



Government  
of South Australia

SafeWork SA

# Work Life Balance Strategy in SA

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## Outline of Session

- Background of SA Strategic Plan and work on WLB
- **Definition – link between WLB and Health**
- SA Labour market profile and motivation for WLB
- The SA WLB Strategy
- **The concept of sustainable work**
- What might WLB initiatives look like in an OH&S programme?  
[Example of Older Workers/Reasonable Hours]
- **The link between the industrial and OH&S environment**
- Future options



## South Australian Strategic Plan Target 2.12 Work Life Balance

- New target in February 2007 review of SASP
- T2.12 Work Life Balance: “Improve the quality of life of all South Australians through the maintenance of a healthy work-life balance”.
- First twelve months to develop a strategy and involve both the public and private sector in addressing the target.



# What is it?

- **Work** is defined as paid work.
- **Life** is defined as the activities outside paid work including activities in the household and with friends, family and neighbourhood, care activities including self-care and care of others, and community, sporting and other unpaid voluntary activities.
- **Balance** is the imagined ideal, where work and other commitments co-exist in complimentary equilibrium. However it is widely accepted that balance is not really an achievable [or even useful] concept and that what we are attempting to achieve is less stressful interaction between the demands of work and life.



## Why should we be interested?

- **Demographics of the workforce: Growth in numbers of working parents, students combining work and study, growth of women's workforce participation**
- **Ageing workforce, decline in the number of young workers**
- **Skill shortages and labour demand**
- **Employer interest in attracting and retaining staff**
- **Risk Management – potential to avert injury**
- **Structuring work differently opens opportunity to engage more workers – including injured workers and workers with disability**



## Workforce profile in South Australia

- The ageing population and reduction in labour supply is estimated to reduce Australia's average economic growth over the next 40 years by around 40%.
- South Australia, as the oldest and second most rapidly ageing state, is expected to experience these effects earlier and more strongly than the rest of Australia.
- Workforce planning *and* OH&S risk management arrangements, need to incorporate WLB initiatives



## Women's labour market participation

- *Meeting Australia's Ageing Challenge: The importance of Women's Workforce Participation*  
Access Economics Nov 2006 report
- Need to boost full-time female participation –  
“Australia's women are too valuable to waste – and their participation choices will make a notable difference to Australia's future prosperity”



## Increasing concern and interest in “Quality of Life/Healthy work”

- Increasing interest in the impact of long hours, materialism and loss of social connectedness on individual and societal health.

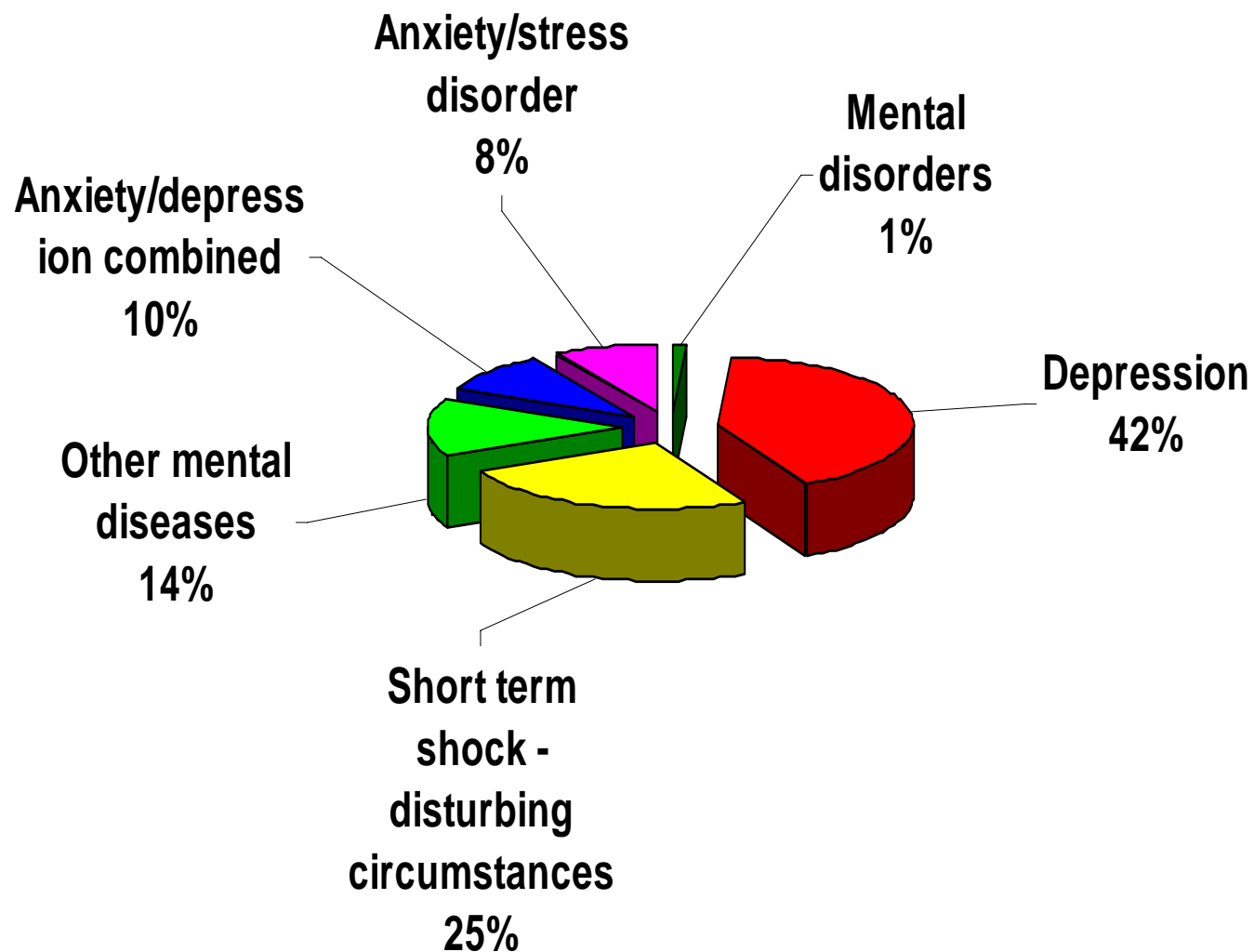
Relationships Forum Australia study

*An Unexpected Tragedy – Evidence for the connection between working patterns and family breakdown in Australia*

- Sustainable work practices has direct implication for improved psychological and physical health and a subsequent impact on health expenditure.



# The human cost of incidents and injury – Non physical injury claims [Work Cover 2004-2006]





## The case for new approaches to the organisation of work

- To maintain workforce participation we need more flexible arrangements at work to allow...
- young people to combine work and study,
- time for parents to spend with family,
- opportunities for graduated retirement for older workers and
- opportunities for all to maintain their own health and contribute to their communities.....AND
- **OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE WORK**



# Sustainable Work

- Design of work – work organisation
- Safe and efficient workplace and equipment design
- Physical risks minimised
- Psychological risks minimised
- Potential for and consequences of error minimised
- Meaningful, satisfying work – sense of purpose
- Role clarity
- Autonomy – having a say
- Social aspects of work
- Opportunities to develop skills and competencies
- Recognition and constructive, timely feedback
- Reasonable payment



## Expert forecast on emerging psychosocial risks related to occupational safety and health

- The top emerging psychosocial risks related to five main topics
  1. New forms of employment contracts and job insecurity
  2. The ageing workforce
  3. Work intensification
  4. High emotional demands at work
  5. Poor Work Life Balance
- *European Agency for Safety and Health at Work 2007*



## WLB: sustainable work arrangements helps attract and retain skilled labour

- Often flexibilities are simple and surprisingly low cost
- Spin-offs include less sick days and reduction in workers compensation costs
- As competition for labour increases, employers are investing in initiatives that make them an **employer of choice**
- Company profile promotion as a company interested in employees health also pays off with better customer service from happier employees



## The SA WLB Project

- Develop social and economic argument for WLB
- Engage key stakeholders
- Develop awareness raising campaign on issue
- Identify best practice case studies
- Identify resources needed to support WLB
- Build links for whole of government response
- Establish partnership projects with Govt Depts
- Explore industrial/legislative supports for WLB
- Promote ongoing WLB programme and research



## Resources and supports needed

- Promotion of existing provisions
- Improvement of Minimum Standards
- Advocacy for paid parental leave
- EO Act Amendments
- LSL Act Amendment
- Link with OH&S
- Research: AWALI
  
- Development of proposal for 'Quality Part Time Work' and Small grants programme.



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# Applying the OH&S risk management approach in considering WLB provisions

- Two examples:
- Older workers
- Reasonable Hours



## WLB Responses to Older Workers

- Necessity to retain skilled workers
- Increased participation of older women a major area of potential employment growth
- Consultation with staff on preferred working arrangements and retirement intentions
- Opportunity for flexible work arrangements
- Reduction of injury risk and greater satisfaction at work
- Opportunity for graduated retirement



## Example of Reasonable Hours

- 1850s: eight hours rest, work, recreation.
- Growth of P/T work: 29% [ABS 2005]
- Growth in casual/precarious work: 30% in SA
- Longer hours by fewer F/T workers – Men 47hrs av  
Women 43 hrs av [ABS 2005]
- Excessive hours defined as >50hrs pw
- 35% of male F/T workers and now 20% of our total  
workforce work more than 50hrs pw [Lee 2004]



## Reasonable Working Hours: OHS aspect

- **Using model of WA Code of Practice on Working Hours – 2006** –hazard / risk management framework to working hours
- **Longer hours** increase exposure to all hazards involved in the job – manual tasks, stress, noise, chemicals – synergistic effects with fatigue
- **Errors** tend to increase and productivity tends to wane



## A clash of policy outcomes – Industrial Relations and health

- Current outcomes of negotiations: loss of penalties, averaging hours, greater span of hours to allow flexible start/finish times
- Growth of P/T work: need to establish quality p/t work opportunities & ‘right to elect’?
- Definition of ‘unsociable’ hours?
- Review of long hours work and cap on overtime?



# Opportunities presented by WLB Strategy

- Strong public interest in issue
- Proactive support needed from industrial parties
- False divide between OHS&W and IR if focus is best practice employment
- Need to promote minimum standards and establish protections from discrimination: EEO Act amendments on Carers Provision
- Promotion of OH&S as a motivator to introduce WLB initiatives