



# BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION

## WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY SECTOR PLAN TO 2022



WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE WORK  
HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE BUILDING  
AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

July 2018

**LET'S TALK SAFETY**

## MINISTER'S MESSAGE

The NSW economy is bustling and the construction industry is a major contributor to the increase in activity. A record \$80.1 billion infrastructure pipeline is the largest program ever undertaken by any state in Australia. Construction employment rates are predicted to grow by another 13 per cent by 2022, resulting in a workforce of almost 400,000.

The NSW Government also recently announced funding for 100,000 free apprenticeships, as part of an unprecedented level of support for apprentices. This will ensure there is a strong pipeline of skilled workers across the state.

Given this vibrancy, it's sobering to learn that the construction industry continues to battle high injury and illness rates when compared to other industries. Even more alarmingly, over 46 per cent are major claims, indicating that construction workers are far more likely to suffer significant injuries than those in other industries.

As Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation, I am passionate about ensuring everyone gets home from work safely at the end of the day. To address specific risks in the building and construction industry, we have worked closely with businesses, workers, associations and unions to develop this work health and safety sector plan.

It takes into consideration key themes that stakeholders raised, and is designed to focus industry on the issues that we will be prioritising in the coming years. It will be supported by detailed sub-sector action plans and innovative safety intervention programs.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the development of this plan. I commend you all. I am in no doubt that we will continue to work together to drive down serious injuries and fatalities, while ensuring that workplaces in the building and construction industry are safe and supported.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Kean".

The Hon. Matt Kean MP  
Minister for Innovation and Better Regulation  
Member for Hornsby

## INDUSTRY ACTION PARTNERS



To achieve our vision for the NSW building and construction industry, we will work collaboratively with peak industry bodies, unions, associations and other government agencies.

Together, we will embed a positive health and safety landscape in NSW workplaces and leave a lasting legacy of reduced deaths and serious injuries in the NSW building and construction industry.

Several organisations have committed to supporting and implementing these initiatives to achieve the vision and goals of this plan. We look forward to welcoming additional industry action partners as we progress towards our goals.

## VISION

To eliminate workplace deaths, serious injuries and illnesses in the NSW building and construction industry

## MISSION

To ensure the NSW building and construction industry understands and fulfils its work health and safety obligations

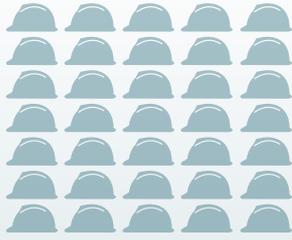
This building and construction sector plan has been developed in consultation with industry and aligns with the SafeWork NSW Work Health and Safety Roadmap 2022 to drive down fatality, injury and illness rates in the NSW building and construction industry.

The building and construction industry has a higher than average incidence rate of workplace injuries and diseases and a higher proportion of major claims.



# THE CURRENT STATE OF CONSTRUCTION IN NSW

## WORKPLACE DEATHS



Between 2013/14 and 2015/16, 35 construction workers, did not return home to their families.<sup>1</sup>

## PERMANENT DISABILITIES



1,208 incidents (4.7 per cent of claims) resulted in permanent disabilities.<sup>1</sup>

## COST



25,600 claims at a total cost of \$520.5 million.<sup>1</sup>

## EMPLOYED



351,300 working in the industry in 2017, projected to increase by more than 13 per cent by 2022.<sup>2</sup>

## GROWTH



In excess of \$80 billion is committed to NSW infrastructure projects over the next four years.<sup>3</sup>

## INDUSTRY ISSUES IMPACTING ON HEALTH AND SAFETY

Industry have told us the main issues impacting on safety are:



Skills & resources shortage



Diverse workforce



Tight profit margins and unrealistic time constraints



Complex work arrangements

# OUR PRIORITY HARMS

## TOWARDS ZERO PROGRAMS - FALLS FROM HEIGHTS AND ELECTRICAL

The Towards Zero programs will focus on those harms that have been the leading causes of traumatic injury fatalities in the building and construction industry for a long time. Our objective is to design and deliver new, innovative and long-term interventions to improve safety outcomes.

### FALLS FROM HEIGHTS



Falls from heights are the leading cause of traumatic fatalities in the NSW construction industry, with 42 deaths reported between 2003 and 2013. This amounts to 35 per cent of all construction deaths over this period.<sup>4</sup>

We have zero tolerance to workers being exposed to the risk of falls on building and construction sites and will apply strong compliance sanctions where warranted.

We will undertake in-depth research and analysis to develop detailed intervention initiatives focusing on the leading causations and contributing factors of falls. The program will also look at new and innovative ways to prevent falls risks in collaboration with other government agencies and leading industry partners.

### CONTACT WITH ELECTRICITY



Electrocution is the second leading cause of traumatic fatalities in construction in NSW, attributing to 20 (or 17 per cent of all) deaths between 2003 and 2013.<sup>4</sup>

Evidence suggests many of the fatalities were due to contact with electricity while working on electrical installations for machinery and (mainly) fixed plant. Australia-wide, half of the fatalities caused by contact with electricity involved electricians.<sup>4</sup>

In collaboration with peak industry bodies and NSW energy suppliers we will develop a strategic plan to reduce the number of fatalities and serious injuries caused by contact with electricity, with particular emphasis on young workers and electricians.<sup>4</sup>

### PLANT



Mobile or fixed plant such as earth moving equipment, trucks, and cranes have the potential to seriously injure or kill people.

Many workers are seriously injured or killed when hit by moving plant, or in on-site vehicle collisions, or when trapped between or in equipment.

We will work with industry leaders in specific sectors of the building and construction industry to address the leading causes of fatalities and injuries involving moving or fixed plant.

### FALLING OBJECTS



Falling objects are the fourth most common cause of traumatic fatalities on NSW construction sites. Between 2003 and 2013, there were 14 workers killed in NSW from being hit by falling objects.<sup>4</sup> This is also a life-threatening risk for members of the public passing by construction sites.

We will raise awareness and improve controls to manage falling objects, as well as providing industry with information on best practice measures.

# PROMOTING LONG TERM HEALTH

## MENTAL HEALTH



Construction workers are more than twice as likely to take their own lives than the general population,<sup>5</sup> indicating that some workplace factors in the industry may be hazardous to the mental health of workers.

Early and supported recovery at work plays a critical role in promoting good mental health after an injury or illness occurs.

We are implementing the largest mentally healthy workplace strategy in this country's history. We need to better understand what factors in the workplace play a role in mental health and assist employers to take action and implement control measures to mitigate these risks. To do so, we will collaborate with leading experts in the mental health sector and utilise industry stakeholder groups to improve awareness and minimise the risk of psychosocial hazards.

## ASBESTOS



Asbestos exposure is one of several 'silent' killers in the construction industry.

SafeWork NSW will develop and maintain a comprehensive asbestos and demolition strategy to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of workers is protected.

The strategy will include compliance and enforcement monitoring, as well as targeted audit programs for licensed asbestos removalists and asbestos assessors and key prevention programs to help raise awareness amongst industry and the community about the risks of exposure to asbestos.

## SILICA



SafeWork NSW has identified respirable crystalline silica as a priority chemical for the elimination and reduction of exposures to silica dust in the workplace.

Workers may breathe in silica dust if their work involves breaking, crushing or grinding materials that contain quartz. Tasks such as paving, surfacing, cement finishing, bricklaying, demolition, road construction and stone masonry all have an increased risk of silica exposure.

We are collaborating with industry leaders to establish clear compliance standards for controlling and managing silica exposures. Also, a monitoring and compliance inspection program will focus on tasks that can result in significant exposure in the construction sector.

## MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS (MSDs)



Workers compensation claims identify muscular stress as the top cause of injury in the construction industry.

An MSD is an injury to, or disease of, the body's musculoskeletal system and includes sprains and strains of muscles, ligaments, tendons and joints.

We will work with the building and construction industry to focus on ways of reducing a workers exposure to hazardous manual task risk factors in the workplace.

We will engage industry leaders to identify realistic and workable solutions, that can be implemented to protect workers from MSDs.

# OUR APPROACH

Each sub-sector identified below has common and individual drivers, challenges, risks, business structures and resources when it comes to workplace health and safety. In collaboration with industry partners and key stakeholders, we will develop tailored sub-sector initiatives to address the key harms identified, with an emphasis on how they commonly arise in that sub-sector and how they can be reduced.



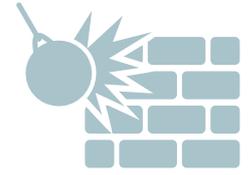
## INFRASTRUCTURE



## MID/HIGH RISE



## HOUSING



## ASBESTOS & DEMOLITION

### PRIORITY HARMS

- Falls from heights — off plant
- Electrical
- Moving plant
- Falling objects
- Musculoskeletal disorders

- Falls from heights — scaffold
- — penetrations
- — formwork
- Electrical
- Falling objects

- Falls from heights — voids & edges
- — roofs
- — ladders
- Structural collapse
- Electrical

- Demolition: — falls from heights
- — falling/flying objects
- — electrical
- — structural collapse

### PRIORITY HEALTH HARMS

- Crystalline Silica exposure – tunnelling and cutting
- Mental Health
- Fatigue

- Crystalline Silica exposure – cutting, grinding and breaking
- Mental Health
- Fatigue

- Crystalline Silica exposure – cutting, grinding and breaking

- Asbestos exposure
- Crystalline Silica — cutting, grinding and breaking
- — demolition dust



We will integrate strong and robust training and assessment processes for high risk work licences and provide exemplar services by cutting red-tape, making safety simpler, and producing communications and publications in plain language.

## HIGH-RISK WORKPLACES

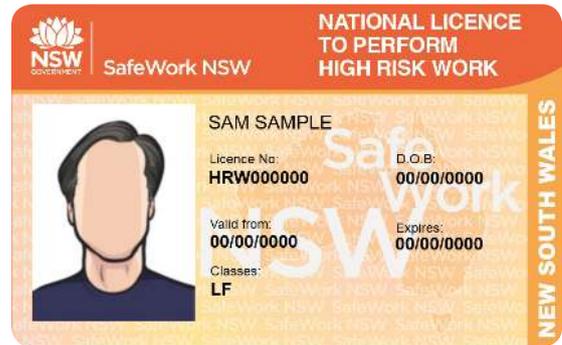
Consultation with industry revealed a strong desire to create a fair and level playing field, with tougher scrutiny and sanctions for those who flout work health and safety laws.

Our high-risk workplace strategy will focus on workplaces that undertake high risk activities and those businesses that continuously disregard worker safety. These workplaces can expect greater scrutiny from SafeWork NSW with increased visits by inspectors and, where necessary, an increase in compliance actions and severity of penalties until compliance is achieved.



## HIGH RISK WORK LICENSING

Work requiring a high risk work (HRW) licence is inherently dangerous and requires knowledgeable, skilled and competent workers to undertake it safely. We will work actively with other national WHS regulators and industry stakeholders to improve the integrity of HRW licence training and assessment activities. This will ensure the safety of workers and provide industry and the community with confidence that only appropriately trained workers are authorised.



## ASSESSING OUR PROGRESS

### MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation helps us to continuously improve and is important to assess the effectiveness of our strategies. It is also necessary to ensure that the plan is being rolled out as intended and that fatalities and serious injuries are falling, in line with or exceeding our targets.

We will review this sector plan every two years and commit to working with industry to check our progress, consider changes or new opportunities, and to ensure new or emerging harms are identified and addressed.

## CONTACT SAFEWORK NSW

For more information on building and construction safety, contact 13 10 50 or visit [www.safework.nsw.gov.au](http://www.safework.nsw.gov.au)

### NOTIFYING US

If there is a serious injury or illness, a death or a dangerous incident, you must report it to us immediately on 13 10 50 as an urgent investigation might be needed.

Incidents can be notified 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

1 Source: Workers Compensation data 2013/14 to 2015/16 provided by NSW State Insurance Regulatory Authority

2 Source: Australian Department of Jobs and Small business 2017 Employment Projections to May 2022

3 Source: NSW Treasury 5/2/2018 Alert NSW takes infrastructure strategy to the US  
<https://www.treasury.nsw.gov.au/node/4051> <http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/EmploymentProjections>

4 Source: *Work-related injuries and fatalities in Construction, Australia, 2003 to 2013*. SafeWork Australia

5 Source: [www.headsup.org.au/training-and-resources/news/2014/10/29/the-challenge-of-suicide-in-the-construction-industry](http://www.headsup.org.au/training-and-resources/news/2014/10/29/the-challenge-of-suicide-in-the-construction-industry)

### Disclaimer

This publication may contain information about the regulation and enforcement of work health and safety in NSW. It may include some of your obligations under some of the legislation that SafeWork NSW administers. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

Information on the latest laws can be checked by visiting the NSW legislation website [www.legislation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au)

This publication does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law as it applies to particular problems or to individuals or as a substitute for legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice if you need assistance on the application of the law to your situation.

This material may be displayed, printed and reproduced without amendment for personal, in-house or non-commercial use.

Catalogue No. SW08957

SafeWork NSW, 92-100 Donnison Street, Gosford, NSW 2250

Locked Bag 2906, Lisarow, NSW 2252 | Customer Experience 13 10 50

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

© Copyright SafeWork NSW 0818