NATIONAL OHS STRATEGY
2002–2012

In 2009 legislation was enacted to create Safe Work Australia as an independent statutory body. Safe Work Australia's role is to develop national policy relating to OHS and workers' compensation and to support the National OHS Strategy 2002–2012. This function was previously performed by the Australian Safety and Compensation Council (ASCC) and prior to that the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission.

The National OHS Strategy 2002-2012

Commitment to OHS

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is a key issue for all Australian employers, workers and the community. A good OHS practice not only provides a safer working environment but improves worker morale and productivity. By pursuing good OHS practices businesses face fewer workplace injuries and benefit from higher employee retention rates and enhanced corporate image. This reduces the costs associated with production delays, recruiting new staff and replacing equipment, and avoids the resulting uncertainty and workload pressure placed on co-workers. Businesses that strive to improve their OHS performance create safer workplaces. This benefits not only employers and employees but also their families, their communities and the Australian economy.

Commitment to better practice OHS is best sustained through a focus on performance outcomes, which can be reported and monitored over time. Measurement of OHS performance demonstrates a commitment to improving the health and safety of workers. At a national level OHS performance is measured through the *National OHS Strategy 2002–2012* (the National Strategy).

The National Strategy was agreed by all Australian governments, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) in 2002 and demonstrates the commitment of all parties to work co-operatively on national priorities. The National Strategy sets very clear and ambitious goals for OHS in Australia and is a key initiative to improve Australia's OHS performance.

As a step towards achieving its national vision of Australian workplaces free from death, injury and disease, the National Strategy set the following targets:

- to sustain a significant, continual reduction in the incidence of work-related fatalities with a reduction of at least 20 per cent by 30 June 2012 (with a reduction of 10 per cent being achieved by 30 June 2007), and

- to reduce the incidence of workplace injury by at least 40 per cent by 30 June 2012 (with a reduction of 20 per cent being achieved by 30 June 2007).

Following a review of the National Strategy in 2004–05, the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council endorsed an aspirational goal for Australia to achieve the lowest rate of work-related traumatic fatalities in the world by 2009.

National Priorities

The five priorities identified by the National Strategy to achieve short and long-term OHS improvement and to nurture longer-term cultural change are to:

- reduce the impact of risks at work
- improve the capacity of business operators and workers to manage OHS effectively
- prevent occupational disease more effectively
- eliminate hazards at the design stage, and
- strengthen the capacity of government to influence OHS outcomes.

Focus

The National Strategy focuses on particular traumatic injury risks, occupational diseases and industry sectors to maximise the impact of its initiatives.

The traumatic injury risks targeted are: body stressing; falls, trips and slips of a person; being hit by moving objects; and hitting objects with a part of the body. These four mechanisms of injury account for 90 per cent of injury and musculoskeletal compensated claims across Australia.

To increase the focus on effective prevention of occupational diseases, eight disease groups were identified in consultation with stakeholders. These are:

- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Mental disorders
- Noise-induced hearing loss
- Infectious and parasitic diseases
- Respiratory disease
- Contact dermatitis
- Cardiovascular disease, and
- Occupational cancer.

Priority industries

The four priority industry sectors originally targeted for improvement under the National Strategy were building and construction, transport and storage, manufacturing, and health and community services. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries was added as a priority sector following the first review of the National Strategy in 2005.

These sectors were chosen because they were identified through data analysis as having the highest incidence rates and/or high numbers of workers' compensation claims compared with other industries. By working with these sectors, not only are lives being saved but these industries will set examples of OHS best practice for other employers to follow.

Progress so far

From the three-year baseline period (2000–01 to 2002–03) to 2008–09 there was a 22 per cent improvement recorded in the incidence of injury and musculoskeletal claims. This is below the rate required to meet the long term target of a 40 per cent improvement by June 2012. The rate of decline in the incidence of claims will need to accelerate in the remaining years if the target is to be achieved.

Of the five priority industries only the construction industry, with a reduction of 24 per cent, recorded a greater improvement than the 22 per cent average for Australia. The manufacturing and transport and storage industries recorded a slightly lower reduction (21 per cent) and the health and community services industry recorded a 19 per cent decrease. The agriculture, forestry and fishing industry has shown the least improvement with an 11 per cent decrease.

From the baseline period until 2008–09 the incidence rate of compensated fatalities from injuries and musculoskeletal disorders decreased by 25 per cent. The national incidence rate is 'on target' to meet the 20 per cent reduction required by June 2012. However, there is a considerable amount of volatility in this measure and consistent improvement is still required to ensure the target is attained.

Analysis of international data indicates that in 2006–08 Australia recorded the seventh lowest injury fatality rate in the world.

Australia's work-related injury fatality rate decreased from 2000–02 to 2004–06, and has increased slightly during 2005–07 to 2006–08. In comparison many of the best performing countries in the world have experienced greater fluctuations in the rate of work-related fatality. It is unlikely that Australia will meet the aspirational goal.

The Safe Work Australia publication, *Occupational Disease Indicators, April 2010*, reported that over the seven-year period from 2000–01 to 2006–07, decreasing trends were observed for five of the eight priority disease groups: musculoskeletal disorders; mental disorders; infectious and parasitic diseases; contact dermatitis; and cardiovascular diseases. For three of the eight priority disease groups, noise-induced hearing loss; respiratory diseases; and occupational cancers, rates over the period did not display a clear overall trend of increase or decrease. Although this report is primarily based on workers' compensation data, additional data sources such as hospitalisations, notifiable diseases and cancer registries are also examined.

Where to from here?

Safe Work Australia is continuing to work to achieve the ambitious goals of the National Strategy through a variety of means including:

- harmonising work health and safety legislation through nationally consistent laws enacted in each jurisdiction delivering the same protection to all Australians

- raising awareness of the importance of OHS policies and programs through national campaigns such as National Safe Work Australia Week

- encouraging excellence in OHS through the Annual Safe Work Australia Awards, and

- improving the collection and analysis of workers' compensation data and research across government to inform policy and regulatory frameworks, which improve decision making within government.

As required by the *Safe Work Australia Act 2008* evaluation of the current National Strategy and development of a replacement will be undertaken in 2011–12. The new National Strategy will be evaluated and developed in consultation with stakeholders.

NOHSC

National Occupational Health & Safety Commission

National OHS Strategy 2002–2012

This document is available for downloading in PDF
format from the NOHSC web site at:
www.nohsc.gov.au/nationalstrategy

Foreword

On behalf of the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council, I am pleased to endorse the release of the National Occupational Health and Safety Strategy 2002–2012. Ministers welcome the national approach it engenders to improving Australia's occupational health and safety performance and state their commitment to achieving the national targets to:

• sustain a significant, continual reduction in the incidence of work-related fatalities with a reduction of at least 20 per cent by 30 June 2012 (and with a reduction of 10 per cent being achieved by 30 June 2007); and

• reduce the incidence of workplace injury by at least 40 per cent by 30 June 2012 (with a reduction of 20 per cent being achieved by 30 June 2007).

The Strategy provides the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council with the framework for ensuring that there is a sustained and substantial improvement in Australia's occupational health and safety performance over the next decade.

Ministers have asked the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission to report annually on progress made in implementing the Strategy and to ensure that it is regularly reviewed and refined.

Tony Abbott
Chair, Workplace Relations Ministers' Council
Federal Minister of Employment and Workplace Relations

24 May 2002

National OHS Strategy 2002–2012

NATIONAL VISION

Australian workplaces free from death, injury and disease

NATIONAL TARGETS

Sustain a significant, continual reduction in the incidence of work-related fatalities with a reduction of at least 20% by 30 June 2012 (and with a reduction of 10% being achieved by 30 June 2007).

Reduce the incidence of workplace injury by at least 40% by 30 June 2012 (with a reduction of 20% being achieved by 30 June 2007.)

NATIONAL PRIORITIES

Reduce high incidence/severity risks

Improve the capacity of business operators and workers to manage OHS effectively

Prevent occupational disease more effectively

Eliminate hazards at the design stage

Strengthen the capacity of government to influence OHS outcomes

OHS data	OHS research	National standards	Strategic enforce-ment	Practical guidance	Incentives	Compli-ance support	OHS awareness	OHS skills

Areas Requiring National Action

Indicators of success

Workplace parties recognise and incorporate OHS as an integral part of their normal business operations

Increased OHS knowledge and skills in workplaces and the community

Governments develop and implements more effective OHS interventions

Research, data and evaluations provide better timelier information for effective prevention

Statement of Commitment

As the parties to the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission, we have accepted responsibility for the development and implementation of the National OHS Strategy. We all share a responsibility for ensuring that Australia's performance in work-related health and safety is continuously improved.

The Strategy will focus our efforts in working together to implement interventions to dramatically improve Australia's occupational health and safety performance over the next decade and to foster sustainable, safe and health enterprises that prevent work-related death, injury and disease.

We are committed to working cooperatively on the priorities and actions identified in the Strategy. We also commit to regularly reviewing our achievements against the Strategy's plans and targets and will further develop the Strategy in light of these achievements. We recognise that there are many other stakeholders who make significant contributions to improving Australia's occupational health and safety performance. We invite them to adopt or contribute to the Strategy and their contributions will be taken into account in its future development.
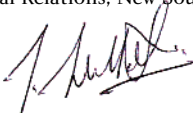
Tony Abbott
Federal Minister For Employment and
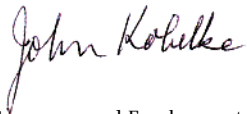Workplace Relations

John Della Bosca
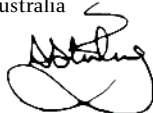Minister for Industrial Relations, New South Wales

Gordon Nuttall
Minister for Industrial Relations, Queensland

John Kobelke
Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection
and Training, Western Australia

Syd Stirling
Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Employment
and Training, Northern Territory
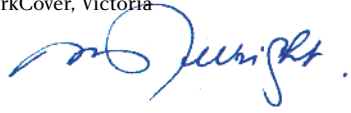
Peter Hendy
Chief Executive
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Bob Cameron
Minister for WorkCover, Victoria

Michael Wright
Minister for Industrial Relations, South Australia

Paul Lennon
Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure,
Energy and Resources, Tasmania

Simon Corbell
Minister for Education, Youth and Family Services,
Planning and Industrial Relations,
Australian Capital Territory

Greg Combet
Secretary
Australian Council of Trade Unions

Introduction

Australia's continuing high rates of work-related fatal and non-fatal injury and disease present a significant challenge to us all. Every year significant numbers of people die and many more are severely affected by work-related injuries and disease.

There have been significant improvements in OHS performance in recent years but considerable scope exists for further progress. For example, Australian workers' compensation records, while not a complete measure of occupational injuries and deaths, show that:

- although there was a 20 percent reduction in the incidence of work-related injuries in the five years from 1995–96, there were, nevertheless, 120,000 accepted workers' compensation claims requiring five or more days off work in 1999–2000; and
- there were 205 compensated fatalities in 1999–2000 resulting from work-related injuries, compared to 267 in 1995–96.

Although no reliable data exist on deaths arising from occupational disease, it has been estimated that over 2,000 people die per year from past occupational exposures to hazardous substances.

To improve the prevention of work-related death, injury and disease, the parties to the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission, made up of the Commonwealth and all State and Territory Governments and representatives of employers and employees, have developed the National OHS Strategy.

The Strategy sets out the basis for nationally strategic interventions that are intended, over the coming decade to:

- foster sustainably safe and healthy work environments; and
- reduce significantly the numbers of people hurt or killed at work.

Efforts will focus initially on the five national priorities identified in the Strategy. These efforts will be underpinned by continued work on the nine areas identified by the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council in 1999 as requiring national action.

The National OHS Strategy will be periodically reviewed and evaluated so that the national priorities and actions may be adjusted or changed to meet current and future needs.

National prevention principles

State, Territory and Commonwealth Governments are responsible for regulating and enforcing workplace health and safety. The National Occupational Health and Safety Commission provides strategic leadership across Australia and coordination of national efforts to improve national OHS performance.

OHS improvement ultimately depends on actions in individual workplaces. In all Australian jurisdictions, duties of care to workers and third parties are shared by everyone whose actions could affect their health and safety, for example:

- employers must provide safe and healthy workplaces and safe systems of work;
- employees must work in as safe a manner as possible; and
- suppliers, designers and manufacturers must provide safe products and accurate information about the safe use of materials and equipment.

The National OHS Strategy embraces the adoption of systematic approaches for prevention by government and industry and is based on the following principles.

- A comprehensive and systematic approach to OHS risk management as part of day-to-day business operations.

- Responsibility to eliminate or control risk rests at the source, be that with the designer, manufacturer or supplier, or in the workplace.
- Prevention requires the cooperation and commitment of all workplace parties to involvement in consultation on workplace health and safety, accepting responsibility for identifying OHS issues and initiating prevention action.
- Prevention also requires workplace parties to be appropriately skilled in OHS so that they can participate effectively in consultations and in identifying and implementing improvements.
- Governments, in their capacity as major employers, policy makers, regulators and procurers, have considerable influence over the achievement of better OHS outcomes in Australia.
- Effective national action requires major national stakeholders, including all governments, to be committed to coordinated, consistent and cooperative approaches to OHS improvement.
- Evaluation of prevention initiatives and the sharing of solutions and evidence of what works among OHS stakeholders.

The National OHS Strategy

National vision

Work-related death, injury and disease are not inevitable but can be prevented. The national vision reflects this and provides the ultimate goal of the National OHS Strategy.

National targets

Targets are used in OHS and other fields. They provide goals for organisations, enterprises and employees with which to identify. They also promote greater innovation and activity in developing the most effective and efficient ways to meet the targets.

The National OHS Strategy sets national targets as a step towards achieving its national vision of Australian workplaces free from death, injury and disease. The initial national targets are:

• sustain a significant, continual reduction in the incidence of work-related fatalities with a reduction of at least 20 per cent by 30 June 2012 (with a reduction of 10 per cent being achieved by 30 June 2007); and

• reduce the incidence of workplace injury by at least 40 per cent by 30 June 2012 (with a reduction of 20 per cent being achieved by 30 June 2007).

Individual industries and jurisdictions will be encouraged to set or refine their own targets to complement the national targets.

The targets are set to be challenging but achievable. The early stages of implementing the Strategy will be used to refine the targets to reflect those set by individual jurisdictions and industries and to refine the methodology and benchmarks for measuring and reporting progress against them. Current data limit the measurement of achievement of the targets largely to compensated work-related injury and disease. Other targets and the data sources to support them will be identified over time.

Indicators of success

In addition to reducing work-related deaths, injuries and diseases, the Strategy should improve the overall workplace health and safety environment. Some indicators of success will include the following.

• Workplace parties recognise and incorporate OHS as an integral part of their normal business operations: businesses that recognise and incorporate OHS as part of their normal operations, and act to involve employees on OHS issues are better able to control risk to their workers, businesses and livelihood.

- Increased OHS knowledge and skills in workplaces and the community–OHS skills and knowledge are vital for ensuring a better capacity to address current and emerging OHS issues.
- Governments develop and implement more effective OHS interventions–the best results are achieved by identifying and applying best practice interventions that include the best mix of information, assistance, regulation, compliance, enforcement and incentives.
- Research, data and evaluations provide better, more timely information for effective prevention–OHS-related research, data and evaluations help to identify what interventions have the greatest chance of success, what works and what does not, and what are the best options for prevention.

More specific indicators for measuring success will be developed in the Strategy's first year of implementation.

National priorities

Five national priorities have been identified to bring about short and long-term OHS improvements, as well as longer-term cultural change. They are to:

• reduce high incidence/severity risks;

• develop the capacity of business operators and workers to manage OHS effectively;

• prevent occupational disease more effectively;

• eliminate hazards at the design stage; and

• strengthen the capacity of government to influence OHS outcomes.

The first national priority is expected to contribute immediately to achieving the national targets. For example, risks in a nominated industry sector may require priority attention nationally where it has a relatively high incidence of work-related injuries compared to other industry sectors or where it accounts for a high proportion of work-related deaths each year.

Some elements of the other four priorities will assist with short-term outcomes. However, they are expected to contribute primarily to achieving longer-term, sustainable results.

Each of the national priorities will be periodically evaluated to assess its ongoing relevance and effectiveness. They will be refined or replaced by new priorities in light of these assessments.

Evaluation methods, benchmarks, milestones and other indicators to measure progress will be developed in the initial stages of implementing the National OHS Strategy.

National priority - Reduce high incidence/severity risks

Although OHS problems can affect workers in any work situation, not all workers face the same degree or type of risk of injury as others. Risks may vary by, for example, the type of industry, occupation or work. By targeting hazards, injuries, industries or occupations where the incidence of injury and/or numbers of deaths is particularly high, significant improvements can be made in Australian OHS performance.

This national priority will involve the better use of OHS data, research and learning to improve the approaches commonly used by Australian jurisdictions in targeting 'high risk' situations. It should help to make such interventions more effective and efficient, as well as fostering innovation and the sharing of experience.

National priority hazards, injuries, industries or occupations will be identified for prevention efforts on a national basis. Individual jurisdictions will have particular priorities to address, but their participation in a nationally-coordinated approach to high incidence/severity risks will provide the best OHS outcomes all round.

Outcomes expected from this priority

• Interventions, including the more effective use of targeted enforcement and incentives, will be increasingly developed and implemented using evidence and experience of what works to achieve greater compliance and best OHS practice.

• Programs for improving performance agreed among stakeholders in each targeted area.

• More effective sharing of OHS information, tools and approaches.

• Improved community and industry attention to OHS and to developing solutions.

National priority - Develop the capacity of business operators and workers to manage OHS effectively

Capacities to control OHS risks and manage OHS effectively in workplaces range from the ability to choose, implement, evaluate and adapt OHS management systems, through to being able to participate in consultation on OHS matters, and carry out good OHS risk management practices. Such management practices should be integrated into day-to-day business operations.

This national priority recognises that, before employers and others take action to manage OHS, they must be motivated to do so. In part, this will involve helping business operators to develop and understand the case for better OHS management, including how it contributes to improved business outcomes.

An aim of the national priority is to build the motivation and ability of employers to manage OHS risks effectively and of workers to work more safely and participate in OHS consultations.

Outcomes expected from this priority

- OHS competencies are more widely integrated into management, vocational, professional, worker and inspectorate training.
- Systematic approaches to prevention are evaluated to identify those that will best build the capacity for workplaces to manage OHS effectively.
- OHS systems are evaluated to identify those most appropriate for implementation by enterprises of varying size and type.
- Systematic OHS management guidance and training products are available and targeted to meet the needs of stakeholders, including those in small and medium-sized enterprises.
- Greater understanding of the case for applying OHS management tools including how it contributes to improved business outcomes.
- Practical guidance is widely available to assist the workplace parties to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of their prevention efforts.

National priority - Prevent occupational disease more effectively

The world of work is changing, creating new occupational health risks. Unlike traumatic injuries and fatalities, it may not always be possible to clearly identify the cause and effect relationship in the case of occupational disease and associated deaths. The effects may not show up for a considerable time after initial exposure to a particular hazard. Sometimes a particular disease may be caused by work and non-work exposures. The result of these factors is that opportunities to protect the health of employees may not always be immediately recognised.

This national priority aims to develop the capacity of authorities, employers, workers, and other interested parties to identify risks to occupational health and to take practical action to eliminate or otherwise control them.

Outcomes expected from this priority

- More timely identification and control of any exposures that affect the health of employees.
- More effective engagement with industry, medical and other interested groups to develop a better understanding of controls that prevent occupational disease.

- Data and research systems to provide more work-related disease data, including measures of exposure and the effectiveness of controls that can be used to better identify existing and emerging risks to occupational health.
- Raised awareness of occupational disease issues and the need to control risks at source.
- Occupational disease risk assessment and control competencies (including knowing when to call for expert assistance) integrated into management, vocational, professional and inspectorate training.
- Better and more easily accessible practical guidance on the steps to prevent and control exposures.
- Regulatory approaches considered, reviewed and modified where necessary to achieve effective controls.

National priority - Eliminate hazards at the design stage

Responsibility to eliminate hazards or control risk rests at its source. This principle applies to all sources of hazards. Responsibility falls on a wide range of parties, including those outside of the workplace such as designers, manufacturers, constructors or suppliers.

This national priority aims to build awareness and observance of this approach and to give people the practical skills to recognise design issues and to ensure safe outcomes.

Outcomes expected from this priority

- Safer approaches are taken through the lifecycle of plant, substances and processes.
- OHS 'safe design' competencies are integrated into management, vocational, professional, and inspectorate training.
- The relative effectiveness and impact of regulatory-based and other incentives to encourage 'safe design' is assessed and the findings used to refine implementation of the priority.
- Raised awareness of the importance of safe design among the design professions, clients and the community.
- More systematic and cooperative application of risk management principles by designers, clients and others involved in design processes.
- Procurement decision-making takes account of safe design considerations.

National priority - Strengthen the capacity of government to influence OHS outcomes

Governments are major employers, policy makers, regulators and purchasers of equipment and services. They have a leadership role in preventing work-related death, injury and disease in Australia.

This national priority aims to sharpen the effectiveness of governments in securing better OHS outcomes and providing examples of good practice.

Outcomes expected from this priority

- Continual improvement in governments' OHS performance as employers.
- Whole-of-government approaches are taken that ensure OHS implications are considered and accounted for in all of the work of government.
- Where practicable, governments, project managers and contractors improve OHS through use of the supply chain.
- Practical guidance on measuring and reporting OHS outcomes is available for public sector agencies.
- Continual improvement in governments' performance as OHS policy makers and regulators.

Areas requiring national action

In December 1999 the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council established a 10-year framework for improving Australia's OHS performance. The National OHS Strategy enhances this framework by setting national targets for improvement and identifying priorities on which to focus national efforts.

The Strategy's vision, national prevention principles, national targets and indicators of success build on and replace most elements of the framework. The framework identified nine areas where national action is required to underpin improvement. Work will continue on these areas over the life of the Strategy; action plans will be maintained for each and used to identify areas for improvement and for ensuring that the national priorities and targets are achieved.

The nine areas for national action

1. Comprehensive OHS data collections

Regular reporting is vital in highlighting major sources of injury and disease and targeting prevention efforts. Comprehensive data also help to identify benchmarks for assessing OHS performance.

Actions include:

- extending data coverage;
- developing consistent definitions and measurement principles; and
- extending systems to allow timely reporting and provision of information.

2. A coordinated research effort

Research adds to the information and advice available for determining OHS priorities and practical prevention approaches. Australia's own research capacity must be developed with a strong focus on practical risk controls in the workplace. A coordinated approach is required for allocating research resources within Australia and to ensure that the whole of Australia is able to draw on available expertise. Actions include:

- establishing research priorities, cooperative arrangements and networks;
- exploring partnerships between areas concerned with public and occupational health; and
- improving communication with national and international OHS research bodies.

3. A nationally consistent regulatory framework

A nationally consistent approach to OHS regulation is essential for employers and employees. Regulatory requirements must remain relevant, effective, clear and practicable and not unnecessarily prescriptive. Outcomes must be expressed clearly in terms of the levels of performance required. There must be a balance between allowing for flexibility in achieving the required outcomes and prescribing certain actions or processes where necessary. Regulatory requirements should not place unnecessary restrictions on competition or international trade.

Actions include:
- monitoring adoption of national standards;
- reviewing national standards and codes;
- developing new national standards where need is demonstrated; and
- repealing superseded regulations.

4. Strategic enforcement

Equitable, practical and consistent enforcement can be achieved by ensuring that actions required are proportionate to the risk and the consequences of non-compliance are clearly understood. A range of enforcement measures is embraced.

Actions include:
- benchmarking and sharing of best practice approaches;
- developing strategic approaches based on proactive targeting, risk assessment and innovative sanctions; and
- publicising enforcement policies.

5. Effective incentives

Appropriate incentives are required to encourage Australian workplaces to focus on prevention and reduce the significant costs of workplace injury and disease.

Actions include:
- examining the effectiveness of current premium setting incentives; and
- investigating innovative non-financial incentives.

6. Compliance support

The effectiveness of the regulatory framework depends on compliance. Regulatory authorities' advisory services, information programs and assistance support the large proportion of workplaces that are willing to comply. Regulatory authorities need to express their requirements clearly, simply and in plain language in a range of media. Communication with business, especially small business, needs to be improved. Access to assistance which educates and informs workplace parties about their responsibilities is important.

Actions include:
- developing hazard and industry specific guidance;
- supporting access to consistent compliance advice; and
- developing OHS management systems guidance and auditing mechanisms.

7. Practical guidance

Practical guidance is required to assist stakeholders in recognising the relevance of legal requirements to their operations and to support their application of risk management principles in their workplaces. Demand for such information is best met when material is hazard and/or industry specific, written in plain language and presented clearly in a range of media.

Actions include:

• developing means for improved access to information and supporting development of guidance; and

• facilitating sharing of guidance developed within specific industries and jurisdictions.

8. OHS awareness

Raising community awareness and expectations is an important element in strengthening workplace commitment and motivation for higher standards of OHS performance. Such programs can assist in the community accepting that work-related injuries are preventable and not just 'part of the job'. The messages of community awareness programs need to be targeted to specific audiences and provide for a response through structured follow-up activities, events and programs.

Actions include:

• maximising gains from substantial investment in awareness campaigns by sharing experience and learning; and

• developing evaluation approaches suitable for measuring the impact of awareness and information initiatives.

9. OHS skills development

Australia needs to invest in skills development to ensure an ongoing capacity to meet current and emerging OHS issues. Skills need to be developed in the workplace and among all practitioners, inspectors, researchers, technical personnel and professions that may impact directly or indirectly on workplace health and safety.

Actions include:

• integrating health and safety into vocational, professional and inspectorate training arrangements;

• promoting the integration of OHS competencies into management training, including for small business;

• encouraging development of suitable OHS training resources; and

• researching improved methods of OHS skills development.

Implementation, monitoring and reporting

Improving Australia's current level of OHS performance to meet the national targets requires certain crucial actions to be taken.

Action plans for national priorities

The first in a series of three-year national action plans will be developed and implemented in the first year of operation of the National OHS Strategy. The action plans will outline:

- actions to be taken against each of the national priorities; and
- benchmarks, milestones and other indicators to be used to measure progress and outcomes of the national priorities.

It is intended that governments and others will be able to adapt successive national action plans to accommodate local imperatives. However, the parties recognise that it is important to give priority to coordinated national action on the matters addressed in this Strategy. Successive plans will be developed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders and interested parties. Plans will be submitted to the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council for their endorsement.

Underpinning areas requiring national action

Improvements in the nine underpinning areas will continue to be implemented. Separate action plans for each will be developed, maintained and reported on.

Monitoring, reporting and review

To achieve sustainable OHS improvements, Australia, like many developed countries, is adopting an evidence-based approach in which prevention programs and policies are regularly:

- monitored to track their implementation;
- evaluated as to their efficiency, effectiveness and impact; and
- reviewed and updated in the light of experience.

Through the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission, the parties will report annually to the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council on progress in implementing the National OHS Strategy. Reports will cover the actions plans, the progress against the national targets and the extent of cooperation and coordination among national stakeholders.

Evaluation is a central component of the Strategy. Evaluation processes will be developed and refined in consultation with stakeholders and interested parties. The Workplace Relations Ministers' Council will be given reports on the evaluations of:

- each action plan for the national priorities developed under the Strategy; and
- at least once every three years, the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Strategy.