivers insurance and care services to the people of New South Wales. icare's [Board](#) is directly accountable to the Hon. Dominic Perrotet MP, NSW Treasurer

icare is a social insurer that puts its customers at the heart of all that we do.

icare's purpose is to protect, insure and care for the people, businesses and assets that make NSW great. Our vision is to change the way people think about insurance and care services by providing world-class services for people, businesses and the community

icare is one of the largest general insurers in Australia, with \$33 billion in assets and insures 3.4 million workers and 284,000 employers across NSW.

Whether a person is injured in the workplace or on our roads, **icare** supports their long-term care needs to improve quality of life outcomes, including helping people return to work.

For more information, visit: www.icare.nsw.gov.au

About R U OK?

R U OK? is an Australian suicide prevention charity. Our mission is to inspire and empower everyone to meaningfully connect with the people around them and to support anyone struggling with life. We're most well-known for our national day of action, R U OK? Day, on the second Thursday in September (14 September 2017).

We also have campaigns to inspire connection throughout the year, including R U OK? at Work, R U OK? Afield and R U OK? in Law. For more information, visit: www.ruok.org.au