



*We're working for
Western Australia.*

**PUBLIC SECTOR WORKPLACE
SAFETY AND HEALTH:
FROM VISION TO REALITY**

FROM THE PREMIER



Workplace health and safety is far more than just a legal obligation to provide a safe and healthy workplace.

People should always feel safe and supported at work. Their workplace should be a healthy environment.

My Government is determined that the public sector will lead the way.

Over the next two years we will modernise the Work Health and Safety Act.

You and I will do this together, because our workplace should be somewhere with a positive and consultative safety culture; where workplace health, safety and injury management follow leading principles; and where we are able to achieve the national targets for workplace health and safety management.

To do this effectively, we will all have to work together. Departments and agencies, working as one united sector.

Health and safety is everybody's responsibility. By sharing knowledge and resources and working together we can create a better safer workplace for all of us.

MARK MCGOWAN MLA
PREMIER OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

MEETING THE NATIONAL TARGETS

The Western Australian Government is committed to the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022, which builds on the previous National Occupational Health and Safety Strategy 2002-2012.

The 2012-2022 Strategy is underpinned by two key principles:

- 1. All workers regardless of their occupation or how they are engaged have the right to a safe and healthy working environment.**
- 2. Well-designed safe and healthy work will allow workers in Australia to have more productive working lives.**

The Strategy sets three national targets to be achieved by 2022:

- A reduction in the number of worker fatalities due to injury of at least 20%.
- A reduction in the incidence rate of claims resulting in one or more weeks off work of at least 30%.
- A reduction in the incidence rate of claims for musculoskeletal disorders resulting in one or more weeks off work of at least 30%.

LEADING WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH

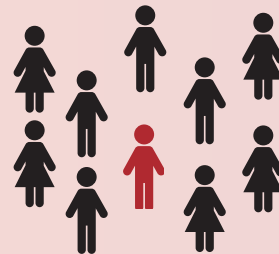
State Government agencies and their executive teams have responsibilities for managing their human resources, including workplace safety and health. They must comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 and Workers' Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981, and related legislation.

A committed leadership is key to promoting workplace safety and health matters, and achieving improvements in performance and injury management.

Leaders play a critical role in positively influencing workplace culture, management practices, and the experiences of their workforce. They should encourage and support effective consultation to improve safety and health outcomes in their workplaces.

Visible involvement by the leadership signals the importance of being safe and healthy at work, and encourages workers to engage in positive practices.

It is important that the leadership communicates clearly with the workforce about key messages and emerging issues.



1 in 10 working Western Australians are employed in the public sector.

About one quarter of workers are in regional and remote areas of the State.



More than one quarter of the workforce are over 55.



5000 (1 in 30 people) are injured at work each year in the WA public sector.

Collectively 221 280 days were lost to WA government agencies in 2018 due to staff absences following workplace injury.



Although mental stress claims represent 9.1% of new workers' compensation claims in 2018, the estimated cost of mental stress claims for WA public sector agencies was 23.3% of the total estimated claims cost.



COMMITTING TO WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH

Chief executives will ensure that each agency has a formal and public statement for employees, contractors and volunteers about the agency's commitment to safe and healthy workplaces. People working in the public sector should feel confident to report safety and health matters, and know how to take steps to eliminate or minimise risks in their workplaces.

Some of the actions agencies can take as part of their commitment include:

- championing safe and healthy workplaces at the senior leadership level
- applying a systematic approach to risk management, with a focus on protective and preventative strategies to eliminate or control hazards
- fostering the development of effective safety and health committees, and encouraging employees to nominate as safety and health representatives
- setting up a network for safety, health and injury management in the agency, including, where feasible, holding an annual workplace safety and health forum within the agency
- participating in and contributing to the inter-agency community of practice for the public sector, where larger agencies with dedicated safety, health and injury management staff can help smaller agencies improve practices
- training managers in their workplace safety and health responsibilities
- adopting a best practice approach to return-to-work programs, with a focus on staff retention
- supporting mentally safe and healthy workplaces, including addressing the potential for violence and aggression
- managing and controlling asbestos in the workplace
- encouraging reporting by staff of workplace safety and health incidents and concerns

- working towards, or receiving, a WorkSafe Plan Certificate of Achievement
- listing workplace safety, health and injury management as a standing item on the agency's corporate executive meeting agenda

Key dates such as World Day for Safety and Health at Work and Workers' Memorial Day in April, and National Work Safe Month in October, can be used to reiterate the agency's commitment and promote workplace safety and health activities.

DEVELOPING CAPABILITY OF STAFF

Not all approaches to workplace safety and health will be the same – there is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all solution. Larger agencies, for example, may have well-established safety and health committees. In smaller agencies, chief executives may have to take on a more hands-on approach to safety, health and injury management practices.

To help meet the challenges of workplace safety, health and injury management, an inter-agency community of practice will bring together public sector health and safety staff several times a year to leverage the significant expertise and experience that already exist.

The public sector community of practice will focus on agencies working together and learning from each other by providing a platform for sharing information and resources, exchanging practices, and trialling new ideas.

In addition, an online repository of resources will be developed to ensure ease of access to workplace safety, health and injury management information, the public sector code of practice, guidance and tools.

“ The public sector community of practice will focus on agencies working together and learning from each other. ”

STAFF AT THE CENTRE OF WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH

Workers in the public sector are central to workplace safety and health.

Safety and health representatives play a key role in consultative processes, including identifying and resolving issues.

Ensuring there are functioning safety and health committees is a visible way of engaging people in safety matters at work.

As well as safety and health representatives, each committee should have a representative from the agency's corporate executive and, where possible, include a union representative.

The committee should report regularly to the agency's executive on actions and outcomes. Ideally, workplace safety, health and injury management should be a standing item on the executive's meeting agenda.

The committee should be prepared to collect data and report regularly on workplace safety and health, including to the executive and through the agency's annual report.

SUPPORTING THE CHANGE

The actions of every agency to deliver safe and healthy workplaces, and appropriately manage injuries, contribute to the public sector's overall performance, and whether national targets are met.

To help achieve the Government's vision, an advisory committee will be established, including representation from key public sector agencies and UnionsWA. The committee will initially be jointly chaired by the Public Sector Commission and the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety. Its role will be to consider sector-wide matters and data trends, and use these and the committee's expertise to provide input and advice to achieving the vision.

To assist agencies consider how to make positive changes in their workplaces, the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety will provide a functional area leadership role while the

advisory committee and interagency community of practice are established. This includes the provision of online information and resources, and sharing of knowledge and lessons learned.

KEY AGENCIES

The following agencies provide support and resources for workplace safety, health and injury management across the public sector.

As well as a regulatory compliance role through its **WorkSafe** directorates, the **Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety** plays a key role in helping WA workplaces to eliminate or reduce exposure to workplace hazards. It does this through the provision of information and education resources, and advising standards.

WorkCover provides advice and education on workers' compensation and injury management, as well as monitoring compliance. It operates an independent dispute resolution service for workers' compensation matters.

Insurance Commission of Western Australia manages workers' compensation claims and commercial cover to the WA Government, and provides advice on injury management.

The **Mental Health Commission** provides support for identifying and addressing mental health matters in the workplace.

The **Public Sector Commission** provides instructions for workplace safety, health and injury management matters to be reported consistently across the sector. It drives accountability and performance improvements (e.g. PSC Circular 2018-03) and also supports effective and efficient practices across the sector.