



# Work health and safety in Australia: information for migrant and multicultural workers

**Everyone in Australia has the right to be healthy and safe at work.**

Work health and safety laws protect all workers, no matter how they are employed (e.g. labour hire; casuals) or their visa status. The same laws apply to all workplaces and cultural groups in Australia.



## What are your rights?

You have the right to be healthy and safe at work, including the right to:

1. work in a healthy and safe place with facilities (e.g. easy access to clean toilets and drinking water)
2. know the possible dangers of your job and be shown how to do it safely
3. be given the appropriate equipment and/or clothing you need to work safely before you start work (you do not have to pay for these)
4. report health and safety issues at work – your employer has a legal duty to let you raise health and safety concerns, and it's illegal to punish you, or fire you for doing so
5. refuse to do work if you are reasonably concerned that it could put you or others at serious risk of getting hurt or sick, and
6. be shown how to report an injury or illness at work.



## What do employers need to do under work health and safety laws?

Employers must:

1. do all they reasonably can to protect your health and safety – both physical and mental
2. provide a safe and supportive work environment
3. find and remove hazards at your workplace – if the hazard cannot be removed, they must do all they reasonably can to make sure nobody is hurt or gets sick
4. provide you with training, information and instruction and make sure you understand the job you will do and how to do the job safely
5. provide you with appropriate equipment or clothing you need to work safely before you start work
6. talk to you about work health and safety. They must answer your questions and listen to your views
7. show you how to report an injury or illness at work.



## What are hazards?

Hazards are things that may harm you physically or mentally at work including:

- working above the ground (e.g. climbing a ladder to stock shelves or working on a roof)
- working with electricity
- lifting or moving heavy or bulky loads
- working in very hot or cold places
- loud noises
- working with machinery or equipment (e.g. in a factory)
- working with chemicals (e.g. cleaning work)
- working long hours or doing hard work (e.g. digging by hand, constant mental demands or concentration)
- working for a long time in the same place (e.g. sitting or standing without being able to move much or take breaks)
- working in awkward positions or holding the same posture for a long time
- prolonged repetitive movement
- working alone or where it is hard to get help if you need it
- breathing in harmful dust or particles (e.g. on a construction site)
- bullying and harassment including racial and sexual harassment, and
- aggressive behaviour and violence

## How can you keep yourself and others safe?

You must also look after your own health and safety at work, and not put other people at risk. You can do this by:

- going to work health and safety training on paid work time and following the training you were given to do your job
- asking questions if you do not understand the training or how to do the job safely
- following reasonable instructions from your employer about how and when to do tasks at work, and how to safely use equipment and tools, and
- telling your employer about hazards you see at work.

## Who can you ask for help?

You have the right to ask questions about your work and talk to your supervisor, manager or employer if you feel unsafe. It is okay to ask questions about anything you don't understand.

You can also talk to a Health and Safety Representative (HSR) if you have one. An HSR is a worker elected at your workplace who knows about work health and safety and can help you with any concerns. You can also talk to your union representative if you feel something is unfair or unsafe at work. A union is a group that protects and furthers the rights and interests of workers in a particular industry or occupation.

You might do work for one person and be paid by a someone else (e.g. a labour hire agency). They are both responsible for making sure you are safe at work. You can talk to either or both about any work health and safety concerns.

You can also contact the work health and safety regulator in the state or territory where you work – they are listed at the end of this document.



## Translation services

Free translation and interpreting services can be found online at [TIS National](https://www.tisnational.com.au). The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with more than 100 languages available.

## What if you get hurt at work?

If you are injured or get sick because of your work, you should tell your employer as soon as possible so they can provide first aid, remove the hazard or do all they reasonably can to make sure nobody else gets hurt or sick.

You should also see a doctor or nurse to get medical treatment and ask for a medical certificate. You have the right to choose the doctor or nurse you see.

You can make a claim for workers' compensation to help pay for medical treatment and other costs (e.g. time off work) from your work-related injury or illness. In Australia, employers must have workers' compensation insurance to cover all their workers, including migrant workers on a temporary or permanent visa, for injuries or illnesses that happen because of work.

If you are a contractor (which you may be if you are self-employed or have an Australian business number (ABN) for work), you should contact the relevant workers' compensation authority in the state or territory where you work to check if you are covered by workers' compensation. If you are not covered, you should consider taking out your own insurance in case you are injured or made sick by work.



For general information about who is a contractor, you can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman on 13 13 94 or at [www.fairwork.gov.au/contractors](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/contractors).

Workers' compensation insurance can also help you to return to work after your injury. The workers' compensation authority will work with you, your doctor and your employer to help you return to work.

To find out how to make a claim, you can contact the workers' compensation authority in the state and territory where you work - they are listed at the end of this information sheet.

## Your right to fair pay and conditions

In Australia, there are minimum wages and working conditions. The Fair Work Ombudsman helps employers and workers to understand these rights and responsibilities at work. They can also help you find out what you should be paid.

The Fair Work Ombudsman can investigate if they think someone has broken workplace laws. They can talk to you and provide advice even if you are in breach of the work conditions of your visa.



You can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman on 13 13 94 or at [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au).



## Where do you go for more information, help or advice about your health and safety at work?

Visit [Migrant workers | Safe Work Australia](#). Translated work health and safety information is available at [Language hub | Safe Work Australia](#).

For help or advice about your safety at work, you can contact the work health and safety regulator or workers' compensation authority in your state or territory - details are provided below. If you need an interpreter, call the **Telephone Interpreter Service on 131 450**.

You can contact your union for more information, help or advice about your health and safety at work. If you are unsure about which union to call you can contact Australian Unions on 1300 486 466 or at [www.australianunions.org.au](http://www.australianunions.org.au).

Other organisations you can contact about your work health and safety concerns are provided below.

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safe work australia

### Work Health and Safety Regulators

To ask for help if you are experiencing or have experienced a work health and safety issue that has not been resolved by your employer

#### New South Wales

SafeWork NSW  
 Website: [safework.nsw.gov.au](http://safework.nsw.gov.au)  
 Email: [contact@safework.nsw.gov.au](mailto:contact@safework.nsw.gov.au)  
 Phone: 13 10 50

#### Victoria

WorkSafe Victoria  
 Website: [worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://worksafe.vic.gov.au)  
 Email: [Info@worksafe.vic.gov.au](mailto:Info@worksafe.vic.gov.au)  
 Phone: 1800 136 089 (free call)

#### Queensland

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, Office of Industrial Relations  
 Website: [worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://worksafe.qld.gov.au)  
 Phone: 1300 362 128

#### Western Australia

WorkSafe WA  
 Website: [commerce.wa.gov.au/WorkSafe/](http://commerce.wa.gov.au/WorkSafe/)  
 Email: [safety@dmirs.wa.gov.au](mailto:safety@dmirs.wa.gov.au)  
 Phone: 1300 307 877

#### South Australia

SafeWork SA  
 Website: [safework.sa.gov.au](http://safework.sa.gov.au)  
 Email: [help.safework@sa.gov.au](mailto:help.safework@sa.gov.au)  
 Phone: 1300 366 255

#### Australian Capital Territory

WorkSafe ACT  
 Website: [worksafe.act.gov.au](http://worksafe.act.gov.au)  
 Email: [worksafe@worksafe.act.gov.au](mailto:worksafe@worksafe.act.gov.au)  
 Phone: 13 22 81

#### Northern Territory

NT WorkSafe  
 Website: [worksafe.nt.gov.au](http://worksafe.nt.gov.au)  
 Email: [ntworksafe@nt.gov.au](mailto:ntworksafe@nt.gov.au)  
 Phone: 1800 019 115

#### Tasmania

WorkSafe Tasmania  
 Website: [worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://worksafe.tas.gov.au)  
 Email: [wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au](mailto:wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au)  
 Phone: 03 6166 4600 (outside Tasmania)  
 Phone: 1300 366 322 (inside Tasmania)

#### Commonwealth

If you work for an Australian federal government agency, or for a large national employer, you may fall within the Comcare scheme.  
 Comcare  
 Website: [comcare.gov.au](http://comcare.gov.au)  
 Email: [whs.help@comcare.gov.au](mailto:whs.help@comcare.gov.au)  
 Phone: 1300 366 979

### Workers' Compensation Authorities

To ask for help if you are seeking compensation for a work-related injury or illness

#### New South Wales

State Insurance Regulatory Authority  
 Website: [sira.nsw.gov.au](http://sira.nsw.gov.au)  
 Email: [contact@sira.nsw.gov.au](mailto:contact@sira.nsw.gov.au)  
 Phone: 13 10 50

#### Victoria

WorkSafe Victoria  
 Website: [worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://worksafe.vic.gov.au)  
 Email: [Info@worksafe.vic.gov.au](mailto:Info@worksafe.vic.gov.au)  
 Phone: 1800 136 089 (free call)

#### Queensland

WorkCover Queensland  
 Website: [worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://worksafe.qld.gov.au)  
 Email: [info@workcoverqld.com.au](mailto:info@workcoverqld.com.au)  
 Phone: 1300 362 128

#### Western Australia

WorkCover WA  
 Website: [workcover.wa.gov.au](http://workcover.wa.gov.au)  
 Phone: 1300 794 744

#### South Australia

ReturnToWorkSA  
 Website: [rtwsa.com](http://rtwsa.com)  
 Email: [info@rtwsa.com](mailto:info@rtwsa.com)  
 Phone: 13 18 55

#### Australian Capital Territory

WorkSafe ACT  
 Website: [worksafe.act.gov.au](http://worksafe.act.gov.au)  
 Email: [worksafe@worksafe.act.gov.au](mailto:worksafe@worksafe.act.gov.au)  
 Phone: 13 22 81

#### Northern Territory

NT WorkSafe  
 Website: [worksafe.nt.gov.au](http://worksafe.nt.gov.au)  
 Email: [datantworksafe@nt.gov.au](mailto:datantworksafe@nt.gov.au)  
 Phone: 1800 250 713

#### Tasmania

WorkSafe Tasmania  
 Website: [worksafe.tas.gov.au](http://worksafe.tas.gov.au)  
 Email: [wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au](mailto:wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au)  
 Phone: 03 6166 4600 (outside Tasmania)

#### Commonwealth

If you work for an Australian federal government agency, or for a large national employer, you may fall within the Comcare scheme.  
 Comcare  
 Website: [comcare.gov.au](http://comcare.gov.au)  
 Email: [general.enquiries@comcare.gov.au](mailto:general.enquiries@comcare.gov.au)  
 Phone: 1300 366 979

**You can also talk to any of the following organisations about your work health and safety concerns**



**To ask about pay and conditions at work**

Fair Work Ombudsman

Website: [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)

Phone: 13 13 94



**To ask for help if you are being bullied**

Fair Work Commission

Website: [www.fwc.gov.au](http://www.fwc.gov.au)

Phone: 1300 799 675



**To ask for help if you have been sexually harassed**

Please call 000 if it is an emergency

Police Assistance Line

Phone 131 444

**To ask for help if you have experienced discrimination or sexual harassment in your workplace and want to make a complaint**

Australian Human Rights Commission

Website: [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

Phone: 1300 656 419

**To ask for help if you need support for domestic, family or sexual violence**

National Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Counselling Service

Website: [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)

Phone: 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)



**There may also be legal centres or migrant and multicultural support organisations in your local area that you can contact for support.**