

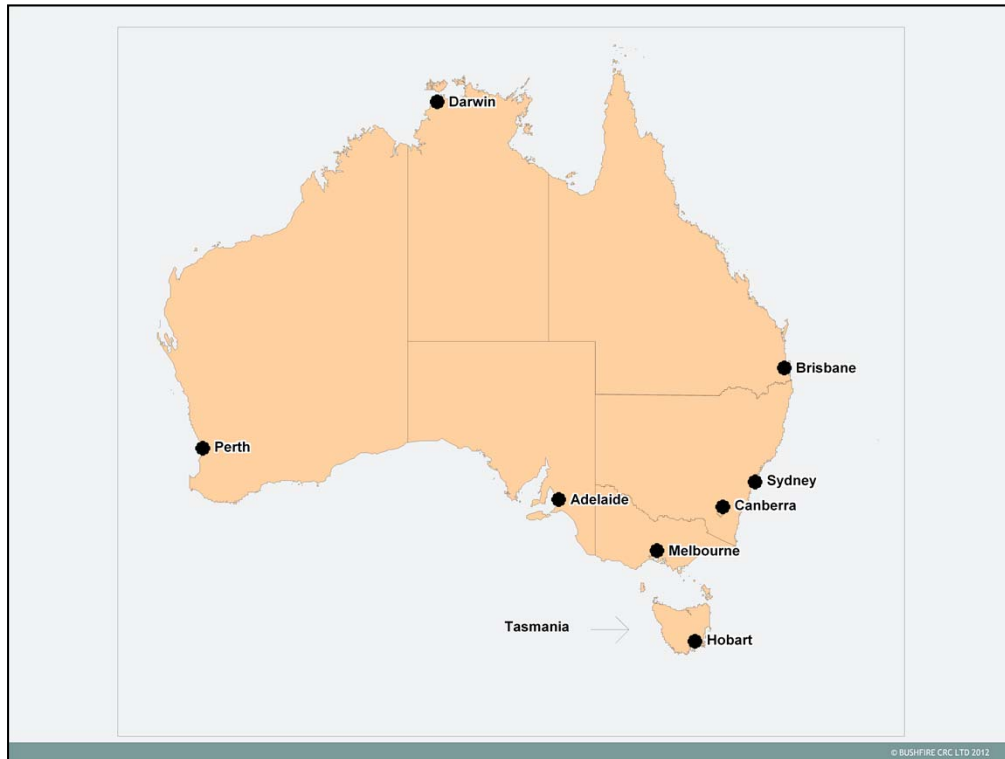


BETTER LEARN FROM THIS ONE – CREATING A CULTURE OF LESSONS LEARNED IN A SCEPTICAL WORKPLACE

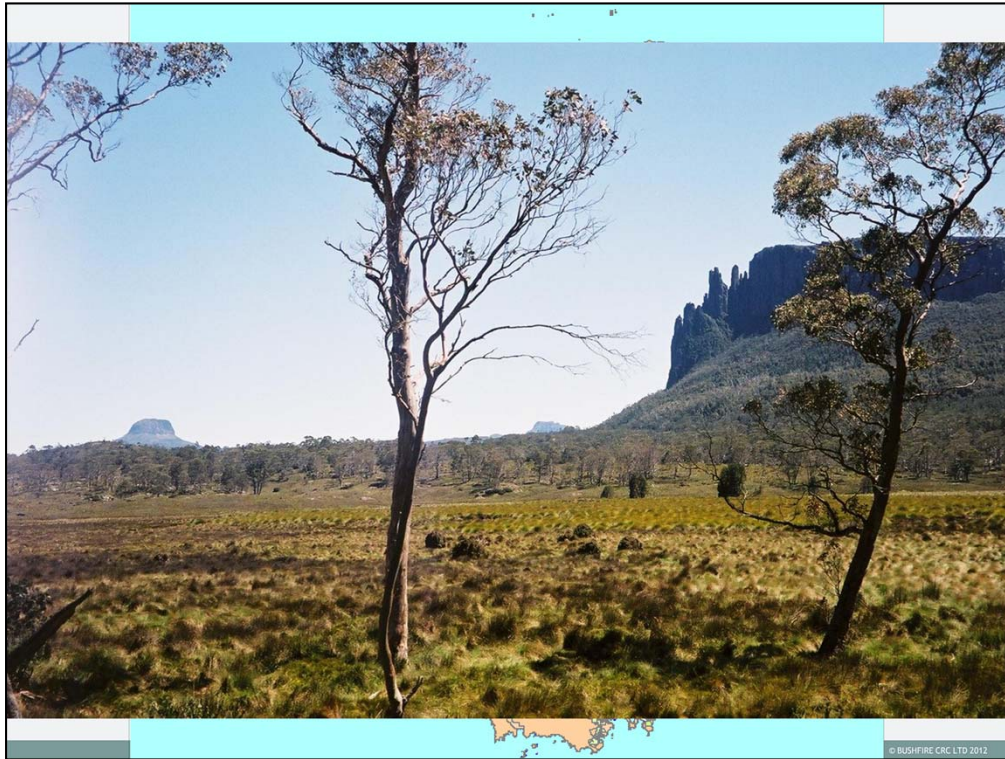
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Cultural change in quite a small organisation – how that can be achieved in a practical way.



Tasmania location



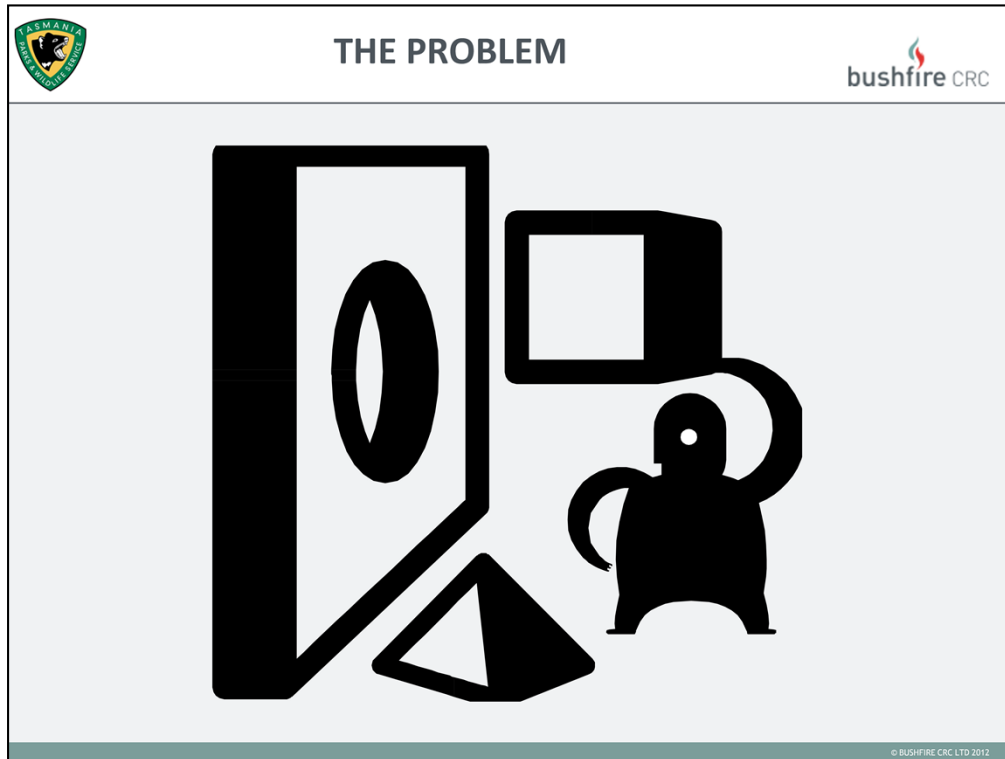
Tasmania – basically showing the extent of vegetation cover.

Have 4 centres that are rather generously called cities, very rural dispersed population.

All the brown areas are National Parks or some type of conservation area.

All the green bits are production forests or forest reserves, managed by Forestry Tasmania. – Bushfire response is shared by 3 main agencies, PWS, FT and TFS

Tas PWS is responsible for approximately 35% of the state, About 2.4 million hectares. We have less than 150 staff actively involved in fire management, and a budget of about 3 million dollars. A small organisation, which helps to achieve great things. And it is an incredible beautiful place to work and live.



The problem.

Different learning styles.

As a trainer, in land management area I am pretty confident saying that most of my colleagues very hands on, visual learners.

How do we manage fires – by paperwork! Generate reams and reams of paperwork to tell us what to do, and then often debrief in a meeting room somewhere with very few visual clues to help us stay focussed. -except we do generate more paper.



THE JOYS OF DEBRIEFS



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What do we do at debriefs? – here's my experience.

- Talk
 - Tell each other what happened -
 - but how often do we reflect on why, or how things might have been done differently, or if things had been done differently what the result might have been.

Not talking about hot debriefs, I am talking about formal debriefs. The same recommendations seem to come up consistently, and change can be frustratingly slow.

Another problem

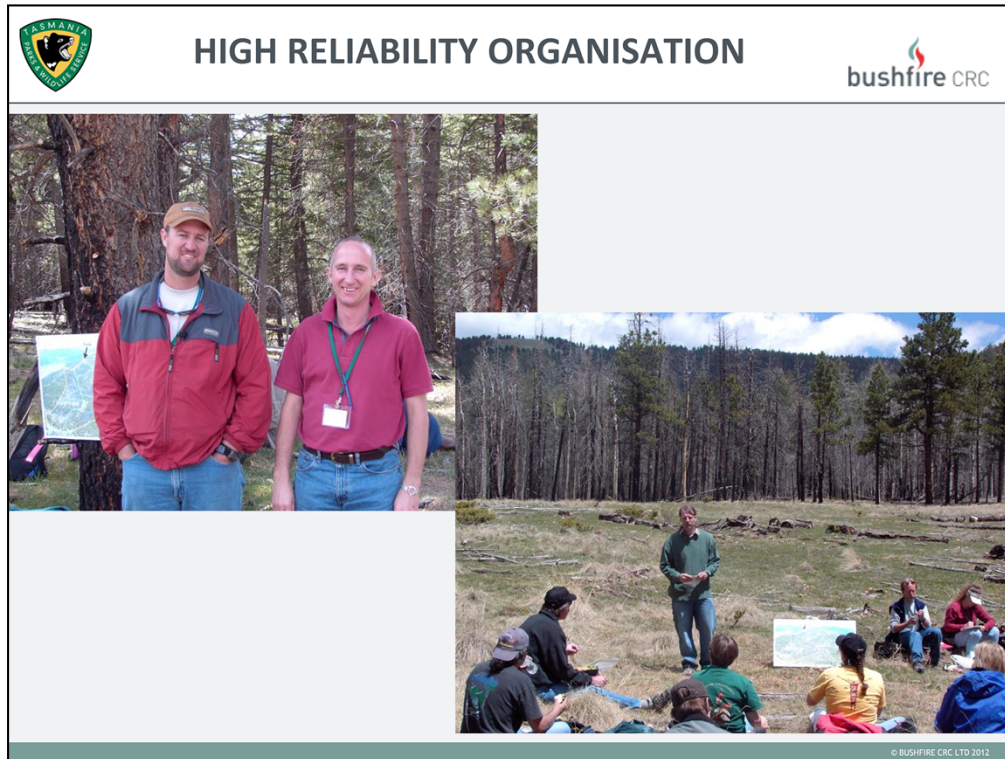
- the same issues rehashed, but not seriously changing the way we go about our business?

I was just as guilty as the next person as just accepting the status quo. This is the way we do things, it must be OK, not great but OK.

Didn't seem to seriously challenge our operational strategies and tactics? Unless of course we were forced to change through the more brutal

processes of inquiries, unfortunately too often driven by a political agenda, and demoralizing for the people involved.

How many near misses do we have, and recognise “we were lucky”, yet don’t genuinely change our behaviour?



Adrian Pyrke – PWS Manager Fire Operations first introduced the concepts of HRO and staff rides to the PWS.

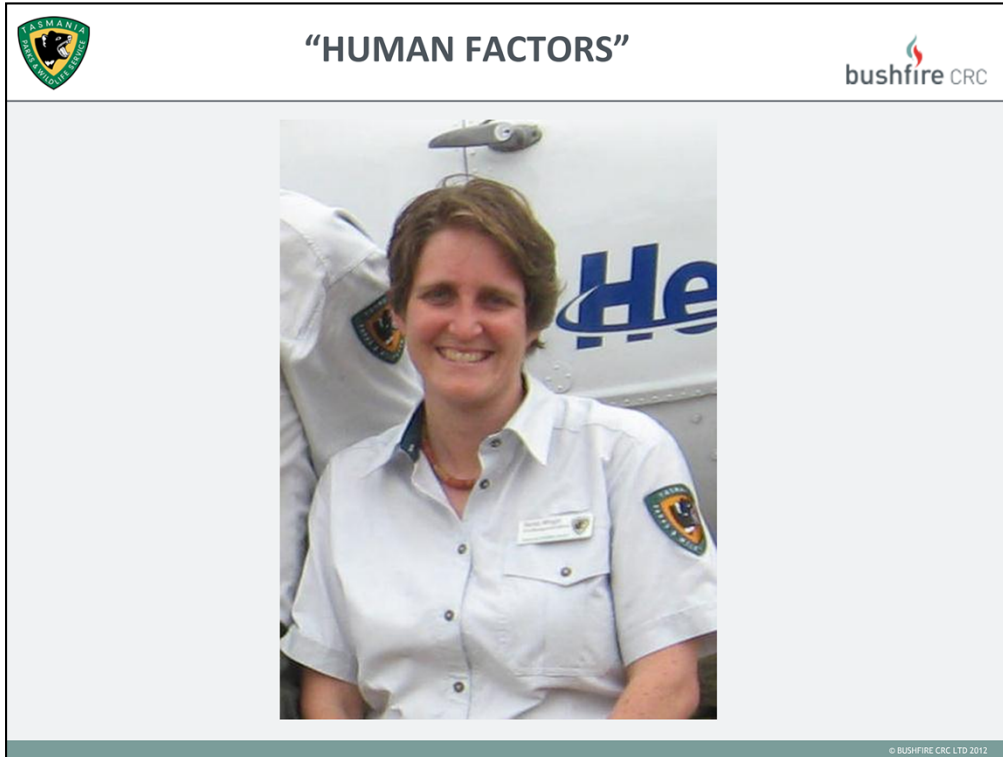
In 2004 he attended a workshop in Santa fe, and went on a staff ride of the Cerro Grande prescribed fire.

In 2006 he became the manager of PWS fire operations, and really wanted to see cultural change happen in our organisation.

Created a brand new position to with assurance, policy and training all wrapped up into a single position.

Around the same time The Bushfire CRC was commencing some new research with the University of Tasmania, looking at “HUMAN FACTORS” in bushfire management.

During the 2006/2007 fire season, many of us working in the incident management teams were being filmed and interviewed by university researchers.



Who was the sceptic?

Me.

I was used to the way we did things, I had been doing them that way for quite some time and all things considered we weren't doing a bad job. Why was our Bushfire CRC funding this wishy-washy psychology touchy-feely stuff.

And you know if I was thinking like that, you can imagine how a lot of my co-workers were thinking.

However, after being interviewed by Christine Owen, and reading through some of their materials, and the books Adrian brought back from the US, maybe there was a role for "this stuff".

Maybe we could change.



Talking with Christine helped me to think differently about how we do our business.

In trying to explain to her how we do our business, she asked questions that helped me to think outside the square, start challenging just why we did things the way we did them.

Mary Oomodi and Christine ran workshops through the CRC on human factors which I was fortunate to attend. And with the enthusiastic support of my boss I started to think 'can I do this?' How do you go about changing a workplace culture?

About this time we had some planned burns that exceeded expectation (escaped), one coming perilously close to a private residence. The typical process of investigation was brutal, and whilst finding the cause of what went wrong, the process didn't help to set a business/operational change that would significantly reduce the risk of the same thing happening again. 2 of the ICs involved were some of our most experienced, over 20 years, and they had just been brutalised. To be honest, the only ones that really learned what happened and why were those who conducted the investigation.

I approached the IC of the burn where the house was nearly lost, and said

“why don’t we do a staff ride”

After explaining to him what that meant – best described was walking through your hazard report rather than reading it, Phil was keen to give it a go. He really wanted others to learn from his experience.

So we decided to “do” a staff ride. That is the extent of it, get in there, have a crack and figure it out as we go along. We watched the staff ride video from the Cerro Grande staff ride, and had a look at the resources available from the Lessons Learned centre to work out what we could do.

There was an issue of scale, Adrian’s experience had been a workshop of 80 participants, 4 busloads of people. Well, that would be more than half our fire-fighters. So we needed something Tasmanian sized.

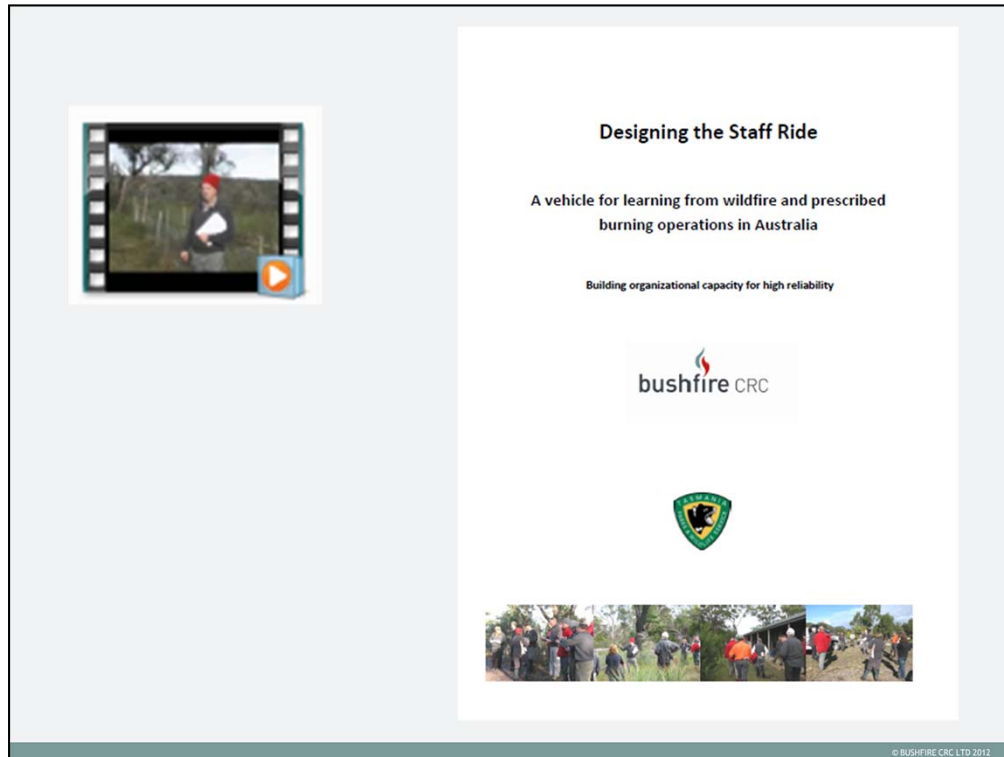


At the last minute, on a whim I rang Christine at the uni and asked if she would like to come along and observe us. It was a rather fortunate after-thought, though we were back to having our every move on film.

Dr Sue Stack joined our ride. She had the facilitation skills that Phil and I lacked, she really helped us, asking the right questions to get the group to talk about what they were thinking, how they would have acted under similar circumstances.



So we'd done it, and most staff said they found it interesting and worthwhile, and certainly had help them think things through at a deeper level. But that isn't cultural change.



Over the next 12 months, we worked with Sue and Christine, a put together a manual. We wanted our “remember this” video so others could learn from the experience, and with the support of the CRC, prepared a manual to help others plan a similar event. All available on the bushfire CRC website.

And this looks great from a management level, but its not really cultural change is it, that permeates the whole organisation. In preparing the manual and video it really helped us to clarify at an organisational level what our objectives for debriefs and staff-rides.

We wanted cultural change that permeated the whole way of thinking – where the high reliability principals didn’t have to be taught in special workshops because they would be reflected in the whole approach to how we managed our business, and the way we worked together as a group.



So how have we made the next step?

As a tactical learning tool the staff ride is great. But like many tools it can be used in many different ways, and we have now moved to much smaller rides, as part of our after action review process.

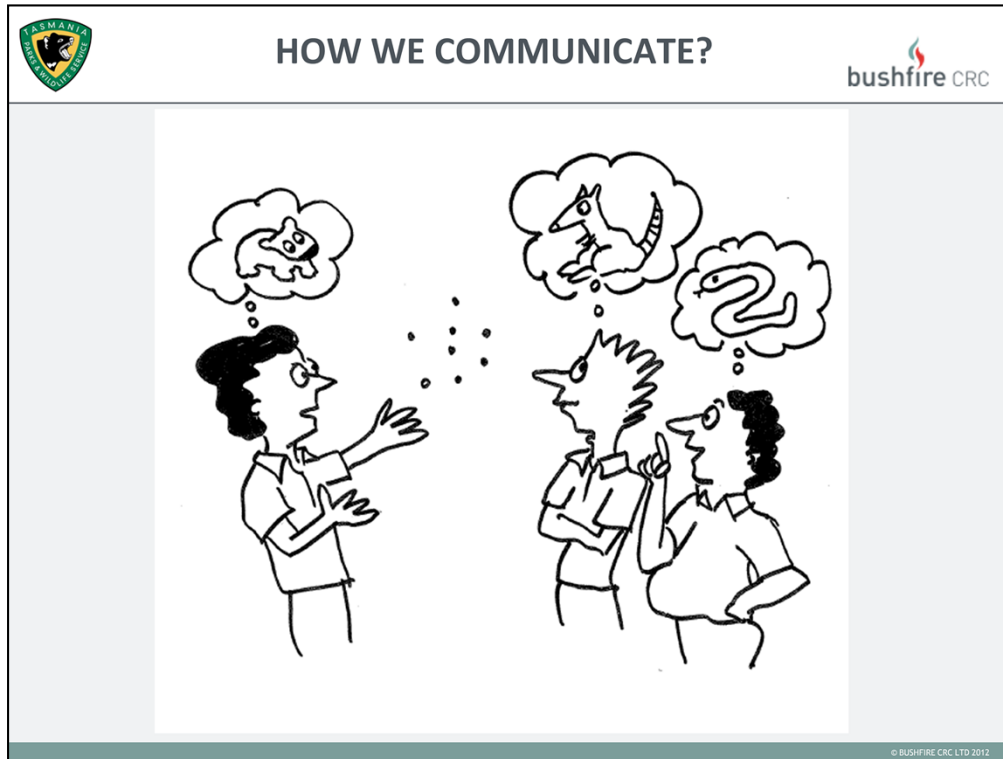
We are also trying to give as many of our staff as possible training at human factors workshops being run by the CRC, and also engaging our local uni friends - Christine Owen for leadership training.

- For all burns that escape (generate an incident number), we undertake an after action review.
- Using the skills acquired from our first staff ride, a facilitated site discussion is held as those involved in the burn tell their story as we move over the site.
- This sense making part of the AAR is critical. For operational staff, being back on site, back where it happened, people revisit not only what they did, but what they were thinking and why. Generally looking at a group of no more than 8 people – the main players involved in the operation. Though, we will often have less experienced staff along to observe, learn, and be absorbed in the culture of 'no blame' and learning we are trying to establish.
- It does make it busy for the facilitator to capture the story that is being told.



You do need 2 days for this type of debrief – after action review. The first day spent on site capturing the story. The listening to chat over dinner, and then the facilitator telling the group their story back to them the next morning. At this point we move to a SWOT analysis, which is such a simple technique, but has proven to be one of the more powerful aspects of the process.

To get the groups to open up it has taken time for staff to learn to trust the process. To accept it really isn't about blame but learning.



Interestingly, the biggest lesson learned from our staff has really been about communication.

Part of the cultural change that is occurring is the way our people are talking to each – making sure everyone shares the same picture.

We have moved away from brutal investigation, to a more reflective process that allows those involved to think about the assumptions that made, without fingers of blame being pointed. This way the real lessons are being learned.

Has it worked – well I have never had staff ask me when they can attend the next debrief, but they do want to know when the next staff ride will be. They are suggesting which ones “we’d better learn from”.

At an organisational level we have their field expertise changing some of the procedures we have in place.

We are planning for failure first, not trying to cope or manage when things go wrong.

And we will also use staff-rides for other purposes – tactical learning reviews, group learning opportunities, as part of our training program.



WHAT DOES CULTURAL CHANGE LOOK LIKE?

bushfire CRC



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Why do I think it has been successful.

Well for me – it is when the language of HRO is just part of normal conversation.

When I hear crew ask if the pre-mortem has been done yet.

When I listen to briefings as staff all make sure they understand each other, and the tasks they are about to undertake.

But really, I know it when they own it. When 2 friends bicker over the all important placement and cooking order of meat on the end of season BBQ, and their co-workers roll their eyes at each other and mutter “ahhh human factors!”.