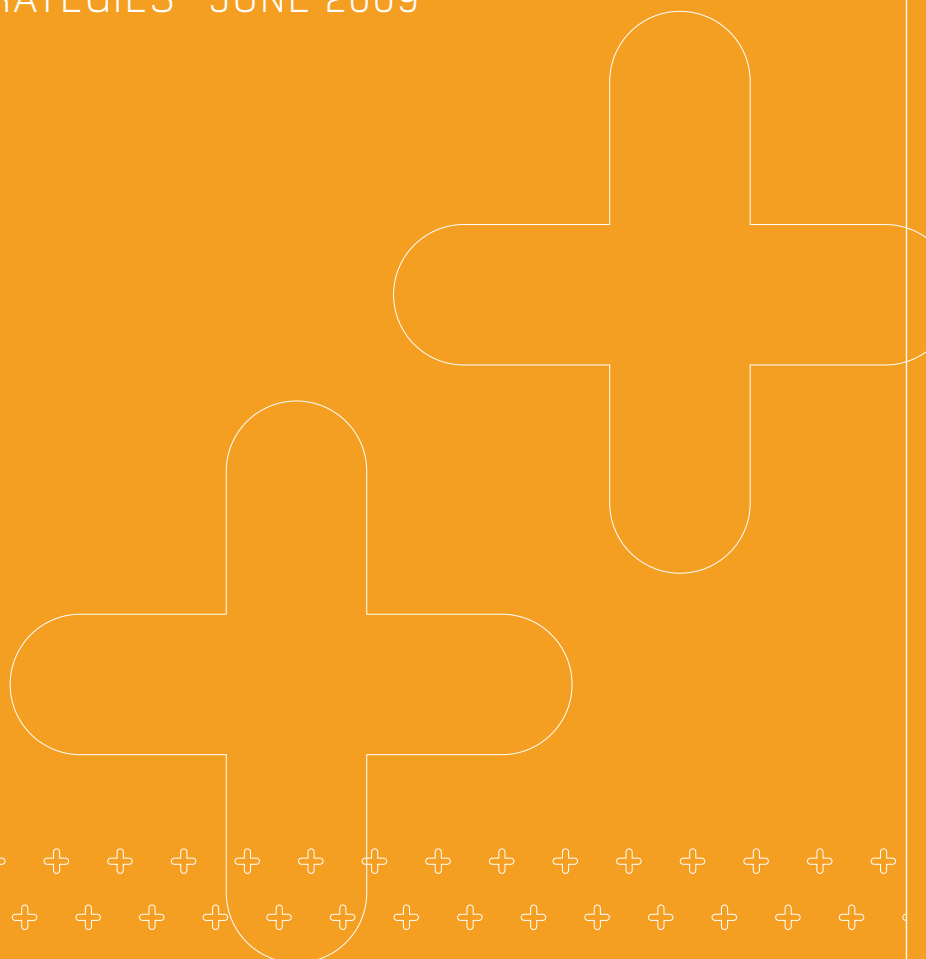




Review of the Workplace Health and Safety Strategy for New Zealand to 2015

WORKING PAPER: SURVEY OF INTERNATIONAL WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGIES · JUNE 2009



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leading Practice

New Zealand is not alone in having a national workplace health and safety strategy. Most modern democratic countries have developed workplace health and safety strategies or strategic plans. Governments will never be able to deliver healthy and safe workplaces in isolation due to the multi-participant and complex nature of workplace health and safety. Consequently, workplace health and safety strategies provide a framework to:

1. Improve coordination across government agencies
2. Involve the wider community, resulting in more stakeholders being involved in strategic design
3. Identify areas of priority focus

International Workplace Health & Safety Strategies

A desktop survey of health and safety strategies from three international jurisdictions was undertaken to investigate any areas of convergence in terms of focus, priorities or approaches. The three jurisdictions were Great Britain, Australia and Singapore. All jurisdictions use performance based legislative frameworks like New Zealand. See Annex One for background on the respective jurisdictions.

Key Observations

Strategic Themes

The survey underlined the general importance of a strategic approach to health and safety. Instructively, a set of strategic themes emerged from the international examples:

- Effective regulatory frameworks, enforcement capacity and justice
- Improving the skills, competence and guidance for workplace participants
- Sector or industry based programmes
- Evidence based prioritisation and targeting of workplace health and safety activities

Strategic Approaches

In addition to these strategic themes, a set of foundational approaches emerged to leading workplace health and safety improvements, namely:

- Proactive stakeholder engagement
- Specific performance targets for the strategy period
- Government agencies “walking the health and safety talk”
- Focusing on workplace culture

Links to the NZ Workplace Health and Safety Strategy to 2015

New Zealand’s Workplace Health and Safety Strategy (WHSS) picks up on these international strategic themes and approaches. Consequently, this elementary desktop

survey affirms that the WHSS framework for action, intervention mix and strategy principles are consistent with international practice.

See Annex Two for an outline of how international strategic themes and approaches are reflected in the WHSS.

DISCUSSION

Strategic Focus

A survey of workplace health and safety strategies from the UK, Singapore, and Australia underlined the importance of a strategic approach to health and safety. Instructively, a set of strategic themes emerged from the international examples:

- Effective regulatory frameworks, enforcement capacity and justice
- Improving the skills, competence and guidance for workplace participants
- Sector or industry based programmes
- Evidence based prioritisation and targeting of workplace health and safety activities

Effective regulatory frameworks and enforcement capacity and justice

The UK, Singapore, West Australian, Queensland and Victorian strategies all had explicit goals, principles or targets relating to effective regulatory frameworks, enforcement capability and justice.

The Health and Safety Executive UK (HSE UK) links its goal around enforcement and justice to assisting duty holders to prevent work-related accidents or illness, maintaining minimum standards and ultimately securing justice against those who put people at risk by flouting the law.

Singapore's strategy aims to create a clear and significant financial disincentive for poor safety management – by increasing penalties for poor safety management. At the same time, it also proposes the development of industry self-regulation.

WorkSafe Victoria, directed by their Strategy 2012, acknowledged *evolving community expectations on how employers...who clearly disregard their legal obligations should be held to account*. Consequently, from 2008-2011 they plan to increase investigations by 50%.

Queensland's Workplace Health and Safety Strategy 2004-12 has a primary goal relating to *specific and general deterrence strategies*. More practically, this is actioned by the maintenance and regular review of their enforcement framework, enhancing enforcement and compliance strategies to ensure strong deterrence and improved health and safety outcomes as well as developing new inspection tools and approaches.

Western Australia's Strategic Plan 2006-10 has a key objective aimed at ensuring a relevant legislative framework by developing an approach to consider the effectiveness of regulations and investigating alternative approaches to achieving compliance including the role of enforceable undertakings and incentives.

Improving the skills, competence and guidance for workplace participants

This area encompasses the competencies of and support for health and safety practitioners, workplace participant capability (i.e. duty holders) and the quality and accessibility of practical information and guidance, especially for small and medium sized businesses (SMEs).

These related, but discrete, issues were articulated in a range of ways by the various strategies. The HSE UK emphasise that health and safety training is about enabling directors, managers, supervisors and workers alike to make sensible and reasonable decisions. They also note the importance of embedding an understanding of risk as a life skill for young people in the education system.

Building strong capabilities is a key element of the Singapore strategy. Practically, they are developing a comprehensive competency framework that will incorporate generic competencies for workers, supervisors, managers and business owners, as well as technical competencies for professionals. They also signal an increased emphasis on improving the image and professionalism of health and safety professionals, including auditors and inspectors.

Developing the capacity of businesses and workers to manage health and safety effectively is a national priority of Australia's National OHS Strategy 2002-2012. More specifically they aim to better integrate workplace health and safety competencies into management, vocational, professional, worker and inspectorate training.

Informed by their Strategy 2012, WorkSafe Victoria announced an alliance with Australia's leading universities, and health and safety organisations. The Health and Safety Professional Alliance (HaSPA) aims to develop minimum standards for health and safety practitioners.

Queensland's strategy has an explicit focus on developing practical guidance based on sound risk management principles and industry/worker experience. Practically, they aim to develop a framework for the creation of guidance material (e.g. Departmental driven vs industry driven). They also have a strong focus on increasing the health and safety skills of duty holders, including professionals and inspectors.

Sector or industry based programmes

A strong characteristic of the Australian jurisdictions is an overt emphasis on sector or industry based programmes. The Australian National OHS Strategy identifies five priority sectors – construction and building, transport and storage, manufacturing, health and community services, and agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

Whilst the Queensland strategy has no sector or industry references in its strategy document, the Queensland Department of Employment and Industrial Relations has developed industry action plans for a key number of priority industries. Each action plan is for a two year period and is developed by a standing committee comprising a diverse range of stakeholders from the respective industry (e.g. key unions, associations and large employers).

As per the Queensland strategy, Singapore took a sector based programme approach through its action planning processes, developing a construction sector strategy subsequent to the launch of the primary strategy.

Similarly, the New South Wales Workplace Health and Safety Strategy was largely comprised of a collection of industry specific action plans. Each action plan was developed by a representative group of stakeholders. The plans outline the priority issues, the necessary steps to address the problems and the measures of success. Interestingly, the strategy also outlines explicitly what the respective government agencies will do to support and contribute to each industry action plan.

WorkSafe Victoria cites that Strategy 2012 has initiated a deeper segmentation of industries based on specific workplace characteristics that includes company size. This has allowed more tailored support and more targeted interventions.

Evidence based prioritisation and targeting of workplace health & safety activities

All of the strategies recognised the link between a good evidence base and the ability to prioritise and target activities and efforts effectively. The various strategies underline that building an evidence base draws on data, analytical capability, research, and evaluation activities.

The HSE proposes that priorities are important, whether at the industry, sector, specific health or safety issue, or individual business level. Setting priorities relies on creating a risk profile that identifies which groups of workers are most at risk and the scale and the incidence of injuries or ill health. This process informs the development of new ways to tackle old problems, as well as recognising inherent new risks emerging from evolving technologies.

One of the nine areas for national action in the Australian national strategy is the need for a coordinated research effort, as it adds to the information and advice for determining priorities and practical prevention activities. In the latest review of their strategy, it was noted that more emphasis is needed to increase the evidence base to inform policy and programme development, implementation and evaluation through increased and targeted national data collection, research and evaluation programmes

More specifically, SafeWork Australia Council's priorities for data analysis, research and evaluation will include:

- High incidence/severity risks
- Economic burden and benefits of workplace health and safety
- Hazard exposure levels
- Effectiveness of national legislative policies through to workplace interventions to improve outcomes
- Workplace and community perceptions
- Surveillance of emerging issues

Similarly, in relation to prioritising workplace activities, the Queensland strategy has three related goals:

- Improving health and safety data analysis and management
- Identifying priorities and influencing the workplace health and safety research agenda
- Strategic enforcement by allocating regulatory effort to high risk industries and situations in order to ensure that workplace health and safety interventions have the most significant positive outcomes

The Singapore strategy directly links effective regulation to strategic interventions, where efforts and resources are deployed in relation to priorities and targets based on risk. Engagement and enforcement activities need to be tailored to meet specific needs, identified through analysis of data and trends.

Strategic Approaches

In addition to these strategic themes from the international strategies, a set of foundational approaches to leading workplace health and safety emerged, namely:

- Proactive stakeholder engagement
- Specific performance targets for the strategy period
- Government agencies “walking the health and safety talk”
- Focusing on workplace culture

Proactive stakeholder engagement

All of the strategies underlined the myriad of ways in which lead agencies needed to involve stakeholders. The value of stakeholder engagement was broad, ranging from seeking agreement on priority problems, encouraging buy-in and co-design of solutions, improving co-ordination across agencies and, at the lowest level, simply raising the awareness of workplace health and safety.

The diverse range of engagement activities identified from the respective jurisdictions spanned from governance levels to individual workplaces. Practical examples from the various strategies include:

- tripartite governance structures
- formal technical groups
- inter-agency consultation
- industry-based steering groups
- health and safety road shows
- ‘safety week’ programmes
- Business and workplace advisory services
- Small business fora
- Workshop and seminar programmes
- Mentoring programmes
- Public pledges of commitment to the strategies’ vision or principles

Perhaps the most striking example of direct stakeholder engagement was through the Singapore strategy’s pledge process. In under a year it succeeded in securing more than 52,000 pledges of commitment towards workplace safety and health. The pledges came from employers, professionals, engineers, office employees, supervisors and workers. Interestingly, the HSE UK has adopted a similar pledge process to support their recently launched health and safety strategy.

Specific performance targets

All of the strategies surveyed, with the exception of the HSE UK strategy, have adopted specific performance targets. These targets invariably relate to reductions in work-related fatalities and the incidence of workplace injury.

The Australian national strategy had two targets:

- To sustain a significant, continual reduction in the incidents of work-related fatalities with a reduction of 20 per cent by 30 June 2012

- To reduce the incidence of workplace injury by at least 40 per cent by 30 June 2012

These targets were cited as a key factor in positively contributing to the progress of the national strategy. All of the State strategies contained explicit references to the national targets and monitored their respective performance against those targets.

The Singapore strategy set a 10-year target to halve the number of work-related fatalities to 2.5 per 100 000 workers by 2015. An earlier UK strategy - Revitalising Health and Safety - also included specific targets:

- reduce the number of working days lost per 100,000 workers from work-related injury and ill health by 30% by 2010
- reduce the incidence rate of fatal and major injury accidents by 10% by 2010
- reduce the incidence rate of cases of work-related ill health by 20% by 2010

Government agencies "walking the health and safety talk"

The Australian strategies, in particular, placed a strong emphasis on government agencies' own health and safety performance. This was expressed through the publishing of health and safety performance surveys in annual reports, a toolkit of dedicated health and safety resources on WorkSafe Australia's website, through to a national priority under the Australian National OHS Strategy – *strengthening the capacity of government to influence OHS outcomes*.

The role of government procurement in improving health and safety outcomes is a related and recurring theme of government leadership, reflected through many of the Australian strategies.

Focusing on workplace culture

The positive and important role of workplace culture is acknowledged in all of the strategies. However, the importance of culture is inferred rather than explicit. It tended to be referred to as the embodiment of changes, as opposed to a driver of change.

This can be interpreted as a recurring and subtle signal from all of the surveyed strategies that achieving aspirational visions on workplace health and safety is not about one change or any one player. Rather, workplace culture is more about a holistic range of changes reflected in attitudes, practices and values by all participants. This focus can be practically seen in the broad scope and nature of activities laid out in the various strategies.

More specifically, Singapore talked of *a strong and pervasive WSH culture [being] only possible if all relevant stakeholders take responsibility*. The HSE UK sees the true effectiveness of health and safety being when it is *an everyday process supported by all as an integral part of workplace culture*.

ANNEX 1 – INTERNATIONAL JURISDICTIONS

Great Britain

Great Britain was included in this survey as it has one of the world's best records for workplace health and safety. Its rates of death, injury and work-related illness have steadily declined for most of the last 35 years.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE UK) is responsible for overseeing workplace health and safety in Great Britain. The HSE's work covers a varied range of activities; from shaping and reviewing regulations, producing research and statistics and joint enforcement of the law with local authorities.

In April 2008, the HSE UK underwent a significant structural change, merging with the Health and Safety Commission (HSC). One of the first undertakings of the new HSE Board was to reset and reaffirm the direction of workplace health and safety in Great Britain. This undertaking was expressed through the development and launch of the *Health and Safety Executive UK - Become part of the solution* strategy and business plan in June 2009. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/strategy/index.htm>

This strategy was developed on extensive consultation across many hundreds of stakeholders. It also built on the experiences of the previous workplace health and safety strategies led by the HSC. This survey also looked at the strategy's companion business plan for the HSE UK.

Australia

Australia was included in this survey as they are our nearest neighbour and share many cultural characteristics. Furthermore, at the Federal and State level, Australia has achieved significant improvements in its health and safety performance over recent years.

International data indicates that in 2006–07, Australia recorded the sixth lowest injury fatality rate, with this rate decreasing more quickly than many of the best performing countries in the world. There has been a fall of 10% in the rate of serious injury and disease claims over the past five years.

Consequently, at the Federal level this survey looked at the *WorkSafe - National Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Strategy 2002-2012*, and the high-level findings from their most recent evaluation.

<http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/swa/HealthSafety/OHSstrategy/VisionTargets/FirstreviewoftheNationalOHSStrategy2002-2012.htm>

As the majority of workplace health and safety regulation and enforcement occurs at the State level, this survey also looked at health and safety strategies from a number of states, specifically:

- *New South Wales Workplace Health and Safety Strategy 2005-2008*
http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Publications/GeneralWorkCoverInformation/Initiatives/nsw_workplace_safety_strategy_2005_2008_4777.pdf
- *WorkSafe Victoria – Strategy 2012*
<http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/resources/file/eb8a0044bd56ea1/WorkSafe%20Annual%20Report%202008.pdf>
- *Queensland Workplace Health and Safety Strategy 2004-12*
<http://www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/publications/strategy04-12/index.htm>
- *Western Australia, Commission of Occupational Safety and Health, Strategic Plan 2006-10*

In some cases this survey was able to investigate formal strategy evaluations. In most situations, the survey was restricted to reviewing annual reports and strategy related documents.

Singapore

Singapore was included in this survey as an example of a small country with a self-acknowledged need for significant improvement in its health and safety performance. Despite improvement over a number of decades, industrial accident rates appeared to have stagnated since 2000.

In combination with the introduction of a new legislative framework, moving away from a prescriptive approach to a more performance based framework, the *Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) 2015 – a Strategy for Workplace Safety and Health in Singapore* was launched in 2006.

http://www.mom.gov.sg/publish/etc/medialib/mom_library/Workplace_Safety/files6.Par.63724.File.tmp/wsh2015.pdf
http://internetstg.wshc.gov.sg/downloads/publications/wshac_ConstructionWSH2015.pdf

Survey observations were largely based on the strategy documents and selected reports from the Singapore Workplace Safety and Health Council.

ANNEX 2 – PARALLELS TO THE NZ WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGY TO 2015 (WHSS)

Table One - International Strategic Themes and the NZ Workplace Health & Safety Strategy

International Strategic Themes	WHSS Outcome	WHSS Objectives	WHSS Actions
Effective regulatory frameworks, enforcement and capacity	Government Leadership and Practices	<i>1a:</i> Set high government expectations for workplace health and safety in New Zealand and ensure that regulatory standards are achieved	<p>Develop, review, align and evaluate standards and guidance (such as codes of practice and guidelines) within the legislative frameworks of the HSE Act and the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act (HSNO) 1996, so they are clear, relevant, and effective.</p> <p>Ensure that enforcement activities (such as audits, inspections, investigations and prosecutions) under the HSE Act, and the HSNO Act in places of work, are rigorous, fair and adequately resourced.</p>
Improving the skills, competence and guidance for workplace participants	Preventive Workplace Cultures	<i>2a:</i> Increase the recognition among business owners, directors and senior managers that health and safety benefits their business	<p>Ensure that practical information and support services are available to help workplaces achieve and surpass standards required under the HSE Act and the HSNO Act</p> <p>Provide practical guidance and tools to support the systematic and effective management of health and safety.</p> <p>Build the capability of managers to manage effectively health and safety systems, particularly in small businesses and high-risk industries.</p> <p>Build the capability of health and safety representatives through training.</p> <p>Provide practical guidance for workplaces on employee-participation systems and practices to support effective involvement of workers in health and safety matters.</p>

International Strategic Themes	WHSS Outcome	WHSS Objectives	WHSS Actions
	Industry Leadership and Community Engagement	<i>3a:</i> Develop and implement industry-led initiatives to improve workplace health and safety	Strengthen the competency of occupational safety and health professionals and practitioners through specialised education and training, and certification and professional development programmes.
Sector or industry based programmes	National Priorities	High Risk Industries	Examples of high injury-risk industries include construction and the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector.
	Industry Leadership and Community Engagement	<i>3a:</i> Develop and implement industry-led initiatives to improve workplace health and safety	Produce and promote industry-specific standards and guidance material for significant health and safety issues.
Evidence based prioritisation and targeting of workplace health and safety activities	Government Leadership and Practices	<i>1a:</i> Set high government expectations for workplace health and safety in New Zealand and ensure that regulatory standards are achieved <i>1c:</i> Improve co-ordination and alignment of government agency roles and activities	<p>Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of enforcement activities and ensure that their focus includes the Strategy's national priorities (such as airborne substances and workplace vehicles).</p> <p>Co-ordinate government investment in workplace health and safety research and set research priorities that are aligned with this Strategy.</p> <p>Develop more effective processes for sharing data and information between government agencies.</p>
	Industry Leadership and Community Engagement	<i>3a:</i> Develop and implement industry-led initiatives to improve workplace health and safety	Build the evidence base for industry-led initiatives through investment in research and development.

Table Two – International Strategic Approaches to Improving Health & Safety and the NZ Workplace Health & Safety Strategy

International Strategic Approaches	WHSS Outcome	WHSS Objectives	WHSS Actions
Proactive stakeholder engagement	Government Leadership and Practices	<i>1c:</i> Improve co-ordination and alignment of government agency roles and activities	<p>Increase joint planning by government agencies to ensure better co-ordination and alignment of work programmes.</p> <p>Improve collaboration between agencies to get the best possible alignment between ACC incentive programmes and the HSE legislative framework.</p> <p>Improve agency co-ordination for the management of hazardous substances in workplaces.</p>
	Industry Leadership and Community Engagement	<p><i>3a:</i> Develop and implement industry-led initiatives to improve workplace health and safety</p> <p><i>3b:</i> Encourage and enable industry and community leaders to promote workplace health and safety to their networks and communities</p>	<p>Create and strengthen industry health-and-safety groups and business/union partnerships as a means of directing and co-ordinating industry initiatives.</p> <p>Provide more effective government support for industry-led initiatives.</p> <p>Develop and implement industry strategies and plans aligned to the Strategy.</p> <p>Identify industry and community leaders to act as champions or spokespersons for improved workplace health and safety.</p> <p>Support industry and community leaders by providing them with information and communication resources that will be relevant to their networks and communities.</p> <p>Establish and provide forums in which industry and community leaders can communicate messages about health and safety to their networks and communities.</p>

International Strategic Approaches	WHSS Outcome	WHSS Objectives	WHSS Actions
Government agencies “walking the health and safety talk”	Government Leadership and Practices	<i>1b:</i> Provide leadership in workplace health and safety through the government’s roles as employer and purchaser	<p>Establish performance expectations for government agencies (as employers) in relation to workplace health and safety practices.</p> <p>Increase government agency participation in ACC incentive programmes.</p> <p>Provide practical guidance to improve government reporting (as an employer) in relation to workplace health and safety.</p> <p>Stocktake workplace health and safety practices in both the central and local government sectors, to encourage best practice and monitor progress.</p> <p>Review government purchasing and contracting guidelines and practices, to promote workplace health and safety within a fair and effective trading environment.</p>
Focusing on workplace culture	<p>Preventive Workplace Cultures</p> <p><i>2a:</i> Increase the recognition among business owners, directors and senior managers that health and safety benefits their business</p> <p><i>2b:</i> Increase the commitment and capability of managers to systematically and effectively manage workplace health and safety</p> <p><i>2c:</i> Ensure that workers participate effectively in processes for improving workplace health and safety</p> <p>See all actions</p>		



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