

About the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012–22

The Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012–22 (the Strategy) has been designed to drive key national activities that:

- will improve the health and safety of all Australian workers, and
- support organisations to better prevent and manage workplace risks.

The Commonwealth, all state and territory governments, major peak employer organisations, worker representative groups, and other bodies all develop strategic plans to support improved work health and safety.

The activities which they each undertake under their strategic plans will support (and be supported by) the outcomes of the Strategy.

Notes:

- Please read the Strategy in full before commenting as the context in which the quoted sections occur and the interaction between various parts of the Strategy need to be taken into consideration.
- The explanatory notes and the text in the left hand column are intended to assist you in answering the questions; they do not form part of the Strategy and do not require comment.
- All direct quotes from the Strategy are in *italics*.
- If you only wish to comment on a particular part of the Strategy, you can click on one of the **LINKS** below to go direct to that page.
- Please either highlight your choices (e.g. **YES NO**) or delete the inapplicable option.

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PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

Explanatory Note

The purpose of the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy is to drive key national activities to improve work health and safety.

It is aimed at national organisations – professional, industry and worker bodies; safety regulators and governments; and other peak bodies which in turn will influence everyday work and workplaces across Australia.

Detailed national activities will be developed by stakeholders as part of the implementation plans that will underlie and support the Strategy.

The Strategy is not designed to be applied directly to generating individual workplaces work health and safety plans. However managers may like to consider how concepts within the Strategy such as '*healthy and safe by design*' may be applied in their own workplaces.

Purpose of the Strategy

Do you agree with this focus in the Strategy?

YES NO

Comment:

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THE VISION AND PRINCIPLES

Explanatory Note

The vision is the aspirational outcome of the Strategy.

The Strategy is underpinned by the principle that all workers, regardless of their occupation or how they are engaged, have the fundamental right to be free from the risk of work-related death, injury and illness, and the belief that healthy and safe work will allow Australians to have more productive working lives.

This is consistent with the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is reflected in duties of care established in all Australian work health and safety legislation.

The vision of the Strategy is:

Healthy, safe and productive working lives.

Does this vision capture the aspirations you believe should underpin the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy?

YES NO

Comment:

This vision is based on two key principles:

Workers have the fundamental right to be free from the risk of work-related death, injury and illness, and

Should this principle be included in the draft Strategy?

YES NO

Comment:

Healthy and safe work will allow Australians to have more productive working lives.

Should this principle be included in the draft Strategy?

YES NO

Comment:

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2022 OUTCOMES

Explanatory Note

Four high-level outcomes are to be achieved by 2022:

- reduced incidence of work-related death, injury and illness
- reduced exposure to hazards or risks causing work-related injury and illness
- improved quality of workplace controls, and
- improved work health and safety infrastructure.

The first outcome will be achieved through the other three. Reducing exposure to hazards, and improving the quality of workplace controls, will lead to a reduction in the incidence of work-related death, injury and illness.

Note: The Strategy proposes reductions of 20 per cent in work-related injury fatalities, and 30 per cent in work-related injuries by 2022. You will be asked to comment on these figures in the next section of these questions.

The 2022 Outcomes are not expressed in numeric terms but it is assumed that the reductions and improvements referred to in the 2022 Outcomes would be broadly consistent with the numeric targets.

Reduced incidence of work-related death, injury and illness.	Do you think this outcome would contribute to achieving the vision? YES NO
	Can a reduction be achieved within the time frame? YES NO
Comment:	
Reduced exposure to hazards or risks causing work-related injury and illness.	Do you think this outcome would contribute to reducing the incidence of work-related death, injury and illness? YES NO
	Can a reduction be achieved within the time frame? YES NO
Comment: Adequate training for both employers and employees in work, health and safety practices will be essential if these outcomes are to be achieved by 2022. While employers undoubtedly play a key role, workers will also need to be educated on ways to reduce their own exposure to hazards or risks, along with their employers. Workers will need to be educated on minimising risk at their own level of control.	
Improved quality of workplace controls.	Do you think this outcome would contribute to reducing the incidence of work-related death, injury and illness? YES NO
	Can an improvement be achieved within the time frame? YES NO
Comment: An improvement in the quality of workplace controls can only be achieved within the timeframe stated via consultation with workplaces at all levels, including management and those at operational level.	

Improved work health and safety infrastructure

Do you think this outcome would contribute to reducing the incidence of work-related death, injury and illness?

YES NO

Can an improvement be achieved within the time frame?

Yes/ No

Comment: Again, consultation with the relevant stakeholders will be vital in achieving this outcome.

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TARGETS AND PRIORITIES

Explanatory Note

The Strategy includes national targets and performance indicators which will be used to monitor the success of national actions to meet the 2022 Outcomes.

Targets will be developed and implemented by 2015.

Work-Related Fatalities Targets:

The Strategy includes a target of a 20 per cent reduction in the number of injury fatalities.

[More information on injury fatalities.](#)

Do you think a 20 per cent reduction is:

- About right
- Too low
- Too high
- Irrelevant, we shouldn't have numeric targets
- Other (please explain).

Comment: Setting a numeric target in the context of reducing injury fatalities begs the question, what happens when the target of a 20 per cent reduction is met? The target for work related injury fatalities should always remain at zero. A numeric target serves no purpose.

Work-Related Injuries Targets:

The Strategy includes a target of a 30 per cent reduction in incidence rates of all claims resulting in one or more weeks off work.

[More information on incidence rates](#)

Do you think a 30 per cent reduction is:

- About right
- Too low
- Too high
- Irrelevant, we shouldn't have numeric targets
- Other (please explain).

Comment: This target may need to be qualified given the fluctuations in the composition of many workplaces, which at any one time may include full-time, part-time, casual and contract staff. For example, a casual and a full-time worker may sustain an injury of equal severity as result of the same workplace incident. The full-time worker may require a full 38 hour week off work, while the casual employees, who is only rostered on alternate weeks, would not need to be away from work at all. The figures in this situation may be deceptive if the severity of an injury is judged by the amount of time taken off from work. If one of the desired outcomes of the strategy is to reduce the *overall* incidence of workplace injuries, the target will need to account for these variations in staffing composition.

Body stressing Injuries Targets:

The Strategy includes a target of a 30 per cent reduction in the incidence rate* of claims resulting in one or more weeks off work due to body stressing.

[More information on body stressing](#)

[More information on incidence rates](#)

Do you think a 30 per cent reduction is:

- About right
- Too low
- Too high
- Irrelevant, we shouldn't have numeric targets
- Other (please explain).

Comment: See comment above in relation to Work-Related Injuries Targets.

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NATIONAL INDUSTRY PRIORITIES

Explanatory Note

The national industry priorities will focus activities and attention on those which contribute to the highest death, injury and illness to workers.

Sub sectors will be chosen from within these industries for three year periods during the life of the Strategy. This will be done during the development of the implementation plans.

National Industry Priorities

The following broad industry groups have been identified as priorities for the reduction of the incidence of traumatic fatalities, injuries and illnesses by 2015

Please indicate whether you agree that the following industries should be considered priorities:

- Agriculture

YES NO

Comment

- Transport

YES NO

Comment

- Manufacturing

YES NO

Comment

- Construction,

YES NO

Comment

Clearly there are a wide range of occupations that could feasibly fall under the construction category. As such, we recommend that when identifying the relevant subsectors government should consult with the relevant industry stakeholders who are experts in these fields in order to determine which occupations require a category of their own. Industry and employer associations would be a vital resource in this regard.

- Health

YES NO

Comment

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WORK RELATED DISEASES AND DISORDERS

Explanatory Note

To focus national prevention efforts, six work-related disease or disorder categories are proposed as national priorities in the first five years of the Strategy. These have been chosen based on their [severity](#), the number of workers estimated to be affected, and the existence of known prevention options.

At the time of the development there is limited reliable national data on short latency occupational diseases, and a lack of reliable national data on work-related long latency diseases and disorders. Establishing numeric targets on the incidence of these diseases is therefore not yet possible.

For short latency diseases, there are clearer links between work-related exposure and subsequently developing the disease. For long latency diseases, although exposure to known hazards may be well-established as a cause of the disease, work-relatedness may be more difficult to establish.

The Strategy proposes in the first five years of the Strategy:

- establishing targets to reduce short latency diseases, and
- establishing targets to reduce exposure to the causes of long latency diseases

Priority work-related diseases:

The work-related disease and disorder categories are:

musculoskeletal disorders

Please indicate whether you agree that the suggested diseases and disorders should be considered priorities:

YES NO

mental disorders

YES NO

cancers (including skin cancer)

YES NO

asthma

YES NO

contact dermatitis, and

YES NO

noise-induced hearing loss

YES NO

Comment: While we agree with the inclusion of these broad categories we would like to see further qualification under each disease and disorder category. Mental disorders in particular will need to be defined.

Work-Related Disease Targets:

It may be possible to establish numeric targets for some short latency diseases in the first years of the Strategy.

Do you agree that numeric targets for reduction in the incidence of work-related short latency diseases should be established in the first years of the Strategy?

YES NO

If you answered **No** please indicate why.

Comment:

Work-Related Disease Hazard Targets:

Establishing national targets for the prevention of exposure to the hazards which can cause short and long latency diseases is proposed by 2015.

Do you agree that targets for the prevention of exposure to disease causing agents should be established by 2015?

YES NO

If you answered **No** please indicate why.

Comment:

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ACTION AREAS

Explanatory Note

The Strategy identifies seven national action areas which together will help deliver the 2022 Outcomes. Achieving each Outcome will involve activity in several Action Areas.

Healthy and Safe by Design: Hazards are eliminated or minimised by design

a) Structures, plant, equipment and substances are designed to eliminate or minimise hazards or risks before they are introduced into the workplace	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving this Outcome: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• very important• important• neutral• of little importance• of no importance
b) Work and work processes and systems of work are designed and managed to eliminate or minimise hazards or risks	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving this Outcome: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• very important• important• neutral• of little importance• of no importance
	Comment

Comment: Unlike larger companies, most small and medium enterprises do not have the resources to employ or even consult specialists in work, health and safety. These smaller businesses would benefit greatly from government support through subsidised training and/or educational tools on designing the appropriate work processes and systems.

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Supply Chains and Networks: Improved work health and safety through supply chains and networks

a) All links along a supply chain understand their cumulative impact and actively improve the health and safety of the supply chain.	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving Outcome A: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• very important• important• neutral,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of little importance or no importance • of no importance
	<p>Comment: Manufacturers and distributors can play an important role in explaining the correct use of specific chemicals, materials and tools to the workers who use them on a daily basis. Those at the top of the supply chain would have the most detailed knowledge on the products being used by employees and so would be best placed to educate on the safest way to work with them.</p>
<p>b) Commercial relationships within supply chains and networks are used to improve work health and safety.</p>	<p>Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO</p>
	<p>Comment</p> <p>Is achieving Outcome B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral • of no importance
	<p>Comment</p>
<p>c) Industry leaders champion health and safety in supply chains and networks.</p>	<p>Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO</p>
	<p>Comment</p> <p>Is achieving Outcome C:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral • of no importance
	<p>Comment</p>
	<p>Are there actions and/or activities that could be undertaken at the national level to support the achievement of these outcomes? YES NO</p>
<p>Comment Government can lead by example in their own activities, through their own use and promotion of safe products.</p>	
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<p>Work Health and Safety Capabilities: Improved work health and safety capabilities.</p>	
<p>a) Everyone in a workplace has the work health and safety capabilities i.e. knowledge and skills they require.</p>	<p>Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO</p>
	<p>Comment</p>
	<p>Is achieving Outcome A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance
	Comment
<p><i>b) Those providing work health and safety education, training and advice have the appropriate capabilities, i.e. knowledge, experience and skills.</i></p>	<p>Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes?</p> <p>YES NO</p>
	Comment
	<p>Is achieving Outcome B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance
	Comment
<p><i>c) Inspectors and other staff of work health and safety regulators have work health and safety capabilities, i.e. knowledge, experience, skills and resources to effectively perform their role.</i></p>	<p>Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes?</p> <p>YES NO</p>
	Comment
	<p>Is achieving Outcome C:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance
	<p>Comment Inspectors will not only need the appropriate work, health and safety knowledge, but should also be properly trained in investigation and negotiation. Employers and their employees will only be able to improve their behaviours if inspectors take a co—operative and facilitative attitude when conducting workplace inspections.</p>
<p><i>d) WHS skills development is appropriately integrated effectively into relevant education and training programs.</i></p>	<p>Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes?</p> <p>YES NO</p>
	Comment
	<p>Is achieving Outcome D:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance
	Comment
	<p>Are there actions and/or activities that could be undertaken at the national level to support the achievement of these outcomes?</p>

	YES NO
Comment Government to provide mandatory investigative and negotiation training for all inspectors and their staff. Back to Links	
Culture and Leadership: Community and organisational culture and leadership leading to improved work health and safety	
<i>a) Proactive communities and their leaders drive improved work health and safety.</i>	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving Outcome A: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance
	Comment
<i>b) Organisational leaders foster a culture of consultation and collaboration which actively improves work health and safety.</i>	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving Outcome B: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance
	Comment
<i>c) Health and safety is given priority in all work processes and decisions.</i>	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving Outcome C: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance
	Comment
	Are there actions and/or activities that could be undertaken at the national level to support the achievement of these outcomes? YES NO
Comment	

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Research and Evaluation: Evidence-informed policy, programs and practice

a) <i>Research and evaluation are targeted to provide the evidence to prioritise and progress areas of national interest.</i>	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving Outcome A: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• very important• important• neutral,• of little importance• of no importance
b) <i>Australia has an effective research infrastructure and capacity.</i>	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving Outcome B: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• very important• important• neutral,• of little importance• of no importance
c) <i>Translating evidence to assist practical application.</i>	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving Outcome C: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• very important• important• neutral,• of little importance• of no importance
d) <i>The results of research are disseminated and implemented.</i>	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving Outcome D: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• very important• important• neutral,• of little importance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of no importance
	Comment
	Are there actions and/or activities that could be undertaken at the national level to support the achievement of these outcomes? YES NO
<p>Comment: Results of any research conducted into policy, programs and practice should be distributed to the relevant industry bodies to ensure the information reaches those who need to know. With their expertise and specific industry contacts these bodies are best placed to interpret the research and disseminate to members in a manner that is most suited to their audience.</p> <p>Back to Links</p>	
Government: Governments improve work health and safety	
<p>a) <i>Work health and safety is actively considered in the development, implementation and evaluation of government policy.</i></p>	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving Outcome A: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance
	Comment
<p>b) <i>Governments use their investment and purchasing power to improve work health and safety.</i></p>	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving Outcome B: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance
	Comment
<p>c) <i>Governments exemplify good work health and safety.</i></p>	Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes? YES NO
	Comment
	Is achieving Outcome C: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance
	Comment

	<p>Are there actions and/or activities that could be undertaken at the national level to support the achievement of these outcomes?</p> <p>YES NO</p>
<p>Comment Government can play an important role in promoting positive work, health and safety practices in the workplace, particularly towards contractors. Contractors tend to receive training in work health and safety policies and procedures that is less comprehensive than their permanent counterparts in the workplace, despite being at the same level of risk. Governments can lead the way in this regard by mandating the same level of training for all workers. It is also important that government take a facilitative approach with work, health and safety and actively assist employers to meet their work health and safety requirements.</p> <p>Back to Links</p>	
<p>Responsive Regulatory Framework: The regulatory framework responds and adapts to changing circumstances to maintain effectiveness</p>	
<p>a) <i>Legislation, policies and regulatory practice are reviewed and monitored to ensure they are responsive and effective.</i></p>	<p>Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes?</p> <p>YES NO</p> <p>Comment</p> <p>Is achieving Outcome A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance <p>Comment</p>
<p>a) <i>Relationships between regulators and all who have a stake in work health and safety are effective, constructive, transparent and accountable.</i></p>	<p>Do you agree that achieving this outcome will contribute to achieving the 2022 Outcomes?</p> <p>YES NO</p> <p>Comment</p> <p>Is achieving Outcome B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very important • important • neutral, • of little importance • of no importance <p>Comment</p> <p>Are there actions and/or activities that could be undertaken at the national level to support the achievement of these outcomes?</p> <p>YES NO</p>
<p>Comment The revision and consultation dates for legislation, policies and regulatory practices must be actively promoted by government to enable industry input. Each industry is different, so direct contact with the major industry bodies is imperative to ensure the development of these policies reflects the needs of those at the operational level in every industry. Industry bodies and associations are well placed to communicate with their members about issues with the regulatory regime and provide that information back to government.</p> <p>Back to Links</p> <p>Next Page</p>	

ADDITIONAL ISSUES

Explanatory Note:

The Strategy also addresses discussed the need for international collaboration and regular reporting on progress.

International Collaboration

Australia is a signatory to a range of international work health and safety conventions and agreements. This is one important way Australia can demonstrate our commitment and regional leadership in work health and safety.

Australia should continue to contribute to building the international evidence base on work health and safety through appropriate international collaboration, cooperation and exchange of information particularly in relation to our national priorities. Australia can support the building of work health and safety capacity in our region.

Is it important that the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy should include an international focus?

YES NO

Comment

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Reporting

There will be an annual progress and activities report on national, and the Strategy (and Implementation Plan) will be comprehensively reviewed in 2017.

Informed by the 2017 review, the Strategy will be modified as required to ensure its continued effectiveness.

Are the proposed reporting arrangements sufficient?

YES NO

Comment:

What would you like to see included in annual and periodic reports on the Strategy?

Comment:

GENERAL COMMENTS

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Is there anything in the draft Strategy that shouldn't be there?

Comment: No

Should the draft Strategy include additional material? If so what?

Comment: No

How could the draft Strategy be improved?

Comment: No

If you wish to comment on any other issues in the draft Strategy which have not been addressed in the questions above, please include your comment in the **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS** area at the end of the questions.

If you wish to make any additional comments please [click here](#).

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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Given the substantial growth in the Australian resources sector it is imperative that the Work Health and Safety Strategy align with the relevant Work Health and Safety Acts, Regulations and Codes of Practice for mines and general industry.

Regulatory inconsistencies across the states and territories can potentially result in different levels of safety regulation in mines as well as inefficiencies, particularly for mining companies and mining support and service companies operating across more than one jurisdiction. A strategy offers the opportunity to provide an overarching set of goals and priorities for all industries, including mining. However, if this strategy does not align with mining legislation it will only add a further layer of regulatory red tape that industry will need to navigate.

MEA also stresses the importance of industry groups being consulted when legislation, policies and codes of practice are reviewed. Given the ever changing nature of Australian industry, particularly the growth in the resources sector, it is imperative that the people at the coal face be given the opportunity to provide their feedback to regulators. Targeted consultation with industry groups in the major mining states of Queensland, Western Australia and NSW is also recommended.

Implementation is also a time that should see stakeholder engagement. Companies' policies and procedures will inevitably require amendment to ensure alignment with the strategy and businesses will be able to feed to government the best way to go about this to ensure the objectives are met with the least disruption to business. The needs of small business in particular will need to be taken into consideration as it is unlikely they will have staff dedicated to implementing regulatory changes and will need time to inform themselves on the changes and develop compliant procedures. Specific support from government for small business, through the distribution of information and access to advice, is highly recommended to ensure the concepts in the strategy are understood and can be easily applied to procedures adopted in the workplace.

DEFINITIONS:

Incidence rates:

The incidence rate is calculated as the number of accepted workers' compensation claims resulting in one or more weeks off work per 1000 employees.

Compensated Injury Fatalities:

Compensated injury fatalities refer to those fatalities due to an injury while working and for which there are accepted workers' compensation claims. It does not include fatalities of those workers not covered by compensation, for example self-employed farmers or self-employed construction trades persons.

Body stressing Injuries:

Body stressing refers to injuries or diseases which result from stress placed on muscles, tendons, ligaments and bones. It includes:

Muscular stress while lifting, carrying or putting down objects

Muscular stress while handling objects other than lifting, carrying or putting down

Muscular stress with no objects being handled (for example, bending, turning or twisting movements)

Repetitive movement, low muscle loading (for example, occupational overuse)

Claims due to body stressing account for about 40 per cent of all claims resulting in one or more weeks off work.

Severity:

The severity of the injury, disease or disorder refers to the seriousness of the potential consequences of the injury, disease or disorder for example whether it is potentially life threatening or causes a permanent or long-term disability.

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