

SafeWork NSW

# Strategic Plan 2024–29







## Acknowledgement of Country

SafeWork NSW acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional custodians of the land and water on which we live, work and depend.

We pay respect to Aboriginal Elders past and present. As the NSW Work Health and Safety regulator, we pay respect to how Country has been protected and cared

for by Aboriginal people over many tens of thousands of years.

We recognise the unique spiritual and cultural significance of land, water and all that is in the environment and the continuing connection and aspirations for Country of Aboriginal people and Traditional custodians.



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# Minister's message

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The Hon. Sophie Cotsis MP  
Minister for Industrial Relations  
Minister for Work Health and Safety

SafeWork NSW is committed to improving the physical and psychological health and safety standards in New South Wales workplaces and to creating a strong culture of safety practices. This is achievable with a strong and consistent regulatory approach and by holding duty holders accountable for creating and maintaining safe and healthy places of work.

In line with the goals of this Strategic Plan 2024–29, SafeWork NSW will deliver its core regulatory functions while focusing each year on a number of set priorities. These will also align with the action areas and targets under the Australian WHS Strategy 2023–33. SafeWork NSW will continue a strong, fair and firm approach to enforcement against non-compliance while building industry capability to manage risk and embed effective consultation mechanisms. SafeWork NSW is committed to forming collaborative partnerships with industry and peak bodies in the prevention of work-related serious injury, disease and fatalities for all workers and workplaces in this state.

## Deputy Secretary's message

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Trent Curtin  
Acting Deputy Secretary, SafeWork NSW

I am proud to introduce SafeWork NSW's 5-year strategic plan.

This strategic plan will guide SafeWork NSW in delivering and improving on our regulatory and enforcement approaches, and in building industry and internal capabilities. This will ensure that SafeWork NSW is a strong, accountable and responsive work health and safety regulator that delivers consistent regulatory outcomes across NSW.

Compliance with work health and safety laws remains a persistent challenge in NSW. Every day, our inspectors and staff provide advice and information to inform workers about their rights and to build capability among businesses and leaders. Where necessary, we enforce compliance and undertake investigations and prosecutions to help secure safe and healthy workplaces.

Our focus is on taking fair and firm regulatory approaches to improve both physical and psychological health and safety. While we will adopt strong and responsive regulatory approaches, we will also work closely with industry, workers and their representatives to prevent work-related serious injuries, diseases and fatalities. When necessary, we will hold duty holders accountable for compliance with our laws, while we work to improve overall work health and safety awareness and support the important roles performed by unions and Health and Safety Representatives.

Finally, while we invest in our systems and capabilities, we will also invest in our inspectors and staff to ensure they have the skills and expertise to ensure SafeWork NSW is a model regulator and employer.

# About us

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SafeWork NSW is the state's work health and safety regulator. We engage with the NSW community to prevent work-related fatalities and serious injuries and illnesses.

We have a legislative mandate to undertake specific functions under the *Work Health and Safety Act NSW 2011*.

SafeWork NSW offers advice on improving work health and safety, provides licensing and registration for potentially dangerous work, provides safety testing services and takes necessary action to ensure the laws we administer are followed.

We are dedicated to using the best regulatory practices to make decisions based on solid evidence. Our services focus on the needs of our stakeholders, ensuring fairness and transparency, and maintaining the trust of the NSW community.





# Our operating context

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## **SafeWork NSW operates in a complex and ever-changing work health and safety environment.**

With the rapid pace of change, SafeWork NSW must be equipped to adapt and respond to a range of persistent and emerging challenges.

The legislation that SafeWork NSW administers is the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and the *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017*. The NSW legislation is part of the model scheme for harmonised work health and safety legislation, which commenced in NSW on 1 January 2012.

Safe Work Australia publish the Model Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations. The Inter-Governmental Agreement for Regulatory and

Operational Reform in Occupational Health and Safety formalises the cooperation between the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to achieve harmonisation of work health and safety (WHS) laws. NSW is party to this agreement. Provisions that are the same across jurisdictions are subject to regular reviews via established national processes.

SafeWork NSW's functions under the legislation include monitoring and enforcing compliance with the WHS legislation within NSW, providing advice and information to persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) and their workers on their rights and obligations, investigating workplace incidents, collecting work health and safety data and reporting to the Minister.



# Our challenges

Our strategic plan is shaped by recognising our operating context and understanding current and emerging WHS issues. By drawing on research and our regulatory expertise, we can ensure our approach to advice, education and risk management is agile and informed by the latest evidence. As a WHS regulator we are not immune from environmental and other issues, challenging us to improve our practices to become a model regulator.



## A changing societal environment



- inflation and cost increases on businesses and industry
- the need for new and improved infrastructure and housing
- world conflicts impacting security and supply chains
- frequent extreme weather events that disrupt normal business operation
- increased urbanisation and the emergence of new infectious diseases
- ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

## Changing world of work



- the gig economy particularly in disability care and food delivery services
- new technology and artificial intelligence, robotics, advances in material science
- the renewable energy sector including the hydrogen economy
- changes to traditional patterns of office-based work and the introduction of flexible and home-based hybrid working arrangements

## Enduring harms and hazards



- psychosocial hazards from high work demands, low job support and harmful behaviours
- workplace sexual harassment harms
- falls from heights and falls on the same level, including from slips and trip hazards
- exposure to hazardous substances, being injured by moving vehicles or plant and machinery



# Alignment to the Australian WHS Strategy

The SafeWork NSW strategic plan aligns to the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023–33. The Australian Strategy enlists the commitment of all parties including SafeWork NSW to work cooperatively to drive continual improvements in WHS performance by responding to key WHS challenges over the next decade. It also sets national targets and actions for reduced worker fatalities, injuries and illnesses, which NSW has adopted.

## Targets 2023–2033



Reduce worker fatalities caused by traumatic injuries by 30%



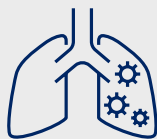
Reduce the frequency rate of serious claims resulting in one or more weeks off work by 20%



Reduce the frequency rate of claims resulting in permanent impairment by 15%



Reduce the overall incidence of work-related injury or illness among workers to below 3.5%



Reduce the frequency rate of work-related respiratory disease by 20%



No new cases of accelerated silicosis by 2033



Action to increase the awareness by PCBU's about their duty to protect workers from exposure to harmful substances



Action to build the capability of PCBU's, regulators and workers to ensure compliance with the duty to manage psychosocial hazards at work

# About the Australian Strategy

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The Australian WHS Strategy was developed in 2022 by Safe Work Australia. Using data analysis, research and extensive stakeholder consultation that provided the current WHS context in Australia, the Strategy provides an outline of the most common causes of injuries and fatalities nationally.

Body-stressing, falls, slips and trips, and being hit by moving objects are the cause of most workplace injuries in Australia. While vehicle incidents, being hit by moving objects and falls from a height continue to account for most fatalities. Musculoskeletal conditions still account for the majority (87%) of workers compensation claims for serious injuries.

Psychological injuries are rising in number and severity. National data showed a 28% increase in workers compensation claims for mental health conditions between 2007–08 and 2019–20. Cancer and other diseases caused by work remain difficult to distinguish in official health statistics; however, we know that they remain prevalent, and some conditions are on the rise. Two people on average are diagnosed with mesothelioma each day, and other particular respiratory diseases have also re-emerged as a challenge.



# Current situation in NSW

## Fatalities 2022



Industries with the highest numbers of fatalities were transport, postal and warehousing, agriculture, construction and manufacturing



Mechanism of fatalities were vehicle incidents, being hit by moving objects and being trapped between stationary and moving objects

In 2022

65% of fatalities involved a vehicle<sup>1</sup>



35% involved moving objects

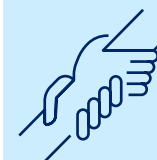


(including vehicles), falling and environmental factors (heat, electricity)

## Serious injury and illness 2021/22



In NSW the frequency of serious injury and illness was 8.9 (per 1,000,000 hours worked). The median time lost in weeks was 5.9



The most common mechanism of injury is body stressing, followed by falls, trips and slips and being hit by moving objects



The most common industry is health and social assistance followed by construction and manufacturing<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of the 65% of fatalities involving a vehicle, 71% did not occur on a public road. Incidents not on a public road do not come under the jurisdiction of the NSW Police (Transport for NSW or National Heavy Vehicle Regulator).

<sup>2</sup> Data extracted from Safe Work Australia Interactive Data Website: [data.safeworkaustralia.gov.au](https://data.safeworkaustralia.gov.au)

# What we are doing in NSW

At SafeWork NSW, we are committed to improving the physical and psychological health and safety in NSW workplaces.

## We will:

- take data-led targeted harm prevention to reduce fatalities and serious injuries and illnesses
- adopt strong and responsive regulatory approaches to prevent work-related serious injury, disease and fatalities for all workers and workplaces
- build industry capability to manage risk and embed effective consultation with stakeholders regarding WHS
- take fair and firm enforcement action against non-compliance
- form collaborative partnerships with government agencies, industry and worker representatives including unions
- equip our people with the skills, knowledge and systems to be a model regulators.





# About this plan

The SafeWork NSW Strategic Plan 2024–29 defines our purpose and the outcomes we want to see in this period. The Plan describes the strategic choices we have made to secure these outcomes, what we aim to achieve and how we will measure our performance.

Purpose							To secure safe and healthy workplaces in NSW							
Strategic objectives		Preventing harm through strong and responsive regulatory approaches			Supporting industry capability by educating, advising, empowering and securing WHS compliance			Engaging and partnering with government, industry, unions and those affected by workplace incidents to collaboratively solve WHS issues			Striving to be a model employer and regulator			
Our actions		Research and data-led programs, interventions and solutions		Strong and proportionate approach to compliance and enforcement		Evidence-based and tailored resources aiding compliance focusing on at-risk and vulnerable workers, small businesses, HSRs and permit holders			Partnerships with peak bodies to solve WHS problems		Systems and process improvements for regulatory best practice, legislation and policies		Workforce planning and capability building to create a culture focused on safety and wellbeing	
Outcomes		NSW workplaces are safe and healthy SafeWork NSW is a trusted and respected regulator												
Success measures		Reduce worker fatalities caused by traumatic injury Reduction in the frequency rate of serious injury and illness claims Monitor and enforce compliance and harm prevention in priority areas			Support of WHS compliance by providing access to information and resources that are fit for purpose Raise awareness of SafeWork NSW and its regulatory role			Stakeholders understand their WHS rights and responsibilities SafeWork NSW engages and consults with partners to identify and solve problems			SafeWork NSW is a trusted and respected regulator Staff are satisfied and engaged with working for SafeWork NSW			
National WHS		NSW will align to the Australian WHS Strategy 2023–33 targets and actions												

## Drivers of success



### Trust and Respect

We have trust and respect from the community as a strong and responsive regulator



### Transparent and Accountable

We strive to deliver best value regulatory interventions and remain transparent and accountable



### Independent and Consistent

We have a strong and consistent regulatory approach by holding duty holders accountable for creating and maintaining safe and healthy places of work



### Strong and Responsive

We respond and target our regulatory attention on high risk, poor performers and repeat offenders and take reasonable and appropriate enforcement action

# Activities to support strategic outcomes

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## 1 Preventing harm through strong and responsive regulatory approaches

- Our regulatory interventions are informed by the latest research and insights into emerging issues and risks, and ensuring that our strategic approach and policies are both relevant and effective
- We will take a responsive and proportionate approach to prevent workplace fatalities, injury, illness and exposure to harmful substances
- We will target attention on high risk, poor performers and repeat offenders and take appropriate education, compliance and enforcement action in line with the national compliance and enforcement framework
- Our WHS advice will be available, accessible and cater for an at-risk and culturally diverse workforce

## 2 Supporting industry capability by educating, advising, empowering and securing WHS compliance

- We will encourage duty holders and officers to comply with their legislative obligations and build good organisational safety cultures
- We will support businesses, particularly small and medium, to put into practice our WHS codes and guidelines to understand and then implement good compliance

## 3 Engaging and partnering with government, industry, unions and those affected by workplace incidents to collaboratively solve WHS issues

- We will create working relationships to engage with representative bodies, other regulators and government departments to drive innovation, policy and improve safety standards
- We will engage with health and safety representatives as a valued and integral part of improving health and safety outcomes
- We will listen to lived experience from our stakeholders through the right communication channels to meet their needs and improve our service delivery

## 4 Striving to be a model employer and regulator

- We will improve our operational policies and frameworks to achieve best practice in WHS compliance and regulation
- Our behaviours will consistently reflect our values and we will embed a safety culture mindset
- Our efforts and resources will be aligned to our strategic and regulatory priorities
- Our staff will have the right systems, tools and capabilities to deliver best practice regulatory services.





# Monitoring our progress



## Performance measurement

Over the next 5 years, our service delivery and business performance will be assessed against a set of success measures, actions and targets aligning to the Australian WHS Strategy 2023–33. We will monitor our progress to ensure we are on track to meet our strategic outcomes.



## Annual planning and reporting

Each financial year, SafeWork NSW will produce an Annual Regulatory Statement describing what we plan to deliver that year, aligned to our strategic outcomes and regulatory priorities. We will publish our Annual Regulatory Statement on our website.

# Implementing our plan

## Working with others



### NSW community

Our mandate is to serve the community by protecting workers and other persons against harms to their health, safety and welfare. We provide advice on what good health and safety compliance looks like to prevent illnesses injuries and fatalities



### Industry, businesses and workers

We engage with industry, businesses, duty holders, workers and worker representatives to support the prevention of workplace harms



### Government

We work with NSW and national government departments to address WHS concerns and provide advice on national standards, policy options and major programs



### Industry associations and unions

Engagement and consultation with unions and industry associations to identify emerging hazards and risks and solve workplace issues



### Technical groups

Collaboration with subject matter experts from professional bodies, academia, specialist organisations for technical advice, research and development activities



### Regulators and co-regulators

We work with other regulators and enforcement agencies to share information, investigate workplace incidents and improve regulatory practices. We work with co-regulators to enable consistent and coordinated approach to WHS with a focus on continuous improvement and higher standards





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