

## During this session I:

- Explain what violent workplace crime is
- Outline the aims of my larger research project
- Highlight the sources of ‘conceptual confusion’
- Suggest possibilities for ameliorating the ‘confusion’ this unique group of injured workers experience

## Definition

- Workplace violence is a perceived or actual verbal or emotional threat and/or physical attack on an individual or their property, while carrying out work related activities, by another individual, group or organisation.

Source: Bowie, V. (1998) 'Violence in the Workplace' *Crime against Business*, 18-19 June, 1998, Melbourne, Australian Institute of Criminology.

## Definition

- ...*occupational crime, occupational deviance and workplace crime* are often used quite interchangeably
- ...from a criminological perspective, it is not particularly useful to classify criminal offences on the basis of where the crime occurs

Source: Friedrichs, D. O. (2002) 'Occupational Crime, Occupational Deviance, and Workplace Crime: Sorting out the Difference', *Criminal Justice*, 2, (3), pp. 243-256.

## Subjective Experiences

- ...victims of threats were...slightly more effected than victims of assaults

Source: Budd, T. (1999) *Violence at Work: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, London: Home Office & Health and Safety Executive.

- ...the same violent incident may have quite a different impact on the different people involved. In some instances...someone witnessing an attack on one of his or her colleagues may be more distressed than the actual target of the aggressive behaviour

Source: Bowie, V. (2002) 'Defining Violence at Work: A New Typology', In: M. Gill, B. Fisher, & V. Bowie, (eds). *Violence at Work: Causes, Patterns and Prevention*, Cullompton: Willan. pp. 1-20.

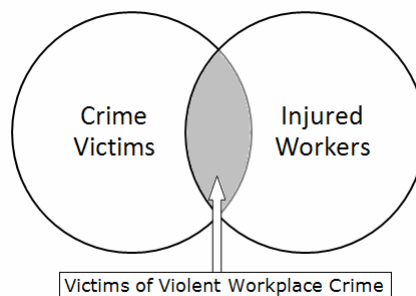
## Research Questions

1. What is the extent of the impact of a worker's involvement in a violent workplace incident?
2. What factors do injured workers believe contribute to, or impede, their recovery from psychological injury sustained by their involvement in a violent workplace incident?
3. How can formal and informal responses to violent workplace crime better address the needs of stakeholders?

## The Issue at Stake

- Criminal victimisation often has dire consequences for victims and society
- When victimisation and injury occur in the workplace, the situation is confounded because of the interplay and overlap between the Criminal Justice and Workers' Compensation systems

- These victims fail to neatly fit either the category of 'crime victim' or 'injured worker'



- Often, one result of the overlap is 'conceptual confusion' for both victims and those associated with them
- This 'confusion' can impede victim recovery

## Legislation

### ***Victims of Crime Act 2001***

Recognises crime victims and the harm they suffer

Modified the treatment of victims in the criminal justice system

Helps victims recover and advances their welfare

Provides compensation – public funds

## Legislation

### ***Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1986***

achieve a reasonable balance between the interests of employers and the interests of workers

provide for the effective rehabilitation of disabled workers and their early return to work

provides fair compensation for employment-related disabilities

reduces the overall social and economic cost to the community of employment-related disabilities

ensures that employers' costs are contained within reasonable limits

## Media - Workcover

Media coverage is generally negative and focuses on cuts to worker benefits and significant level of unfunded liability

## Media – Victims of Crime

Media coverage is generally positive and focuses on increasing victims rights and access to compensation



## Injured Workers

Reflection on the value of rehabilitation

“Not really, not for me, no. But for them I guess it was. From a management point of view I can understand it now but I couldn't at the time. It was all about keeping the costs down”



## Injured Workers

Comment about the employer's role after armed hold-up

“Some bloody robber came in and held us up and all they [employer] did was about making sure that the procedures were not questioned more than anything substantial for my benefit”

## Injured Workers

“all they wanted to do was send me to new employment at Ashford Hospital...they wouldn't listen to what my medical officers were saying”

“I just wish they'd listen to the medical side of it because they make you feel worse, They're quite intimidating and just treat you like a piece of shit”

## Injured Workers

Comment about post-incident debriefing

“they need to be there but not in the capacity of trying to help your employer. Their service should be to you directly. I know they have a job to do. But, their sole role should be trying to help you through probably what will be one of the toughest times in your life”

## Recommendations

- **Explain workplace processes to all employees**
- **Develop information packs about the effects of trauma and the recovery process**
- **Greater levels of cooperation between agencies**

## Thank You

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