



Australian Work Health and
Safety (WHS) Strategy

2023-2033



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Australian Government



Government of South Australia



GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Tasmanian Government



Australian Work Health and Safety (WHS) Strategy

2023-2033



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Safe Work Australia is an Australian Government statutory agency established in 2009. Safe Work Australia includes Members from the Commonwealth, and each state and territory, Members representing the interests of workers and Members representing the interests of employers.

Safe Work Australia works with the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to improve work health and safety and workers' compensation arrangements. Safe Work Australia is a national policy body, not a regulator of work health and safety. The Commonwealth, states and territories have responsibility for regulating and enforcing work health and safety laws in their jurisdiction.

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Postal address

Safe Work Australia
GPO Box 641
Canberra ACT 2601

Office location

Please do not send mail to this address. All mail should be sent to the postal address.

2 Phillip Law Street
Canberra ACT 2601

safeworkaustralia.gov.au



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A note on purpose and scope

The purpose of the Australian Work Health and Safety (WHS) Strategy 2023–2033 (the Strategy) is to outline a national vision for WHS — Safe and healthy work for all — and set the platform for delivering on key WHS improvements. To do this, the Strategy articulates a primary goal supported by national targets, and the enablers, actions and system-wide shifts required to achieve this goal over the next ten years. This Strategy guides the work of Safe Work Australia and its Members, including representatives of governments, employers and workers – but should also contribute to the work and understanding of all in the WHS system including researchers, experts and practitioners who play a role in owning, contributing to and realising the national vision.

Safe Work Australia wishes to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this Strategy.

Introduction

This Australian Work Health and Safety (WHS) Strategy (the Strategy) sets an ambitious vision for WHS outcomes in Australia.

Our **national vision — *Safe and healthy work for all*** — sets the agenda for our response to key WHS challenges over the next ten years.

The last ten years has seen Australia make significant progress towards improving our approach to WHS including enhancing the model regulatory framework, responding to persistent WHS challenges, and reducing harm as measured against targets set by the previous Strategy. Despite this progress, Australia has further to go in improving WHS outcomes and ensuring the WHS system is ready to address emerging challenges over the next decade.

Injury and fatality rates have fallen significantly over the last decade, however progress has slowed. We need ongoing dedication and commitment of all stakeholders — governments, persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs), workers, industry, unions and WHS practitioners — to continue to ensure that workers return home safely. We cannot be complacent — shifting economic, social, and environmental trends require evolving and iterative approaches to achieve our vision.

Work-related injury and illness impacts workers and their families deeply. Reducing these can also contribute to significant economic growth — some tens of billions of dollars each year. To make further gains, we need to ensure that WHS is core to how we do business in Australia. We want WHS conversations to be commonplace in every workplace across the country. **Education, innovation, and collaboration will be critical enablers of our success.**

This vision will also need to be achieved in a new context. Our economy has seen changes in the industrial base and the nature of work with a further acceleration towards services, increasing integration and exposure to global trade, and rapid adoption of digital technology from small businesses through to multinationals. Our society has also changed with population growth in outer suburbs of major cities, demographic shifts and changing expectations around care and family. Our environment is now experiencing the increasing impacts of climate change. These trends will impact work in different ways.

Against this background, the Strategy sets a clear, unifying **national goal to reduce worker fatalities, injuries and illness**. It sets out forward-looking actions to work towards, with tangible and achievable targets to focus efforts, as stakeholders develop and implement their own solutions to the challenges ahead.

All stakeholders in our WHS system can make a valuable contribution to creating safe and healthy work that promotes the social and economic wellbeing of workers in Australia. Safe and healthy work is the result of combined efforts and a fundamental commitment to collaboration from all governments, industry, and workers and their representatives. This Strategy is agreed by Safe Work Australia Members and ministers with responsibility for WHS, demonstrating the commitment of all parties to work cooperatively to drive continual improvements in Australia's WHS performance.

Strategy at a glance

Vision:

Safe and healthy work for all

Goal:



Reduced worker fatalities, injuries and illnesses

Enablers



Embed good WHS practice in all work, across all industries, cohorts, and hazards



Innovate and deepen knowledge of WHS to broaden understanding



Collaborate collectively and cooperatively to respond to WHS challenges

Targets

Reduce

- ↓ worker fatalities caused by traumatic injuries by 30%
- ↓ the frequency rate of serious claims resulting in one or more weeks off work by 20%
- ↓ the frequency rate of claims resulting in permanent impairment by 15%
- ↓ the overall incidence of work-related injury or illness among workers to below 3.5%
- ↓ the frequency rate of work-related respiratory disease by 20%

✗ No new cases of accelerated silicosis by 2033

Action to

- ✓ increase the awareness of PCBUs about their duty to protect workers from exposure to harmful substances
- ✓ build the capability of PCBUs, regulators and workers to strengthen compliance with the duty to manage psychosocial risks at work

Actions



Information and awareness



National coordination



Data and intelligence gathering



Health and safety leadership



Compliance and enforcement

Context

The Strategy is shaped by the current WHS context in Australia.

There are still too many injuries and illnesses arising from work.

On average each year just under 200 workers are fatally injured at work. In 2021 over 130,000 claims were accepted for work-related injury or illness. Body-stressing, falls, slips and trips, and being hit by moving objects are the cause of most workplace injuries in Australia. While vehicle incidents, being hit by moving objects and falls from a height continue to account for most fatalities.

Musculoskeletal conditions still account for the majority (57%) of workers' compensation claims for serious injuries. While their frequency has declined from 4.7 claims per million hours worked since 2007-08, to 3.4 claims per million hours worked in 2019-20, the reduction rate has slowed in recent years.

Meanwhile, **psychological injuries** are rising in number and severity. National data showed a 28% increase in workers' compensation claims for mental health conditions between 2007-08 and 2019-20. In addition, time off work in these cases is almost four times longer than for other injuries.

Cancer and other diseases caused by work remain difficult to distinguish in official health statistics; however, we know that they remain prevalent, and some conditions are on the rise. Two people on average are diagnosed with mesothelioma each day, and certain respiratory diseases have also re-emerged as a challenge. Results from health screening of stonemasons and engineered stone workers indicate that 1 in 4 workers screened have evidence of silicosis.

High priority must be given to the six industries in which workers face the highest rates of harm.

According to the latest data, 70% of fatalities and 58% of serious workers' compensation claims occur in just six industries:

- agriculture,
- construction,
- road transport,
- manufacturing,
- health care and social assistance, and
- public administration and safety.

The first five of these industries also represent those with the highest frequencies of serious claims per million hours worked. Based on the most recent claims data, psychological hazards including workplace harassment and bullying occur most frequently in public administration and safety, and health care and social assistance.

The most common causes of workplace injuries



Vehicle incidents



Falls, slips and trips



Being hit by moving objects



Body stressing

The most common causes of workplace psychological injuries



Work pressure



Harassment and bullying



Occupational violence



Other mental stress factors

Common work-related illnesses



Respiratory diseases



Zoonotic diseases



Mental health



Cancers

Persistent challenges

The following persistent and emerging challenges Australia will face over the next decade are intersecting in nature, and will require sophisticated and holistic approaches to address.

Managing psychosocial risks

Psychosocial hazards, such as high work demands, low job support, and harmful behaviours, create risks of physical and psychological harm. On average, work-related psychological injuries have longer recovery times, higher costs, and require more time away from work. Managing the risks associated with psychosocial hazards not only protects workers, it also decreases the disruption associated with staff turnover and absenteeism, and may improve broader organisational performance and productivity. Improvement in this area requires PCBUs to understand and meet their duties. Workers and communities also need to understand WHS duties, and to expect PCBUs to prevent work-related psychological injury.

Health and safety vulnerability

PCBUs must consider the needs of all workers in designing safe systems of work. This includes ensuring policies are in place that support increasing worker awareness, training on WHS hazards, and building knowledge of their WHS rights and responsibilities. Worker empowerment to participate in and be consulted about injury and illness prevention is of critical importance in identifying and controlling WHS risks.

Particular working conditions, arrangements and personal characteristics compound WHS risks for workers, putting them at greater risk of work-related illness, injury or death than others performing the same work, in the same environment.

Factors known to affect workers' WHS vulnerability include being younger, working alone, being from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background or working in a more complex contractual chain (e.g. labour hire).

The structural factors that may lead these workers to being more vulnerable than others include:

- Lack of WHS capability development: It can be more difficult for workers who have limited experience in Australian workplaces or who are working in a more complex working arrangement to readily access, understand and implement health and safety knowledge.
- Insufficient support: Some workers may hesitate to raise health and safety issues because of a power imbalance, and/or discrimination and stigma attached to raising WHS issues.
- Ineffective communication: One size fits all communication approaches by PCBUs and/or a lack of suitable supervisory support can expose workers to unacceptable workplace risks. This is particularly significant since CALD and migrant workers are over-represented in high-risk industries and occupations, including the agricultural, health care and social assistance sectors.

Small businesses need additional support

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, in 2018–19, small businesses made up 97% of all Australian businesses and employed 4.7 million workers. Almost half of the employees (43%) in those industries with higher rates of injury work in small businesses.

However, due to their size, small business owners may have fewer resources to dedicate to understanding WHS requirements and ensuring the health and safety of their workers. Managing WHS risks does not need to be costly or complicated and can assist businesses to operate more efficiently and productively. Succinct and easy to understand information and advice combined with strategies to better reach and engage these PCBUs will improve WHS skills and capacity and enhance health and safety outcomes for small businesses. Identifying key influencers for small business and delivering tailored education and guidance to better promote the benefits of investing in WHS will help small businesses meet their duty to ensure safe and healthy work and workplaces.



Emerging challenges

Rise of artificial intelligence (AI), automation and related technologies

New technology capabilities can bring many benefits, including safer work and workplaces. But they need to be designed and have appropriate oversight to ensure workers are not exposed to new or additional WHS risks.

For example, while automation could replace some dangerous manual tasks (decreasing worker exposure to physical risks), workers overseeing the technology could be exposed to more psychosocial hazards resulting from increased or more complex interpersonal interactions as part of their job role.

New types of work

The nature of work is changing, along with the relationship between workers and PCBUs. Growing numbers of people now have multiple jobs and there has been an increase in gig and platform work. More frequently multiple PCBUs are involved in work at the same location or involved in the same undertaking who share responsibilities under WHS laws. While roles and responsibilities are relatively well understood in traditional work arrangements, more can be done to explain WHS roles and responsibilities in platform, online or disintermediated work contexts.

Workforce demographic shifts

New WHS risks are likely to emerge as Australia's population and economy continues to change. The number of older workers in the labour force is set to increase further as the distribution of our population moves towards older ages. Data show that when older people are injured, they are likely to require more time off work to recover.

Labour shortages in key industries such as agriculture, health care and social assistance may lead to a sharp increase in migrant workers with CALD backgrounds. PCBUs must take a proactive approach to address any barriers to health and safety posed by these demographic workforce trends, and design appropriate health and safety systems and working environments for all workers.

Hybrid work

The COVID-19 pandemic sparked a sharp shift to working from home and more flexible working arrangements across a wide variety of occupations. Hybrid work models, including working from home, may change or create new WHS risks that PCBUs need to manage. For example, flexibility in relation to when work is performed may increase time spent working. It may also impact on risk management processes and effective consultation, requiring PCBUs, worker representatives and Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) to find new ways to engage with workers to identify and manage risks to health and safety.

Climate-related risks

A warming planet creates WHS risks. Heat, flooding and extreme weather events are increasingly likely to disrupt the normal operation of many businesses. In addition, new technologies and industries in decarbonisation and the circular economy are emerging, creating new roles. These changes create WHS issues — for example, workers could be exposed to hazardous materials if adequate controls are not implemented. Climate change, increasing urbanisation and proximity of humans and animals have also led to the emergence of novel infectious diseases and increased the transmission and spread of other diseases. PCBUs need to consider infectious diseases at work as ongoing hazards and ensure appropriate control measures are in place to manage the risks to workers and others at work.

More complex supply chains

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented pressures on global supply chains. Trends that were identified prior to the pandemic, including increased consumer demand for a wider array of goods and services and business becoming increasingly international, were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The increased scope of global supply chains with more participants means that PCBUs must consider WHS risks more systematically and ensure there is clarity in relation to WHS duties and responsibility.

The impact of low frequency, high consequence events on supply chains within high hazard industries is also significant. This requires proactive responses to risks posed by high hazard industries and supply, for example in the case of the emerging hydrogen industry. PCBUs must consult, cooperate, and coordinate effectively across supply chains to ensure the protection of all workers.



The Strategy

Vision:

Safe and healthy work for all

Goal:



Reduced worker fatalities, injuries and illnesses

Within this context of strong progress but some persistent and emerging challenges, the Strategy sets an ambitious goal to further reduce worker injuries and illness. Positively, fatal and serious injuries have declined over the last decade. However, on average each year just under 200 workers are fatally injured at work and in 2021 there were 130,000 serious workers' compensation claims, with an average absence of 40 days, indicating there is further work to do in reducing workplace hazards.

Targeting attention and activities to those industries with the highest rates of injuries, illnesses and fatalities will have the largest impact on reducing fatalities, injuries and illnesses in Australia.

High-risk industries currently include:

- agriculture,
- construction,
- road transport,
- manufacturing,
- health care and social assistance, and
- public administration and safety.

Enablers



1. Embedding good WHS practices in all work, across all industries, cohorts, and hazards

PCBUs need to comply with their obligations and to invest in improving WHS. PCBUs should be encouraged to take greater ownership of health and safety to manage the challenges arising from evolving employment and operational arrangements, global supply chains and increased use of technology and digital platforms. This will require a targeted approach from regulators to ensure compliance while producing information in accessible ways.

2. Innovating and deepening knowledge of WHS risks to broaden understanding

There should be a continued focus on improving the evidence base that informs regulation and policy development, particularly to address established evidence gaps such as data on occupational diseases and experiences of injuries among different groups of workers. WHS focused data collection must be collaborative and seek inputs beyond the WHS system with an eye to wider labor market, economic and social trends.

3. Collaborating consistently and effectively to respond to WHS challenges

Greater consultation and collaboration between PCBUs and workers at the local level and governments, industry and unions at a national level is necessary to make further gains in reducing WHS fatalities, injuries and illnesses.

Jurisdictions need to increase cooperation to drive consistent improvements to WHS on a national scale and ensure workers across Australia have access to safe and healthy workplaces. This can be achieved through the exchange of information on best practice and successful initiatives, enabling them to roll out across Australia and lead to better outcomes for more workers. Jurisdictions that are the first to experience and respond to WHS risks should share valuable knowledge and insights at the national level to inform wider policy and regulatory responses.

Unions and employer organisations have a valuable role in channelling local insights to inform regulatory, operational and policy approaches and in building worker and PCBU capability through WHS promotion and education.



Targets

The Strategy sets targets to measure progress towards the national goal: **Reduced work-related fatalities, injuries and illness**

Reduce work-related fatalities

1. A reduction in the number of worker fatalities caused by traumatic injuries of at least 30 per cent

The Strategy sets a target to maintain the rate of progress that was achieved under the previous strategy. Deaths due to occupational disease will also be monitored closely.

4. A reduction of the overall incidence of work-related injury or illness among workers to below 3.5 per cent

Not all work related injuries result in a workers' compensation claim. The Strategy includes a new target to reduce all instances of work-related injury and illness, not just those that result in serious claims.

5. No new cases of accelerated silicosis by 2033

The rapid re-emergence of accelerated silicosis, particularly among those working with engineered stone, is of significant concern. Safe Work Australia and jurisdictional regulators continue work on a broad range of education measures and compliance and enforcement activities — a commitment to work towards no new cases of accelerated silicosis will continue this momentum.

6. A reduction in the frequency rate of work-related respiratory disease by 20 per cent

Accelerated silicosis has been an important focus in recent years, but this has also highlighted the need to better manage the occupational risks to lung health more broadly.

Increase preventative action in key areas

7. All Safe Work Australia Members take action to increase the awareness of PCBUs about their duty to protect workers from exposure to harmful substances coinciding with the introduction of new workplace exposure standards

A list of updated workplace exposure standards applying to over 600 chemicals will be implemented during the course of the strategy. Increasing the awareness of PCBUs of their duty to protect workers from exposure to harmful substances will support strong compliance with regulatory standards to keep workers safe.

8. All Safe Work Australia Members take action to build the capability of PCBUs, regulators and workers to strengthen compliance with the duty to manage psychosocial risks at work

WHS laws throughout Australia are being updated to include express regulations on psychosocial hazards. Building the capability of PCBUs is critical to ensuring improved understanding and management of psychosocial hazards in all Australian workplaces. More effective reporting on psychosocial hazards and psychological injuries is also a priority for the next decade.

Reduce work-related severe injury or illness

2. A reduction in the frequency rate of serious claims resulting in one or more weeks off work of at least 20 per cent

While the frequency rate for serious claims has reduced over time, progress has slowed. The Strategy sets a target to renew efforts to reduce serious injury and illness.

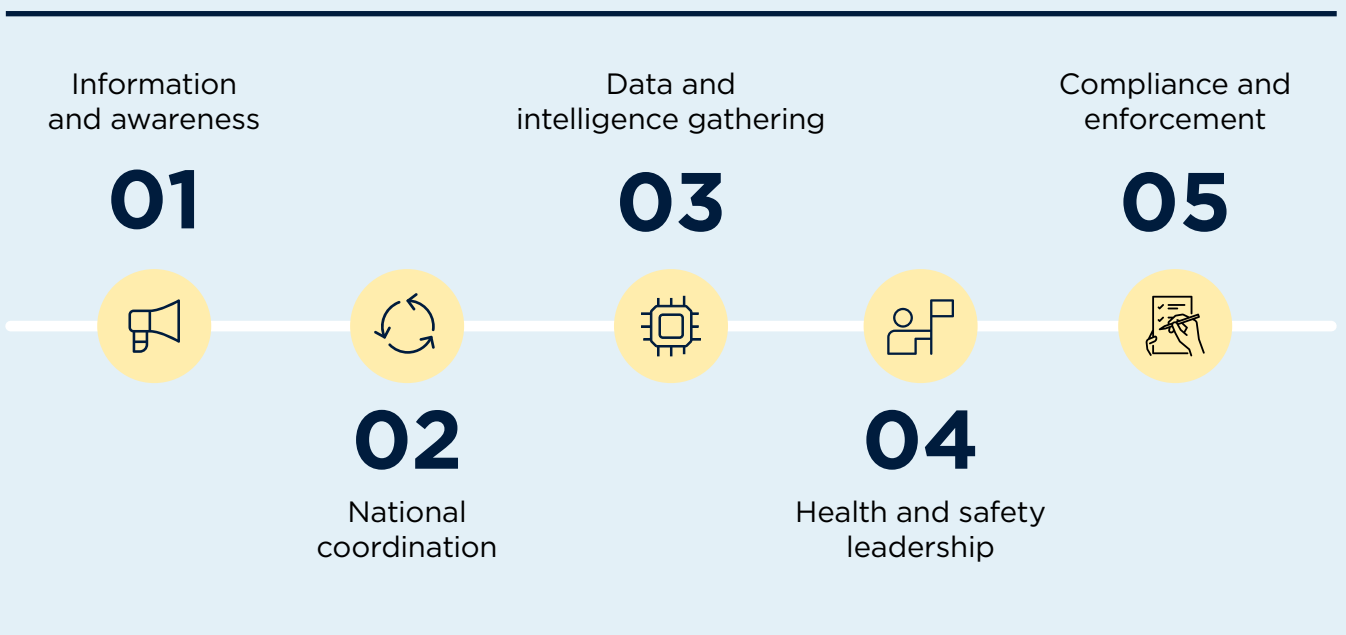
3. A reduction in the frequency rate of permanent impairment by 15 per cent

The Strategy includes a new target focused on injuries and illness that are permanent or unlikely to improve.

Actions



There are many ways to contribute to the success of Australia's WHS system.



01 Information and raising awareness

It is important to address the perception in some parts of the community that WHS conflicts with business productivity. There is also a general lack of community awareness of psychosocial risks. Many businesses (especially small businesses) want clearer guidance on their responsibilities — building their capacity and willingness to engage effectively in consultation, cooperation, and coordination in developing their approach to WHS is key.

Effective, coordinated information and awareness campaigns will require collaboration between jurisdictions. These campaigns should also be evidence-based and address gaps in knowledge and understanding of WHS.

Key actions:

- Develop joint campaigns with materials and checklists to improve small business WHS awareness and compliance.
- Consult with small business about their communication preferences for WHS guidance, training and gaps in knowledge.
- Collaborate with worker representatives and industries with diverse workforces to reach groups of workers with higher health and safety vulnerability in high-risk industries.

02 National coordination

There has been significant progress in improving national coordination across Australia's WHS system. All jurisdictions have developed their own WHS strategies or plans, setting out specific priorities that complement the previous national Strategy. However, there is a fresh opportunity to increase coordination by sharing resources, collaborating on initiatives, and tackling complex challenges which affect all Australian workplaces (e.g. combatting harmful behaviours such as sexual harassment).

Key actions:

- Share insights across jurisdictions and industries so that successful initiatives can be replicated and scaled in other jurisdictions and workplaces, leading to best practice being adopted across Australia.
- Work with researchers to identify emerging WHS challenges.
- Engage with national employers to better understand impediments to working across jurisdictional lines.
- Coordinate on monitoring and improving the WHS framework at the national level, including Safe Work Australia preparing WHS regulations, codes of practice and other materials.²

03 Data and intelligence gathering

Expanding the evidence base through an iterative approach to collating reliable and timely data is an enabling tool to address current and emerging WHS challenges. Collaboration is encouraged through data-sharing between governments, industry, and other stakeholders. This allows trends and patterns to be identified, and new insights extracted that support evidence-based policy.

Key actions:

- Identify new data sources from industry, social surveys and other sources that supplement official workers' compensation claim statistics.
- Collaborate across government, social partners and research communities to ensure that national surveys and other data collection efforts include WHS measures and occupational information where possible.

² Whilst Victoria has not adopted the model laws, it notes the importance of jurisdictions collaborating on initiatives, information sharing and tackling complex future challenges together.

04 Health and safety leadership

Governments, industry, organisations, and individuals (including PCBUs and workers) all have a leadership role to build a culture of health and safety and embrace systematic ways to manage WHS risks. Stakeholders can contribute in different ways. Governments at all levels in Australia can champion leading practice and investment in WHS as model employers. Regulatory partnerships can support the development of greater capacity and capability across the system. As duty holders, PCBUs can invest in organisational capability to manage and prevent WHS incidents.

Key actions:

- Jurisdictions develop and refine their own detailed strategies and action plans to help address systemic WHS challenges or focus on particular groups of workers.
- Liaise with the vocational education and training sector to influence future health and safety training requirements for workers and promote the importance of the WHS profession (for example occupational hygienists and physicians) as a career path.
- Increase training of WHS Officers, worker representatives, managers and supervisors as key leaders of healthy and safe work in practice.

05 Compliance and enforcement

A continued strong focus on compliance and enforcement is essential for ensuring PCBUs are meeting WHS duties. The WHS legislative framework will be tested over the next 10 years and may require updates to keep pace with the changing environment for work and the evolving pressures on PCBUs. Enforcing legislative and regulatory obligations and duties is a key enabler of unlocking the benefits of the WHS improvements envisaged in their drafting.

Actions by regulators offer an effective, efficient and economical intervention for lifting WHS practices and should be exercised when necessary. A focus on systematic WHS management by regulators will ensure duty holders' compliance in line with the intent of regulation. The National Compliance and Enforcement Policy promotes a clear framework for engagement as well as a nationally consistent approach to compliance and enforcement of WHS laws.

Key actions:

- Jurisdictions collaborate to improve compliance across supply chains of goods and labour.
- Target national compliance and enforcement campaigns to poor performing sectors, including the high-risk sectors identified in this Strategy and those that emerge. Develop insights from data on prosecutions, notifications and breaches, and increase knowledge sharing across the WHS system.
- Strengthen compliance on consultation, representation and supervision to improve worker health and safety.

Driving systematic change

These actions and enablers will support us to achieve our vision and goal by producing significant shifts in WHS system over the next ten years. Success will mean a shift to a more mature WHS system, with a stronger WHS culture and a more dynamic mindset.

| | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------|--|
| 01 | From a newly harmonised system | To a mature system |
| 02 | From 'how to do WHS' | To 'why we do WHS' |
| 03 | From a focus on current work | To a focus on the evolving nature of work |

01 Shift from a newly harmonised system to a mature system

Why this shift is important

Significant progress has been made towards a nationally cohesive approach to WHS since Australia's WHS laws were harmonised in 2012 but the system has not yet realised its full national potential. Initially, there was a strong focus on helping industry understand the impact of legislative changes. Since then, Australia has experienced significant changes in the nature and patterns of work including more businesses and workers operating across state and territory jurisdictional lines. Stakeholders working together is more important than ever to support a simple, clear and cohesive WHS system.

What success will look like

This Strategy aims to foster a stronger national WHS system by encouraging stakeholders to leverage similar resources, tools and campaigns. Beyond the harmonisation of WHS regulation, the transition to a mature system will be demonstrated through open and timely information sharing and coordination between regulatory partnerships, social partners and other stakeholders to ensure that common national goals and actions are pursued together. PCBUs will also better understand their responsibilities — and this will ultimately support and protect Australian workers.

Achievements by 2033

- ✔ We will have increased collaboration between federal, state and territory governments, and other WHS stakeholders, including coordinated compliance and enforcement, capacity building and education, and awareness campaigns on nationally significant WHS issues.
- ✔ We will have responsive and effective national model WHS laws that are updated in response to issues in a timely way, through an ongoing commitment by jurisdictions and social partners.
- ✔ We will have replicated and implemented successful prevention efforts at scale through sharing insights among the WHS community about "what works".

02 Shift from 'How to do WHS' to 'Why we do WHS'

Why this shift is important

Without appropriate support, PCBUs may take a less comprehensive, 'tick a box' approach to health and safety that narrowly focuses on eliminating or minimising risks posed by specific hazards without understanding the benefits of WHS. These benefits include making workers feel respected and safe at work (a goal in itself), and facilitating greater workplace participation, higher performance and lower absenteeism.

What success will look like

PCBUs that manage WHS risks well recognise the value of a strong health and safety culture within their business and are motivated to engage in genuine cooperation and consultation with workers and their representatives to achieve safe and healthy workplaces. This Strategy aims to proliferate this mindset more widely. The goal is to ensure that workers remain the central focus of PCBU approaches in terms of ensuring their protection from harm but also their critical contribution to developing solutions.

Achievements by 2033

- ✔ We will have showcased leading prevention examples through industry stories that celebrate success. Case studies will have highlighted how PCBUs have been able to cultivate health and safety culture, trust, expertise and innovation among their workforces.
- ✔ We will have engaged companies with a strong WHS track record to influence their industries, including Australia's largest corporations demonstrating the inclusion of WHS in corporate reporting.
- ✔ We will have engaged with entrepreneurs to ensure they appreciate the value and benefits of WHS when they decide to go into business.
- ✔ Safe Work Australia and partners will have delivered education campaigns to highlight that good work design involves incorporating WHS considerations into workplaces and organisations from the ground up.

03 Shift focus from current work to the ever-evolving nature of work

Why this shift is important

Technological advancement, freelancing and platform work, the on-demand and knowledge economy, COVID-19 and climate change are revolutionising work in Australia. Consistent with the principles-based approach that underpins the WHS framework, we must continue to anticipate and adapt to change while grappling with current challenges.

What success will look like

This Strategy proposes strengthening the WHS evidence base by incorporating a broader focus on information gathering, data collection and research. This would support timely and clear definitions of WHS roles and responsibilities in new areas such as gig work, and with respect to AI, automation, and other emerging technologies. Policy guidance would be informed by a broad range of stakeholders, supplemented by educational efforts where needed. Stakeholders would also develop new data- and intelligence-gathering methods to generate early warning signals about WHS hazards and risks to enable timely action.


Achievements by 2033

- ✔ We will have deepened partnerships between the WHS system and the research sector (including demographers, and experts in law, engineering, technology, the environment, and health), with a focus on WHS and the future of work.
- ✔ We will have assessed with stakeholders how to best respond to the impacts of AI and automation, climate change, and structural workforce factors such as skills shortages and changing labour force characteristics. We will have developed educational materials and guidance to help industry adapt WHS to new forms of work.
- ✔ We will have improved the use of data to detect new and emerging trends before they become national WHS issues.
- ✔ We will have further collaborated between jurisdictions, social partners, researchers and high-risk sectors to better understand Australia's diverse workforce and address the structural factors that make certain groups of workers more vulnerable to harm.

The role of Safe Work Australia

Safe Work Australia, through its tripartite membership, has a key role in monitoring the progress of and driving certain actions contained in the Strategy.

This accords with the functions set out in the *Safe Work Australia Act 2008* and the objectives outlined in the model WHS laws to provide for a balanced and nationally consistent framework to secure the health and safety of workers and workplaces.

| Strategy Action | Role of Safe Work Australia |
|--|---|
|  Information and awareness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering national education and awareness campaigns • Developing guidance materials and model WHS codes of practice |
|  National coordination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating with national and international bodies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participate in the global WHS community of practice to bring innovative WHS thinking to Australia • consult with broader WHS system stakeholders to inform tailored and effective guidance materials for PCBUs and workers |
|  Data and intelligence gathering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting analysing, and publishing data and research relevant to WHS • Playing a leadership role in examining data approaches that will broaden understanding of WHS challenges in Australia |
|  Health and safety leadership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing national strategies and frameworks • Reporting on progress of the Australian WHS Strategy 2023-2033 |
|  Compliance and enforcement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and evaluating model WHS laws • Facilitating consistent approaches through the National Compliance and Enforcement Policy (noting that Safe Work Australia is a policy body and not a WHS regulator) |

Reporting on the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2033

Safe Work Australia will periodically report on progress against the targets of the Strategy. However, an approach based solely on target measures is insufficient to monitor the landscape of WHS challenges and to support the achievement of the goals and targets laid out in the Strategy. A landscape monitoring approach that facilitates continuous improvement of WHS will consider a range of metrics. This approach is at the forefront of identifying what works to deliver system change and responding to potential areas of increased risk.

Using a combination of lead, lag and activity-based metrics is the most effective way to determine whether initiatives are achieving their intended outcomes or impact. The approach will be reviewed over the course of the Strategy to ensure metrics capture new and emerging issues and can identify links between activities and outcomes. This approach will also assist to build the business case for additional data collection where national data sources are currently lacking to ensure that emerging issues are being captured and allow the Strategy to evolve and remain relevant.



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