Suicide prevention in mining and heavy industry



Moving from awareness to action

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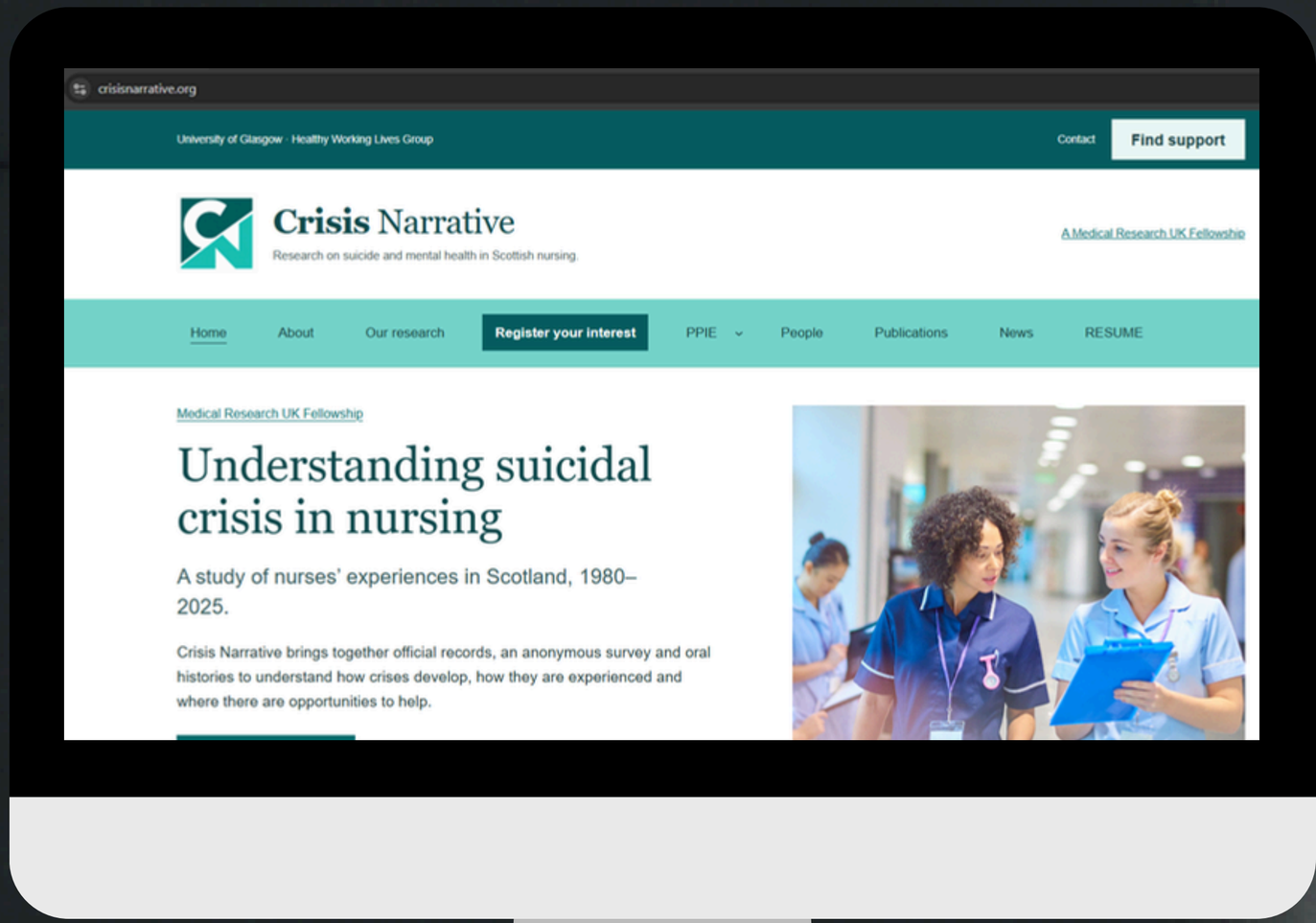
Scan me!

Currently focused on Scottish Nurse Suicide (MRUK) and Veteran Mental Health (NIHR/MOD)

Published on “Increased Suicidal Vulnerability Periods” in 2025 - within RCN Mental Health Journal

Consulted for UK, Scottish, and Australian Government on Suicide Prevention within Work (2022 - 2026)

Currently developing in work resources for suicide prevention and first stage safety conversation management for ideation disclosure



Why this belongs in occupational health

Work can provide income, identity, connection and purpose

Working conditions can add to pressures outside work

Suicidal crises are complex and rarely have a single cause



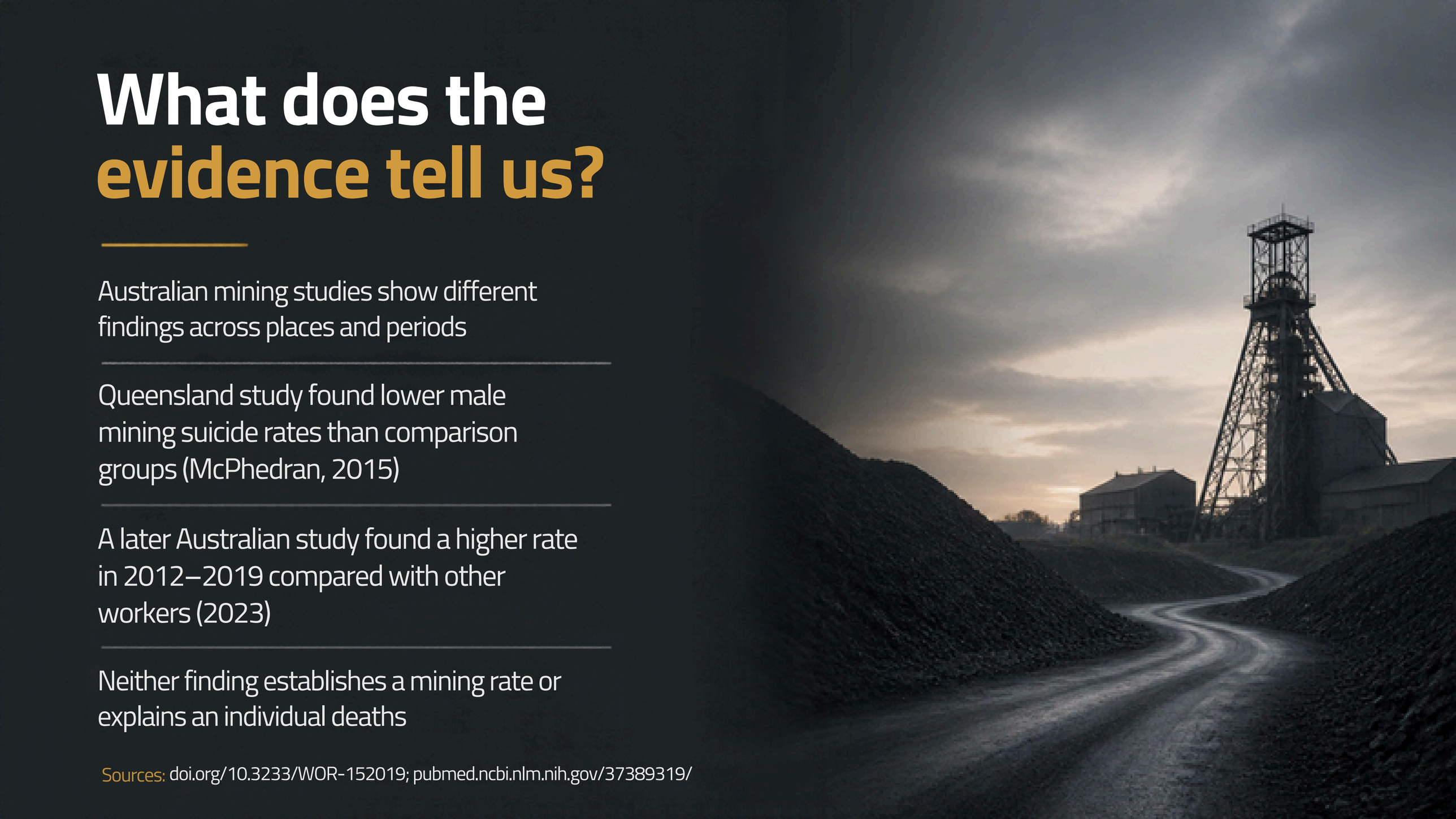
What does the evidence tell us?

Australian mining studies show different findings across places and periods

Queensland study found lower male mining suicide rates than comparison groups (McPhedran, 2015)

A later Australian study found a higher rate in 2012–2019 compared with other workers (2023)

Neither finding establishes a mining rate or explains an individual deaths



Sources: doi.org/10.3233/WOR-152019; pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37389319/

Look beyond the individual

- Rosters, fatigue and time away from home
- Injury, physical health conditions and pain
- Financial uncertainty, insecurity and work transitions
- Bullying, belonging and confidence to seek help

These are possible pressures, not a prediction checklist. Experiences vary.



Artisanal and small-scale mining

A range of formal and informal mining environments

Some workers may lack accessible occupational health support

Ghana studies have examined work stress, sleep and mental health; associations do not establish cause

Suicide-specific evidence remains unclear from the search

Sources: pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/40779543/; doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2025.104978; WHO 2016 who.int/publications/i/item/9789241510271



From awareness to action

01 Build healthier, safer work environments

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02 Make confidential support easy to access

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03 Train people to listen, respond and connect

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04 Plan for crisis response and ongoing care

05 Co-design and review with workers



What can the existing approaches offer?

COMPASS	A construction-focused framework addressing organisational and cultural barriers, help-seeking and referral
VitalCog	Suicide prevention training focused on conversations and recognition
ASIST	Training is one component; consider local services, confidentiality and organisational conditions
SPACE	SPACE is the disclosure response tool currently in development and improvement

Source: COMPASS and VitalCog presentations circulated with SOM Mining SIG agenda



A question for the Mining SIG

How can suicide prevention reach workers across large sites, contractors and artisanal mining communities?

What could occupational health contribute to identifying psychosocial risks and connecting people with support?

How can we work with miners, communities, local services and organisations to shape responses that fit and last?



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Get in Touch

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I work across suicide prevention, workplace mental health, occupational health and evidence synthesis. I'm particularly interested in how working conditions and life experiences interact during periods of suicidal vulnerability, and how research can inform practical prevention.

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I'd be pleased to hear from anyone interested in collaboration on suicide prevention, mental health and occupational health across mining and other industries.