



Research & Evaluation **Strategy**

Introduction



Evidence

Evidence is a key function for Safe Work Australia as the national policy body responsible for improving work health and safety (WHS) and workers' compensation arrangements across Australia.



Research

In early 2024, Safe Work Australia Members identified a need to reinvigorate its research function and develop a dedicated research and evaluation program to drive national research for work health and safety and workers' compensation.



Priorities and Principles

The *Safe Work Australia Research and Evaluation Strategy* outlines the priorities and principles to focus the Agency's research efforts towards enhancing the knowledge base for national policy.



Existing strategies

The development of priorities has been informed by previous research programs and existing strategies, including:

- *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2033*
- *National Return to Work Strategy 2020-2030*



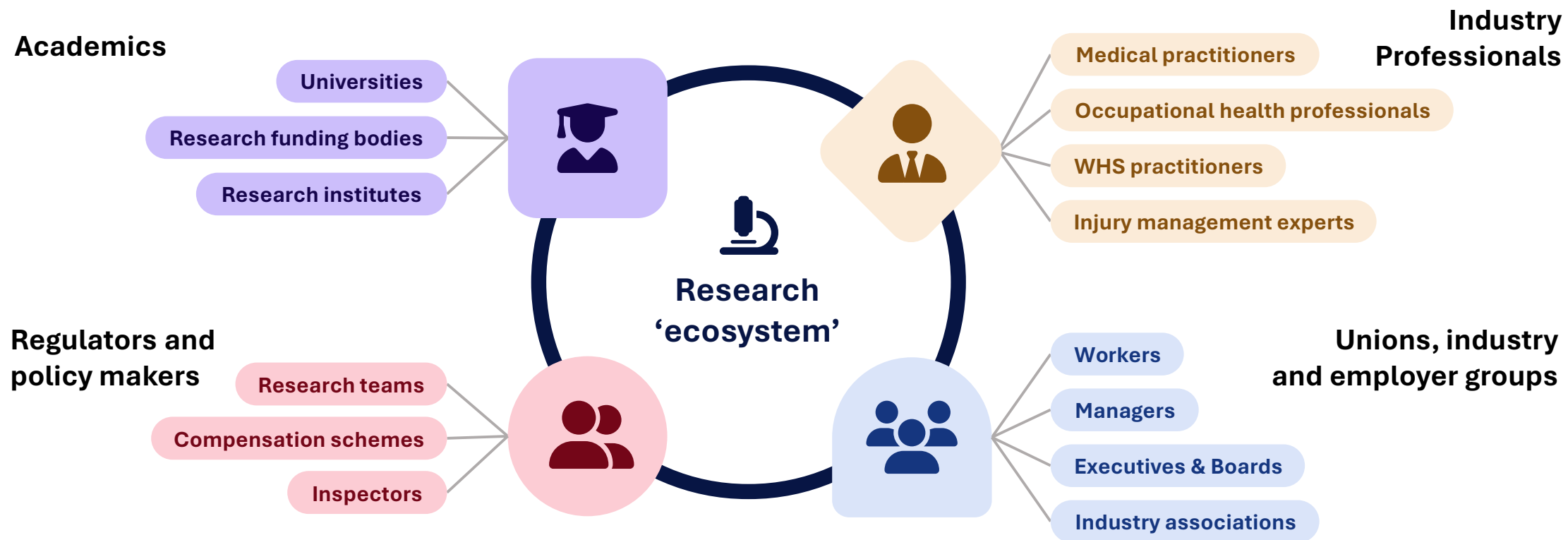
A research 'ecosystem'



There are many who can benefit from and influence the evidence for improved WHS and workers' compensation arrangements.

Collectively, we refer to these influences as an 'ecosystem'.

The *Safe Work Australia Research and Evaluation Strategy* is underpinned by a belief that an improved evidence base comes by working together and strengthening connections across this ecosystem – within Australia and internationally.





Purpose

The Safe Work Australia Research and Evaluation Strategy aims to **foster innovative and high-quality evidence** to improve national work health and safety outcomes and workers' compensation arrangements.



Vision

An engaged and connected research ecosystem that anticipates emerging challenges and opportunities so that evidence drives real improvements in safe and healthy work.



Goals

1 Drive thought leadership

Encourage future-focused and innovative research across the academic sector.



2 Build the evidence base

Enhance internal research and evaluation mechanisms to deliver effective evidence-based policy.



3 Enhance national value

Collaborate with Members to address priority issues that deliver evidence with national value.





Implementation priorities

Workstreams of activity to support the achievement of the *Safe Work Australia Research and Evaluation Strategy* goals.

Governance and Systems

Establish governance and systems that support effective research and evaluation across the Agency and nationally. This could include forums to identify strategic research priorities; improved systems for designing, delivering and evaluating research outcomes; and more consistent and robust horizon scanning.

Projects and Partnerships

Identify multidisciplinary projects and partnerships with the potential to tackle persistent and emerging challenges. This could include joining relevant research collaborations and commissioning targeted activities.

Translation and Promotion

Enable wider understanding and application of research through effective translation and promotional activities. This could include forums to share the Agency's research needs; events that enable expanded opportunities for networking and collaboration; showcasing research findings from across the ecosystem through formats tailored for different audiences.



Initial focus areas for research and evaluation activities

Workplaces, regulators, workers and policymakers face complex challenges as industries and demographics shift and risks evolve.

The *Safe Work Australia Research and Evaluation Strategy* identifies initial focus areas that will drive prioritisation of research and evaluation activities that develop meaningful knowledge for policy reform or operational implementation.

The supplementary focus areas will be incorporated across activities to enhance the broader evidence base.

It is expected that these focus areas may be adjusted over time as the evidence base grows and new needs emerge.



Primary focus areas

Psychosocial harm prevention and recovery



Expanding the evidence base around effective systemic controls/regulation to reduce psychosocial harm in workplaces and enable faster recovery when it does occur.

Shifting mindsets around WHS fundamentals



Shifting behaviours and mindsets to increase understanding and capability around fundamental duties and obligations for risk management and injury recovery – across small businesses to large enterprises, from workers and supervisors, to middle management, senior leaders and boards.

Changing nature of work



How the safety regulation and compensation frameworks might adapt to better accommodate the changing nature of work (e.g. gig work, compressed weeks, non-traditional employment, multiple jobs, working from home, complex supply chains, multi-regulated sites).

Effectiveness of systems and frameworks



Better understanding the effects and impacts of changes to the legislative frameworks (e.g. where harmonisation could be strengthened, gaps between expectations and reality, determining optimal models for injury management, bridging gaps in compensation policy evidence).

Advances in technology



How technological advances (e.g. AI, automation, automated machines) might affect policy approaches, enable improved hazard identification, give rise to new WHS risks, and/or enhance health and safety outcomes.



Underpinning all Focus Areas



Emerging or evolving issues and approaches

Better understanding emerging and innovative developments in Australia and internationally (e.g. emerging exposure hazards, evolving silica-related risks and treatments, ability to regulate air quality beyond specific dust types, or optimising synergy between WHS/organisational development/HR, climate-related risks).



Workers in vulnerable contexts

Ensuring that all research supports greater understanding of the needs of specific worker cohorts or characteristics associated with higher risk of harm (e.g. people with a disability, older people, young people, migrants, shift workers, women and gender-diverse workers especially when in male-dominated industries) – reflecting greater plurality in workplace demographics.



Guiding principles

The *Safe Work Australia Research and Evaluation Strategy* is grounded in the following principles for how we help ensure research has a positive impact.

Influential

We strive to be influential by ensuring research is effective and impactful, shaping policies and practices that can resonate nationally and globally.

Connected

We are connected within a broader ecosystem and work collaboratively, while aligning our efforts with national strategies and goals.

Adaptive

We are adaptive by staying curious, embracing change, and fostering a culture of innovation through continuous improvement.

Trusted

We build trust through transparency, upholding high ethical standards and consistently delivering on our commitments.

Enduring

Our work is enduring by focusing on delivering practical and meaningful outcomes through high-quality, robust research practices.

Strategic

We take a strategic approach by being proactive and forward-looking, setting clear and sometimes challenging targets for progress.

Research and Evaluation Strategy on a page

