

Safe Work Australia Research agenda and activities

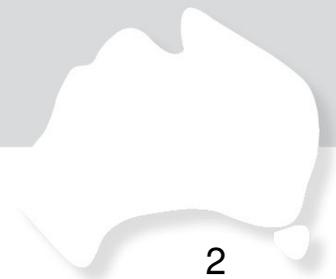
November 2015



safe work australia

Today's Presentation

- Why does Safe Work Australia conduct research?
- What research has Safe Work Australia done, is doing and plans to do?



Research function under the *Safe Work Australia Act 2008*

The Act creates Safe Work Australia to improve occupational health and safety outcomes and workers' compensation arrangements in Australia

It gives Safe Work Australia several functions, including:

“to conduct and publish research relating to OHS and workers' compensation in order to inform the development or evaluation of policies in relation to those matters” (Function 8: Research etc.)

Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012–2022

- Research and evaluation is one of the seven action areas identified to contribute to the delivery of outcomes of the Australian Strategy
- Four outcomes to be achieved by 2022:
 - reduced incidence of work-related death, injury and illness
 - reduced exposure to hazards and risks
 - improved hazard controls
 - improved work health and safety infrastructure



Australian Strategy: Research & Evaluation

Research and evaluation

Evidence-informed policy, programs and practice

- » Research and evaluation are targeted to provide the evidence to prioritise and progress areas of national interest.
- » Australia has an effective research and evaluation infrastructure and capacity.
- » Evidence is translated to assist practical application.
- » The results of research and evaluation are disseminated and implemented.



Australian Strategy: Action Areas

Research and evaluation informs and is informed by the other action areas

- Healthy and safe by design
- Supply chains and networks
- Health and safety capabilities
- Leadership and culture
- Government
- Responsive and effective regulatory framework
- **Research and evaluation**



Safe Work Australia Corporate Plan 2015–2019

The Agency's research functions are reflected in the Corporate Plan approved by Safe Work Australia Members

Outcome

Healthier, safer and more productive workplaces through improvements to Australian work health and safety and workers' compensation arrangements

Strategies to achieve the outcome

Support evidence informed policy, programs and practice through national work health and safety and workers' compensation data, research and evaluation programs (Strategy 3).

Agency policy areas informing and informed by the research

Occupational Hygiene Policy

- including asbestos, lead, noise, chemicals and major hazard facilities

Plant & Licensing Policy

- including construction, plant, confined spaces and high risk work licensing

Industry Policy

- including diving, electrical work, bullying, stevedoring, mining, agriculture, hazardous manual tasks and general workplace hazards



Explosives Policy

- analysing and interpreting legislation relating to explosives in order to develop a nationally consistent explosives framework

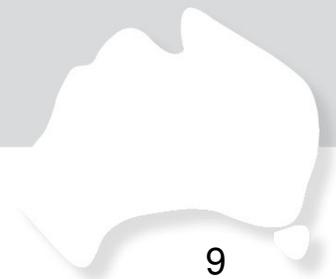
WHS & Compensation Policy

- Horizon scanning / emerging issues

Also ...

Data & Analysis

- Reporting on occupational injuries, fatalities and disease and workers' compensation



So, why are we doing research?

To gain a better understanding of:

- Nature and distribution of workplace hazards
 - identifying populations at risk of injury or disease
 - examining causal factors for occupational diseases
- Why certain workers are still exposed to certain hazards
 - workplace safety culture / climate factors that are WHS barriers and enablers
- What solutions / interventions are available
 - identify WHS legislation, regulatory interventions and other strategies that work
- Whether or not interventions are working
 - if not why not?



What research do we do?

Using existing research data

Cross-sectional and longitudinal data created and maintained by academic researchers and institutions

- Australian Workplace Barometer (University of South Australia)
- Personality and Total Health (PATH) Through Life (Australian National University)
- Raine Study (Curtin University)
- Australian Workplace Exposure Study (Curtin University)
- Occupational skin disease database (Occupational Dermatology Clinic, Melbourne)

Generating our own data

National questionnaire surveys

- National Hazard Exposure Worker Surveillance (2008)
- Motivations, Attitudes, Perceptions and Skills (2009–10)
- Perceptions of Work Health and Safety (2012–13)
- Work Health and Safety Cost of Compliance (2013)
- Health and Safety at Work (2014)

Semi-structured interview studies

- Impact of harmonisation on very large businesses with multi-state operations (2013)
- Experiences of non-employing, small and medium-sized businesses (2014)
- Limited cost-benefit analysis of model WHS laws (2014)

Small-scale studies with specific industries / occupations / issues

- Occupational noise-induced hearing loss (2010)
- Residual chemicals in shipping containers (2012)
- Noise, dust, vibration and chemicals in agriculture (2015)

Major recent surveys

Used mainly for the evaluation of the model WHS laws

Perceptions of Work Health and Safety

- Questionnaire survey conducted by paper and online (by CATI for workers)
- September 2012 to January 2013

- 1572 business owners and senior managers
- 669 health and safety representatives
- 1311 workers

- Looked at perceptions, attitudes and experiences related to:
 - Performance of WHS duties
 - WHS information, communication and consultation

Work Health and Safety Cost of Compliance (Regulatory Burden) Survey

- Questionnaire survey conducted by paper
- April to June 2013

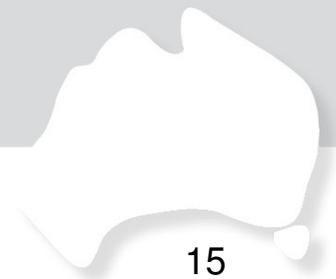
- 1663 businesses

- Looked at:
 - Awareness of WHS obligations
 - WHS activities
 - Cost of and time spent on WHS activities
 - Reported impact of operating post-harmonisation



Health and Safety at Work Survey

- Questionnaire survey conducted by paper and online
- June to August 2014
- 2350 businesses
- Looked at:
 - Cost of and time spent on WHS activities
 - Changes to WHS practices due to the model WHS laws
 - Impact on business due to the model WHS laws
 - WHS information and training



Recent research publications

- Mindfulness of work health and safety in the workplace
- Sources of work health and safety information in Australian workplaces
- Transport industry: Synthesis of research findings
- Work productivity loss in young workers
- Work Health and Safety Perceptions: Manufacturing Industry
- Work Health and Safety Perceptions: Construction Industry
- Exposure to multiple hazards among Australian workers
- Attitudes towards risk taking and rule breaking in Australian workplaces
- Australian Work Exposures Study (AWES) - Formaldehyde
- Australian Work Exposures Study (AWES) - Lead and lead compounds
- Australian Work Exposures Study (AWES) - Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons



2015–16 Work Plan

- Hazard surveillance
 - Psychosocial hazards
 - Asthmagens
 - Shift work
- Supply chains impact
- Workplace culture
- Intervention effectiveness
 - MSDs
 - Falls prevention code of practice / platform ladders
 - WHS costs and activities

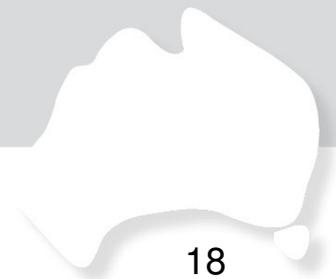


Large surveys for 2016–17

2016 Health and Safety at Work

Aug–Nov 2016

- Regular monitoring of WHS activities, costs and regulatory burden to highlight policy issues
- Preparations underway for a national survey of businesses
 - Pilot survey of 1000 businesses
 - Finalisation of survey instrument and method
 - Sample of 10 000 businesses



Large surveys for 2016–17

2017 Work Health and Safety Culture

May–Aug 2017

- Workplace culture factors that influence WHS behaviours
- Safe Work Australia collected information in 2009–10 and 2012–13 on WHS motivations, attitudes and perceptions
- Findings highlighted instances where attitudes are not changing as desired (e.g. continued focus on individual responsibility for injuries)
- Continued monitoring of WHS motivations, attitudes, perceptions and skills with a national survey of employers and workers
 - 4 years after the last data collection on WHS culture and perceptions



Reflections on

Challenges

- Worker samples – lack of reliable frames
- Business samples – willingness / ability to participate
- Participant knowledge and insight – activities, hazards and costs
- Relevance of WHS – specific issues and target groups

Opportunities

- Partnerships – stakeholders, academics
- Incremental evidence base – inform policy, design, supply chains, etc.
- Recognition and use of best practice – safety champions, case studies, etc.



Questions?



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