



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Defence**

# DEFENCE WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGY

## 2017–2022





# Defence Work Health and Safety Policy Statement

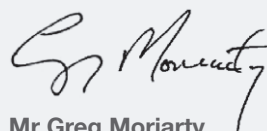
*Our mission — to defend Australia and its national interests — at times, requires our people to operate in hostile or hazardous environments. Protecting our people is therefore paramount in all activities undertaken by Defence. We cannot protect our nation if we do not first protect the health and safety of our people.*

Achieving our safety vision requires us all to be focussed on the work health and safety of our people. The *Defence Work Health and Safety Strategy 2017–2022* gives effect to the health, wellness and safety priority in our recently released *Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture 2017–2022*. A focus on health, wellness and safety is important to ensure Defence capability is maximised and sustainable. Importantly, work health and safety is everyone's responsibility. Safe practice must be inherent in how we think and act. Each one of us has a duty to prevent harm to ourselves and others through identifying hazards and managing risks in our workplace, whether they be physical or psychological. When our people are adversely affected by their work, we must support their recovery, and their ongoing contribution to delivering the Defence mission.

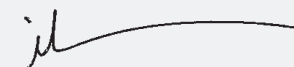
Our Strategy sets the direction for the Department to achieve our safety vision, and identifies areas in which to focus our efforts.

The *Defence Work Health and Safety Strategy 2017–2022* is structured around four focus areas:

- **Health and Safety Conscious People** – Safe practices must become inherent in the way we think and act. We must continue to support our people by providing them with the knowledge, skills, equipment and work environment they need to do their jobs safely and to remain healthy.
- **Healthy and Safe Workplaces** – The integration of work health and safety in all Defence activities will help provide the highest level of protection that is reasonably practicable. This includes a focus on workplace behaviours and psychological wellbeing as well as physical safety.
- **Health and Safety across the Capability Life Cycle** – The inclusion of work health and safety considerations and the possible effects on the workforce are considered from capability design through to disposal decisions.
- **Safety Assurance and Continuous Improvement** – We must learn from our experiences and identify opportunities for improvement.



**Mr Greg Moriarty**  
Secretary  
September 2017



**ACM Mark Binskin, AC**  
Chief of the Defence Force  
September 2017





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# Foreword

*Safety underpins all aspects of Defence capability and is an integral part of the way we deliver the Defence mission. The vision for the Defence Work Health and Safety Strategy 2017–2022 is: Defence has workplaces free from foreseeable and preventable injury and illness.*

Our Strategy sets the direction now and into the future and the supporting Implementation Plan articulates the activities we will undertake as an organisation to achieve this.

The intent of the Strategy is to continue embedding work health and safety into our thinking and behaviour as well as in all Defence business and management systems. The Strategy will support Defence to meet its obligations under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and the *Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

The areas of focus within this Strategy will require everyone to include work health and safety into everyday Defence business and future activities. This is an important aspect of ongoing cultural reform. Healthy, safe workplaces, both physically and psychologically, are critical enablers to Defence capability. We need people to be able to do their jobs well so we can deliver for the Australian community.

At times during overseas operations there may be circumstances where our people are exempt from some provisions of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. Where there is no viable way to apply the provisions of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, we still focus on ensuring the safety of our people so far as is reasonably practicable. There are other equivalent enterprise wide systems, including Sea and Air Worthiness,

which together with this Strategy provide comprehensive work health and safety outcomes for Defence in all operating environments.

Everyone needs to know their workplace, identify and manage risks, and have the courage to speak up and act to deliver safe and healthy workplaces.



**Ms Roxanne Kelley PSM**  
Deputy Secretary  
Defence People Group

Co-Chair  
Defence Work Health and  
Safety Committee



**Vice Admiral Ray Griggs AO CSC RAN**  
Vice Chief of the Defence Force

Co-Chair  
Defence Work Health and Safety  
Committee

# How this Strategy fits into the Defence strategic context

*The Defence Work Health and Safety Strategy 2017–2022 and its Implementation Plan provide enterprise wide guidance for work health and safety management aligned with Australian Government and Defence enterprise level frameworks.*

Integrating positive work health and safety culture into all Defence activities is a key objective of the Strategy and directly contributes to achievement of the Defence mission. The focus of the Strategy is on enhancing our safety behaviours and culture by including the work health and safety of our people, our most important capability, as a considered and integrated aspect of how we do business. This is intended to improve compliance with legislation and the performance and effectiveness of the Defence Work Health and Safety Management Systems.

The Strategy and Implementation Plan utilise enterprise level planning and management guidance. Figure 1 depicts how work health and safety management links to Defence strategic guidance and informs Group and Service activities. Monitoring, review and reporting of the Strategy's implementation to the Defence Work Health and Safety Committee will ensure work health and safety management is managed as an enterprise priority and significant work health and safety risks are identified and addressed.

There are other equivalent Defence enterprise systems that contribute to work health and safety outcomes. These Defence operating and regulatory systems, such as Sea and Air Worthiness, deliver on specific safety regulations.

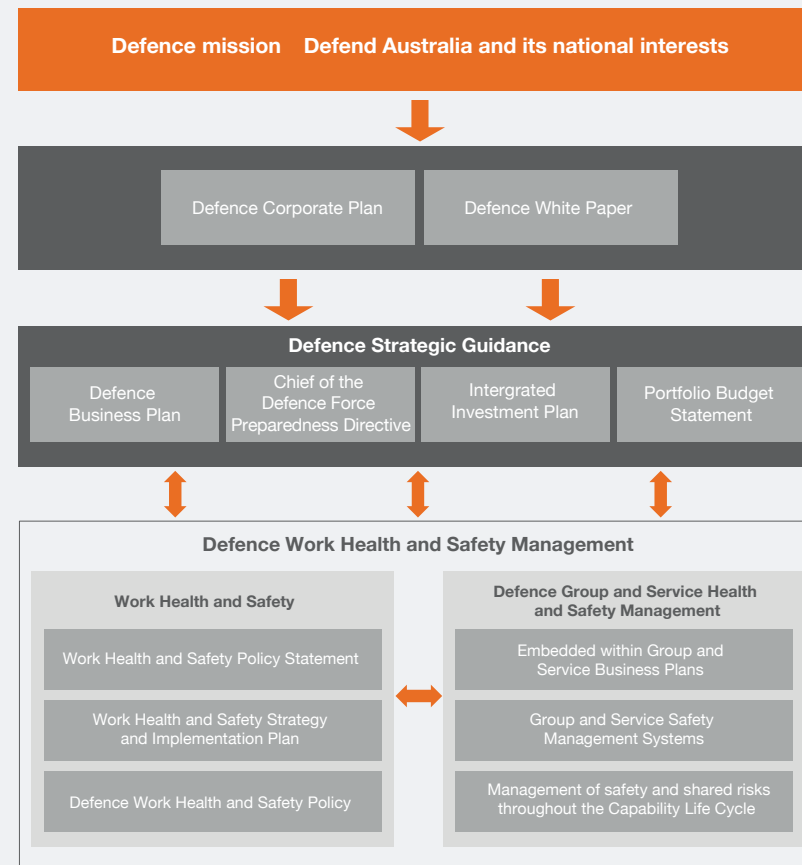


Figure 1

# Governance and accountability for the Defence Work Health and Safety Strategy 2017–2022

*Ownership of the Implementation Plan by the Groups and Services is critical to the success of the Strategy and to create a culture that embeds work health and safety as a component of day-to-day business.*

The Strategy and accompanying Implementation Plan will be overseen by the Defence Work Health and Safety Committee, with regular reporting to the Defence Enterprise Business Committee and the Defence Audit Risk Committee.

Ownership and accountability for achieving the Strategy is assigned through the Implementation Plan. The Plan is intended to promote the inclusion of work health and safety in Defence planning and activities in order to deliver cultural and behavioural change aligned with *Pathway to Change: Evolving Defence Culture 2017–2022*.

Figure 2 outlines the direction setting and governance from the strategic centre with review and reporting mechanisms from Accountable Officers within Groups and Services through the Defence Work Health and Safety Committee and Enterprise Business Committee.



Figure 2

# Work Health and Safety Risk Management and Assurance

*Safety assurance seeks objective evidence that the safety management system is working to improve safety performance.*

The Defence Work Health and Safety Risk Management Framework is aligned with the enterprise and whole of government risk management principles. All activities involving our people inherently have work health and safety risk and require assured systems to manage or eliminate those risks, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Shared critical safety risks at the enterprise level include those that extend across the whole of government, multiple Groups and Services, industry, our international partners and the community, require high levels of co-operation, consultation and coordination between stakeholders. These will be addressed over the timeframe of this Strategy through applying the Defence work health and safety risk management approach. The Strategy through the four focus areas aims to improve integration across our business, and our ability to manage shared risks and provide assurance of the systems we have in place to eliminate or minimise risks.



Figure 3





## Strategic Focus Areas

*The vision and focus areas of the Defence Work Health and Safety Strategy 2017–2022 build on the previous strategies. The aim is to continue maturing our approach to work health and safety management, integrating it into all of our business considerations and activities, making it a part of day-to-day business.*

The four focus areas: Health and Safety Conscious People; Healthy and Safe Workplaces; Health and Safety across the Capability Life Cycle; and Safety Assurance and Continuous Improvement play a vital role in achieving the vision of the Strategy. The descriptors underpinning each focus area are based on achieving the level four maturity characteristics of the Defence Safety Management System.



# Health and Safety Conscious People

## Health and Safety Conscious People

*Our people are trained professionals who are committed to a culture of safety, and are supported by systems and communication that manage work health and safety risks. Our training, policies and procedures have work health and safety as an integral element, ensuring that lessons learned are integrated across Defence to support force preservation and the provision of safe materiel and facilities.*

### How does this look?

- Our culture supports a holistic and open evaluation of incident management outcomes and enables more innovative and integrated approaches to prevention.
- People are mindful of how their work could affect their own or other people's physical and psychological health, wellbeing and safety.
- Work health and safety education, awareness and skilling is innovative, integrated, timely, relevant and well received.
- Groups and Services collaborate to maximise opportunities for the placement and retention of injured or ill workers through appropriate rehabilitation treatment.
- Work health and safety emergency preparedness planning processes are integrated with business continuity, security, environmental and critical infrastructure protection. Joint responses are practised. Lessons learned are linked to continuous improvement.
- When Australian Defence Force members are training and on operations, health and safety are of fundamental importance in planning and activity.
- The Occupational Medicine Occupational Health capability is integrated into the Defence Work Health and Safety Management Systems.

# Healthy and Safe Workplaces

## How does this look?

- Our workplace behaviours recognise the importance of physical and psychological wellbeing to healthy and safe workplaces.
- Leaders have examined and implemented improvement within their span of control and also seek to improve work health and safety management through collaboration, sharing and integration across Defence business.
- Defence-wide work health and safety issues are proactively managed. Potential work health and safety threats are identified through safety management systems, and action to address these is taken quickly.
- Opportunities for effective return to duty or work for ill and injured workers are explored and supported by Groups and Services.
- Defence workplaces are monitored and informed by an integrated and holistic occupational health capability.
- Emergency responses to work health and safety risks are fully integrated with business continuity, environmental protection, security, critical infrastructure protection and continuous improvement processes.
- We meet our obligations to those affected by our work within the broader community in which we operate and protect.

## Healthy and Safe Workplaces

*Risks are effectively managed and minimised through effective identification and controlling of hazards; implementing processes for cooperation and consultation; ensuring staff are educated and informed; and embedding safety, both physical and psychological, in all our work practices.*

# Health and Safety across the Capability Life Cycle



## How does this look?

- Worker health and safety are fundamental considerations in the design, acquisition, sustainment and disposal of Defence materiel.
- Risk management approaches cross organisational boundaries and are integrated into the capability life cycle.
- Integration of work health and safety is seen as a fundamental way to improve capability.
- Partnering relationships with contractors and suppliers to enable mutual improvement of work health and safety performance.
- Health and safety risk treatment protocols are proactively evaluated for effectiveness. This includes internal and external contestability.



# Safety Assurance and Continuous Improvement

## Safety Assurance and Continuous Improvement

*Safety is improved through clear accountability; by the use and verification of management systems; and through safety analysis and audit to inform and improve hazard and risk management.*

### How does this look?

- Work health and safety is a fundamental performance criteria for both Defence people and materiel.
- Safe systems of work are improved through collaboration, innovation and integration.
- Consultation and collaboration occurs in the workplace and reflects integration of work health and safety into day-to-day Defence business.
- All areas of Defence work to high standards of work health and safety performance, with underpinning assurance mechanisms enabling consistency, integration and collaboration.

## Implementation, monitoring and reporting

*The Implementation Plan provides the framework to measure, monitor and report implementation activities in support of the Defence Work Health and Safety Strategy 2017–2022.*

The vision of the Strategy is based on striving to achieve the level four maturity characteristics of the Defence Safety Management System, that is work health and safety is embedded into Defence business and related management systems; and improvement is holistic, innovative and integrated across the organisation.

The Implementation Plan details the actions to deliver the Strategy. The aim of the Implementation Plan is to align the initiatives with the enterprise planning and performance cycle. The effectiveness of the Strategy will be measured through a mix of lead and lag indicators identified against activities within the Implementation Plan. It will be a living document, reviewed and updated twice yearly to ensure alignment of current and planned activities with the intent and vision of the Strategy. Regular reviews will ensure that work health and safety policies and programs are delivering intended outcomes, and performance is tracked to inform future policies and programs.





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