

BUILDING SAFER, FAIRER WORKPLACES IN CONSTRUCTION



**Australian
Chamber of Commerce
and Industry**



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SPEAKER INTRODUCTION



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WHY SAFETY MATTERS...

Between 2023 – 2024, there were 146,700 workers' compensation claims for serious injuries.

- **17,609 of these were attributed to construction.**

Due to these claims, there was a median time lost of 7.4 weeks.

- **This was slightly higher for construction at 8.4 weeks.**

Regrettably, there were a total of 184 lives lost in the most recent reporting period.

- **44 of these were attributed to construction.**

The key causes of serious injury continue to be:

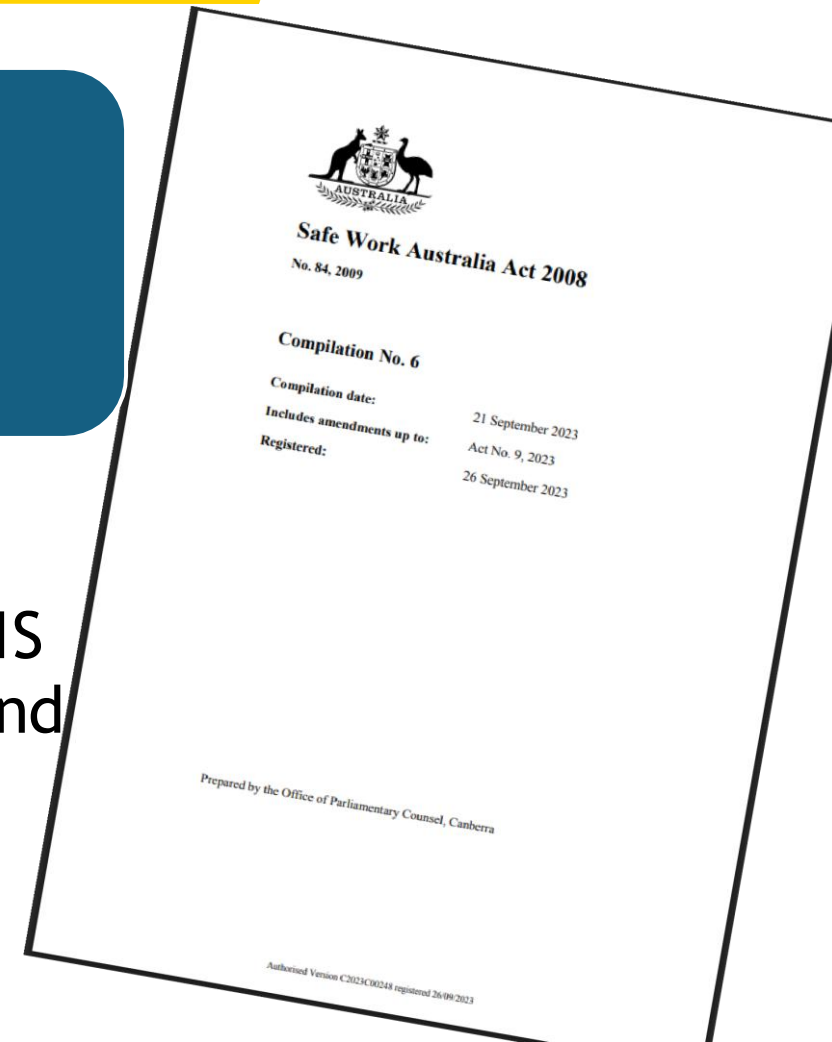
- Body Stressing;
- Falls, Trips, and Slips;
- Falling from Heights;
- Being Hit by Moving/Falling Objects; and
- Mental health conditions, which are increasing...

THE SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA ACT

OBJECT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA

"improve national WHS outcomes and workers' compensation arrangements by providing an inclusive tripartite forum"

- Collaborate on national WHS and workers' compensation matters; and
- Lead the development of evidence-based national WHS and workers' compensation policies and strategies; and
- Promote consistency in WHS and workers' compensation arrangements across Australia.



THE SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA ACT

FUNCTIONS OF SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA



**1 National policy
and strategy**



**2 Model WHS
legislative
framework**



**3 Workers'
Compensation**



4 Evidence



**5 Education and
communication**



**6 Collaboration
with all relevant
stakeholders**



**7 Advising WHS
Ministers**

SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA ECOSYSTEM

Governance structure of the agency



We have **15 members** including:

 1 Chair

 
2 Members representing the interests of workers

 
2 Members representing the interests of employers

      
9 Members representing each state and territory and the Commonwealth


The Chief Executive Officer of Safe Work Australia



NATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS



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Safe Work Australia Work Plan

Snapshot of some of the Priorities for 2026

WHS Legislative Framework	WHS Model Codes, Guidance, Tools and Awareness Raising	Evidence Function (Data and Research)	Workers' Compensation
Dispute Resolution	Model Regulations and Code: Welding Processes	Incident Notification – Data Development	Review Taking Action Framework
Best Practice Review	Transition to WEL Resources		
Crowd Platforms and Designer Duty Amendments			
Crane Licensing Reforms	Transition to WEL – PCBU Guidance	Worker Exposure Survey Program	
Lead regulation	Transition to WEL – Technical Guidance		
Review of Carcinogens			
Review of Air Monitoring			
Improving Quad Bike Safety	Update to Work Environment Facilities code (Ventilation and Lighting)		
Asbestos Framework Review			

OTHER KEY DEVELOPMENTS – Incident Notification Changes



March 2024 - SWA Members agreed to policy recommendations to strengthen the model IN provisions - agreed by Ministers in June 2024.



March 2025, SWA Members agreed to draft amendments, including a number of new notifiable incidents, including:

Work-related suicides, or attempted suicides, of a worker.

Suicide or attempted suicide of other people in certain workplace settings (such as mental health patients or detainees).

Serious work-related violent incidents, including sexual assault.

Serious brain injuries, bone fractures and crush injuries.

OTHER KEY DEVELOPMENTS – Incident Notification Changes



Changes also include the reporting of *Dangerous incidents* including:

- Mobile plant (like vehicles) overturning, crashing or rolling away (where there's an immediate or imminent serious risk to people); and
- Falls involving an immediate or imminent serious risk to people

Also now include the requirement to notify of:

- A worker's absence for 15 days or more because of work-related physical or psychological injury or illness.

Hazardous Chemicals



Workplace Exposure Standards changing to Workplace Exposure Limits - effective 1 December 2026 - many are reducing!

Decision Regulation Impact Statement for 9 Chemicals.
Recommendations currently with WHS Ministers for approval. A two third majority of approval is required for the WES list to be amended.
Ministers have until 26 April 2026 to respond.

- Benzene
- Chlorine
- Copper
- Formaldehyde
- Hydrogen Cyanide
- Hydrogen Sulphide
- Nitrogen Dioxide
- Respirable
Crystalline Silica
(RCS)
- Titanium Dioxide

Best Practice Review

In September 2024, WHS ministers asked Safe Work Australia to undertake a Best Practice Review to ensure the model WHS laws provide the highest level of protection for workers. The Review aims to:

- Examine Australia’s model WHS Act and model WHS regulations;
- Assess jurisdictional deviations from the model WHS legal framework; and
- Consider relevant reviews and inquiries to develop recommendations on whether the model WHS laws incorporate a best practice approach that **maintains and strengthens harmonisation.**
- Following public consultations – final report due to SWA Members

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Emerging Issues

Working in
Heat / Climate
Change

Artificial
Intelligence

National Construction Industry Forum

Building Bad

A months-long investigation into the CFMEU has uncovered rife infiltration by bikies and organised criminals, intimidation and allegations of corruption.

CFMEU construction arm placed into administration effective immediately, including WA and ACT branches

By political reporters Isobel Roe and Jade Toomey

Unions

Fri 23 Aug 2024

CFMEU is still Building Bad nine months later

New reports of criminal activity underline how inadequate the measures taken have been to stamp out illegal CFMEU-linked behaviour.

Blueprint for the Future

A building and construction industry that works for everyone

National Construction Industry Forum

Tripartite forum to advise the Government on a broad range of matters relating to work in the industry, including but not limited to:

- ❖ Workplace relations
- ❖ Skills and training
- ❖ Safety
- ❖ Productivity
- ❖ Diversity and gender equity
- ❖ Industry culture.

Four threads identified that represent the key elements of a thriving construction industry:

- ✓ SAFETY: A healthy, safe and secure work environment for all
- ✓ CULTURE: Positive, respectful, inclusive, lawful and cooperative
- ✓ PRODUCTIVITY: High quality, on time, on budget, through greater investment and innovation
- ✓ SUSTAINABILITY: Optimal economic, social and workplace outcomes

National Construction Industry Forum

Blueprint for Change

45 recommendations spanning **8 broad areas** with **9 priority recommendations**

- ❖ Collaboration and alignment
- ❖ Governance, lawfulness and compliance
- ❖ Regulation and procurement
- ❖ Skills, workforce and participation
- ❖ Financial viability
- ❖ Fragmented and project-based nature of industry (“industry projectification”)
- ❖ Risk allocation
- ❖ Reporting and transparency

1. Strengthening the role of the NCIF through increased resourcing to drive long-term structural reform
2. Developing a new Joint Construction Industry Charter
3. Advising on best practice for procurement frameworks and settings, including the use of labour hire and reducing planning and approval red tape
4. Developing advice on delivering safe, secure, well-paid jobs
5. Advising on strengthening pathways into the construction industry, by identifying strategies to address structural barriers to entry
6. Identifying best practice to address structural barriers to women’s participation in the industry
7. Improving worker mobility through nationally consistent skills accreditation, licensing and regulation
8. Developing advice on effective security of payment arrangements for contractors throughout the supply chain
9. Developing guidelines on appropriate risk management/risk allocation.

Proposed Industry Standard

- Ensure construction industry participants **do not engage in unlawful or criminal behaviour**, including offering, paying, soliciting or accepting bribes or inducements of any kind, and that such behaviour is reported to the Commonwealth and relevant regulators immediately
- Ensure **inappropriate “industrial fixers” or mediators who are not operating**
- **Fit and proper** requirements for parties on construction projects
- Ensure **enterprise agreements are genuinely agreed**, and workplaces are free from coercion and intimidation, and effective and timely resolution of disputes
- Ensure a **union cannot dictate the choice of subcontractors** used on a site
- Appropriate **workplace flexibilities** that **promote productivity** and the **participation of women**, including access to part-time work and positive culture training.
- Support for safe, secure and well-paid jobs in the industry, how to address over-reliance on labour hire, support for the engagement of apprentices
- How to ensure subcontractors and suppliers are paid on time and in full for work.

Industry Initiatives

Future
Makers

Level the
Site

Q&A



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