

the monitor

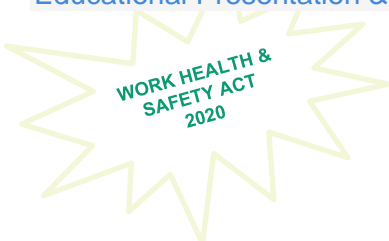
Keeping all those with an interest in OHS informed of current developments in workplace health and safety nationally and internationally.



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Monitor Editor: Emma D'Antoine.

First charges under new work health and safety laws

WorkSafe has initiated the first four prosecutions under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2020*, which came into effect in March 2022. **Wesbeam Pty Ltd**, a manufacturer of engineered wood product, has been charged with failing in its duty while in control of plant and consequently causing serious harm to an individual. WorkSafe alleged that in April 2022, an operator at Wesbeam's Neerabup factory was clearing a blockage on a conveyor belt when his arm was dragged into an unguarded section, resulting in serious injuries requiring extensive medical treatment.



Haulage and crushing contractor **MLG OZ** and mine operator **Evolution Mining** (Mungari) have both been charged with failing to ensure the health and safety of a worker and, by that failure, causing serious harm to an employee. WorkSafe alleged that a heavy diesel mechanic's arm was crushed when he was attempting to clear an obstruction near an unguarded roller of a mobile stacker at a gold mine west of Kalgoorlie in April 2022.

Justin John **Collins** has been charged with carrying out work when he was not authorised to carry out that class of work. It was alleged that in April 2022, Mr Collins removed 41 metres of asbestos fencing from between two houses in Beckenham. After a fencing installer discovered pieces of asbestos remaining in the ground, the matter was reported to WorkSafe and it was found that Mr Collins did not hold an asbestos removal licence. Acting WorkSafe Commissioner Sally North said today these four cases saw the commencement of court action under the State's new workplace safety laws.

“The Work Health and Safety laws carry additional and more serious penalties than the previous laws,” Ms North said. “This is illustrated by the potential maximum fine of \$3.5 million in three of these cases, but more serious breaches may risk penalties including terms of imprisonment for individuals. “It’s disappointing that workers continue to suffer serious or permanent injuries due to failure by employers to comply with their obligations under Work Health and Safety laws. “The potential consequences of failing to ensure a safe and healthy workplace are now more serious than they have ever been, and I encourage everyone with work health and safety duties to be proactive in managing risks.”

Source: Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation & Safety. (2024). *First charges under new WHS laws*. Government of Western Australia. Author. <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/announcements/first-charges-under-new-work-health-and-safety-laws>

IN EVENTS

Visit to Dr. Low's Redcliffe Clinic

By Dr Amy Bright.

The Occupational Health Society Western Australia (OHSWA) held an educational event for Members on the 30th of April 2024 kindly sponsored and hosted by Dr John Low Managing Partner and Chief Occupational Physician of OccuMED Western Australia. Dr Low opened the doors to his double storey Redcliffe clinic, providing members with a guided tour of the facilities and demonstrated equipment. He also spoke on the skills required for a doctor to perform a medical for either health surveillance or fitness for work.



Dr John Low provided a presentation on health surveillance, linking the role of the hygienist identifying exposure, the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) in initiating a health monitoring programme, specifically for crystalline silica, and the role of the occupational physician.



Following this we had a practical interactive session with Consultant Occupational Physician Dr KC Wan providing a practical demonstration on reading chest X-rays using the 19080 International Labour Organisation (ILO) classification criteria.

ILO chest Xray assessments are a medical assessment tool which are still utilised in some parts of Australia, however, in Western Australia they have been replaced by low dose CT scans. This session aimed to pass on the knowledge from an experienced ILO chest Xray reader who had graded thousands of chest X-rays of miners in Western Australia described in his paper Silicosis in Western Australia from 1984 to 1993. It opened up discussions about cases, what symptoms people would display at different stages of the imaging, how to differentiate between the different presentation of different pneumoconiosis based on size, shape and profusion on the Xray. Most importantly what do we do about it all! If we ever see such things, when to remove a worker, how to support them, accessing reporting registers and who to report cases to. It was an interactive, agile session, which brought a really great group of passionate members from an eclectic background together. Feedback from the evaluation questionnaire was positive and we look forward to holding another event.

The evening ended with a social networking, refreshment break, with thanks to Dr Low for providing delicious food.

New WorkSafe Commissioner appointed



The Cook Government is pleased to announce that it has appointed Sally North as Western Australia's WorkSafe Commissioner. Ms North started this role on 1 July 2024 for a five-year term. Ms North has more than 23 years' experience in WA's occupational health and safety sector, which includes working as the Acting WorkSafe Commissioner and Acting Deputy WorkSafe Commissioner. With regulatory experience across a wide range of sectors, Sally North has a background in occupational hygiene and experience working with specialists in areas including human factors, ergonomics, plant and engineering. Ms North is actively involved in a number of state and national work health and safety committees and continues to work on improving health and safety outcomes for all Western Australian workers. Prior to joining WorkSafe in 2001, Ms North worked in private industry as a chemical safety consultant and as an occupational safety and health officer.

Source: WorkSafe WA. (2024). *New WorkSafe Commissioner appointed*. Western Australian Government.
<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/announcements/new-worksafe-commissioner-appointed>

IN SAFETY

High price to pay for failing to have a safe method of work



In a significant judgment in [SafeWork NSW v AGL Macquarie Pty Ltd \(2023\)](#), the District Court of NSW fined AGL \$450,000 (after a reduction of 25% for a guilty plea) for an incident that resulted in an employee sustaining severe burns, which occurred due to the company's failure to have in place a safe method of work. **The incident**

AGL operated Liddell Power Station, at which Mr McNeill was employed as an Assistant Plant Controller. The power station had four steam generator units that all had a turbine and three transformers. Air getting into a transformer tank is a serious and known hazard that may result in the rupture of the transformer tank, and the

release and ignition of hot oil. Each generator transformer had three cooling systems that cooled the oil in the transformer tanks.

One of the oil coolers was leaking and needed to be removed from service. To remove the oil cooler from service, a replacement needed to be brought into service. Mr McNeill commenced the procedure for bringing the replacement oil cooler to service. Once brought back to service, a blockage was identified. Mr McNeill went to investigate the oil cooler when he heard a cracking noise. The transformer exploded and Mr McNeill sustained second degree burns to 19% of his body.

At the time of the incident, it was not known that the replacement oil cooler itself had a long-standing leak that meant it was partially or fully drained of oil when Mr McNeill went to bring it back to service. It was assumed it was in a standby position.

The Court's findings

The Court found that AGL was aware of the risk associated with the introduction of air into the oil cooler, as procedures had been designed and implemented to avoid the introduction of air into those systems and there was regular maintenance undertaken to test for leaks.

AGL pleaded guilty, conceding that it had failed to develop and implement a safe method of work for the changeover of oil coolers on a live transformer, which included:

- prohibiting changing over oil coolers that are not in standby status;
- verifying that an oil cooler is primed and in standby status before it is returned to service on a live transformer;
- requiring that oil inlet and outlet valves on a cooler not be opened on an in-service transformer;
- providing a physical means of preventing oil valves on an oil cooler being opened while a transformer is in service; and
- providing relevant information and training to workers regarding a safe system of work for the changeover of oil coolers on a live transformer and the hazards relating to air being introduced into the transformer tank and the potential for this to cause an electrical arc and an explosion.

In terms of this incident, the Court found that the system that was in place did not adequately provide for the possibility that:

- procedures may not have been followed, resulting in the oil inlet and outlet valves not being open; and
- an oil cooler may become fully or partially drained of oil due to an undetected oil leak while out of service.

The Court took into account mitigating factors, convicted AGL and ordered it to pay a fine of \$450,000 after a 25% reduction pleading guilty.

Source: High price to pay for failing to have a safe method of work. *Health and Safety Handbook*. Tanda.

<https://www.healthandsafetyhandbook.com.au/bulletin/high-price-to-pay-for-failing-to-have-a-safe-method-of-work/>

WA's worst workplace hazards revealed

New statistics have shown Western Australian workers have a much lower chance of being fatally injured at work in 2024 than they did 34 years ago. When the increase in WA workforce numbers is taken into account, a worker's risk of being fatally injured fell by 83% between 1988/89 and 2022/23. In 1988/89, Western Australia (WA) recorded 49.5 fatalities per million workers. By 2022/23, this number had reduced to 8.5 fatalities per million workers. A recent WorkSafe publication – “Worst hazards in Western Australian workplaces 2012-13 to 2021-22” – analyses lost time due to workplace injuries and fatalities and reveals some interesting statistical facts about WA workplaces. When looking at years of lost work time over the report period, the top twenty workplace hazards resulted in a huge 25,000 years of lost time. Manual handling is the worst hazard group by total time lost from work, accounting for 40 per cent of all lost time. The worst specific workplace hazard is trips on clear, cluttered or slick ground.

Women are more likely to be harmed by psychosocial hazards and handling other people, while men are more likely to be harmed by falls and vehicle crashes. **Young workers under 25** lose more time to electrocution, gravity hazards and moving objects, while **workers over 65** lose more time to trips, handling and assault. The greatest hazards in the construction industry are **falls, trips and handling**.

WorkSafe Commissioner Sally North warned against complacency towards the safety of workers in light of the new figures. “Although this decrease in the rate of fatalities is good news, we should never become complacent about the safety of workers,” Ms North said. “The improvements can be attributed to a number of factors including a steady increase in awareness of workplace health and safety over recent decades. Improved regulation has also played a part, along with lots of great work from employers, workers, health and safety representatives, unions and industry bodies. “A general improvement in understanding of risks and hazards and the maturing of the health and safety profession have also contributed to a steady fall in the relative number of deaths and injuries. However, it's up to both employers and workers to make safety part of the job so everyone can return home safe and healthy at the end of each day.”

The document “Worst hazards in Western Australian workplaces 2012-13 to 2021-22” can be found at [Worst hazards in Western Australian workplaces 2012–13 to 2021–22: Report](#)

Source: DEMIRS. (2024). *WA's worst workplace hazards revealed*. WA Government.
<https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/worst-hazards-western-australian-workplaces-2012-13-2021-22-report>

Western Australia has had 25,000 years of time lost to workplace injuries over a decade



A recent WorkSafe Western Australia report has found that the top 20 workplace hazards have led to 25,000 years of lost time over the period of a decade. Manual handling was the worst hazard group by total time lost from work, accounting for 40% of all lost time, while “**trips on clear ground**” was the worst hazard, with 4300 years lost and 17,800 claims at a cost of \$700 million. This was followed by “**muscular stress with no objects**” (2200 years lost and 10,800 claims at a cost of \$400 million) and “**trip on cluttered ground**” (2000 years lost and 8400 claims at a cost of \$300 million). “Handling other person” (1900 years lost and 5800 claims at a cost of \$300 million) and “**lifting box**” (1800 years lost and 8300

claims at a cost of \$300 million) rounded out the top five hazards, according to the report, Worst hazards in Western Australian workplaces 2012-13 to 2021-22. In terms of overall hazard groups, manual handling contributed to the highest amount (41 per cent) of years lost, followed by trips (17 per cent), moving objects (14 per cent), falls and falling objects (13 per cent) and psychosocial hazards (7 per cent).

In terms of the worst hazards by industry, “**handling sheep**” and “**hit by cow**” were the two worst hazards in the agricultural industry, while “**truck crash**” and “**fall from truck**” contributed the most years lost in the road transport sector. In hospitals, the worst hazard was “**handling other person**” (665 years lost), and “**assault**” contributed to 330 years lost in schools.

On a more positive note, the statistics show that Western Australian workers have a much lower chance of being fatally injured at work in 2024 than they did 34 years ago. When the increase in Western Australian workforce numbers is taken into account, a worker’s risk of being fatally injured fell by 83% between 1988/89 and 2022/23. In 1988/89, Western Australia recorded 49.5 fatalities per million workers, but by 2022/23, this number had reduced to 8.5 fatalities per million workers. Women were more likely to be harmed by psychosocial hazards and handling other people, while men were more likely to be harmed by falls and vehicle crashes. Young workers under 25 lost more time to electrocution, gravity hazards and moving objects, while workers over 65 lost more time due to trips, handling and assault.

“The improvements can be attributed to a number of factors including a steady increase in awareness of workplace health and safety over recent decades. Improved regulation has also played a part, along with lots of great work from employers, workers, health and safety representatives, unions, and industry bodies. A general improvement in understanding of risks and hazards and the maturing of the health and safety profession have also contributed to a steady fall in the relative number of deaths and injuries. However, it’s up to both employers and workers to make safety part of the job so everyone can return home safe and healthy at the end of each day. Although this decrease in the rate of fatalities is good news, we should never become complacent about the safety of workers” said Acting WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner Sally North.

Source: AIHS. (2024). *Western Australia has had 25,000 years of time lost to workplace injuries over a decade*. Author. <https://www.aihs.org.au/Web/Advocacy-Media/All-News/2024/05-May/WA%2025,000%20years%20of%20time%20lost%20to%20workplace%20injuries%20over%20a%20decade.aspx>

\$380,000 enforceable undertaking for fatal telehandler incident

A PCBU operating as part of a mixed farming and contracting business in NSW recently entered into a \$380,000 enforceable undertaking over an incident in which a worker was fatally injured by a telehandler. The incident occurred at a chicken broiler farm in Goolgowi NSW, which required straw to be chopped and baled at a farm shed. The hay bales were then moved with the assistance of a telehandler. While employees had been instructed that an exclusion zone existed around the area in which the telehandler was operating, no physical barriers were in place. The incident, which occurred on 13 October 2020, involved a worker who was crossing a worksite and walked through the exclusion zone while the telehandler was reversing. The telehandler subsequently ran over the worker, who suffered serious blunt force and crush injuries that ultimately proved fatal.



The PCBU, Alistair Macdonald, contravened section 19(1) and 32 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011, and agreed to undertake a number of activities as part of the EU. These activities included

- The development and implementation of safe systems of work and training for volunteers and truck drivers undertaking rural charitable hay runs.
- The development, manufacture, and implementation of an engineering load restraint control on truck trailers, obviating the need for workers to work in and around a trailer when loading, securing, and unloading hay bales.
- A targeted workplace safety audit focussed on the risks associated with people interacting with mobile plant, including the implementation of corrective actions identified in the audit
- The creation of an annual grant (for a period of three years) for students of a regional TAFE, considered to have demonstrated the highest attitude towards safety in the workplace.

Source: AIHS. (2024). \$380,000 enforceable undertaking for fatal telehandler incident. Author.

<https://www.aihs.org.au/Web/Advocacy-Media/All-News/2024/06-June/WA%20first%20charges%20under%20new%20WHS%20laws.aspx>

New South Wales has introduced new industrial manslaughter laws

After 20 years of campaigning by families, friends, and unions whose members have been killed at work, on the 20th June 2024 the Industrial Manslaughter Bill passed the New South Wales (NSW) Parliament. NSW was the last mainland state to make industrial manslaughter an offence. The Minns Government has fulfilled its promise to legislate industrial manslaughter.

Since 2019 more than 300 workers have been killed in NSW. The new Industrial Manslaughter law will give prosecutors the ability to hold a business or individual responsible for the death of a person due to gross

negligence in the workplace. The maximum penalty is 25 years jail for an individual, which is consistent with the existing maximum penalty for manslaughter in the NSW Crimes Act. There is a maximum penalty of \$20 million in fines for a body corporate, the highest in Australia. It will be supported by a new unit established in the NSW Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The new law does not create new work health and safety obligations or duties for employers but creates a strong new offence to deter unsafe practices and strengthen accountability. The Government consulted widely before introducing the bill and the bill was supported by an overwhelming majority of the Parliament. A review is to be undertaken 18 months after the commencement of the provisions.

New South Wales previously had industrial manslaughter laws under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000*. However, despite fatalities occurring in the workplace while that Act was in operation, no prosecutions were commenced under the old industrial manslaughter laws. Those laws were removed when the harmonised model Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act was introduced in 2011.

The Act includes a very wide definition of gross negligence, which includes “inadequate corporate management, control or supervision of the conduct of one or more authorised persons in the business” or conduct substantially attributable to “failure to provide adequate systems for conveying relevant information to relevant persons in body corporate”. This Act provides an exemption for volunteers, and no limitation period applies to the offence, meaning that the usual 2-year limitation will be of no effect.

Source: Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for Work Health and Safety. (2024). *Tough new Industrial Manslaughter laws send strong message on importance of worker safety in NSW*. NSW Government. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/media-releases/tough-new-industrial-manslaughter-laws-send-strong-message-on-importance-of-worker-safety-nsw>

Report urges employers to prioritise workplace wellbeing

Global insurance, risk management and consulting firm Gallagher has released its annual [Australian Workforce Trends Report](#), revealing that flexible work arrangements, professional training and career development programs are must-haves for employees to improve their workplace wellbeing. Now in its third year, the Workplace Wellbeing Index shows how Australian employers are tracking in providing positive, safe and effective workplaces for employees. The report is based on the insights of 2499 full-time, part-time and casual employees across Australia.

Dr Scott Krebs, Head of HR and People Experience Consulting at Gallagher, said that while the 2023 report reflected a battle to attract and retain skilled workers, this year saw a softening of the labour market driven by increasing immigration and declining job vacancies. However, organisations are still under pressure to provide a compelling employee value proposition and duty of care around staff wellbeing. “Our research reveals that low wellbeing continues to present a growing risk that impacts the bottom line and presents a significant opportunity for employers to differentiate their offerings by striking the right balance between remuneration and other benefits,” Krebs said.

While the research showed a slight improvement in workplace wellbeing from 2023 (of five percentage points, at 53%), it found that 63% of employees have continued to work despite feeling they should have taken time off (referred to as ‘presenteeism’), a figure similar to last year (67%). The data also confirmed that over half



of employees experiencing low levels of wellbeing reported dissatisfaction with their workload and their organisation's approach to workplace bullying and harassment.

The report also confirmed that the appetite and expectation of flexible and hybrid working has not diminished. No matter the age or industry, flexible working arrangements are the highest priority for workers aged over 35 and rank just after professional training and development for workers aged 18–34. However, some sectors are pushing for staff to return to the office, with some even linking this to career progress

and promotion.

“With flexibility confirming its top spot as the most important benefit to employees, it is critical for leaders to trust their people and empower them with the right resources and environments to thrive. For organisations looking to introduce new restrictions to their flexible working options, this may come at the cost of retaining employees,” Krebs said.

The report also found that two-thirds of workers with low wellbeing reported experiencing a mental health-related injury in the last 12 months, compared to 5% of people with high wellbeing. While employees with low wellbeing are at a higher risk of experiencing both mental health-related and physical injuries at work, mental health conditions also come with a significant personal impact as well as a financial cost for organisations. “This makes it even more crucial for employers to provide a safe environment for their staff to communicate mental health problems to their superiors without being stigmatised,” Krebs said.

Krebs believes that shifting the dial on wellbeing means shifting the dial on business performance outcomes. The report found that when employees were confident in actions being taken as a result of feedback, they were 2.7 times more willing to go above and beyond, 2.7 times more engaged at work and had 1.7 times stronger intentions to stay. The percentage of employees who have had the opportunity to provide feedback on their wellbeing at work has risen, from 67% in 2023 to 71% in 2024. However, just over 50% of employees reported feeling confident that action would be taken after providing feedback, indicating a clear area for improvement for employers.

“Consulting with your workforce is essential to creating a safe workplace that supports employee wellbeing. Open communication about potential risks and concerns can assist employers and employees in finding solutions together. This cooperation helps build more trusting relationships, a greater understanding and commitment to decisions and ensures a safer workplace,” Krebs said.

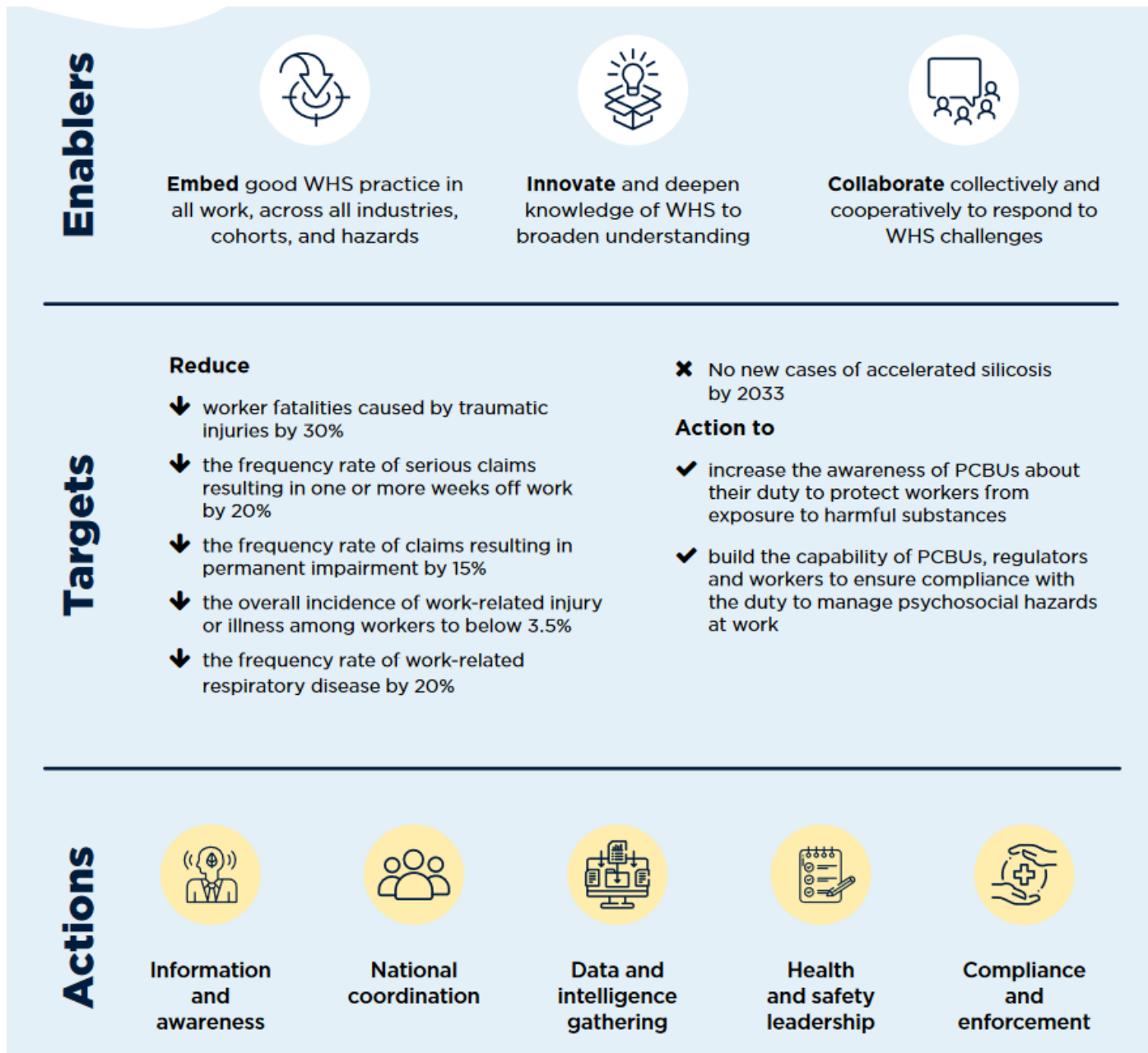
Source: NSCA Foundation. (2024). *Report urges employers to prioritise workplace wellbeing*. Author. https://www.nscfoundation.org.au/news-item/16194/report-urges-employers-to-prioritise-workplace-wellbeing?utm_source=stb&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=stb_240613

Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2033

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.

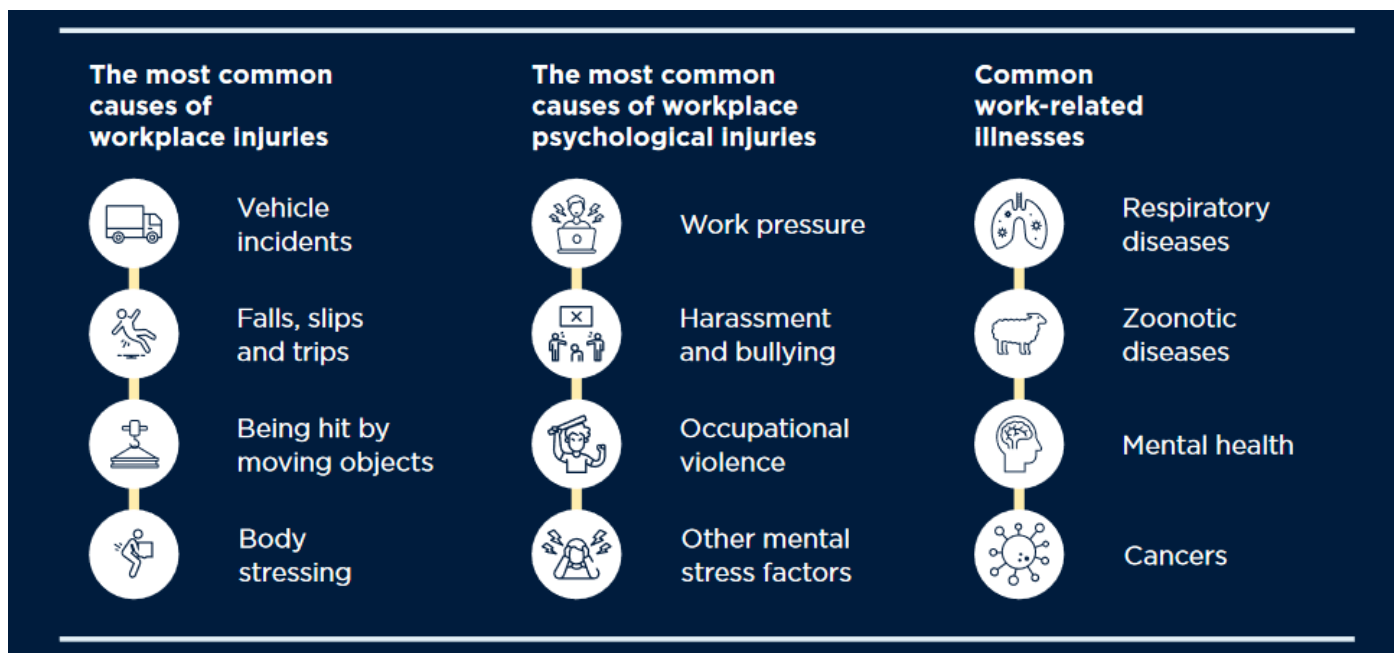
Work-related injury and illness impacts workers and their families deeply. Reducing these can also contribute to significant economic growth — some tens of billions of dollars each year. Injury and fatality rates have fallen significantly over the last decade, however progress has slowed. The Strategy 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.



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.



Persistent challenges

- psychosocial hazards
 - such as high work demands, low job support, and harmful behaviours
- health and safety vulnerability
 - such as 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).
- small businesses need extra support
 - may have fewer resources to dedicate to understanding WHS requirements and ensuring the health and safety of their workers.

Emerging challenges

- Rise of artificial intelligence (AI), automation and related technologies
- Workforce demographic shifts
- New types of work
- Hybrid work
- Climate-related risks
- More complex supply chains

The actions and enablers will support to achieve these visions and goals 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.

Source: Safe Work Australia. (2023). Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023–2033. Australian Government. https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/awhs-strategy_23-33

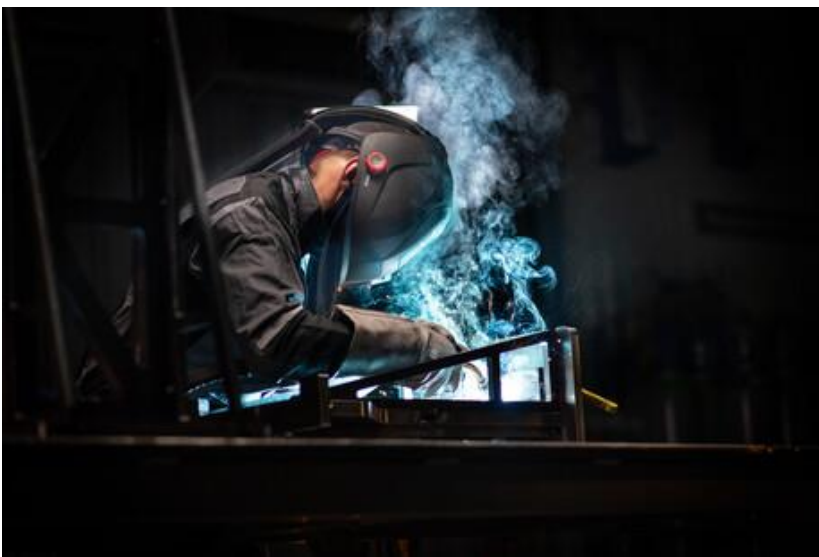
The benefits of complying with new welding fume safety standards

The International Agency for the Research on Cancer (IARC) and Cancer Council Australia classify welding fumes as Group 1 carcinogens, indicating their potential to cause cancer in humans. Welding fumes, comprised of metallic oxides, silicates and fluorides, originate from the materials and processes involved in welding, including base materials, coatings and the reactions initiated by the welding's intense heat and ultraviolet light. Exposure to welding fumes can result in severe health implications, such as acute and chronic respiratory diseases, lung cancer, heart disease and neurological issues.

In January 2024, Work Health and Safety Ministers implemented an immediate reduction to the workplace exposure standard (WES) for welding fumes (not otherwise classified) to be reduced from an 8-hour time weighted average (TWA) of 5 mg/m³ to 1 mg/m³. These standards are essential to lower exposure limits, enhance the effectiveness of ventilation and extraction systems, and the personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements.

Ensuring compliance with these new regulations is vital for protecting workers from both immediate and long-term health hazards. Central to this compliance is the employment of appropriate PPE, particularly advancements in respiratory protection. The updated safety standards emphasise the need for PPE that offers superior filtration and protection, to safeguard worker health in the face of these occupational hazards. Despite being considered the last resort in the hierarchy of safety controls, PPE remains an essential line of defence.

A key development in respiratory protection technology is the next generation of powered air purifying respirator (PAPR). PAPRs represent a significant step forward in worker safety, featuring advanced filtration systems that capture a broad spectrum of hazardous particulates. Unlike traditional respirators, PAPRs use a powered system to supply a continuous flow of filtered air, which eliminates the user's breathing resistance associated with non-powered traditional respirators and increases comfort for extended periods and welder acceptance. This technology is particularly relevant in today's workplace, accommodating the resurgence of beards and facial hair among Australian workers, which poses additional challenges in selecting effective respiratory protection.



these new standards encourage.

As Australian welding safety regulations become more stringent, the importance of adopting PPE solutions that meet these new standards cannot be overstated — and an innovative approach is required to comply with these regulations. Workplaces should therefore look to deploy Australian Standards certified PAPR units that are engineered to meet the demands of modern safety standards. Features such as advanced welding lenses for improved vision, quick-release helmets for ease of use, padded harnesses for comfort and extended battery life for continuous protection are key to the comprehensive approach to safety that

The move towards improved safety regulations and the adoption of advanced protective equipment like PAPRs marks a pivotal shift towards ensuring safer working conditions for welders. It reflects a broader commitment to worker health and safety, recognising the need for stringent protective measures to combat the significant risks posed by welding fumes.

In conclusion, the evolution of welding safety standards, driven by an enhanced understanding of the health risks associated with welding fumes, requires a robust response from the industry. The introduction of advanced safety regulations in Australia serves as a model for protecting workers from the hazardous effects of welding fumes. Compliance with these regulations, particularly through the adoption of advanced PPE technologies like PAPRs, is essential for ensuring the health and safety of welders, underscoring the industry's commitment to fostering a safer and healthier work environment.

Source: Techware Pty Ltd. (2024). *The benefits of complying with new welding fume safety standards*. Safety Solutions. <https://www.safetysolutions.net.au/content/confined-spaces/article/the-benefits-of-complying-with-new-welding-fume-safety-standards-1414239119>

Manufacturers seek safer alternatives to engineered stone

Effective from 1st July 2024 there is a nationwide ban on the use of engineered stone. This world-first ban is a significant step towards protecting Australian workers from the debilitating effects of silicosis, a severe lung disease caused by exposure to respirable crystalline silica. Under the new regulations, the manufacture, supply, processing, and installation of engineered stone benchtops, panels, and slabs are now prohibited across all States and Territories in Australia. This decisive action addresses the unacceptable health risks posed by working with engineered stone and aims to prevent further cases of silicosis among workers.

Sydney-based stone supplier Gitani Stone is advocating for safer alternatives to engineered stone, after the



Commonwealth, state and territory governments prohibited the use, supply and manufacture of engineered stone due to its link to silicosis.

Jason Gittany, Managing Director of Gitani Stone, said the best alternative to engineered stone is the exact material it attempted to mimic — natural stone — and that there are plenty of natural stone options that are just as cost-effective as engineered stone.

“Without a doubt, natural stone is definitely the best option for anyone

looking to prioritise quality and longevity as a product. I always strongly recommend natural stone as it is superior in every aspect of durability, quality and aesthetic appeal, and there's tons of options that are just as affordable as engineered stone was. In the 50 years that Gitani Stone has been in business, we've learned that there is a form of beautiful natural stone to fit any project and any budget,” Gittany said.

According to Gittany, the market is also trending towards porcelain, which offers a “natural” look, is heat and scratch resistant and has zero silica. Both porcelain and natural stone also undergo “rigorous testing” to ensure that they meet the company's standards for safety and performance. “As well as natural stone, we are seeing a market trend towards porcelain, which can offer a great natural look, it's heat and scratch resistant, and of course it has zero silica. We are currently in the process of developing a full-body porcelain option that's just

as durable as some of our natural stone products. We are very thankful that the right decision was made to ban engineered stone. I'm excited to finally say goodbye to crystalline silica and innovate with newer, safer products of higher quality," Gittany said.

Sources:

Australian Institute of Health & Safety. (2024). *Engineered Stone Ban Comes into Effect to Safeguard Australian Workers*.

Author. communications@aihs.org.au

Manufacturers seek safer alternatives to engineered stone. (2024), Safety Solutions.

<https://www.safetysolutions.net.au/content/hazardous-goods/news/manufacturers-seek-safer-alternatives-to-engineered-stone-802430767>

New workplace exposure limits for airborne contaminants

Work Health and Safety Ministers have agreed to a new workplace exposure limit list for airborne contaminants and a harmonised transition period, which will end on 30 November 2026. The workplace exposure limits will replace the current workplace exposure standards, after the ministers agreed to rename them to make it clear that a limit should not be exceeded, and for Australia to align with terms used internationally. While most exposure limits remained unchanged, the workplace exposure standards review did result in some changes, including reductions and increases in limits for certain chemicals and the removal or introduction of new limits for others.

An airborne contaminant is a fume, mist, gas, vapour, or dust that can be harmful to health when breathed in. They may not be visible to the naked eye nor detected by odour, and they may arise from chemicals or materials used in the workplace or be generated by work processes.



Safe Work Australia's Workplace exposure limits for airborne contaminants list notes that some people may have health effects at levels below the exposure limit, either due to individual differences or due to existing health conditions (such as pregnancy, cancer treatment, recovery from an illness, heart, or lung disease). There may be additional factors that can cause people to have health effects at an exposure level below the workplace exposure limit. If there are multiple airborne contaminants in the workplace, then the combined effects of these must be considered. For example, exposure to multiple airborne contaminants, either at the same time or one after the other, may cause additional harm. Some airborne contaminants can also interact to be more harmful than either contaminant on its own. Airborne contaminants that can also be absorbed through the skin can increase a worker's exposure and, in some cases, cause sensitisation.

Safe Work Australia said the person in charge of the business or undertaking should also engage an appropriately trained and experienced professional, such as an occupational hygienist, to understand the

potential effect on workers' health of airborne contaminants in their workplace and identify the control measures that may be needed to protect workers.

The list notes that there are three different kinds of exposure limits: an 8-hour time weighted average (TWA), short-term exposure limit (STEL), and peak limitation. The TWA is the maximum average concentration of an airborne contaminant calculated for an eight-hour working day, based on a 5-day working week (40 hours). A worker must not be exposed to a level above the TWA over the course of an 8-hour working day. A STEL is the time-weighted average maximum concentration of an airborne contaminant calculated over a 15-minute period. It is intended to protect most workers from the acute effects of exposure. A peak limitation is the maximum or peak concentration of an airborne contaminant measured over the shortest time possible, and not exceeding 15 minutes. Exposure above the peak limitation can cause immediate and severe health effects, even if the exposure is very short. Exposure above the peak limitation is not allowed at any time.

Source: AIHS. (2024). *New workplace exposure limits for airborne contaminants*. Author. <https://aihs.org.au/Web/Web/Advocacy-Media/All-News/2024/04-April/New%20workplace%20exposure%20limits%20for%20airborne%20contaminants.aspx>

Company fined \$1.2m for exposing workers to cobalt dust

Orica Australia Pty Ltd has been fined \$1.2 million after SafeWork NSW prosecuted the company for exposing two workers to cobalt dust, a known respiratory sensitising agent that can cause occupational illness. The chronic effects of exposure to cobalt dust include respiratory effects such as asthma, fibrosis and lung damage, and more rarely, cardiac effects and congestion of the liver and kidneys.



The company pleaded guilty to a Category 1 offence, pursuant to section 19 of the [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#) in relation to the exposure between 2014 and 2019 at a Kooragang site which caused one worker to develop occupational asthma.

A Category 1 offence occurs when a person has a health and safety duty but engages in conduct where an individual is exposed to a risk of death or serious injury or illness and is reckless as to that risk. In this case, it was due to the exposure to cobalt dust through inhalation and

skin irritation and direct contact to the eyes, nose, mouth and skin.

The company's activities at the industrial chemical manufacturing facility at Kooragang Island included producing cobalt catalyst pellets in the Cobalt Catalyst Manufacturing Shed where the two men worked. The court determined that the cobalt dust and powders were generated during manufacturing processes and were visible, although the amount of dust and powders generated varied and depended on the stage of the above manufacturing process and the state of the cobalt catalyst.

Head of SafeWork NSW Trent Curtin said that the Court found the likelihood of risk of exposure was certain and few steps were taken by Orica to guard against the risk; those steps were poorly implemented and inadequate. "This is a prosecution for a Category 1 offence of the NSW WHS legislation and sends a clear

message to industry — if you put people at risk we will prosecute you to the full extent of the laws,” Curtin said.

To learn more about health monitoring for cobalt dust, visit:

https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-11/health_monitoring_guidance_-_cobalt_1.pdf.

Source: Safe Work NSW. (2024). Orica fined \$1.2 million after workers exposed to cobalt dust. NSW Government. [https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/news/safework-media-releases/orica-fined-\\$1.2-million-after-workers-exposed-to-cobalt-dust](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/news/safework-media-releases/orica-fined-$1.2-million-after-workers-exposed-to-cobalt-dust)

Residential care provider fined \$300,000 over workplace sexual violence

The District Court of New South Wales (NSW) recently convicted and fined a residential care provider \$300,000 for breaching its WHS obligations and as a result of exposing workers to a risk of violence, including inappropriate sexual behaviour, in the workplace. The case was brought by SafeWork NSW against Marist Youth Care, for failing to address risks of inappropriate sexual and violent behaviour and a history of assault by clients, which resulted in a risk of serious illness or injury to workers.

Workplace violence including sexual harassment is a work health and safety (WHS) hazard which affects workers across all industries. To help prevent this WHS hazard, employers can:

- Consult with workers to develop policies and procedures to identify and prevent WHS risks and communicate them to workers, visitors, and customers.
- Regularly assess work design and environment risks that can contribute to workplace violence and sexual harassment such as working at night, alone, in remote or isolated settings and client or home visit related work.
- Address barriers to reporting, provide timely and confidential (informal and formal) reporting options and offer support to anyone who makes a report.

“This is a significant conviction brought by SafeWork NSW against Marist Youth Care for failing to prevent the risk of work-related violence and should be a warning to NSW employers that violence and sexual harassment in the workplace are never acceptable,” said head of SafeWork NSW Trent Curtin. “Under NSW WHS laws, employers are required to address WHS risks and should take proactive, preventative action in their workplaces to ensure workers are protected from harm, including from violence and sexual harassment.”

Source: AIHS. (2024). Residential care provider fined \$300,000 over workplace sexual violence. Author. [https://www.aihs.org.au/Web/Advocacy-Media/All-News/2024/04-April/Residential%20care%20provider%20fined%20\\$300,000%20over%20workplace%20sexual%20violence.aspx](https://www.aihs.org.au/Web/Advocacy-Media/All-News/2024/04-April/Residential%20care%20provider%20fined%20$300,000%20over%20workplace%20sexual%20violence.aspx)

Worker management through AI

From technology development to the impacts on workers and their safety and health

Artificial intelligence (AI) is currently understood as one of the major threats to labour, although its use might in principle even ameliorate workers’ safety and health if adequately designed, implemented, managed and regulated. Unlike conventional machines, the fundamental distinction of AI lies in its capacity to learn, coupled with the massive ability to store information through cloud computing. The capacity of AI to execute decision-making tasks has the potential to replace functions traditionally carried out by middle management. This transformation could also pose a challenge to the authority of higher-level supervisors, as well as result in a loss of relationships between workers and managers, which is an important mitigating factor of work-related stress.

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) has introduced the term ‘AI-based worker management’ (AIWM) technologies and set out to answer important questions including:

- ✚ Who are the inventors and key actors driving the development of these technologies?
- ✚ To what extent is the adoption of AIWM technologies spread across various sectors, going beyond specific case studies?
- ✚ What specific functions are these technologies intended to perform in relation to the workforce?
- ✚ What are the implications of these technologies for workers, particularly in terms of their safety and health?

Through mapping of AIWM technologies, EU-OSHA were able to gauge the significance of AIWM in the application of such technologies. They concluded that:

- ✚ AIWM technologies have demonstrated a consistent upward trajectory, both in terms of their absolute numbers and their expanding market presence.
- ✚ There is a prevalence of US-based firms, alongside well-established entities in the EU and Japan, as well as emerging contenders in countries like China and South Korea.
- ✚ There are diverse scopes for the application of AIWM technologies, including the improvement of worker efficiency, facilitation of decision-making processes, and enhancement of health and safety measures.

They also identified:

- ✚ prominent patent-holding entities, encompassing not only industry leaders within the digital technology sector but also significant players in complementary industries such as retail trade, banking and automotive.
- ✚ specific tasks and occupational categories directly affected by AIWM technologies.

Source: European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. (2024). *Worker management through AI - From technology development to the impacts on workers and their safety and health*. Author. <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/worker-management-through-ai-technology-development-impacts-workers-and-their-safety-and-health>

What’s the end goal on vaping?

Dr Michael Page, The Australian Medical Association (WA) Council President



Over the school holidays, many people will swap the rain clouds of the Southern Hemisphere for the vape clouds of the North. Vaping is absolutely rife in some countries. On a visit to the United Kingdom last year, my first overseas trip since before 2020, I was stunned at the change in landscape since the pre-vape days. People of just about every age group, vaping

on every park bench and street corner, and vaping products available in every second shop.

This is just an observation, not a judgment of those who vape; indeed, Public Health England, a government agency, did the world a disservice back in 2018 when it made a strong statement arguing for the safety of vaping. Its report is still quoted today by pro-vapers, a la Andrew Wakefield’s discredited and retracted research linking vaccines with autism.

Whilst it could be true that vaping is safer than smoking, we don’t know this with certainty in the direct sense, and nor do we know whether vaping provides a more accessible route to smoking or

other substance use. What we do know is that it provides no public or individual health benefit and therefore, in the view of many, should be the subject of an outright ban.

In this regard, I find that arguments made by those who oppose vaping often don't go far enough: they focus on keeping vapes out of the hands of children. Of course, this is important. But if we allow vapes into the hands of anyone, they will find their way into the hands of children, just as cigarettes and alcohol have, since time immemorial, despite legislation intended to prevent this. The ambition to keep vaping out of Australia must therefore be much broader.



So, the new laws going through Federal Parliament this week are welcome. They will ban the sale of vapes other than through pharmacies. The Bill had intended to make vapes prescription-only, but in a last-minute deal with the Greens, the Labor Government agreed that they could be sold without a prescription.

What does this mean? Pharmacies become vape shops? The Pharmacy Guild has vigorously opposed the amendment. As pharmacies push to become “healthcare destinations,” it would be understandable that they would not want to be perceived as tobacconists. (As an aside, perhaps the next stand the Guild could take could be against pharmacies carrying unproven quack remedies?) In any case, the evidence does not yet support the safety and efficacy of vapes as smoking cessation aids. But Big Tobacco which is, after all, behind the vaping industry, will push for its products to be recognised as “therapeutic,” and when they do, turn a blind eye to the vast majority of vapers not using them for this purpose.

Source: Page, M. (2024). *President's Blog: What's the end goal on vaping?* Australian Medical Association. <https://www.amawa.com.au/news/presidents-blog-whats-the-end-goal-on-vaping/>

Shortening work week to improve construction culture

A new report has explored construction industry culture, highlighting the problems of excessive work hours and the benefits in addressing them. The [Construction Industry Culture Taskforce](#) (CICT), led by the governments of NSW and Victoria along with the Australian Constructors Association, has released the ‘Culture in Construction Pilot Projects: Interim Report’, led by RMIT University.

The report found that a 50-hour work week spanning five days has strong support within the construction industry. Many within the industry typically work six days per week, with Saturday shifts often the norm. However, the interim results of pilot projects run under a new draft Culture Standard, aimed at improving the infrastructure construction industry, show that a five-day week would not adversely affect site productivity.

Achieving cultural change

The report studied the integrated strategies used by pilot projects to improve time for life and flexibility, diversity and inclusion, and wellbeing to determine how they contribute to positive cultural shifts in the industry.

“Cultural change in the industry is one of the key ways to address the acute skills shortage that has led to escalating labour costs and stagnant productivity in an industry which has so many other reasons to be a place to have a great career,” said Gabrielle Trainor, Chair of the CICT and Interim Chief Commissioner of Infrastructure Australia.

“The Culture Standard, designed to be part of the procurement process, means a level playing field for contractors and government clients to buy in, project by project, and create better, safer and more equitable work environments and support construction to become an industry of choice.”

What were the key findings of the report?

One key finding was the strong support for a five-day work week, with 84% of salaried respondents and 61% of waged respondents preferring this schedule. This preference contrasts with the current

industry norm of longer working hours, where 64% of workers exceed 50 hours per week and Saturday work is routine.



“The lack of work and life balance faced by many construction workers can cause significant stress, relationship issues and reduced productivity. It is a leading reason people exit the industry,” Trainor said. “However, the five-day work schedule preferred by the workers in the study allowed them to spend more time with their kids, play sport, see friends or relax, and a two-day weekend also ensured they were better rested and recovered from the work week.

“Monday to Friday is clearly shown in this study to be the ideal. But the standard provides for the reality that not every project can work five days. These findings also demonstrate the positive benefits of a deliberate and accountable focus on ensuring no-one works excessive hours and flexibility is built in, and where measures on diversity and wellbeing are also in place to support the other key aspects of culture change women and young men are looking for,” she said.

Minimal impact on productivity

Despite initial concerns about productivity and pay impacts, feedback from pilot project participants indicates minimal adverse effects. “On our [Mulgoa Road Upgrade Project Stage 1](#), our team reported that productivity was not adversely affected by implementing the Culture Standard’s five-day work week,” said Greg Anderson, Seymour Whyte Alliance Manager in New South Wales.

“With Saturdays typically seeing lower productivity across the industry, the loss of

Saturday as a workday in the move to a Monday to Friday schedule was more than offset by the fact that we had a better rested, healthier and more satisfied workforce, which led to productivity improvements across the five-day week.

“We also saw positive impacts in terms of recruitment, with other workers in the industry seeking to join our project due to the five-day work week.” Before the implementation of the draft Culture Standard at the pilot projects, some workers on wages, mostly young men, were concerned about the effect on their pay.

However, once the Culture Standard was operating, many of these same workers said that the effects on their pay had been minimal and, even though they may have experienced a small reduction in their earnings, the benefits of spending more time with their family and friends outweighed the cost.

Australian Constructors Association CEO Jon Davies said while recognising the need to limit the hours worked, the pilots are also considering how to maintain the flexibility of projects to work the hours needed to meet operational requirements. “The Culture Standard acknowledges the interconnectedness of working hours, wellbeing and gender diversity. Addressing working hours in isolation from wellbeing and gender diversity won’t yield the desired cultural transformation and outcomes,” he said. These results are very encouraging, and we are looking forward to finalising the pilot studies later this year to inform the case for broader adoption of the standard in procurement,” Trainor said.



Source: Safety Solutions. (2024). *Shortening work week to improve construction culture*. Author. https://www.safetysolutions.net.au/content/business/article/shortening-work-week-to-improve-construction-culture-47798530?utm_campaign=06%2F05%2F24%20Safety%20Solutions&utm_content=Shortening%20work%20week%20to%20improve%20construction%20culture&utm_term=&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Adestra

IN PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH

New South Wales has a new strategy to address psychological risks in the workplace

The New South Wales (NSW) Government recently launched a strategy that outlines how SafeWork will support employers to manage risks and comply with their duty to prevent psychological harm in NSW workplaces. The SafeWork NSW Psychological Health and Safety Strategy 2024-2026 will be supported by \$5.6 million in government funding over the next two years to deliver workplace mental health programs through the Black Dog Institute and Transitioning Well. The programs will be targeted at small businesses, which make up the bulk of employers in NSW and generally have less capability and fewer resources to manage mental health and protect psychological health at work.

New initiatives as part of the 2024-2026 strategy include:

- practical tools, resources and webinars to help businesses.
- the translation of all resources to reach and support culturally and linguistically diverse workers (a high-risk worker category for psychological injury).
- building capability across SafeWork NSW's inspectorate and conduct compliance visits in high-risk workplaces.
- creating industry forums whose role is to identify psychosocial hazards in the relevant industry.

NSW is home to roughly 850,000 small businesses which employ 1.7 million people or about 43 per cent of the state's private sector workforce. Nationally, workplace mental ill health is estimated to cost Australian businesses up to \$39 billion each year due to lost participation and productivity. SafeWork NSW consulted with many stakeholders during the development of the strategy, including workers, health and safety professionals from government agencies, unions and business.

“Large businesses and government agencies at high-risk of psychological injuries can expect compliance checks from SafeWork NSW,” said Acting Deputy Secretary SafeWork NSW Trent Curtin. “SafeWork NSW will issue improvement notices, prohibition notices or formal regulator warnings and may prosecute workplaces who repeatedly do not comply or where they have seriously breached WHS laws. In addition to being an obligation under WHS regulations, a psychologically healthy and safe workplace helps reduce business costs. These include costs associated with absenteeism and presenteeism, where staff are away from work and where staff are attending work under stress or experiencing mental health issues,” according to Curtin, who said “presenteeism is estimated to have an annual cost of \$1680 per employee.”

NSW Minister for Mental Health Rose Jackson said the past few years have been particularly hard for people. “Our workforce has been impacted by increased pressure from the cost-of-living, natural disasters, and COVID-19,” she said. “We know workers in industries such as emergency services, nursing, and law enforcement have been on the frontline and may be more at risk. Our strategy launching today aims to strengthen mental health support in the workplace. “Irrespective of the industry that you work in, everyone deserves to work in a respectful and psychologically safe workplace. It is imperative that our workplaces and employers are doing everything they can to prevent psychological harm in NSW workplaces.”

Source: AIHS. (2024). *New South Wales has a new strategy to address psychological risks in the workplace*. Author. <https://www.aihs.org.au/Web/Advocacy-Media/All-News/2024/05-May/NSW%20new%20strategy%20to%20address%20psychological%20risks%20in%20the%20workplace.aspx>

Police officers drive up psychological injury claims payments

An increase in the volume of taxpayer-funded psychological claims is behind an estimated 50 to 66% decline in return-to-work rates in recent years, according to a recent New South Wales (NSW) report into workers' compensation claims and state insurer icare. Medical discharges of police officers who have been assessed as unable to return to the workforce have been the main source of increased psychological injury claims payments, the NSW Auditor-General's performance audit report into workers' compensation claims management found. Taxpayer-funded workers' compensation payments also increased from \$648 million in 2018-19 to more than \$1 billion in 2022-23.

In response to a significant decline in the performance of workers compensation schemes, icare is implementing major reforms to its approach to workers' compensation claims management. However, the report noted that icare is yet to demonstrate if these changes are the most effective or economical way to improve outcomes for the schemes. "icare's planning and assurance processes for its reforms to its claims management approach did not adequately assess its existing claims models or conduct detailed analysis of other options to inform decisions on the changes," the report documented.



While icare has implemented several broader organisational improvement programs in recent years, the report also noted that these programs have not focused enough on icare's accountability for improving return to work outcomes and maintaining the financial sustainability of workers' compensation schemes. Furthermore, icare has not given sufficient attention to addressing the increase in psychological injury claims – despite trialling some individual programs. icare acknowledged psychological injury claims are a growing issue, which has negatively impacted return-to-work rates and financial viability of the schemes. The report noted that the State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) has also raised concerns about the management of psychological injury claims.

A State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) claims file review published in July 2020 noted that most of the psychological injury claims in its sample did not include sufficient collection of information about the claim. Furthermore, there was also inadequate investigation of questions from employers about the causation of the injury in most cases. "These findings indicated that claims service providers may have been accepting and making payments for claims without adequate evidence that they were valid. Subsequent claim reviews published by SIRA in 2021 and 2023 made similar findings about weaknesses in the management of psychological injury claims," the report noted. While it acknowledged the prevention of psychological injuries in workplaces is not primarily icare's responsibility, its ability as an agency to achieve the key objectives of workers' compensation schemes is significantly affected by this issue. "Greater focus and attention to the management of psychological injuries is required from all relevant parties, including icare, to address the social and financial challenges the issue is presenting," this report recorded.

Source: AIHS. (2024). Police officers drive up psychological injury claims payments. Author. <https://aihs.org.au/Web/Web/Advocacy-Media/All-News/2024/04-April/Police%20officers%20drive%20up%20psychological%20injury%20claims%20payments.aspx>

Mining Worker Study: Key insights into the state of WA mining's mental health

- Mining workers report a strong focus on physical safety behaviours
- More than one in three mining workers reported high levels of burnout
- Covert forms of sexual harassment such as sexism and misogyny are high
- Bullying in mining shows signs of decreasing, however levels remain significantly higher than other industries with double the number of women affected compared to men



New findings from *The Mental Awareness, Respect and Safety (MARS) Program Landmark Study* show reports of unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion are decreasing but being put down or condescended to based on gender, and receiving offensive sexist remarks, remain common themes in Western Australia's mining sector.

Researchers from the Centre for Transformative Work at Curtin University surveyed more than 2,500 workers and conducted in-depth interviews with 60 individuals to gain insights into their experiences with a focus on three critical areas – creating mentally healthy workplaces, building a culture of safety and respect, and preparing for workplace safety in future mining. MARS Program Landmark Study Chief Investigator, John Curtin Distinguished Professor Sharon Parker said only four in ten WA mining workers reported feeling satisfied with their job and nearly one in three said they were likely to try to find a new job with another employer in the next 12 months.

“Our research found one in three mining workers experiences emotional exhaustion regularly, indicating high levels of burnout. Disturbingly, covert forms of sexual harassment, including sexism and misogyny, persist,” Professor Parker said. “The negative impact of these experiences on mental health and well-being is evident, emphasising the urgent need for change through improved work design, leadership and organisational culture. “With the mining sector constituting 10 per cent of our workforce in WA and playing a pivotal role in our State's economic prosperity, this study is a crucial step in highlighting the mental health, safety and well-being of workers.”

Lead author Dr Cheryl Yam said while the findings acknowledge workplace culture was improving as companies pay more attention to reducing discrimination and harassment, a collective commitment is needed to achieve meaningful and lasting change in building a respectful workplace culture. “The mining industry is a leader in physical safety. With the support and resources from the MARS Program, we are confident that the mining industry is well positioned to also be a leader in mental health and well-being,” Dr Yam said. “Our research findings provide a roadmap for meaningful action to address and reduce covert forms of sexual harassment and create respectful workplaces to attract, retain and prevent harm to women and people in other minority groups.”

Key findings:

- Overall, there was a very large percentage of WA mining workers adopting high levels of safety behaviours such as safety compliance (88%) and safety participation (78%). These levels are comparable to findings from a sample of FIFO workers in 2018 (Parker et al.). These findings are consistent with mining being a safety-critical industry where workers’ safety-orientation is consistently held at very high levels. Further, the reported safety behaviours of Western Australian mining workers are significantly higher than workers in the benchmark sample from other similar types of industries.
- Although the rate of under-reported is not as high as in the benchmark sample, it is still too high for a safety-critical sector. Under-reporting of notifiable incidents and near misses exists in the mining industry – about one in four notifiable incidents in the past 12 months were unreported, while one in three near misses in the past 12 months were unreported. This data presents a risk to the sector because non-reporting creates lost opportunities for improving safety and because non-reporting is linked to the number of major accidents that occur.
- Organisational drivers that are strongly associated with increased safety behaviours include safety climate and the way that change is managed by senior leadership and throughout the organisation.
- Job drivers that are strongly associated with increased safety behaviours include adequate job resources (task variety, possibilities for development, role clarity, decision-making autonomy, contributing to safety procedures and perceptions that technology is helpful and understandable). Most of these job-level drivers uniquely contributed to safety behaviours, even in the context of all other drivers.
- Less than half of the mining workers surveyed reported engaging in any policies or practices related to their work design, however, 71-74% of workers who engaged in work design-related policies and practices felt that it was useful in supporting them at work.
- Workers’ perceived usefulness of these policies and practices was related to their safety behaviours.
- 41% of WA mining workers reported feeling satisfied with their jobs and 42% reported feeling a sense of thriving.
- 30% of mining workers reported high or very high levels of psychological distress, 38 % reported feeling burnt out at work, and 31% reported an intent to leave their employer within the next 12 months.
- 60% of FIFO mining workers reported being satisfied with their accommodation while 73% of male FIFO workers reported feeling physically very safe in their work-provided accommodation compared to 53% of female FIFO workers.
- 16% of workers reported having experienced bullying (22% reported witnessing bullying) at least 2-3 times per month in the past six months.
- 41% of female mining workers reported they had experienced *being put down or condescended to*, while 34% reported receiving *offensive sexist remarks* (e.g., suggesting that people of your sex are not suited for the kind of work you do).

The Mental Awareness, Respect and Safety (MARS) Program Landmark Study: Insights from the Worker Survey and Interviews report can be found at https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2024-03/mars_report_insights_20240312.pdf

Source: Curtin University. (2024). Mining Worker Study: Key insights into the state of WA mining’s mental health. Author. <https://www.curtin.edu.au/news/media-release/mining-worker-study-key-insights-into-the-state-of-wa-minings-mental-health/>



Occupational Health Society of Australia (WA)

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

MEMBER INFORMATION

Title (Mr, Mrs, Ms, Dr etc)	
First name	
Surname	

PREFERRED MAILING DETAILS

Address			
Suburb		Postcode	
Home Phone		Mobile	
E-Mail			
Special interests (for Society Directory)			

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION – Only complete if you wish company to be recorded against your name

Company/Self Employed	
Work Phone	
E-Mail	

APPLICATION FOR:

- Full Membership \$50 for 1 year; \$100 for 3 years.
 Corporate Membership \$100 for 1 year; \$200 for 3 years.
 Student Membership \$20 for 1 year; \$40 for 3 years. Student Number: _____

An invoice will be issued once the Committee has accepted this application. *Membership includes receiving the Monitor Newsletter.*

AGREEMENT

I certify that the information provided in this application is correct and I agree to adhere to the Occupational Health Society Constitution. I also give consent to the Society to collect, use and disclose my personal information in accordance with the National Privacy Principles in matters relating to the Society.

Signature _____ Date _____

CONSENT

I hereby consent to have my details displayed in the Society's directory.

Signature _____ Date _____

The Secretary OHSWA, 639 Murray St, West Perth, WA 6005

E-mail: ohswa@outlook.com.au

Website: www.ohsociety.com.au

ABN: 83 170 105830

The OHSWA is a non-profit representative body providing expert advice to Government at all levels and support to OHS professionals.



Educational Presentation & Networking

PFAS – A FOREVER CHEMICAL AND SCARY – are we there yet!

(PFAS = Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances)

Tuesday 13th August 2024 from 6:15 pm

The Occupational Health Society of Australia (Inc) is proud to present Adjunct Professor Dr Jimmy Seow for a dynamic and engaging 1 hour presentation, discussion and Networking session on the topical theme of Contaminants in our Drinking Water.

Dr Jimmy Seow – recognised PFAS subject matter expert, adjunct research lecturer at Murdoch and Curtin Universities, consults to DFES, AMSA, Petronas, Changi Airport to mention a few, is supporting our request following recent media news articles regarding Sydney, Newcastle, Canberra, Victoria, Queensland, Rottneest and Norfolk Island (11 June 2024, *Carie Fellner, The Sydney Morning Herald*) #tapwater #contaminants #carcinogenic in widespread drinking water contamination. Jimmy will share key points and lead a discussion



To attend please register in advance by email to OHSWA secretary Ali Martins ohswa@outlook.com.au.

For more information, please contact Vice President DrAmyBright@omema.com.au.

There is *no charge* for OHSWA members who register to attend.

The charge of \$20 is for non-members.

The event will not be webcast, but slides will be available to members.

Valid for Occupational Physicians, Medico-legals, HSE professionals, insurers, emergency responders, environmental architects and engineers.

Attendance will be recorded for CPD if required.

When: Tuesday 13 August 2024 from 6.15 pm. 6.25 presentation start.

Time: Commences at 6.15 pm.

Where: MAYFAIR LANE Pub & Dining Room – 72 Outram St West Perth (Dining Room)
Free roadside parking from 6 pm in West Perth.

Cost: Attendance is free for Occupational Health Society Members but you MUST register.
Cost for non-members is \$10.00 including snacks from the Mayfair Lane Kitchen.
Drinks at the bar at your discretion.

RSVP: By 9th August 2024 to the Society's Secretary by e-Mail: ohswa@outlook.com.au

Payment Details:

Account Name: Occupational Health Society -BSB: 066 161 Account No: 1003 7010.

Payment can also be made at the event before commencement.