

# 2017 – 2022 MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDER STRATEGY

Revised in July 2020



Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) are one of the most common work related injuries and diseases in NSW, and can have long-term, costly impacts for businesses and workers.

An MSD is an injury to, or disease of, the body's musculoskeletal system and includes sprains and strains of muscles, ligaments, tendons and joints. MSDs can result from gradual wear and tear and/or sudden damage to these parts of the body, and are commonly caused by hazardous manual tasks and slips, trips and falls.

When workers are required to perform a manual task, there are certain characteristics that make it hazardous. These are:

- repetitive or sustained force
- high or sudden force
- repetitious movement
- sustained or awkward posture
- exposure to vibration.

When workers are exposed to these characteristics of a hazardous manual task (risk factors), there is a greater risk of them getting a work related MSD.

# 17 WEEKS

**THE AVERAGE TOTAL TIME LOST<sup>(3)</sup>**

# 19,525

**THE NUMBER OF MAJOR MSD CLAIMS<sup>(3)</sup>**

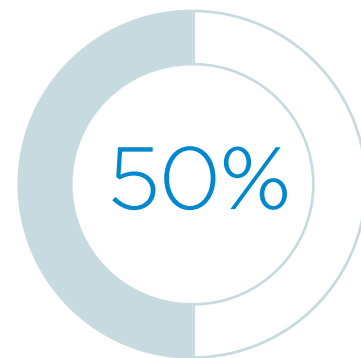
# \$32,774

**THE AVERAGE COST OF A CLAIM<sup>(3)</sup>**

There are physical, psychosocial and organisational causal factors in the workplace that may drive the presence and severity of risk factors for a hazardous manual task. It is recognised that these causal factors are interrelated and can impact upon each other.

Data shows that MSDs span across all industries and occupations. Hazardous manual tasks are the most common cause of injury, accounting for 29 per cent of workplace injuries in NSW<sup>(1)</sup>.

By implementing this Musculoskeletal Disorder Strategy (the Strategy), SafeWork NSW intends to deliver on the Work Health and Safety Roadmap for NSW 2022 commitment to reduce serious musculoskeletal injuries and illnesses. NSW has met and exceeded the original target of a 30% reduction, and accordingly the Government have set a more ambitious target. By 2022, NSW aims to achieve a 50% decline in the incidence rate of serious musculoskeletal injuries and illnesses.



**Our target: A 50% decline in the incidence rate of claims\***

\* Incidents resulting in one or more weeks off work. This decline is measured over ten years from 2012 to 2022.

A 50% reduction will see almost

# 13,500

**fewer serious work related MSD injuries and a saving in excess of**

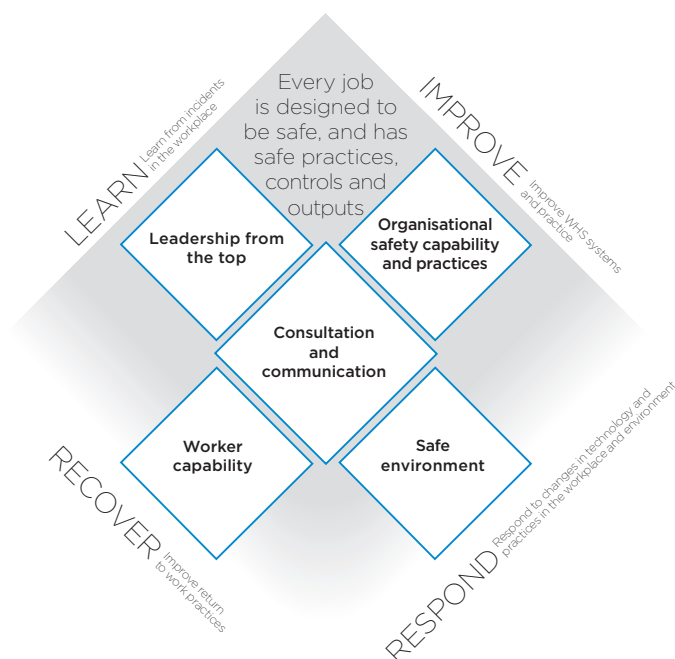
# \$415 million

**to NSW businesses<sup>(2)</sup>**

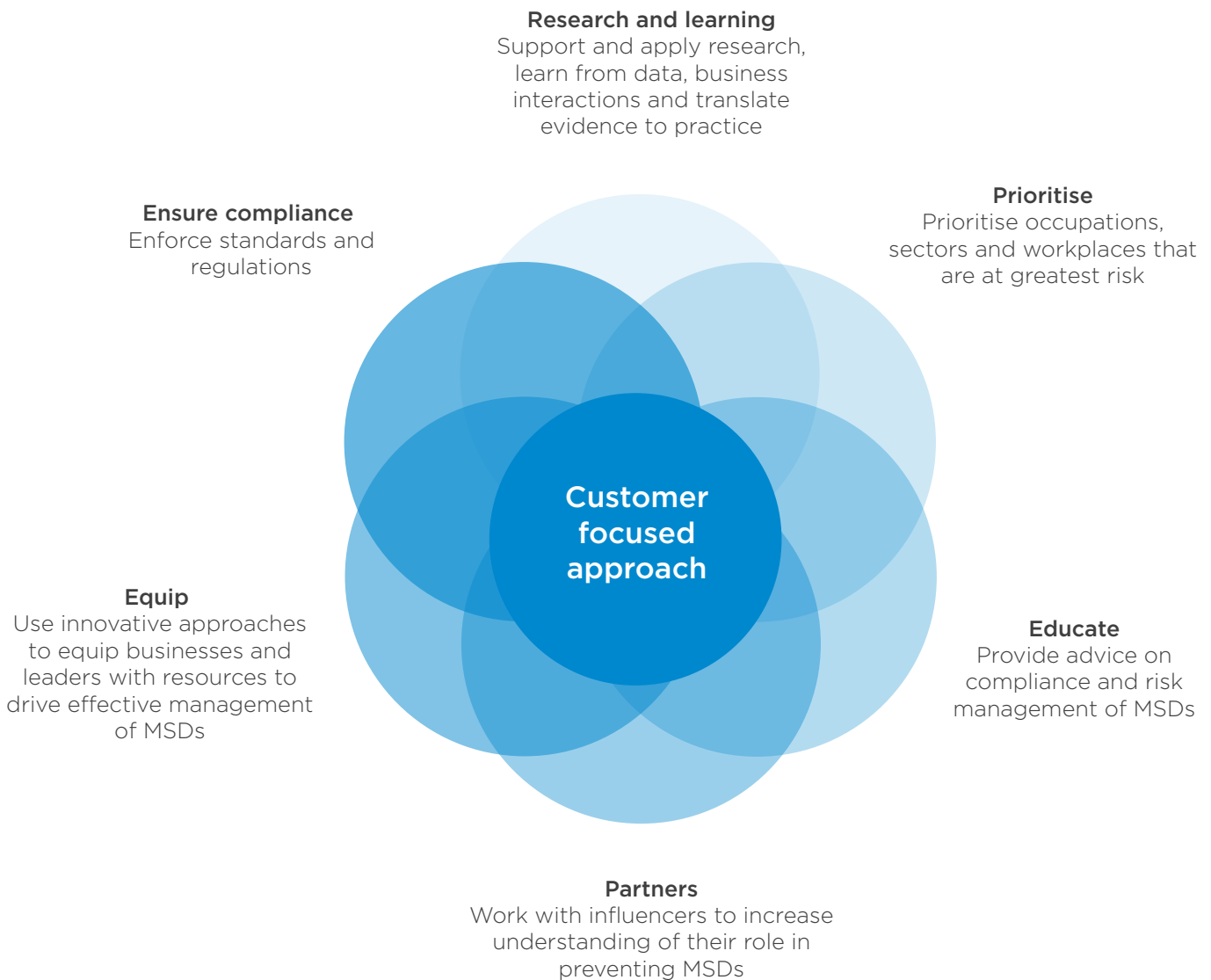
## WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

| Description of success   | NSW businesses embed a work health and safety landscape that addresses risks that lead to MSDs  | NSW businesses use a systematic approach to eliminate and/or reduce exposure to MSD hazards and risk factors   | NSW businesses, injured workers and health professionals work together to learn from MSD injuries and make improvements  |
|--|---|--|--|
| Outcomes   | <p>MSD prevention is given priority in all work processes and decisions by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leadership from the top</li> <li>• safe design of             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- systems of work</li> <li>- plant and structures</li> </ul> </li> <li>• understanding the relationship between a person's physical and psychological wellbeing and MSDs</li> <li>• ensuring worker capability for the task.</li> </ul> | <p>Businesses have capacity to effectively manage MSD hazards and risks by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• eliminating hazards at the planning and design stage</li> <li>• increasing the use of high level controls and reducing reliance on low level controls</li> <li>• ensuring MSD risk factors are considered in operational decision making including purchasing</li> <li>• ensuring effective systems for reporting and resolving MSD issues and risk factors</li> <li>• ensuring compliance with systems, control measures and legislation.</li> </ul> | <p>All parties work together to support injured workers to recover at work and learn from injury experiences by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring suitable work design by proactively managing MSD risk factors throughout the recovery at work process</li> <li>• applying learnings to improve work health and safety practices and integrate into safe design and systems across the workplace.</li> </ul> |
| NSW businesses use consultation and communication as the foundation for the effective management of MSDs |   |  |  |

The Work Health and Safety Roadmap for NSW 2022 aims to embed the health and safety landscape in NSW workplaces.



# SAFework NSW APPROACH TO ENGAGING AND PARTNERING WITH STAKEHOLDERS FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE STRATEGY



The Strategy will run until 2022 and will be supported by an MSD Action Plan and ongoing engagement with an MSD Stakeholder Consultative Committee.

The Action Plan follows a risk-based approach. It identifies the industry sectors and occupations that have the highest number of serious MSDs each year and describes the actions SafeWork NSW will take to support these businesses. Reviewed annually, this plan provides a focused approach, allowing SafeWork NSW to be responsive to changes in industry sectors and occupations.

## Sources

1. State Insurance Regulatory Authority and SafeWork NSW, NSW Workers Compensation Statistical Bulletin 2013/14. Includes major claims only. A major claim is one where the injury resulted in death, permanent disability, or temporary disability with at least one week of weekly benefit entitlement paid.
2. This reduction will be measured against the baseline in the National Strategy. For serious musculoskeletal injuries and illnesses the baseline is the average of the relevant incidence rate for the three financial years 2009/10 to 2011/12.
3. Major musculoskeletal injury and disease claims 2013/14 to 2015/16, NSW Workers' Compensation Claims data.

## 2020-21 MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS ACTION PLAN

To address the issue of musculoskeletal disorders amongst workers in NSW workplaces, and to improve the recover at work experience of injured workers, SafeWork NSW is taking a multi-pronged approach. Firstly, we will be focussing not only on the industries and occupations most at risk, but also engaging those people that may influence a worker's exposure to Hazardous Manual Tasks (HMT), and their recovery at work. Secondly, we will be partnering with industry and workplace leaders, people responsible for purchasing, designers and engineers, allied health professionals and educators to influence positive change.

This 2020-21 Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) Action Plan has been developed to support the delivery of the MSD Strategy 2022 (the Strategy).

The Strategy was developed in consultation with our customers and, forms the overarching framework for this Action Plan. The Strategy sets targets for reducing MSD-related harm amongst NSW workers. It also enables SafeWork NSW to change attitudes and improve knowledge and behaviours around the way work-related MSDs are prevented and managed, whilst ensuring compliance with work health and safety legislative requirements.

This Action Plan follows a risk based approach, identifying the industry sectors and occupations that report the highest number of serious MSDs each year and describes the actions SafeWork NSW will take to support these businesses. Reviewed annually, this plan provides a targeted approach allowing SafeWork NSW to be responsive to changes in industry sectors and occupations.

### FOCUS INDUSTRIES FOR 2020-2021

In 2020/21 we will work with industry to deliver programs across the six priority industry sectors of Health care and social assistance, Manufacturing, Construction, Agriculture, Transport and

Government. These industries and occupations have some of the highest rates of MSD injuries in NSW. We will identify focus occupations within these industry sectors where appropriate.

#### SafeWork NSW MSD action plan for 2020/21

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Programs          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participative Ergonomics for Manual Tasks (PERforM) workshops, including delivery of online sessions, targeted PERforM workshops and implementation assistance</li><li>• MSD Prevention - Inspector visit program for businesses at high risk of MSD</li><li>• Working with each work health and safety sector plan to deliver improvement in the management of HMT and prevention of MSDs for highest risk industry sector stakeholders - Agriculture, Manufacturing, Government, Transport, Construction, Health Care and Social Assistance</li><li>• Industry-specific problem solving and co-design of solutions across high risk sectors</li><li>• Host a series of training workshops to targeted businesses on the A Participative Hazard Identification and Risk Management (APHIRM) toolkit</li><li>• Complete and evaluate the Patient Handling Injuries Review of Systems (PHIRES) pilot project</li><li>• Participate in a HWSA project that is focused on reducing business and industries reliance on 'how to lift' type training as a sole or primary means of controlling manual task related hazards.</li></ul> |
| Response activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responding to requests for service and incidents</li><li>• Delivering requested presentations</li><li>• Provision of advice to internal and external customers</li><li>• Contribution to policy advice on state and national issues</li><li>• Provision of internal advice to investigation and Enforceable Undertakings</li></ul>   |

## SafeWork NSW MSD action plan for 2020/21

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|--|--|
| Engagement   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ongoing facilitation of the MSD Consultative Committee</li><li>• Engagement with highest risk industry sector stakeholders - Agriculture, Manufacturing, Government, Transport, Construction, Health Care and Social Assistance</li><li>• Engagement with MSD influential stakeholders through conference participation, working with universities and relationship development</li><li>• Building of the online MSD LinkedIn community</li><li>• Planning for 2021 National MSD Symposium (postponed from March 2020 due to COVID-19)</li><li>• Launch of MSD online self-assessment tool</li></ul> |
| Communication  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting delivery of 'At-Risk' workers' strategy- delivery of relevant documents/communication in culturally appropriate language</li><li>• HMT/PERforM poster and mini-guide</li><li>• Webinars</li><li>• Development of MSD resources including tailored sector resources and case studies</li><li>• Delivery of an MSD Strategy Communications Plan</li><li>• Communication resources targeting stakeholder's reliance on and use of inadequate control measures</li></ul>  |
| Exemplar regulator   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internal capability building with Inspector training and professional development</li><li>• WHS Ergo Regulators of Australia (WERA)</li><li>• Data driven development of programs</li><li>• Introduce evidence based tools for business</li><li>• Continue to work with universities (student experience program)</li><li>• MSD strategy and action plan evaluation</li><li>• PERforM online session evaluation</li></ul>  |
| Research - Working with the Centre for Work Health and Safety (CWHS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Build on MSD aged care research and embed findings within industry</li><li>• Research the contributing factors of MSDs by partnering with the Centre for WHS to undertake an MSD research project that will investigate<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>— qualitative perceptions of MSD prevention tools</li><li>— economic analysis of the costs associated with MSDs and benefits of prevention</li><li>— cross sectional study</li></ul></li><li>• Potential further research opportunities that align with our current programs of work</li></ul>  |

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#### Disclaimer

This publication may contain information about the regulation and enforcement of work health and safety in NSW. It may include some of your obligations under some of the legislation that SafeWork NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

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