

Operational Plan 2025–26




Legislative context

Safe Work Australia was established under the *Safe Work Australia Act 2008* (Cth) (the SWA Act). In accordance with the SWA Act, this operational plan details the activities to be undertaken by Safe Work Australia and the planned expenditure for the year. Further, it is consistent with, and supports, the strategies in the Safe Work Australia Corporate Plan 2025–2029.

Our purpose

Safe Work Australia has an important national role to achieve significant and continuous reductions in the incidence of work-related death, injury and illness and to improve outcomes for injured workers and their employers.

It is a tripartite forum representing the interests of the Commonwealth, states and territories, as well as workers and employers in Australia to:

-  **collaborate** on national work health and safety (WHS) and workers' compensation policy matters
-  **lead** the development of evidence-based policy and supporting education and strategies, and
-  **promote** consistency in WHS and workers' compensation arrangements.

This collaborative model recognises that national WHS and workers' compensation outcomes are improved when all relevant views and interests are considered. This plan describes the activities to be undertaken by Safe Work Australia in performing its statutory functions during 2025–26. Safe Work Australia will receive total agency funding of \$25.99 million for the financial year.

The activities we will undertake in 2025–26

The activities we will undertake in 2025–26 support the strategies outlined in the Safe Work Australia 2025–2029 Corporate Plan and reflect the priorities agreed by Safe Work Australia Members and include:

- a best practice review of the model WHS laws in the context of seeking to maintain and strengthen a harmonised approach
- continuing to support implementation of the engineered stone prohibition including finalising a review of the prohibition to ensure it is operating effectively and preparing new guidance materials on managing risks of respirable crystalline silica in the workplace
- supporting the transition to the new workplace exposure limits, including updates to the model WHS laws, guidance and model codes of practice
- subject to agreement of WHS ministers, updating the model WHS laws to improve incident notification requirements, as well as developing guidance material to support the new requirements
- developing detailed advice on how practical dispute resolution processes under the model WHS laws could be improved for consideration of WHS ministers
- delivering the inaugural research summit focused on national, innovative, and future focused research in WHS and workers' compensation, as well as progress actions under the Agency's new Research and Evaluation Strategy
- collecting new data through the Australian Worker Exposure Survey
- progressing Safe Work Australia's contribution to delivery of the Asbestos National Strategic Plan 2024–2030 and Silica National Strategic Plan 2024–2030
- introducing a range of improvements to crane licensing through a phased approach, and in consultation with key stakeholders
- developing guidance and other measures to address gender-based violence in the workplace, particularly in the construction industry
- supporting the initiatives in the National Return to Work Strategy 2020–2030 to improve return to work outcomes for workers with a work-related injury or illness, including undertaking the National Return to Work Survey to understand the outcomes and experiences of injured workers as they return to work
- continuously assessing new and emerging business models, industries and hazards to identify if there is a need for changes to the model WHS framework
- developing and implementing communication strategies that increase awareness of WHS fundamentals, including communication activities to support the transition to the new workplace exposure limits and to provide practical advice about the risks of working with crystalline silica substances; and
- developing new model WHS Regulations and model Codes of Practice for WHS ministers to consider, including model Codes of Practice and guidance on crystalline silica substances, fatigue, biological hazards, healthcare and social assistance, and elevated work platforms.

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In addition to these key activities, we will also continue performing our core activities by:

- developing accessible, effective and practical material to support the model WHS legislative framework to aid understanding and compliance, particularly for small business
- advising WHS ministers on national policy matters and initiatives relating to WHS and workers' compensation
- monitoring the progress of and driving actions in the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023–2033
- developing proposals to improve workers' compensation arrangements, and to promote national consistency
- collecting, analysing, and disseminating high quality evidence
- undertake and publish research to inform the development and evaluation of WHS and workers' compensation policies and strategies
- developing and implementing national education and communication strategies and initiatives to increase awareness and support improvements in WHS outcomes and workers' compensation arrangements
- delivering new data insights and fostering innovative and high-quality evidence to improve national work health and safety outcomes and workers' compensation arrangements, and
- collaborating with our national and international counterparts.

How we will measure our performance

Our performance in delivering the activities identified in this plan will be measured against the performance criteria and targets included in the Safe Work Australia 2025-26 Portfolio Budget Statements and reported in the Safe Work Australia Annual Report.