Tracking potentially traumatic event exposure and organisational responses

Developing best practice guidance
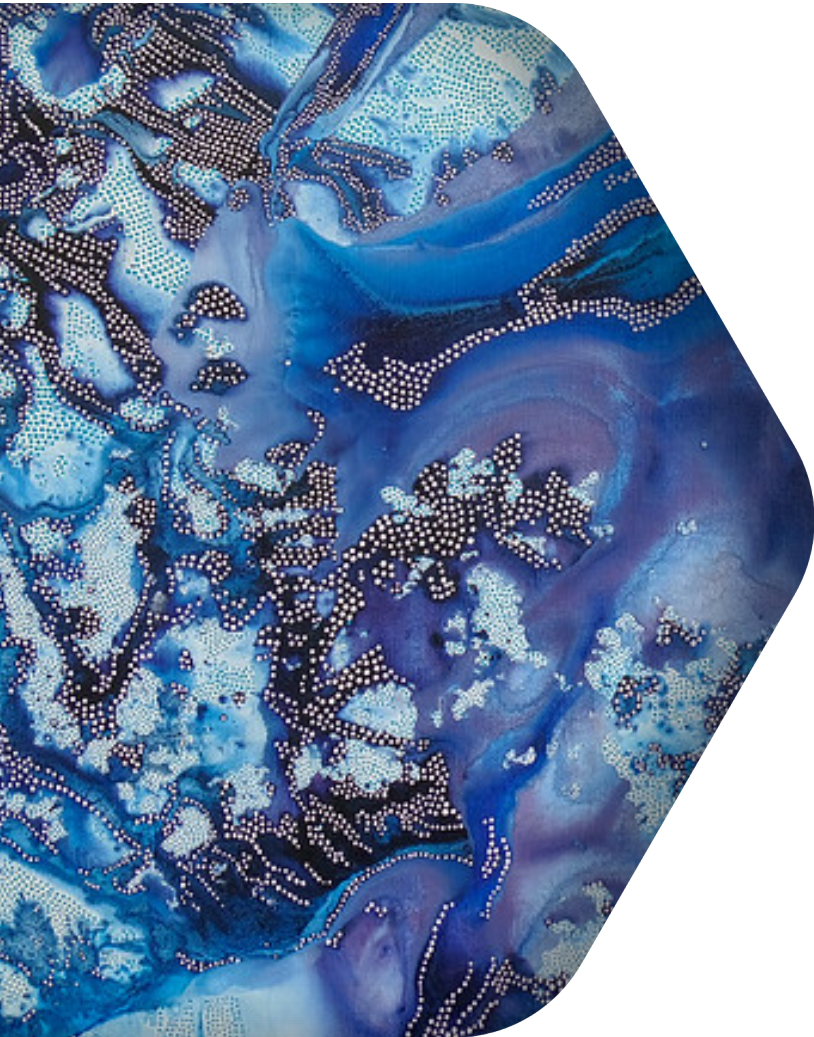
Alexandra Howard, Director, Disasters and public health emergencies

David Pedder, Clinical Specialist

Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health

16 May 2024

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of these lands.

We acknowledge that the land on which we meet was the place of age-old ceremonies, of celebration, initiation and renewal, and that the local Aboriginal peoples have had and continue to have a unique role in the life of these lands.

We recognise and honour the strength and courage of those with lived and living experience of trauma and mental ill health, and feel privileged to be working alongside and for those individuals, their carers and kin.

@Harold Bowen

About Phoenix Australia

Understanding trauma.

Renewing lives.

We are Australia's National Centre of Excellence in Posttraumatic Mental Health, and the internationally recognised experts in trauma-related mental health and wellbeing.

We build evidence and translate knowledge into action, such as improved treatment options and greater support for trauma-affected individuals, families and communities.

We are Phoenix Australia. We understand trauma and renew lives.

Project team and governance

Project team

→ Alexandra Howard
→ Anita Savic
→ David Pedder
→ Loretta Watson
→ Tracey Varker
→ Kit Huckvale, Centre for Digital Transformation of Health

Project Management Committee

→ Blythe McLennan, NHRA
→ Ethel Samalca, NHRA
→ Melissa Peppin, AFAC
→ Chris Hardman, FFM Vic
→ TJ Bauer, NSW RFS
→ Suzanne Leckie, CFA
→ Rachel Treeby, VICSES

Presentation Overview

1. Introduction
2. Project approach
3. Best practice review findings
4. Next steps

Introduction

Project background

→ **Likely repeated exposure** to potentially traumatic events (PTEs) within the fire & emergency services

→ 'Answering the call survey' found **clear association between PTE & psychological distress and PTSD** (within the context of other organisational stressors)

→ **Call for improved tracking** of PTEs & organisational responses to help improve psychosocial safety

  ▪ AFAC's Mental Health & Wellbeing Group

Project aims

→ To determine the most effective (best) practice for tracking:

- fire & emergency service workers' exposure to traumatic events; &

- organisational responses to emergency service workers' exposure to traumatic events

Application of findings

Findings will support Australian fire & emergency service agencies to:

→ assess their current practice for tracking cumulative exposure to PTEs against international best practice; and

→ select suitable psychosocial risk management systems that include tracking both cumulative exposure to PTEs and organisational responses to them

Resource:
A guidance document for agencies to benchmark their current approach to tracking PTE exposure against best practice

Project approach

Project phases

| Best practice review | Needs & suitability assessment | Translation for practice |

→ **Literature search** of best practice tracking systems & approaches

→ **Disseminate survey** with agency reps to identify current systems

→ **Comparative analysis** using defined criteria

→ **Consultation workshops** with ES agencies representatives & other experts to

- assess agency needs & suitability of available systems, and

- move toward best practice consensus

→ **Develop a brief guidance document** to assist in agencies in benchmarking their current approach to tracking PTE exposure against best-practice
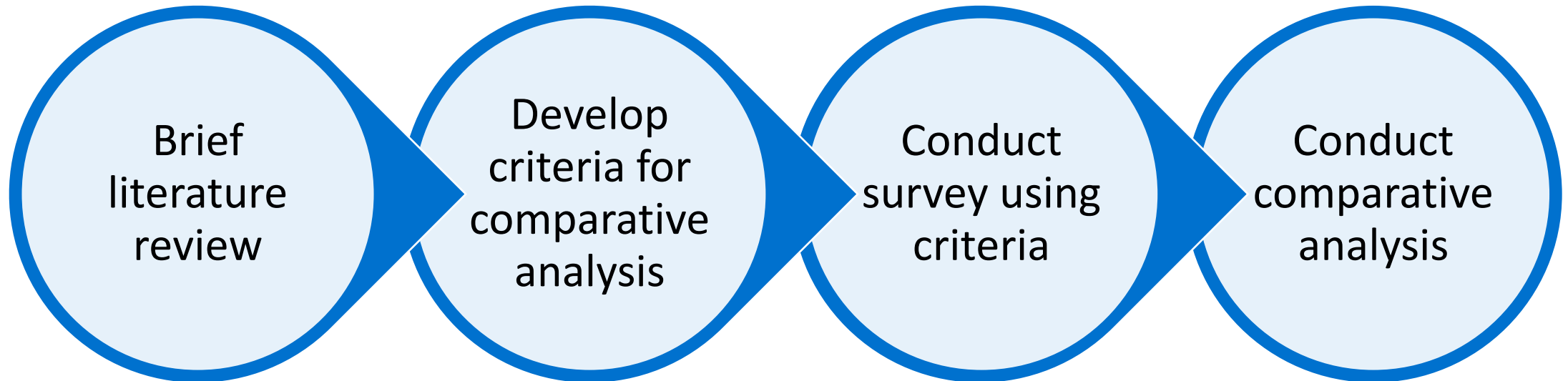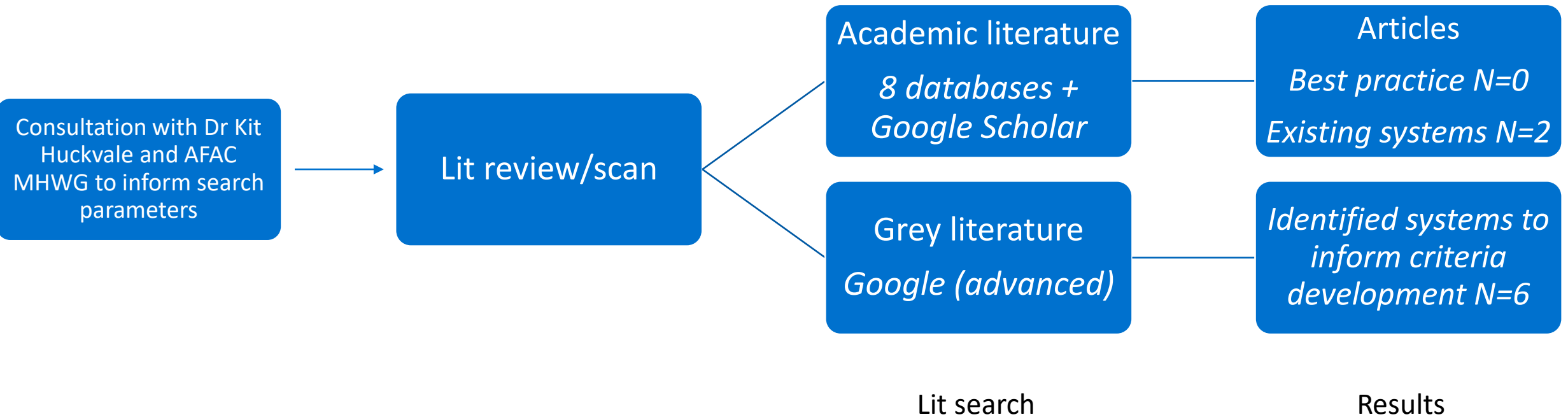
Best practice review

Best practice review phases

Brief literature review

Consultation with Dr Kit Huckvale and AFAC MHWG to inform search parameters → Lit review/scan

Academic literature

8 databases + Google Scholar

Grey literature

Google (advanced)

Articles

Best practice N=0

Existing systems N=2

Identified systems to inform criteria development N=6

Lit search

Results

Identified systems

Academic

- Police Care UK: Police Traumatic Events Checklist (PTEC) (handwritten or digitised checklist to proactively monitor trauma exposure)
- City of Tallahassee Fire Department: ESO Suite software for tracking critical incidents

Grey

- VicPol: Safe-T-Net support system for tracking PTEs
- NSW Ambulance: Significant Events Support Register
- St John Ambulance: The Significant Events Register
- NSW Police: Traumatic event monitoring
- Ambulance Tas: Range of comms notifying of traumatic jobs
- AFP: The Trauma Tracking Project – 2017 pilot to monitor cumulative exposure

What did we learn?

→ What does the academic literature tell us about evidence for tracking systems, and what is best practice?

→ What does the academic and grey literature tell us about what criteria might be important to consider in tracking systems?

Developing criteria

→ Criteria represent **elements** of a tracking system that we think are important to **consider**, and **collect** and **compare** information about

→ They are **not best practice principles**, but may guide what elements of a tracking system we want to make best practice principles regarding

Criteria for comparative analysis

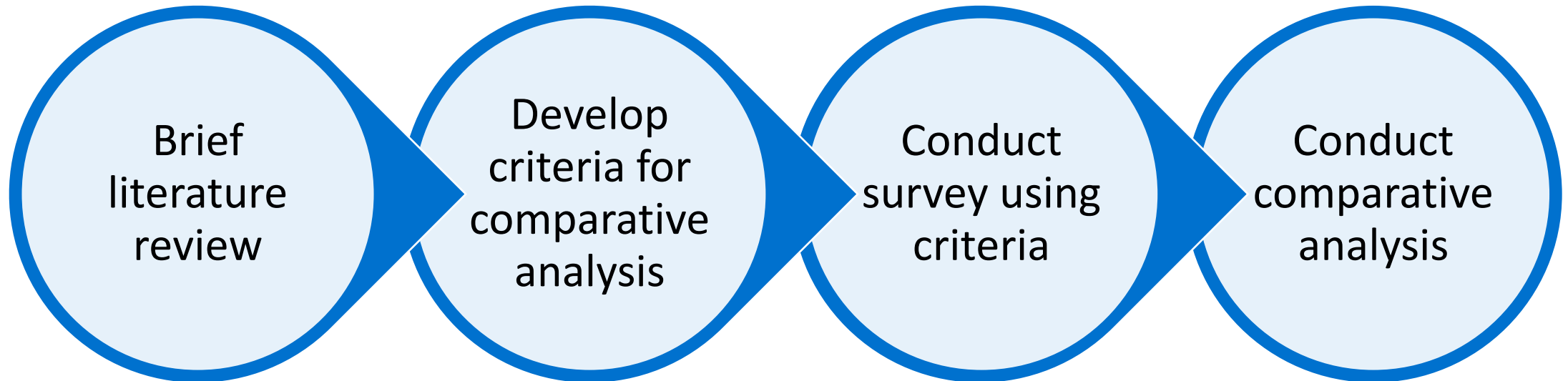|		
Primary purpose	What is measured?	How is data collected and stored?
How is data used?	Tracking implementation	Organisational context

Next steps

Comparative analysis steps

Next steps

→ Use criteria to develop the survey

→ Disseminate the survey and conduct comparative analysis

- Disseminate to organisational representatives (1 per org)nationally and internationally in June

→ Consider industry needs and suitability

- Interpret findings and develop best practice principles through workshops with AFAC MHWG and ES MH experts

Resource:
A guidance document for agencies to benchmark their current approach to tracking PTE exposure against best practice

Thank you

Any questions?

ahowa@unimelb.edu.au
david.pedder@unimelb.edu.au