



SMART Work Design

For OHSA Mini Symposium on
The Evolving Workplace –Emerging Issues
23 Sept 2026

Judy Chi
Applied Organisational Research Lead

Support thriving people
& organisations in the
digital age.



Understand the role of
work design in generating
healthy & productive work.

Implement, evaluate & support change.

Transformative
work design

Work capabilities and
motivation

Human systems
integration

Public policy in the
digital age

Data analytics and
decision making

Ageing and work

What is work design?

- How tasks are **organised**
- What tasks are **involved**
- The **role** in the organisation
- The **responsibilities**
- The nature and quality of **relationships** with others

WORK DESIGN



Think about your worst job or your best job,

What is one feature of your job that made it so positive or negative?



Resources

Demands



Parker, S. K., & Knight, C. (2024). The SMART model of work design: A higher order structure to help see the wood from the trees. Human Resource Management, 63(2), 265–291. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22200>

Prevent Harm through Work Design

S

STIMULATING

- Task variety
- Skill use and variety
- Problem solving

M

MASTERY

- Role clarity
- Feedback
- Task identity (taking a piece of work from beginning to end)

A

AGENCY

- Job autonomy
- Flexible working
- Participative decision making (involved in decisions that affect their job directly)

R

RELATIONAL

- Supervisor support
- Co-worker support
- Task significance
- Social worth (feeling recognised)

T

JOB DEMANDS

- Workload and time demands
- Time and location demands
- Cognitive demands
- Role demands
- Emotional demands and trauma
- Relational demands
- Physical demands

ORGANISATIONAL DEMANDS

- Organisational change (being consulted about changes)
- Organisational justice
- Job security

Addresses stressors (psychosocial hazards)

- Low skills development opportunity or underused skills

- Lack of role clarity
- Jobs with low positive feedback
- Inadequate training, tools and resources for a task
- Low recognition and reward

- Low job control
- Prescriptive processes which do not allow workers to apply their skills and judgement
- Levels of autonomy not matched to workers' abilities

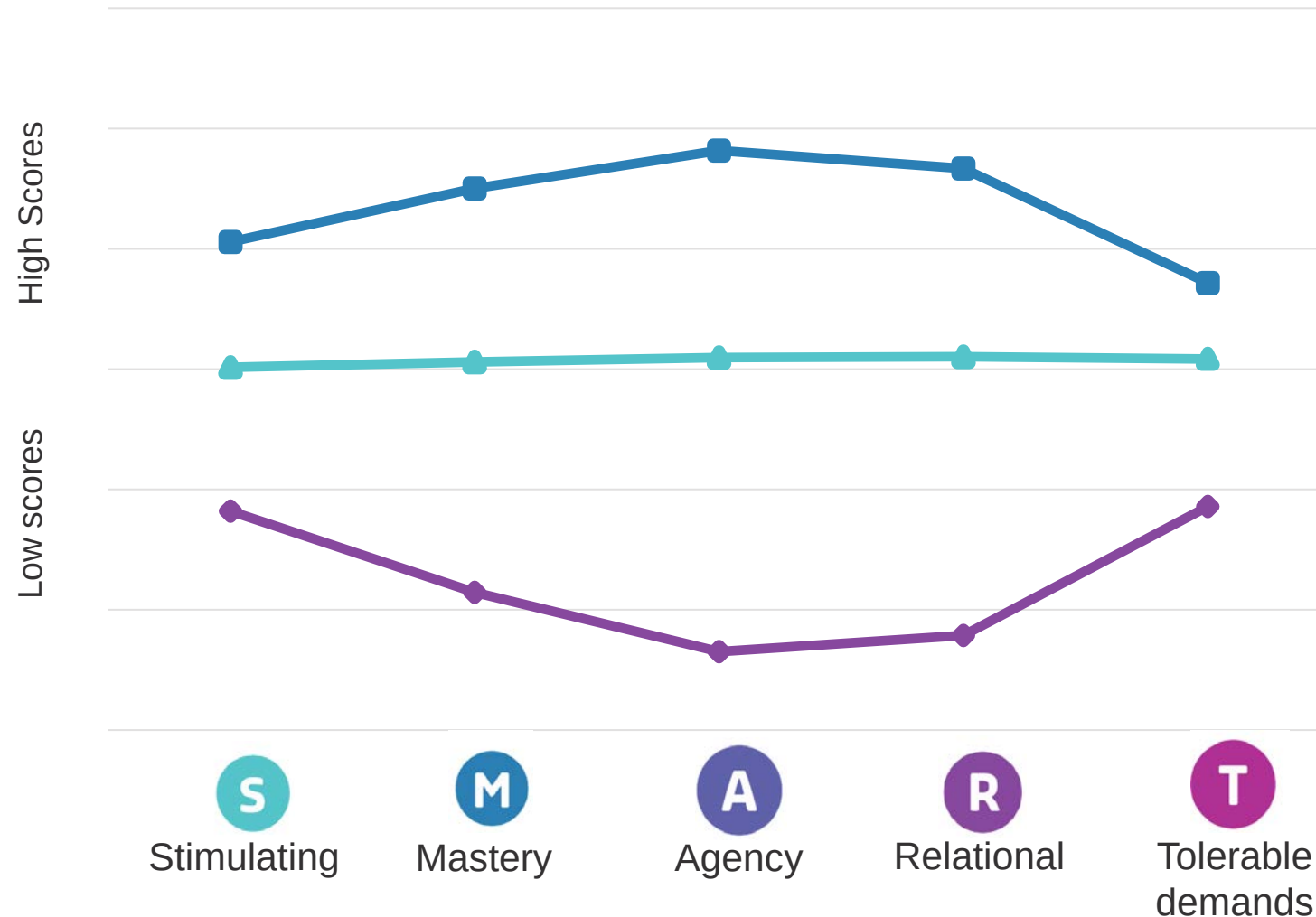
- Poor support: Tasks or jobs where workers have inadequate support
- Inadequate reward and recognition
- High level of unconstructive negative feedback from managers or customers

- Unreasonable or excessive time pressures
- Remote or isolated work
- Intense/sustained high (or low) mental effort
- High vigilance required
- Intense/sustained high (or low) emotional effort; Fatigue
- Traumatic events or material
- Violence and aggression
- Poor physical environment
- Bullying

- Poor organisational change management
- Poor organisational justice
- Insecure work

Impact of Work Design

People have very different work experiences...which affect their health and wellbeing.



■ 15% SMART work:
1 in 10 high burnout
1 in 20 disengaged
Very few (<1%) severe distress

▲ 70% "Okay" SMART work:
1 in 5 high burnout
1 in 10 disengaged
Few (1.2% severe distress)

◆ 15% Non-SMART work:
1 in 2 high burnout
1 in 2 disengaged
Many (12.3%) severe distress

Jolly, A., Kunzelmann, A., Dey, S., Zettna, N., Yam, C., Forner, V., Askovic, M., Johnson, A., Nguyen, H., & Parker, S. K. (2023). How work design shapes mental health in the Healthcare and Social Assistance industry.

Work design is neglected as a strategy

Symptom

Stress



EAP

Low job performance



Training

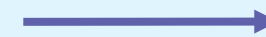
Low innovation



'Fun Zones'

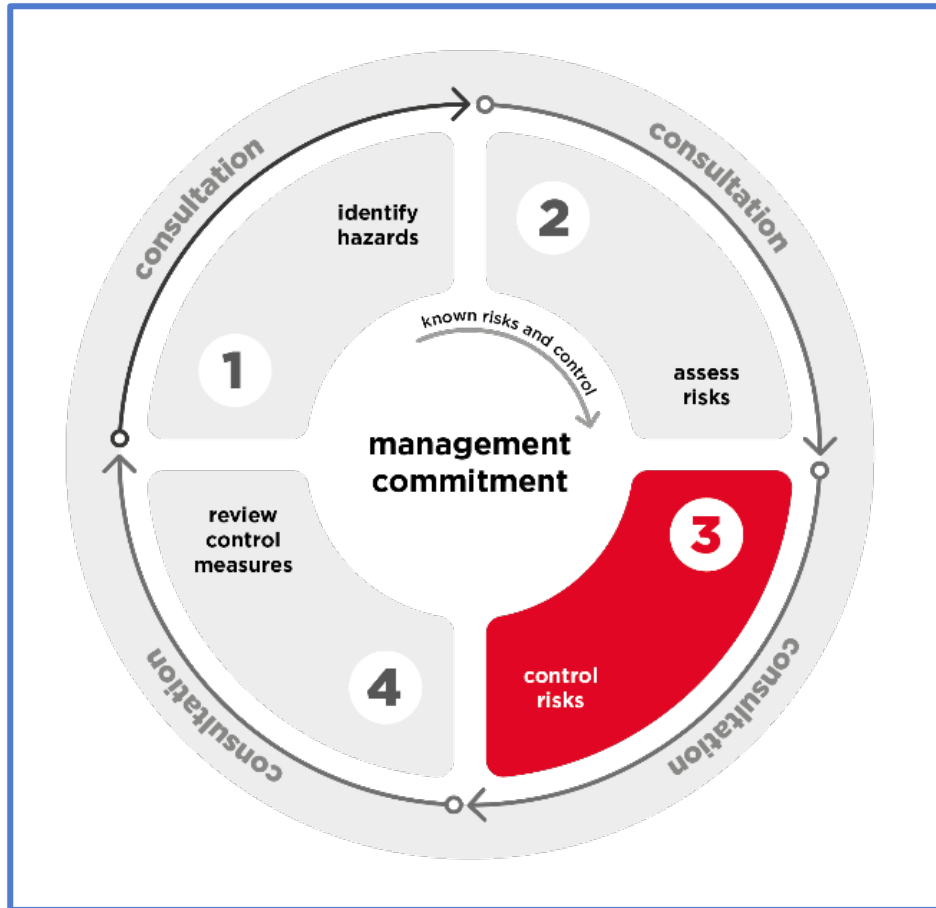
Root Cause

Poorly designed
work



	Formal Job Description	Individual behaviours	Team behaviours	Leader behaviours	Policies and Practices	Organisational Design	Technology	Macro e.g., Legislation
S Stimulating	Task variety; Meaningful purpose; Problem-solving responsibilities	Seeking new challenges; Taking on new tasks	Sharing information; Encouraging new ideas; Learning from each other	Delegating stretch tasks; Encouraging innovation; Challenge thinking	Job rotation programs; Development pathways; Acting and secondment opportunities	Activity-based working; Job enlargement; Self-managed teams	Creative tools; Tools that reduces administrative or repetitive tasks.	WHS legislation; Industry competency frameworks; Professional accreditation
M Mastery	Clear role expectations; Clear goals; Feedback from the work	Self-monitoring practices; Seeking feedback; Goal-setting.	Peer feedback; Clarifying team roles; Sharing priorities	Coaching conversations; Setting clear expectations; Providing regular feedback	Performance reviews; Career development planning; Recognition systems	Clear reporting structures; Transparent strategy; Cascading mechanisms	Performance dashboards; Information management systems; Learning management systems.	WHS legislation; CPD requirements; Professional credentialing frameworks.
A Agency	Role scope and boundaries	Shape tasks and workflows; Review energy use and work methods.	Flexible task allocation; Collaborative decision making	Empowering staff; Involving staff in decisions	Flexible work arrangements, Delegation authority schedules; Consultation processes	Flat organisational structure; Autonomous work teams.	Self-service systems; Tools supporting autonomy	WHS legislation; Scope of practice frameworks
R Relational	Working as part of a team; Stakeholder interaction	Building networks; Supporting colleagues; Perspective-taking and active listening.	Open communication; Psychological safety; team building activities	Providing support; Foster Psychological safety; Building trust and collaboration.	Team development programs; Hybrid work policies with co-location intents.	Escalation and support pathways; Communities of practice; Working groups; Cross-functional teams.	Communication platforms; Networking platforms.	WHS legislation; Professional and industry bodies.
T Tolerable Demands	Workload levels; Time pressure; Performance targets.	Prioritisation skills; Time management; Reframing challenges	Distributing workload; Checking capacity; Emotional support	Workload monitoring and active intervention; Setting realistic expectations	Fatigue management policies; Change management processes.	Realistic planning cycles; Reasonable performance expectations	Managing after-hours communication; Technology boundaries	WHS laws; ISO 45003 Anti-bullying legislation; Right to disconnect.

PSR Management



Safe Work Australia:
Model Code of Practice

To determine controls, must consider:

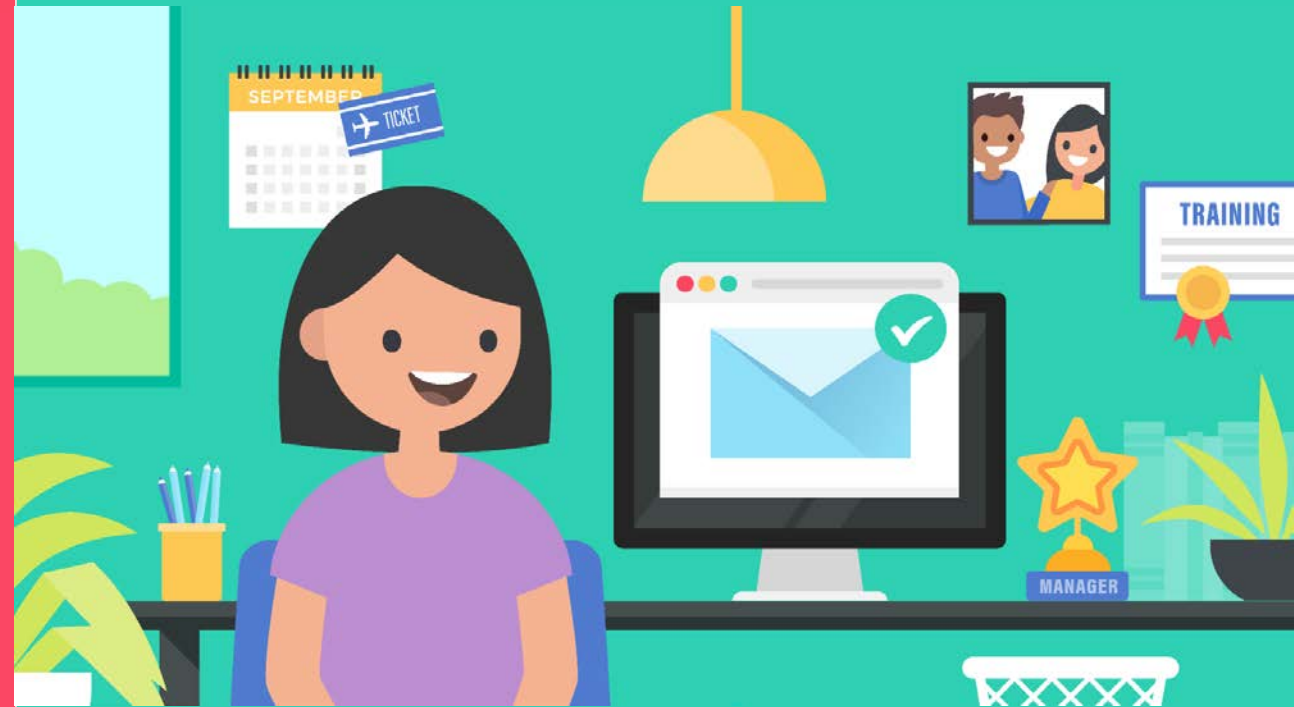
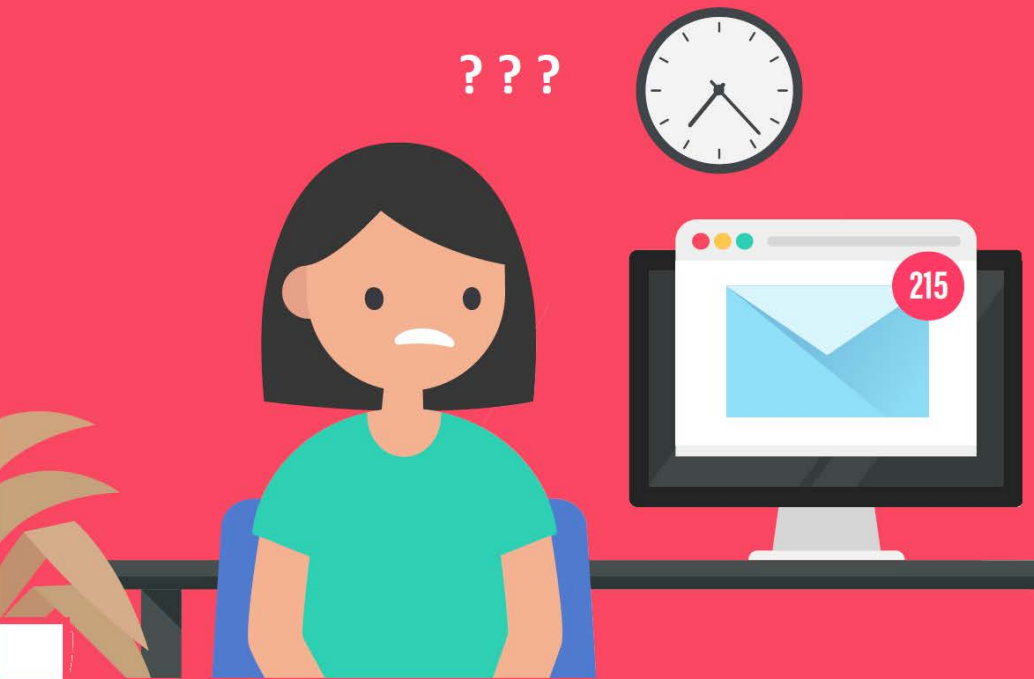
- the duration, frequency and severity of the exposure of workers and other persons to the psychosocial hazards
- how the psychosocial hazards may interact or combine
- the **design of work**, including job demands and tasks
- the **systems of work**, including how work is managed, organised and supported
- the **design and layout**, and environmental conditions, of the workplace
- the **plant, substances and structures** at the workplace
- **workplace interactions or behaviours**, and
- the **information, training**, instruction and supervision provided to workers.

	Formal Job Description	Individual behaviours	Team behaviours	Leader behaviours	HR Policies and Practices	Organisational Design	Technology	Macro e.g., Legislation
S Stimulating	Task variety; Meaningful purpose; Problem-solving responsibilities	Seeking new challenges; Taking on new tasks	Sharing information; Encouraging new ideas; Learning from each other	Delegating stretch tasks; Encouraging innovation; Challenging thinking	Job rotation programs; Development pathways; Acting and secondment opportunities	Activity-based working; Job enlargement; Self-managed teams	Creative tools; Tools that reduce administrative or repetitive tasks.	WHS legislation; Industry competency frameworks; Professional accreditation
M Mastery	Clear role expectations; Clear goals; Feedback from the work	Self-monitoring practices; Seeking feedback; Goal-setting	Peer feedback; Clarifying team roles; Sharing priorities	Coaching conversations; Setting clear expectations	Performance reviews; Career development planning; Reward systems	Clear reporting structures; Transparent strategy	Performance dashboards; Information management	WHS legislation; CPD requirements; Professional credentialing frameworks.
	Design of work	Workplace interactions and behaviours			System of work; Information and Training		Design & layout; Plant & Structures	
A Agency	Role scope and boundaries	Shape tasks and workflows; Review energy use and work methods.	Flexible task allocation; Collaborative decision making	Empowering staff; Involving staff in decisions	Flexibility arrangements; Delegation authority schedules; Consultation processes	Work structure; Autonomous work teams.	Supporting autonomy	WHS legislation; Scope of practice frameworks
R Relational	Working as part of a team; Stakeholder interaction	Building networks; Supporting colleagues; Perspective-taking and active listening.	Open communication; Psychological safety; team building activities	Providing support; Foster Psychological safety; Building trust and collaboration.	Team development programs; Hybrid work policies with co-location intents.	Escalation and support pathways; Communities of practice; Working groups; Cross-functional teams.	Communication platforms; Networking platforms.	WHS legislation; Professional and industry bodies.
T Tolerable Demands	Workload levels; Time pressure; Performance targets.	Prioritisation skills; Time management; Reframing challenges	Distributing workload; Checking capacity; Emotional support	Workload monitoring and active intervention; Setting realistic expectations	Fatigue management policies; Change management processes.	Realistic planning cycles; Reasonable performance expectations	Managing after-hours communication; Technology boundaries	WHS laws; ISO 45003 Anti-bullying legislation; Right to disconnect.

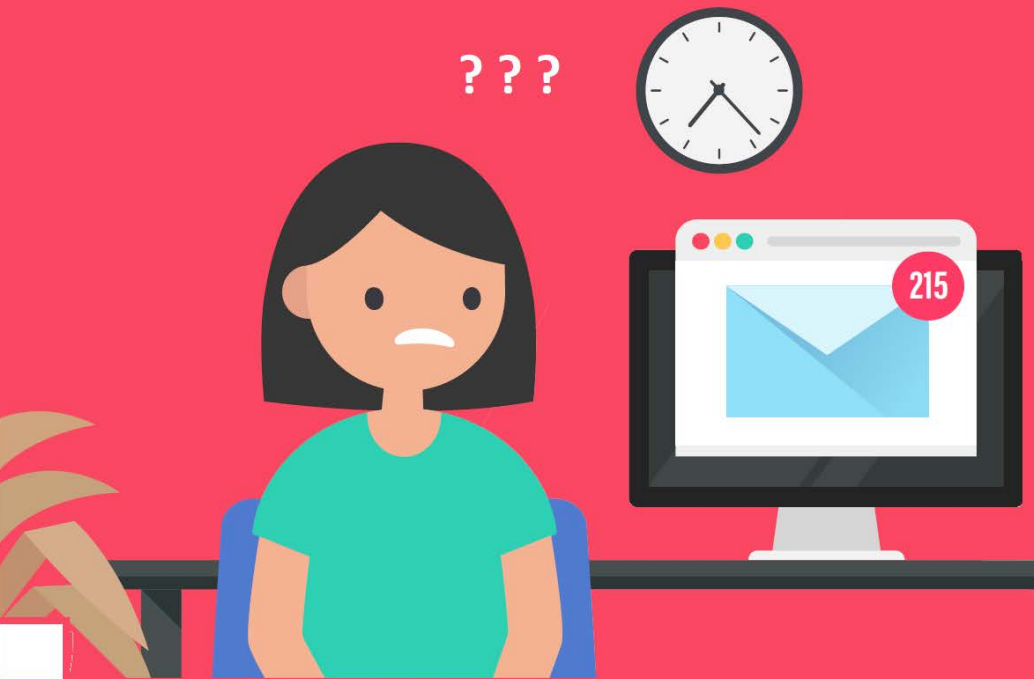
PSR Management

VS

Good Work Design ?

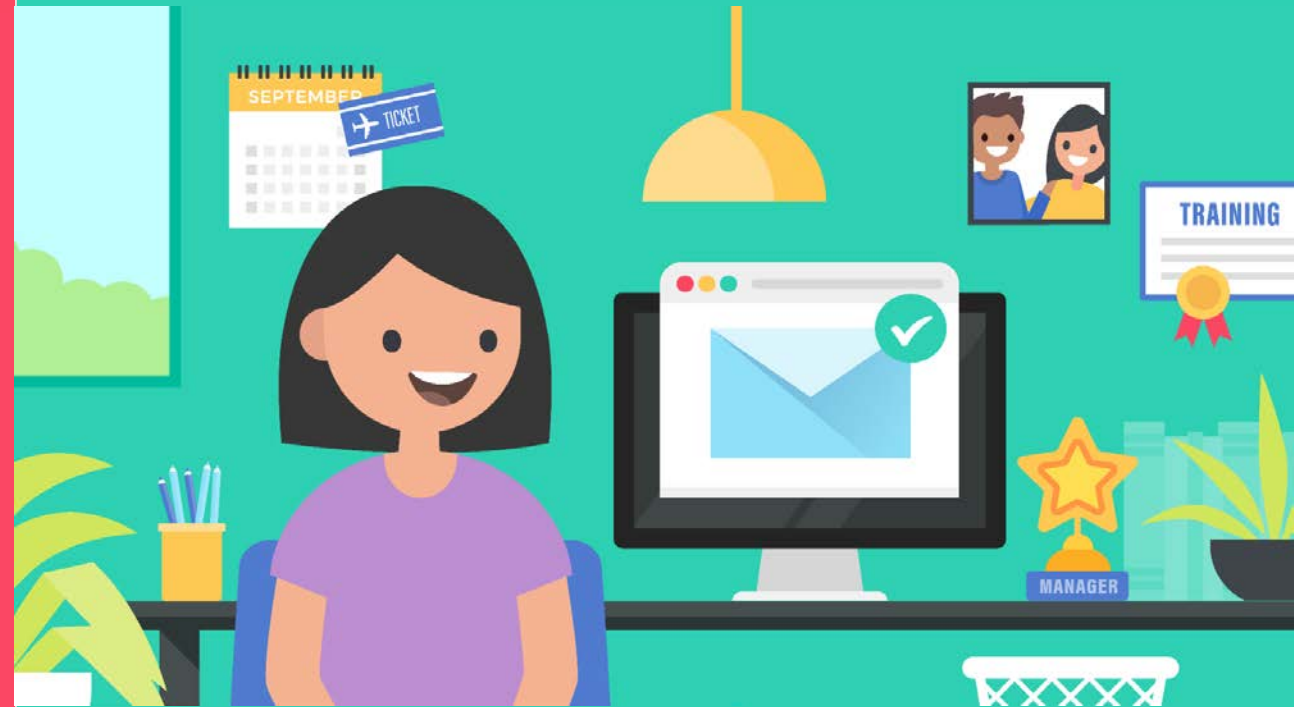


PSR Management

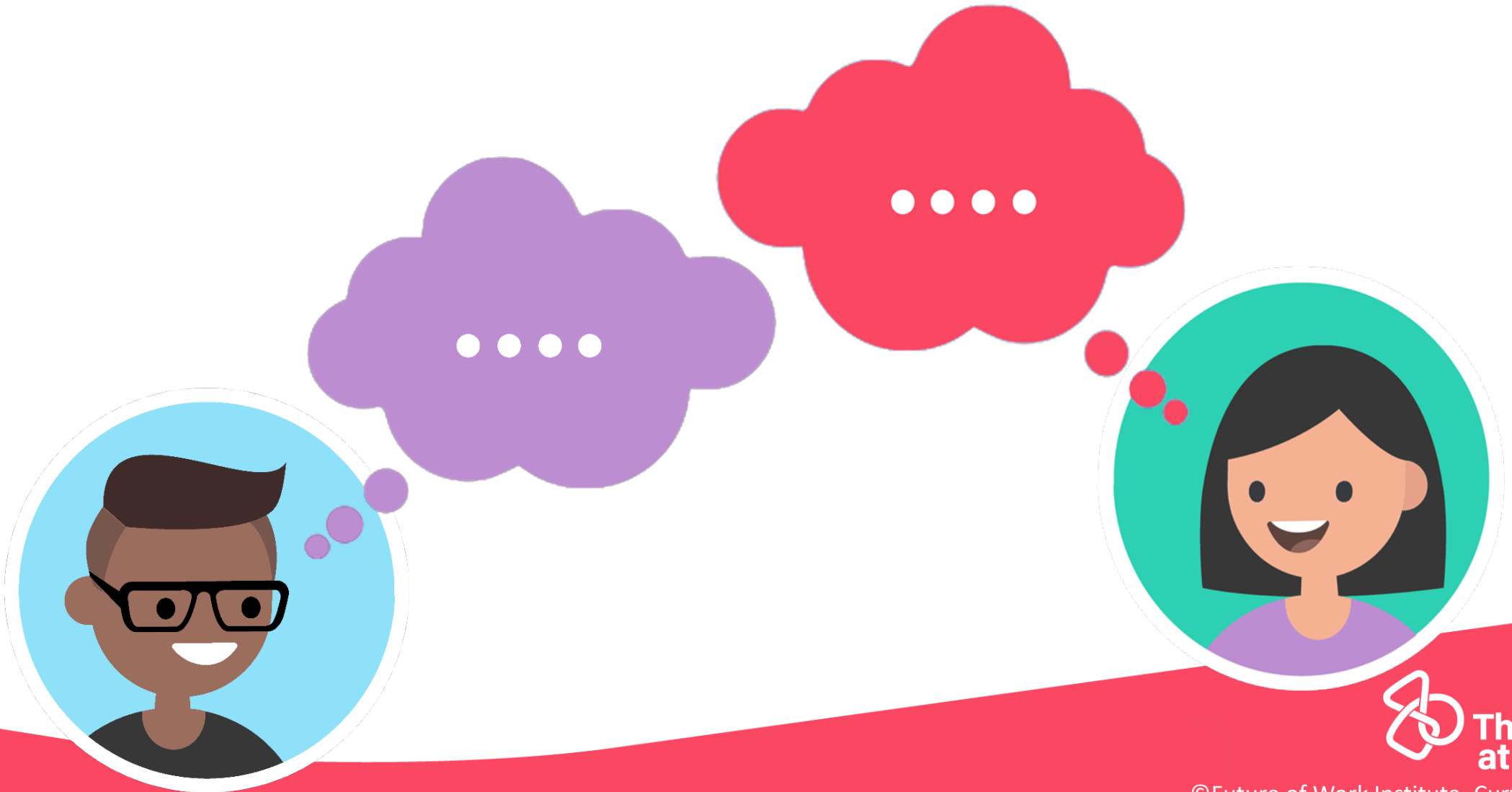


AND

Good Work Design



Questions or Key Takeaways?



Thank You!

<https://www.thriveatwork.org.au/>
Thriveatwork@curtin.edu.au

