

News Update

Meet the new Research Strategy team at Safe Work Australia

National Safe Work Month 2024 wrap-up

Solar installers guide on managing risks

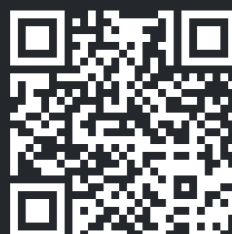
Managing psychosocial hazards in retail

2024 DATA SHOWS THERE'S STILL WORK TO DO

While Australia compares favourably to the rest of the world, data in the Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Australia 2024 report shows the number of workers fatally injured at work remains high.

WELCOME TO THE SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA UPDATE

In this issue, we explore the detail of our annual *Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Australia 2024* report, chat to Dayna Fawkes who is leading our new Research Strategy team and look at the fantastic job everyone did to raise awareness of work health and safety during National Safe Work Month.



Subscribe to Safe Work Australia News to receive our newsletter or get email updates across a range of topics including work health and safety, workers' compensation, data and statistics, model WHS laws and codes of practice.

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Comcare's National Safe Work Month forums go off without a hitch



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2024 data shows there's still work to do

The *Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Australia 2024* report, released in September, is our flagship annual data report. Worryingly, in 2023, 200 workers were fatally injured at work.

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Meet the new Research Strategy team at Safe Work Australia

We caught up with Dayna Fawkes, Director of the new Research Strategy team at Safe Work Australia, to talk about the functions of the new team and how its work will support the broader vision of Safe Work Australia.

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Out and about



Our efforts this year have focused on delivering policies and legislative reforms that make a real difference in the lives of workers, their families, businesses, and communities.

A year of progress and engagement in work health and safety

As I reflect on my first year as Chief Executive Officer of Safe Work Australia, I'm both proud and encouraged by the progress we've made in creating safer, healthier workplaces across the country.

In my first months in the role of CEO, I spent considerable time meeting with Safe Work Australia Members, Agency staff, industry/business/employer representatives, unions, professional associations, families who have lost loved ones as a result of a workplace fatality, and many others asking them what they wanted from me as CEO and what they would like from the Agency over the coming years. Throughout the year, I have continued to place a strong emphasis on consultation and engagement and this approach will guide our work at the Agency over the coming years.

Our efforts this year have focused on delivering policies and legislative reforms that make a real difference in the lives of workers, their families, businesses, and communities. Here's a look at some of the initiatives we've implemented over the last year, and what they mean for Australian workplaces.

One of the most significant and impactful initiatives has been the nationwide ban on the manufacture, supply, processing, and installation of engineered stone benchtops, panels, and slabs. This world-first ban, which took effect on 1 July 2024, emerged from Safe Work Australia's strong recommendation and the unified agreement of WHS ministers to combat silicosis—a serious lung disease caused by exposure to respirable crystalline silica. Further, on 1 September 2024, we strengthened regulations across all industries for materials containing 1% or more crystalline silica. These changes mark a bold step forward in protecting workers from hazardous exposure to silica.

In April 2024, following extensive consultation, WHS ministers agreed on updated workplace exposure limits for around 700 chemicals. This is crucial to ensuring long-term protection of workers from airborne contaminants. It's a proactive approach that recognises the evolving nature of workplace risks and the need for limits that reflect the latest evidence. As we transition to these new exposure limits, set to take effect on 1 December 2026, we are working to provide guidance to help businesses adjust. We're also consulting on additional proposed limits for specific chemicals—such as benzene and formaldehyde—to ensure we're hearing from industries and workers directly on the impact these changes will have.

Creating workplaces that are truly safe means addressing all forms of harm, including sexual and gender-based harassment. In late 2023, Safe Work Australia Members endorsed the *model Code of Practice: Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment*. This code offers clear guidance for PCBUs on meeting their WHS obligations to prevent harassment, aligning with recommendations from the Australian Human Rights Commission's *Respect@Work* report.

To ensure our policies are grounded in evidence and addressing emerging risks, we've strengthened our research focus this year. We have established a research team within the Agency because we know there are significant evidence gaps around how we deal with some of the persistent challenges, like supporting vulnerable worker cohorts, as well as how we can better understand how to manage emerging issues, such as balancing the positive and negative effects of AI and new technologies.

The achievements of the 12 months are shared by everyone committed to work health and safety—from WHS ministers, to Safe Work Australia Members and Agency staff and the broader work health and safety community.

A deeper connection with the WHS research community will equip us all to make informed, impactful decisions that keep pace with evolving health and safety risks and to foster the great work being done across Australia to test creative and practical solutions that have the potential to impact workplaces directly.

On 29 October, Australia became one of the first nations to ratify all 10 fundamental International Labour Organization conventions, reaffirming this country's commitment to workplace safety. It's a significant achievement that places Australia among global leaders in health and safety and underscores our belief that safe work is not just a legal requirement—it's a fundamental human right.

This year we also commenced important work developing a model Code of Practice for the health care and social assistance industry. We have been workshopping the code with relevant government and non-government, unions and industry representatives over the last few months and we are keen to hear Safe Work Australia's Members' views on the draft at our next meeting. We are also finalising the important amendments to the incident notification provisions in the model laws. To assist businesses we are asking them what the Agency can do in its guidance materials to support them through the implementation of the changes. Importantly we are also undertaking a mid-term review of the *National Return to Work Strategy 2020-2030* to provide an in-depth analysis of its effectiveness after the first 5 years of implementation.

At their September meeting WHS ministers tasked us with delivering on some key outcomes which we will be focusing on next year including our role in the Asbestos and Silica National Strategic Plans and consideration of dispute resolution and other outcomes of jurisdictional reviews of the model work health and safety laws.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who has supported me in my work as CEO this year. The achievements of the 12 months are shared by everyone committed to work health and safety—from WHS ministers, to Safe Work Australia Members and Agency staff and the broader work health and safety community. I am excited about the work that lies ahead in 2025 and confident that together, we can continue to make progress on achieving safe, healthy workplaces across Australia.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marie Boland". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Marie Boland
CEO, Safe Work Australia

2024 DATA SHOWS THERE'S STILL WORK TO DO



Tragically, 200 workers were fatally injured at work in 2023, compared to 195 in 2022, according to our Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Australia 2024 report.

The Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Australia report is our flagship annual data report. It provides a snapshot of work health and safety in Australia by presenting national data on work-related fatalities, injuries and disease.

Over the past 10 years, there have been more than 1,880 traumatic injury fatalities in Australian workplaces, and over 1,165,100 workers have made a serious workers' compensation claim involving more than one week of working time lost.

Safety in Australian workplaces has improved significantly over time. But even reduced rates of work-related fatalities, injury and illness have a major impact on workers, communities and the broader economy.

Australia's current work-related injury rate of 3.5% – the proportion of people who experienced a work-related injury or illness in the previous 12 months – is roughly one-third the global rate of 12.1%.

The report found that 76% of work-related traumatic injury fatalities and 61% of serious workers' compensation claims occurred in just 6 industries: agriculture, forestry and fishing; public administration and safety; transport, postal and warehousing; manufacturing; health care and social assistance, and construction.

Vehicle incidents continue to account for the largest proportion of worker fatalities (42%; 84 fatalities). Falls from a height was the second highest contributor to worker fatalities, with a concerning increase of 71% since 2022, from 17 to 29 fatalities.

The report also found that claims for mental health conditions continued to increase in 2023, now accounting for 10.5% of all serious claims. The median time lost from work in these cases is more than 5 times longer than that recorded across all injuries and diseases.



Safety in Australian workplaces has improved significantly over time. But even reduced rates of work-related fatalities, injury and illness have a major impact on workers, communities and the broader economy.

Phil Wise, Director, Data Improvement and Analysis

Work-related injury fatalities 2023

- ↓ The traumatic injury fatality rate for workers in Australia has **decreased by 19% since 2013**.
- ♂ **95%** of worker fatalities were male.
- 🚗 **Vehicle incidents** continue to account for the **largest proportion of worker fatalities (42%)**.
- 🏗️ **Machinery operators and drivers** had the **highest number of fatalities by occupation (73 fatalities)**.
- 🌲 The **agriculture, forestry and fishing** industry had the **highest worker fatality rate** (9.2 per 100,000 workers).

Work-related injury and illness 2023

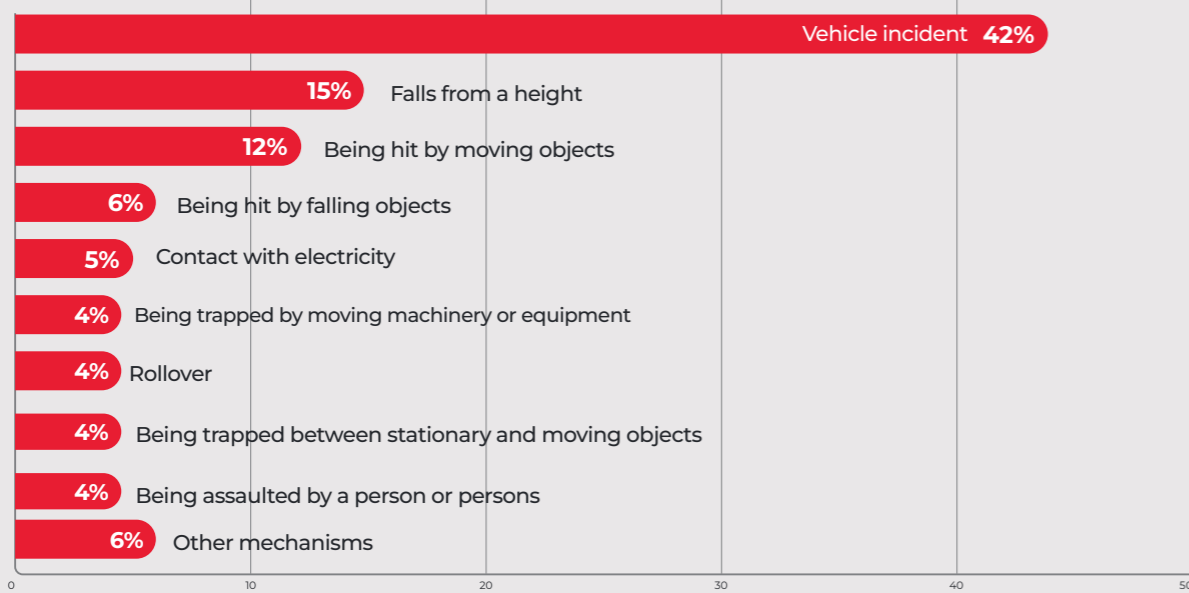
- 👤 There were **139,000 serious workers' compensation claims** in Australia in 2022-23p.
- 🕒 The median time lost from work-related injuries and illnesses has been increasing over the past 10 years, with **21.3%** of accepted claims involving 13 weeks or more off work in 2021-22.
- 🔪 **Body stressing injuries** were the leading cause of serious workers' compensation claims (**32.7%**), followed by falls, slips and trips of a person; being hit by moving objects, and mental stress.
- 🧠 **Mental health conditions** accounted for **10.5%** or **14,600 claims** in 2022-23p. This is a **97.3%** increase compared with 10 years ago.
- 👷 **Labourers** accounted for **22.9%** of serious claims in 2022-23p – nearly 3 times as high as the proportion of jobs they represent (**8.4%**).

📄 View the [Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Australia 2024](#) report and explore more data on our interactive data website – [Our Data. Your Stories](#). Also consider completing our user survey when you visit the interactive data website.

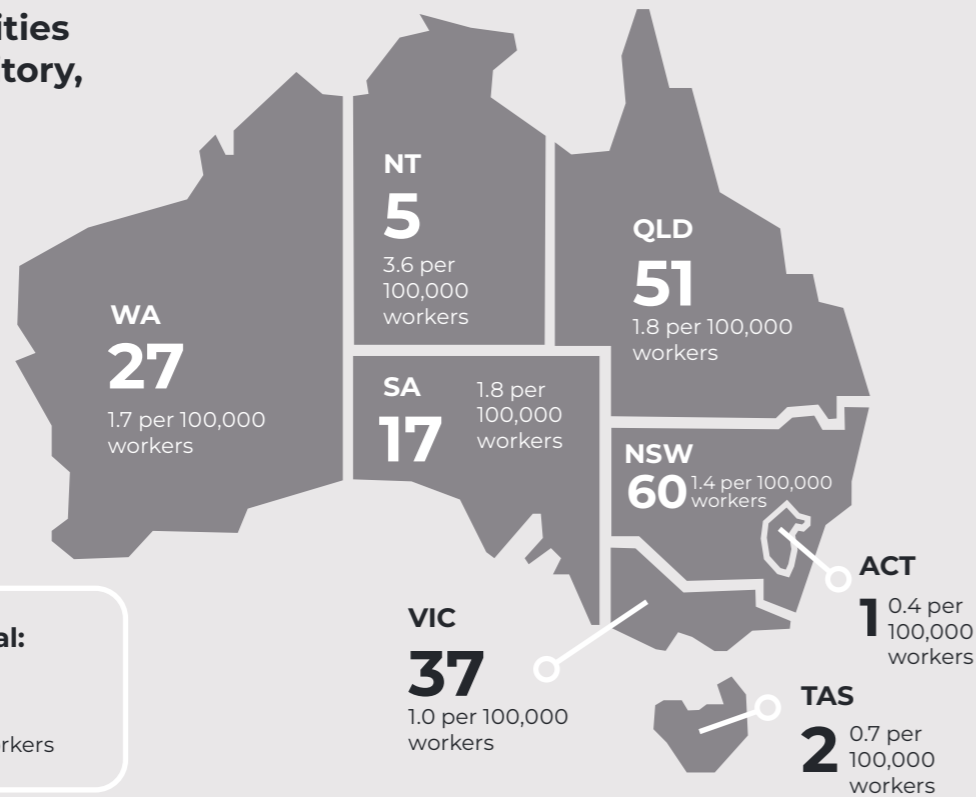
KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REPORT

View the [Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Australia 2024](#) report and explore more data on our interactive data website – [Our Data. Your Stories.](#)

Worker fatalities by most common mechanism of incident, 2023

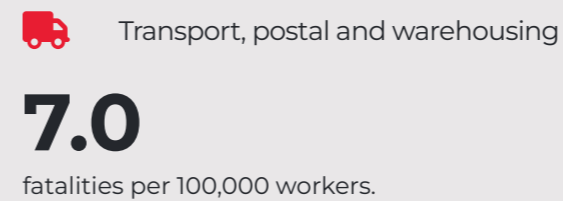
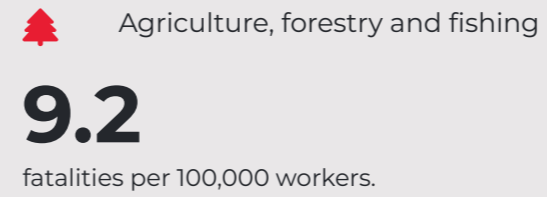


Worker fatalities by state/territory, 2023

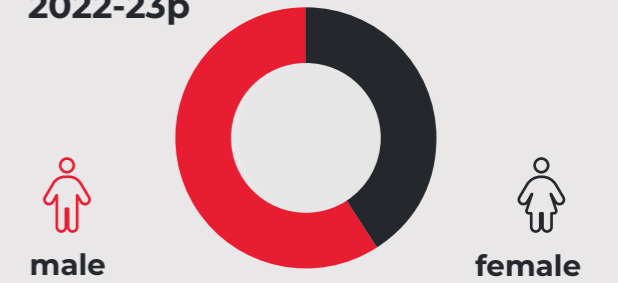


Australian total:
200
1.4 per 100,000 workers

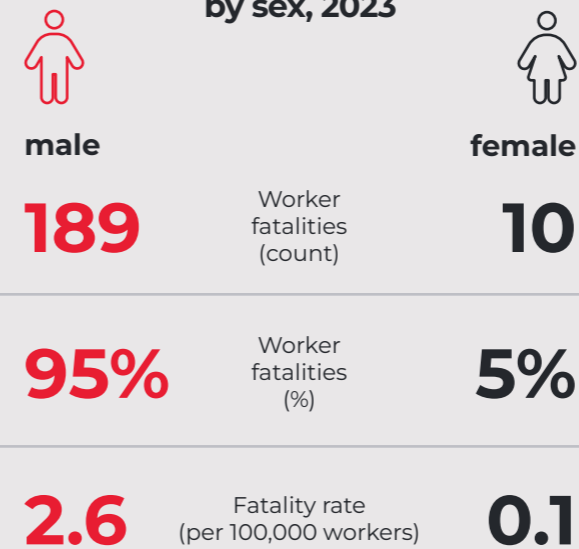
Worker fatalities by industry



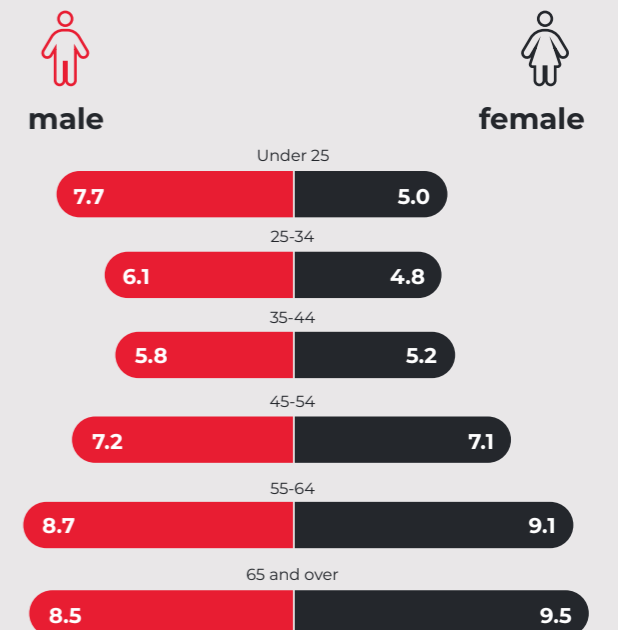
Serious claims by sex, 2022-23p



Worker fatalities by sex, 2023



Serious claims (frequency rate) by sex and age group, 2022-23p



MEET THE NEW RESEARCH STRATEGY TEAM

AT SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA

Our CEO, Marie Boland, had a vision - to build on our evidence function and establish a dedicated research section to inform our policies and strategies and to deepen our connections with the research community.

That vision is now a reality, and we caught up with Dayna Fawkes, Director of the new Research Strategy team, to chat about her background, the functions of the new team and how their work will support and shape the broader vision of Safe Work Australia.

Can you tell us about your research background and what attracted you to the research role at Safe Work Australia?

My interest in research is grounded in my first degree in maths and statistics, which gave me an appreciation for high quality data and instilled the value of taking a systematic approach to solving problems. I completed a psychology degree later in my career to support my understanding of what drives successful organisations. I am particularly interested in how teams and leaders can be most effective and how organisational systems and cultures can make or break a person.

Before joining Safe Work Australia, I worked in the Mental health and research team at Comcare, managing a rolling 4-year research program. Some highlights from my 5 years there include developing better practice principles for effective Employee Assistance Programs through an interagency working group and developing a capability maturity model for workplace bullying prevention.

I am so grateful for my time at Comcare working on projects that were connected to my passion – that people really are their best at work when they feel safe, supported and included. I think there is such an exciting opportunity for my role at Safe Work Australia to extend that across a broader, national platform. There is so much amazing WHS and workers' compensation research being done across the country that can tell us how policy and systems can lead to safer, healthier and more productive workplaces and I can't wait to find ways to harness that and direct it to where it's most needed.

Tell us about the team's areas of focus.

Our first big job is to develop a research strategy that sets out the Agency's vision, goals and objectives - we're in the process of doing that now and I'm grateful to all those who have given their time to offer their insights.

Our role is to build partnerships and connections to deliver innovative research, with a strong focus on engaging with academics and the research sector. We want to bring people together and trigger new conversations – so we will have a strong event focus. These research events will create spaces where smart people, with different ways of thinking, can come up with some potential solutions for some of our biggest challenges.

What do you see as key challenges for your work?

To start with, I'm not coming into a void, there are some really solid foundations to work with. The Agency has lots of existing relationships with researchers and has delivered some great research to explore WHS and workers' compensation topics over the years. The challenge as I see it, is how do we strengthen the connections with existing stakeholders and how can we build broader connections across the research community so that we can develop and harness the best evidence challenges to inform policy? There is more we can do in this space, and consultation indicates academics want to engage with us more.

In terms of broader research challenges, there are lots of existing and emerging complex WHS and workers' compensation issues that need critical discussion to keep our policy, advice and model WHS laws current and relevant. How do we manage WHS risks with the changing nature of work? How could artificial intelligence affect or improve workers' health and safety? What are the best ways to prevent psychosocial hazards at work? And how do we get people back to work safely and more quickly if they do have an injury?

How will your work support Safe Work Australia to tackle these challenges?

Although we're still developing our research strategy, I see our work helping the Agency access the evidence we need to deliver great policy based on evidence. We can also help to evaluate policies and test outcomes - were they what we expected? What can we learn for next time?

There is value in lifting up and supporting the WHS regulators at the state and territory level who are working with researchers to solve their own challenges. Together, we can solve elements of the bigger, national picture.

A major role for the Agency is to drive thought leadership around what the big WHS and workers' compensation issues will be in the next 5-10 years. By engaging researchers to assist with predicting these future issues, we can ensure the Agency is proactive in addressing them.

What events is the Agency planning that the research community may be interested in?

Our first event is a worker consultation research event at the end of November in Melbourne. Worker consultation is a key part of the WHS fundamentals – concepts that are essential for everyone in the workplace to understand. Even though worker consultation is embedded in the legislation it's not always done well. The event will explore the barriers and opportunities for improved worker consultation and what more can be done by policy makers and regulators to embed consultation with workers as a fundamental element in the workplace.

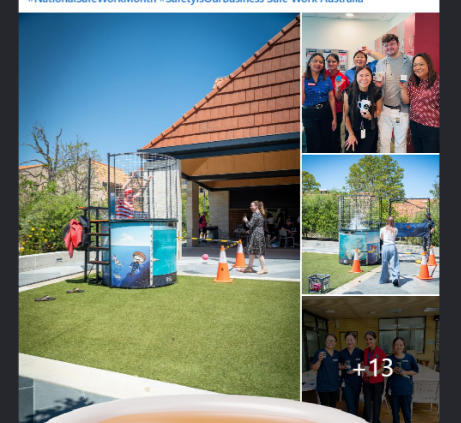
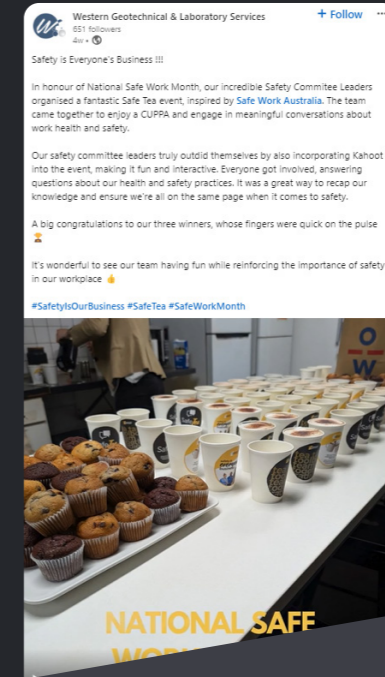
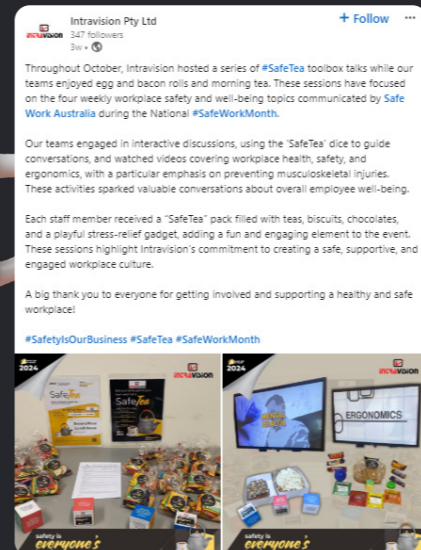
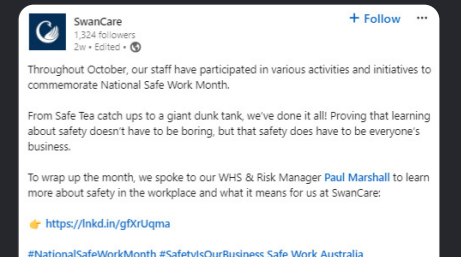
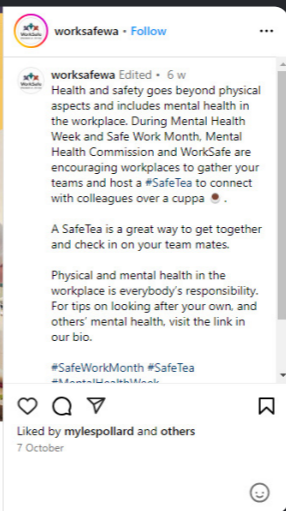
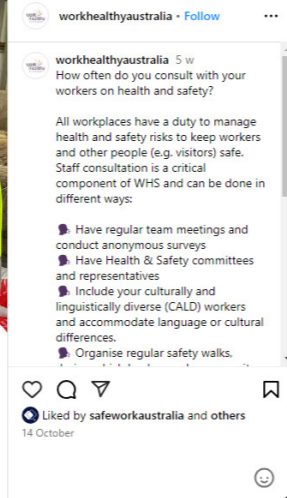
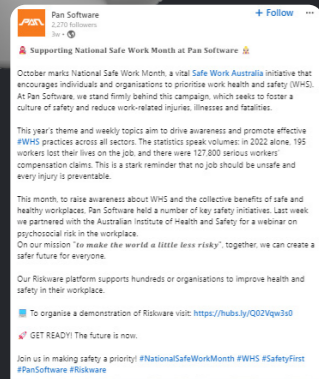
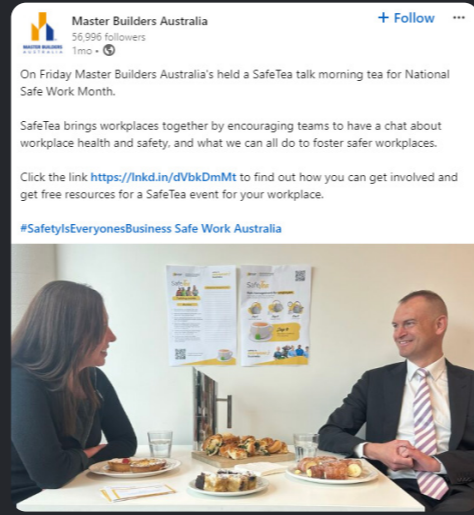
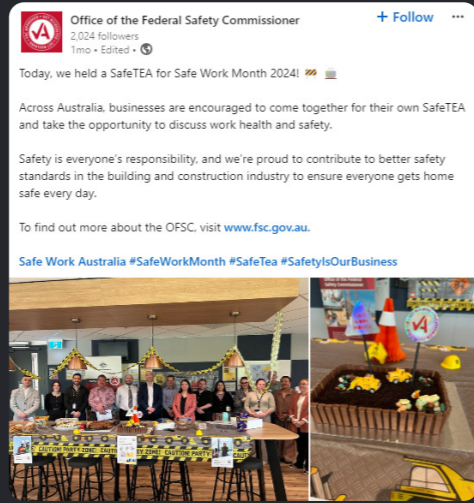
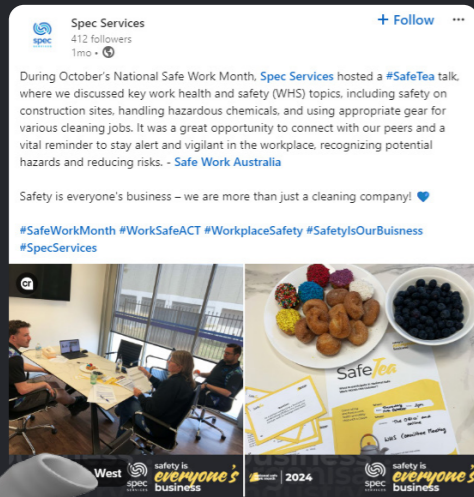
The format of this event, with the focus on a single discussion topic, is a bit of a pilot. We're hoping it will be a success and that we can plan more events like it in future.

As for 2025, things are in the planning stages but bringing academics, regulators, policy makers and practitioners together to network, share research and identify opportunities for collaboration is high on our priority list, including an in-person event.

The Agency is really looking forward to engaging with many of you on the journey!



The Research Strategy team: Luke Cummins, Dayna Fawkes and Jin Zhou



THAT'S A WRAP!

NATIONAL SAFE WORK MONTH 2024

In October, workplaces around Australia got together to recognise National Safe Work Month – a time to commit to creating safe and healthy workplaces. From SafeTea chats and toolbox talks to webinars and events, workers and employers showcased the theme **safety is everyone's business**, highlighting how a safe and healthy working environment is a fundamental principle and right across all industries and occupations.

Although National Safe Work Month is over, safety is everyone's business 365 days a year. Get inspired and check out some highlights from National Safe Work Month 2024!



safety is everyone's business

COMCARE'S NATIONAL SAFE WORK MONTH GOES OFF WITHOUT A HITCH!

Safe Work Australia is proud to have so many organisations that support our National Safe Work Month (NSWM) campaign each year.

Comcare is a proud supporter of NSWM and actively promotes and supports WHS initiatives each October as a trusted WHS authority.

This year Comcare integrated the National Safe Work Month 2024 theme 'Safety is everyone's business' into its webinar series with great success.

PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH AND SAFETY FORUM

The forum attracted 995 attendees and opened with a regulatory update from Comcare. Safe Work Australia also provided an update about new or upcoming changes to the model WHS laws around incident notification, sexual harassment and fatigue. Dr. Natalie Flatt (SuperFriend) then shared insights from the Thriving Workplace Index, underscoring the relationship between psychosocial health, safety, and mental health resources. Megan Boyd and Kristy Stewart (Australian Tax Office) presented case studies on fostering psychosocial health, and Callie Barrett (Department of Health and Aged Care) discussed the advantages of neurodiversity in the workplace, addressing common misconceptions and sharing personal experiences. Professor Sharon Parker (Curtin University) finished the webinar with a focus on managing psychosocial hazards through SMART Work Design, using participatory change and practical case studies as key strategies.



[Watch the recorded webinar.](#)

HEALTH AND SAFETY REPRESENTATIVE (HSR) FORUM

This inaugural HSR Forum, launched in support of National Safe Work Month, had 505 attendees and featured a regulatory update on recent safety regulations and their impact on HSRs, presented by Justin Napier and Luka Campbell (Comcare). Teagan Poole and Kathy Naumczyk (Comcare) provided insights into managing psychosocial hazards and shared practical tips for creating psychologically safe workplaces. There was also a panel discussion with several experts who discussed current challenges, shared experiences and opportunities for HSRs.



[Watch the recorded webinar.](#)

TRANSPORT NETWORK FORUM

The forum brought 150 attendees together to hear industry experts discuss the latest developments in risk management, prevention, and early intervention in the transport sector. Topics included federal and state initiatives to improve rest areas, the principles of effective rest breaks, and the standards of rest areas across Australia. Rod Hannifey (TRUCKRIGHT Road Safety) and Sue Read (Life Unlimited) highlighted important WHS issues in the road transport and logistics industry and discussed initiatives to reduce risks, prevent injuries and support workers.



[Watch the recorded webinar.](#)

[Download our guide and find out more](#)

GUIDE TO MANAGING THE RISKS OF ROOFTOP SOLAR INSTALLATION WORK

A new guide is now available



Rooftop solar installation work includes retailing, surveying, designing, installing, testing, commissioning, repairing, maintaining, decommissioning or removing rooftop solar systems on residential or commercial structures.

There are serious work health and safety risks associated with rooftop solar installation work, including working at heights, falling objects, heat stress and working with electricity.

Falls from height are a major risk in the industry. No one should ever work on a roof without adequate fall protection. Persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) should assess the risk of a fall and eliminate or minimise the risk so far as is reasonably practicable. In most cases when working on residential roofs, the guide recommends using temporary edge protection to prevent the risk of a fall. This is because the use of harnesses, restraint techniques and fall arrest systems may introduce other risks, such as tripping over ropes while carrying equipment.

It is important to note that every workplace is different, with varying hazards and risks. PCBUs must consult with workers and their health and safety representatives to decide how to manage the risks of rooftop solar installation work. By drawing on the experience, knowledge and ideas of workers you are more likely to identify hazards and choose effective control measures.

PCBUs should also seek the advice of a competent person, for example an accredited and experienced solar panel installer, and refer to relevant industry guidance to ensure the most comprehensive information about hazards and risks and use the most effective control measures available for the workplace.

It is important to note this guide only covers WHS requirements. There are several incentives, rebates and regulatory regimes associated with solar installation. For information on other regulatory schemes that may apply to solar installation, PCBUs will need to contact the relevant regulator.



In 2023, falls, slips and trips were responsible for 29 worker fatalities and 30,300 serious claims for work-related injuries. Being hit by moving objects were responsible for 24 worker fatalities and 22,000 serious claims for work-related injuries. This new guide will help PCBUs and workers manage these types of risks to health and safety – from retail and planning to installation and testing

Nathan Lee, Director,
High Risk Work and Industries Policy



ALL 10 INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION FUNDAMENTAL CONVENTIONS RATIFIED BY AUSTRALIA

On 29 October, Australia ratified the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Fundamental Convention – Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention 187 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The ratification affirms Australia's role as a world leader in work health and safety. Australia was one of the first in the world to ratify all 10 ILO Fundamental Conventions which together recognise workplace health and safety as a fundamental principle and right.

The ceremony included representatives from Safe Work Australia's Members and the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The ratified conventions align with recent work at Safe Work Australia to ensure the health and safety of all workers, including:

- initiatives under the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2033,
- new guidance and regulations for psychosocial hazards, including sexual and gender-based harassment, and
- the ban on engineered stone benchtops, panels and slabs.

MANAGING PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS IN RETAIL

We have published the first in a series of case studies focused on managing psychosocial hazards in various industries.

This first case study is set in a retail workplace and highlights some of the key psychosocial hazards retail workers may face. It also provides examples of ways to help manage health and safety risks at the workplace.

Retail workers often face psychosocial hazards, such as:

- high job demands (long hours, pressure to meet sales targets)
- aggressive customers and poor workplace culture, and
- poor support and training from managers.

Case Study

Horizon Retailers employs 300 workers across multiple stores. Staff are reporting issues with stress, anxiety, fatigue and burnout. Retention is down, and sick days have gone up. What should Horizon Retailers do to manage the WHS risks?

Businesses must eliminate physical and psychosocial risks in the workplace, or if that is not possible, minimise risks as much as they reasonably can.

Learn more about how Horizon Retailers manage the psychosocial hazards by reading the case study [Managing the risk of psychosocial hazards in retail](#) on our website. Watch this space for future psychosocial case studies in other industries.



Psychosocial hazards that may arise at work:

- high or low job demands
- low job control
- poor support
- lack of role clarity
- poor organisational change management
- inadequate reward and recognition
- poor organisational justice
- traumatic events or material
- remote or isolated work
- poor physical environment
- violence and aggression
- bullying
- harassment including sexual harassment, and
- conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions.

Retail workers are on the front line of harmful behaviours from the public. That, combined with often high work demands and limited support and training puts them at risk of psychological harm. Employers have a legal duty under WHS laws to minimise these risks as much as they reasonably can. Consulting workers on the risks and how to manage them is the first step in finding practical solutions for healthier and safer workplaces.

Katherine Taylor, Director, Psychosocial Policy

WORKSAFE WA PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS AND THE MINING SECTOR

CASE STUDY

The Australian Work Health and Safety (WHS) Strategy 2023-2033 has 2 activity-based targets which focus preventative action in 2 key areas – exposure to harmful substances and psychosocial hazards. These targets present an opportunity to demonstrate ongoing collaboration and innovation across Safe Work Australia Members to address the evolving nature of work-related exposures in these areas.

The WA Work Health and Safety (WHS) Strategy has 2 activity-based targets which focus preventative action in 2 key areas – exposure to harmful substances and psychosocial hazards. These targets present an opportunity to demonstrate ongoing collaboration and innovation across Safe Work Australia Members to address the evolving nature of work-related exposures in these areas.

The Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety's (DEMIRS) WorkSafe WA's Strategy *The way forward 2023-24 to 2025-26* supports the Australian WHS Strategy by highlighting psychosocial hazards as a priority in WA. The WA labour force has unique characteristics distinct from the nation-wide labour force, with a high representation of workers in the mining sector.

Sexual harassment and discrimination has been identified as a particular issue in the mining industry, with the Australian Human Rights' Commission *Time for respect survey* reporting 62% of women in mining in Australia had experienced sexual harassment compared to 25% of men. Mining was also one of the industries where a formal report or complaint was least likely to be made (2% of people harassed who made a formal report or complaint in this industry).

DEMIRS, in conjunction with other WA government agencies including Department of Communities, Mental Health Commission and Equal Opportunity Commission is working with the mining sector, tertiary institutions, peak bodies and unions to deliver initiatives to address serious mental health, workplace culture and safety issues in the Western Australian mining industry through the *Mental Awareness, Respect and Safety (MARS) Program*.

WorkSafe WA has also launched the *Sexual harassment awareness reporting engagement (SHare) campaign*. Targeting the WA mining sector, the campaign focused on raising awareness of workplace sexual harassment and the importance of creating safe and inclusive workplaces where individuals can speak up and report inappropriate behaviour. More information is available on the *WorkSafe WA website*.

WorkSafe is committed to evolving its regulatory approach to gendered violence at work, including workplace sexual harassment and assault, with ongoing consultation with peak bodies, unions, and industry.

According to the 2021 Census, **46% of workers in the Mining industry resided in Western Australia**. In WA, Mining workers are:

- Mostly male - 21% female and 79% male workers
- Work long hours – over 60% report working 41 hours or more in the week prior, with an average of 51 hours worked per week
- Work in remote areas – 25% of mining workers in WA were located in remote or very remote areas (place of enumeration)



Safe Work Australia representative Jenny Zhou, working our booth



2024 PIEF PERSONAL INJURY & DISABILITY MANAGEMENT NATIONAL CONFERENCE & AWARDS

We attended the PIEF National Conference in Perth from 28-30 October, and our CEO, Marie, hosted a conference lunchbreak.

The 2024 PIEF National Conference provides a unique opportunity for industry practitioners and stakeholders to consider the principles of "Work, Drive and Be Well", and hear from thought leaders, experts and industry practitioners.

The sponsored lunch break was a great opportunity for us to discuss our national workers' compensation policy work and the National Return to Work Strategy 2020-2030.

Marie and the team enjoyed meeting so many people from across Australia's workers' compensation network. Sharing ideas, best practice and lived experience is central to the policy work we do to improve workers' compensation in Australia and promote national consistency.

Also, congratulations to all the finalists and recipients at the 'Excellence in personal injury and disability management' awards. It was great to see regulators, insurers, allied health, and support service organisations from across Australia come together to celebrate their achievements.

WHAT IS THE ASBESTOS AND SILICA SAFETY AND ERADICATION AGENCY?

The Asbestos and Silica Safety and Eradication Agency (ASSEA) was initially established in 2013 to oversee national actions to improve asbestos awareness and the effective and safe management, removal and disposal of asbestos. In December 2023 their functions were expanded to include silica.

Safe Work Australia develops model WHS legislation which includes asbestos and silica. So how does ASSEA's role differ to Safe Work Australia's? We asked Julia Collins, Director, Awareness and International section, to explain more about the work of their agency.

Safe Work Australia is focused on silica from a WHS perspective, including providing information to PCBUs and others about how to eliminate or manage the risks of working with silica. How does ASSEA's role align with this and how is it different?

A key difference is that ASSEA's functions are not limited to workplaces, which means we can address asbestos and silica safety more broadly in the community, particularly where there is an environmental or public health impact. For example, our awareness campaigns can target not only PCBUs and their WHS duties, but also homeowners and what they need to do to prevent exposure to asbestos or silica. Safe Work Australia takes the lead for WHS guidance and information aligned to the model WHS framework.

Safe Work Australia develops and maintains the model WHS laws. How can ASSEA contribute to Safe Work Australia's function to evaluate how the model WHS laws are operating?

Through our regular engagement on silica and asbestos we occasionally identify opportunities for refinements to the model WHS laws relating to asbestos and silica. We draw on our research and data as well as our stakeholder networks and what we hear through consultation to work with Safe Work Australia and others to identify potential legislative change.

The recently published Asbestos National Strategic Plan 2024-2030 is a good example of this.

As part of ASSEA's expanded functions to include silica you are also developing a Silica National Strategic Plan 2024-2030. Can you update us on the progress of this plan?

The draft *Silica National Strategic Plan 2024-2030* (the plan) is currently with state and territory governments for endorsement. The plan aims to eliminate silica-related diseases in Australia and supports Safe Work Australia's [Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2023-2033](#) target of zero new cases of accelerated silicosis by 2033.

The plan's strategic actions focus on:

- workplace risk reduction
- education and awareness
- health monitoring, surveillance and support for workers and other affected by silica-related diseases
- research and development, and
- international collaboration.

Once endorsed, each jurisdiction will develop their own action plan specific to their state or territory. ASSEA will support this process to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach.

National targets for measuring the plan's success will be developed in 2024-2025, and annual reporting on progress will incorporate input from jurisdictions as well as our own research and data.

Is ASSEA currently conducting or planning any campaigns on asbestos or silica?

We are currently running an asbestos campaign about disclosure of asbestos in residential properties. The campaign reminds buyers, sellers, renters and landlords about the importance of disclosing where asbestos materials are in a property to keep people safe. It also reminds sellers and landlords they may have legal obligations to disclose.

The campaign targets people using property websites and apps, and professionals who work in real estate and conveyancing. You can find out more on our [Disclosure of asbestos in residential property webpage](#).

We are also refreshing our National Asbestos Awareness Campaign to launch in November. The focus of the campaign will shift slightly to:

- address identified knowledge gaps around where asbestos can be found
- promote our new [Asbestos Product Guide](#), and
- better align with the [Asbestos National Strategic Plan 2024-2030](#).

Is there any other work or information you would like to share?

ASSEA recently launched the [Asbestos Product Guide](#) which provides images and descriptions of a wide range of asbestos containing materials used in Australia. It has been developed for asbestos professionals, such as asbestos assessors and removalists.

The guide supports consistent and accurate identification of asbestos containing materials and can be used as an educational resource for the general public to show where asbestos can be found in buildings. We have received extremely positive feedback about the guide and will continue to update the guide as more images and information becomes available.

ASBESTOS SAFETY

OUT AND ABOUT

Catch up on recent events we've attended.



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF HEALTH & SAFETY ACT WHS SYMPOSIUM

Our Chief Officer of Policy Services, Angela Wallbank, was a guest speaker at the inaugural ACT WHS Symposium on 24 October 2024. Angela spoke about the harmonisation of work health and safety legislation and the future of work health and safety.



WORKSAFE ACT INDUSTRY BREAKFAST SERIES

In September, Marie was a guest speaker at WorkSafe ACT's industry breakfast series, with a vulnerable workers theme - 'understand your obligations, know your rights'.

Marie's speech emphasised the importance of managing systems at an organisational level to eliminate or minimise the risks for everyone, not just vulnerable workers.

HEALTHCARE & SOCIAL ASSISTANCE CONSULTATIONS

We are currently developing the health care and social assistance model Code of Practice. Since August, we've held 4 workshops in Sydney and Melbourne, 3 online workshops, with one targeting Western Australia stakeholders. We had a great turnout with over 160 participants from more than 60 organisations in attendance. Participants ranged from industry associations, PCBUs, peak bodies, unions, government agencies, and WHS regulators. There was strong support for an industry Code of Practice to address serious WHS issues in the industry. Thank you to everyone who participated in the workshops.



AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS HEALTHY WORK CONFERENCE

Marie provided the opening address on Day 1 of the conference in October and participated as a panel member for a session on risk-based work health and safety prosecutions on Day 2. Representatives from across the Agency attended.



WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY SHOW

Nathan Lee, Director of High Risk Work and Industries Policy, attended the 2024 Work Health and Safety Show in Sydney and presented on 'Making WHS Guidance More Accessible', using the SWMS tool as a case study. He received great feedback from industry participants about the tool and how it's being used to make construction workplaces safer. He also got a chance to check out some of the latest WHS product innovations, including a window-cleaning drone that removes the need for workers to work at height!



GRAND OPENING OF THE CENTRE FOR CONSTRUCTION SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Marie was the keynote speaker at the opening of the Centre for Construction Safety and Wellbeing at the University of Newcastle on 5 November 2024.

The Centre was established through an industry partnership between the University of Newcastle and construction company Hansen Yuncken. The Centre will:

- provide short-medium lessons for construction industry health and safety management, and
- identify ways to enhance health and safety knowledge and skill development for future generations of construction management graduates.

WHY WE'RE HERE

A core function of our work is developing and maintaining an evidence base to inform WHS and workers' compensation policy and practice



\$28.6b

The value to the Australian economy each year from reducing work-related injuries and illnesses



139,000

Serious workers' compensation claims in 2022-23p



133 killed

The preliminary number of Australians killed at work in 2024 to date



Subscribe to Safe Work Australia News to receive our newsletter or get email updates across a range of topics including work health and safety, workers' compensation, data and statistics, model WHS laws and codes of practice.