

# Wellbeing, psychological and physical health





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The World Health Organization defines a healthy workplace as one where workers and managers collaborate to use a continuous improvement process to protect and promote the health, safety and wellbeing of all workers and the sustainability of the workplace.

While it is difficult to control what people do, eat, drink or smoke in their own time, and how they are dealing with issues away from the workplace, it is now widely accepted that these issues are directly related to work health and safety.

The costs of sick leave and replacing those workers who are forced to leave due to health psychological and physical problems can be a hidden productivity issue with potential business impacts.

If workers are making unhealthy dietary and lifestyle choices, this can contribute to fatigue and impact on fitness for work. Those who aren't looking after their health and wellbeing are also less productive and more likely to be involved in workplace incidents.

There are also associated risks such as obesity and long-term chronic disease (e.g. diabetes) impacting on the wellbeing of workers.

And when you consider that workers could potentially be exposed to workplace hazards such as paints, chemicals, fumes and dusts, this can heighten the potential risks of developing chronic health issues.

Well designed and managed workplaces can play a role in promoting worker health and wellbeing, as well as minimising ill health and facilitating recovery and return to work after injury or illness

A mentally healthy workplace protects and promotes psychological health by preventing common psychosocial hazards such as fatigue, bullying, discrimination and stressful working conditions.

Workplaces are increasingly a setting for physical health promotion and preventative activities (e.g. smoking, obesity, drug and alcohol use) to assess and improve people's overall health as well as reduce work-related injury.

## Further information

Safe Work Australia's fact sheet *Preventing Psychological Injury under Work Health and Safety Laws*

[safeworkaustralia.gov.au](https://safeworkaustralia.gov.au)

The 'Healthy living' section of the SA Health website provides tips and tools to foster better health, wellbeing and healthy lifestyles.

[sahealth.sa.gov.au](https://sahealth.sa.gov.au)

# Alcohol and drugs

## Hazards/risks

In Australia alcohol use is a daily part of many people's lives. Although the use of illicit drugs is not as common, those who have used these drugs at least once is reported to be increasing.

The effects of both alcohol and illicit drug use during and outside of work hours can have a significant impact on workplace health, safety and productivity. Co-ordination, motor control, alertness and ability to exercise judgement can become affected. This risk is greater where people operate machinery, drive or rely on concentration to do their work.

Prevailing workplace culture, availability, physical isolation, job satisfaction and stress are a few of the other factors that might also increase the likelihood of alcohol or other drug consumption.

Workers under the influence present an injury hazard to themselves. They may also place their workmates in danger or in the difficult position of being expected to cover for unsafe work practices or having to report a fellow worker.

Damage to property or equipment and negative publicity for a business are also potential issues.

## Safety solutions

If an alcohol or other drug-related hazard is identified in a workplace, you need to eliminate or reduce any related harm, as far as is practicable.

Consider developing an alcohol and drug policy which sets out everyone's responsibility to ensure a healthy and safe work environment. The content should be based around an assessment of the associated risks and the individual requirements of your workplace. The policy should clearly state what is acceptable and the consequences of any unacceptable behaviour. Develop the policy in consultation with your workers, communicate it clearly to all members of the workforce, display it and ensure that workers have read, understood and signed it.

Some other solutions include:

- providing behaviour change/prevention information and education, counselling and rehabilitation arrangements
- creating opportunities for return to usual work duties by affected workers
- providing food and low alcohol/non-alcoholic alternatives if alcohol is allowed at functions
- providing alternative travel arrangements for workers affected by alcohol or drugs.

## Further information

Information about resources and services available to help employers and workers is available at [safework.sa.gov.au](http://safework.sa.gov.au).

*Framework for alcohol and drug management in the workplace*, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland [worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://worksafe.qld.gov.au)

Check with your industry association (e.g. Motor Trades Australia SA has one [mta-sa.asn.au](http://mta-sa.asn.au)) for any current alcohol and drug policies.

### SA Health

Drug and alcohol emergency information. [sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://sahealth.sa.gov.au)

### Alcohol and Drug Information Service

A confidential telephone counselling, information and referral service staffed by trained professionals. Phone 1300 13 1340 from 8.30am to 10pm every day (local call fee for South Australians) or visit [sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://sahealth.sa.gov.au).

### Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia

A range of information resources, pamphlets and posters for download, some available for order. [sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://sahealth.sa.gov.au)

### beyondblue

Drugs, alcohol and mental health fact sheet. [resources.beyondblue.org.au](http://resources.beyondblue.org.au)

### Counselling Online

Free and confidential 24/7 online drug counselling and referral line, phone 1800 888 236. [counsellingonline.org.au](http://counsellingonline.org.au)

# Bullying

## Hazards/risks

Workplace bullying can have a significant negative impact on individuals and the workplace. Like all hazards at work it needs to be managed.

Everyone at work has a responsibility for work health and safety – both physical and psychological – and to ensure that bullying does not occur.

## Safety solutions

Develop an anti-bullying policy in consultation with your workers.

Ensure workers are aware of the bullying reporting process.

Adopt a process for dealing with bullying complaints.

Provide educational information and support.

## Further information

Safe Work Australia’s national bullying guides explain what is and isn’t workplace bullying, how it can occur and how risks can be managed.

[safeworkaustralia.gov.au](http://safeworkaustralia.gov.au)

The **employer’s guide** shows how to identify the risk of bullying occurring. For example, it’s a good idea to monitor incident reports and patterns of absenteeism, and develop anti-bullying policies and procedures. It also explains how to respond to bullying and conduct an investigation into allegations of bullying.

The **worker’s guide** outlines where to get advice and what steps to take if bullying is occurring. It also provides information on what to do if a workplace bullying report has been made. In addition, it highlights the new provisions of the Commonwealth’s *Fair Work Act 2009* which allows the Fair Work Commission to consider individual applications to stop bullying.



# Fatigue

## Hazards/risks

Fatigue is a state of mental and/or physical exhaustion which reduces the ability to perform tasks safely and effectively – it is more than just feeling a little drowsy.

Being awake for 17 hours impairs performance to the same level as having a 0.05 blood alcohol content. Being awake for 20 hours has the same effect as a 0.1 blood alcohol content. <sup>1</sup>

Everyone’s ability to remain alert can be reduced by fatigue, which can adversely affect safety at work.

Fatigue can be caused by either work or non-work factors, or a combination of both, and can accumulate with time.

<sup>1</sup> WorkSafe Victoria, WorkCoverNSW, *Fatigue Prevention in the Workplace*, August 2008

## Safety solutions

Avoid working during periods of extreme heat or cold, or minimise exposure time through job rotation.

Encourage workers to report concerns they may have about work-related fatigue.

Design working hours and rosters to enable enough recovery time between shifts.

Ensure workers take adequate and regular breaks to rest, eat and rehydrate.

## Further information

For more information, refer to Safe Work Australia’s national fatigue guides which provide information about workplace fatigue: why it’s a problem, the signs of fatigue and how to mitigate the risks.

The guides outline the factors that can contribute to fatigue (e.g. shift work), how the risks can be assessed and controlled, and what workers’ responsibilities are in managing fatigue.

[safeworkaustralia.gov.au](http://safeworkaustralia.gov.au)



# Health and wellbeing

## Hazards/risks

Because working in a workshop is seen as a physical job, it's often assumed that it is also a healthy occupation, with plenty of exercise and fresh air.

However, the reality is that workshop workers face a number of different impacts on their personal health and wellbeing which may affect their ability to remain fit and well.

Obesity is on the rise due to inappropriate food choices, smoking is common, and alcohol and drugs are used widely, especially by young workers and often at high levels.

Unhealthy dietary and lifestyle choices can affect fitness for work and productivity, and potentially lead to long-term chronic disease, the risk of which may be heightened by exposure to other workplace hazards (e.g. smoking combined with exposure to chemicals, fumes and dusts).

Poor health and wellbeing can also be a hidden productivity issue for many Australian businesses.

## Business impacts

It is worth considering if your business could cope without you if you had a significant health issue. If you have a team of workers, you also need to consider the costs of sick leave and replacing those who are forced to leave due to health issues.

Having a healthy workforce makes sense because:

- poor employee health and absenteeism costs Australian businesses \$7 billion annually (or an estimated \$2700 per worker, per year) <sup>1</sup>
- unhealthy workers take up to 9 times more sick leave than their healthy colleagues <sup>1</sup>
- healthy workers are nearly 3 times more productive than unhealthy workers <sup>1</sup>
- presenteeism (not functioning fully while at work, due to poor health) is estimated to cost Australian business \$26 billion per year in lost productivity (2005/06) <sup>2</sup>
- obesity-related poor health is estimated to cost South Australian businesses \$273 million per year (2008). <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The health of Australia's workforce*, November 2005, Medibank Private

<sup>2</sup> *Workplace Wellness in Australia*, 2010, Price Waterhouse Coopers

<sup>3</sup> *The growing cost of obesity in 2008*, report for Diabetes Australia by Access Economics Pty Ltd, 2008.

### Cost of sick leave

Implementing a successful workplace health program can decrease staff absenteeism/sick leave by an average of 30%.

### Cost of replacement staff

Implementing a successful workplace health program can decrease staff turnover by an average of 10%.



cost of sick leave \$7200  
based on 30 sick days per  
workplace per year @ \$30/hr



cost of replacement  
staff \$135 000  
based on 3 workers resigning  
each year @ 75% of \$60 000  
annual wage

**implement a workplace health program**

Estimated savings

**\$2,160**

**+**

**\$13,500**

**=**



## Safety solutions

Offer healthy food choices at the workplace.

Support workers to participate in regular physical activity, through promotion, education and access to physical activity and involvement opportunities.

Support worker wellbeing through work practices, a positive workplace and leadership

## Further information

Workplaces can act as a setting for physical health promotion and preventative activities.

The 'Healthy living' section of the SA Health website provides tips and tools to foster better health, wellbeing and healthy lifestyles.

- Try *Get Healthy*, a free, confidential information and telephone-based coaching service that helps adults make lifestyle changes in relation to healthy eating, being physically active and achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.
- Download the *Healthy Workers Healthy Futures* toolkit, a guide to developing a successful workplace health program.
- Utilise Step 2 of the *Healthy Workers Audit Tool* to do an audit of how well your workplace currently supports worker health and wellbeing.
- Access the *SA Brief Health Check* which assesses current lifestyle and provides tips and referrals to support change.
- Search for SNAP resources (Smoking, Nutrition, Alcohol, Physical Inactivity).

[sahealth.sa.gov.au](http://sahealth.sa.gov.au)



# Smoking

## Hazards/risks

The *Tobacco Products Regulation Act 1997* prohibits smoking in all enclosed workplaces (e.g. offices, shops, factories, work vehicles).

Workplace exposure to passive smoke can produce symptoms of ill health, particularly for people with pre-existing medical conditions (e.g. respiratory or cardiovascular). Workers must be protected from the harmful health effects of exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke.

Workers who smoke should not be stigmatised.

## Safety solutions

The following control measures are key to successfully achieving a smoke-free work environment:

**Commitment:** Demonstrate senior management commitment and support to the development of a smoke-free workplace policy.

**Consultation:** Consult with workers during the development and implementation of the policy.

**Policy:** Following consultation, develop and communicate a written non-smoking policy. The policy should ban smoking from the workplace and include all indoor areas, vehicles and areas where smoke could drift into workplaces.

**Support:** Establish designated outdoor areas where smoking is permitted. These areas should have adequate natural ventilation and be placed where smoke cannot drift into smoke-free areas.

**Communication:** Make management, workers, customers and visitors aware of the policy. Use signage so that everyone knows where they cannot smoke (e.g. toilets, stairwells, foyers, staff rooms).

Offer encouragement to quit smoking by:

- placing health and 'Quit' information in strategic locations (e.g. staff rooms)
- not selling cigarettes at the workplace
- inviting 'Quit' program providers to talk with workers
- offering incentives to participate in 'Quit' programs
- referring smokers to the Quitline for help.

## Further information

Further information and details of support are available at [safework.sa.gov.au](https://safework.sa.gov.au).

SA Health has a smoke-free workplace guide to help you meet your legal requirements and support the development of smoke-free policies – download it from [sahealth.sa.gov.au](https://sahealth.sa.gov.au).

## Work-related stress

### Hazards/risks

Workplace injury claims for stress-related mental disorders are estimated to cost Australian business more than \$200 million annually. <sup>1</sup>

Work-related stress describes the physical, mental and emotional reactions of workers who perceive that their work demands exceed their abilities and/or their resources (such as time, help/support) to do the work. Stress occurs when people feel they are not coping in situations where it is important to them that they do.

A worker's response to stressors at work may be positive or negative depending on the type of demands placed on them and the amount of control they have of the situation, as well as support they receive and their individual response.

In the vast majority of instances people adjust to stressors and are able to continue to perform their normal work duties. While stress itself is not a disease, where it becomes excessive and long-lasting, it can lead to ill health.

Employers have a primary duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of their workers is not put at risk. This duty extends to protecting workers from the risk of harm from stressors at work.

<sup>1</sup> NOHSC 2003, from *Work-related mental disorders in Australia*, April 2006, Safe Work Australia

### Safety solutions

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has a series of 12 fact sheets on managing work-related stress. [worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://worksafe.qld.gov.au)

WorkSafe Victoria has a *Stress-Wise* kit that explains the risks of work-related stress and what you need to do to identify, prevent and manage them. [worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://worksafe.vic.gov.au)





## Work-related violence

### Hazards/risks

Work-related violence is any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work.

This definition covers a broad range of actions and behaviours that can create a risk to the health and safety of workers.

Work-related violence can result in both physical and psychological injuries to workers, and cause significant economic and social costs to them, their family, the business where they work and the wider community.

### Safety solutions

SafeWork SA's guide *Preventing and Responding to Work-Related Violence* helps employers and workers identify work-related violence hazards and ways to eliminate or minimise them.

Two types of work-related violence are covered:

- external violence – usually associated with robbery or other crimes where the perpetrator is someone from outside the workplace
- service related violence – arises when providing services to clients, customers, patients or prisoners.

This guide will assist in the development of work systems for the prevention of violent incidents, and responses to them should they occur.

[safework.sa.gov.au](https://safework.sa.gov.au)

# Quick safety scans – wellbeing, psychological and physical health

Use these quick safety scans to look at key work health and safety (WHS) issues in your workplace. Those items where you tick 'Sometimes' or 'Never' will need action to fix or improve. Use the safety solutions suggested earlier to help you.

Alcohol and drugs	Always	Sometimes	Never
You have a drug and alcohol policy, developed in consultation with workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The policy is displayed in the workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workers have read, understood and signed the documentation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational information and support programs are provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If alcohol is allowed at work functions, you provide food and low alcohol/non-alcoholic alternatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alternative travel arrangements are provided for workers affected by alcohol/drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Bullying	Always	Sometimes	Never
An anti-bullying policy has been developed in consultation with workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workers are aware of the bullying reporting process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You have a process for dealing with bullying complaints	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational information and support is available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An employee assistance program is available to workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Fatigue	Always	Sometimes	Never
Fatigue risks have been assessed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategies/policies are in place to handle risks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fatigued workers are given time off work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rosters allow for adequate recovery time between shifts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Health and wellbeing	Always	Sometimes	Never
Healthy food choices are offered in the workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workers are supported to participate in regular physical activity through promotion, education and access to physical activity and involvement opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worker wellbeing is supported and promoted through work practices, a positive workplace culture and leadership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational and information support programs are provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Smoking	Always	Sometimes	Never
A smoke-free workplace policy has been developed in consultation with workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The policy is displayed in the workplace	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You have designated outdoor smoking areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
'No smoking' signage is in place	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
'Quit' information and support is available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Work related stress	Always	Sometimes	Never
Work-related stress risks have been assessed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategies/policies are in place to handle risks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational information and support is available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An employee assistance program is available to workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Work related violence	Always	Sometimes	Never
Work-related violence risks have been assessed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategies/policies are in place to handle incidents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Educational information and support is available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
An employee assistance program is available to workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

