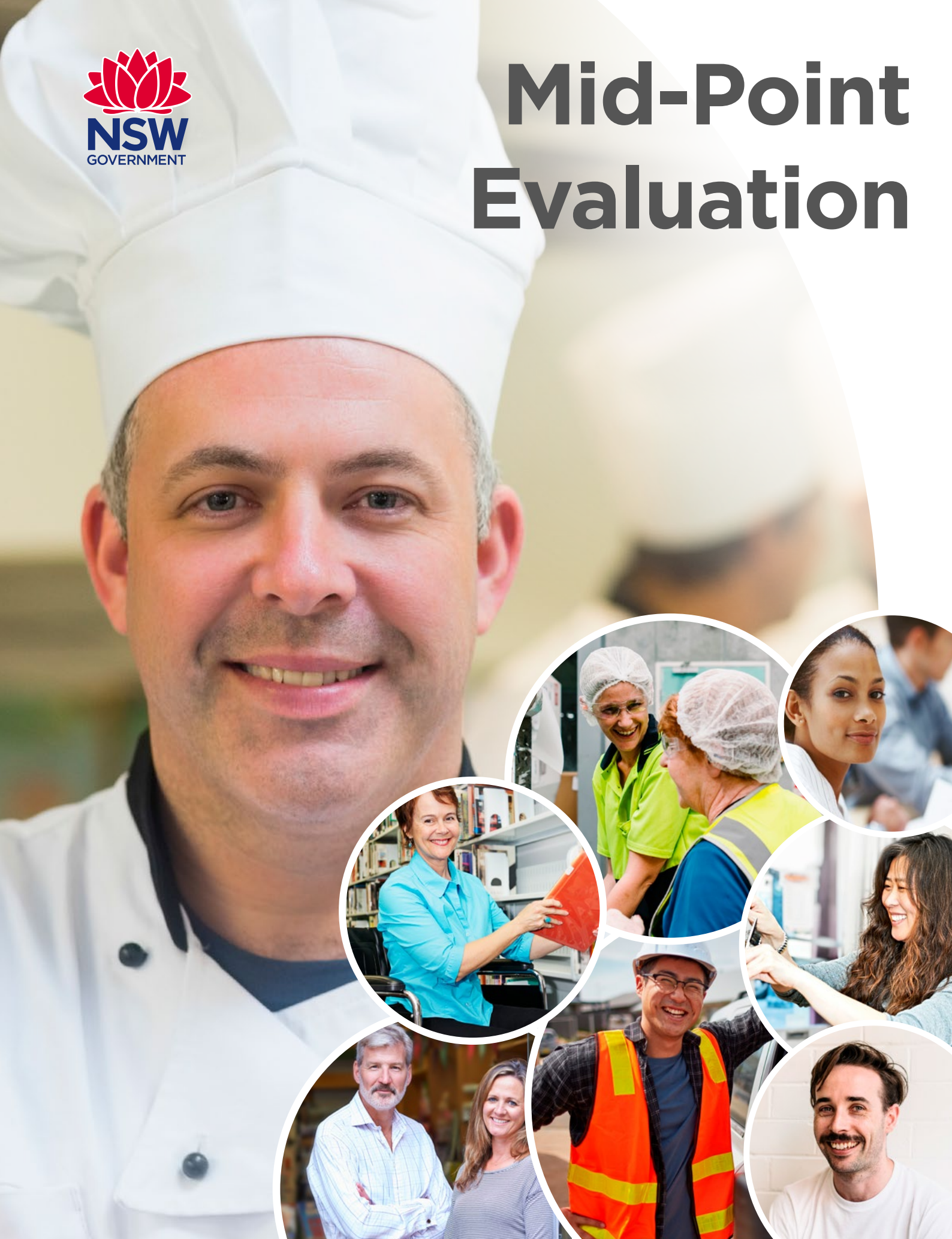




# Mid-Point Evaluation



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[mentalhealthatwork.nsw.gov.au](http://mentalhealthatwork.nsw.gov.au)

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# ACRONYMS

Abbreviation	Description
DCS	Department of Customer Service
MHW	Mentally Healthy Workplaces
NSW	New South Wales
SIRA	State Insurance Regulatory Authority

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## CONTEXT

The NSW Mentally Healthy Workplaces Strategy is the NSW government's response to addressing mental health in the workplace. Led by SafeWork NSW, the Strategy was developed in 2017-2018, and is being delivered over a four-year period from 2018 to 2022. Its key objectives are to reduce the impact of mental illness in working age people; improve health and social outcomes for the people of NSW; enhance employer capability to create mentally healthy workplaces, and to reduce mental health-related productivity costs to employers.

The Strategy has four core streams: 1) Awareness Raising 2) Evidence-Informed Interventions 3) Research and 4) Building Employer Capability. Across its four streams, the Strategy has 20 projects, of which 14 are being delivered by SafeWork NSW and the remainder are being delivered by the State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA), icare and the Centre for Work Health and Safety.

Urbis has been commissioned by SafeWork NSW to complete an evaluation of the Strategy throughout its delivery period. The evaluation focuses mainly on the 14 projects delivered by SafeWork NSW, however high-level findings relating to the projects being managed by SIRA and icare are also included. The evaluation has two main data collection and reporting periods: the Mid-Point Evaluation Report in late 2020 and the Final Evaluation Report in late 2022. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation also provided high-level interim findings in August 2020.

This report contains the findings of the Mid-Point Evaluation as of November 2020.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the Mid-Point Evaluation included: a review of project data provided by SafeWork NSW; a review of available data from non-project data sources including the Mentally Healthy Workplaces Benchmarking Tool survey and Workers' Compensation Claims data; and in depth interviews with stakeholders from SafeWork NSW, workplaces which had participated in Strategy activities and key industry stakeholders. The findings from all data sources were then integrated to inform the evaluation findings.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

<b>Strong design process</b>	The Strategy's design process was comprehensive and involved broad consultation, the establishment of a Design Steering Committee with key industry stakeholders, strong engagement with academic experts, and the compilation of an evidence-base which informed the Strategy's focus and activities. While this work provided a good foundation, more direct consultation with employers would have added to the knowledge base and helped identify priorities and projects that would benefit workplaces.
<b>Mostly successful implementation to date</b>	<p>The implementation of the Strategy has been mostly successful for this stage of the Strategy's delivery, with the majority of projects now established and only a small number still under development. Variability in project progress has been largely due to a complex operating environment with significant organisational change occurring for the Department since the Strategy's launch, as well as some limitations in SafeWork NSW resourcing.</p> <p>The SIRA and icare managed projects have demonstrated strong implementation to date. It is noted several of the icare projects were in existence prior to the development of the Strategy and therefore required minimum lead up time.</p>
<b>Broad reach across sectors and workplaces achieved, although significant challenges experienced</b>	The Strategy has demonstrated a broad reach across multiple sectors and workplace types. Since its launch in June 2018, close to 7,000 individuals have engaged directly with the Strategy through participating in its training and other programs, and a further 95,000 have accessed Strategy tools and resources provided online. However, the extent of the reach has fallen short of expectations, and could have been greater if circumstances had been different. The SafeWork team have experienced some challenges in

achieving greater reach, mainly due to a number of issues that have negatively impacted their ability to strongly promote and raise awareness of the Strategy and its projects.

**Evidence of positive impacts on workplaces**

While at this mid-point stage of the Strategy's delivery it is too early to fully assess its impact, the available evidence shows that workplaces participating in Strategy's activities report largely positive outcomes as a result of their engagement. These benefits include increased confidence and knowledge in relation to workplace mental health, and improved skills in supporting others with their workplace mental health needs. Some workplaces also reported they are better able to prioritise workplace mental health as a result of participating in the Strategy's activities, as the Strategy has provided such actions with legitimacy in the context of broader business-planning activities. It was also noted by workplaces that the Strategy has remained relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, and SafeWork NSW, SIRA and icare stakeholder report a number of adaptations have been made to support ongoing delivery and relevance of the Strategy during this period. It is noted however that the largely generic projects on offer under the Strategy have not always matched the needs of diverse workplaces. A more tailored approach is likely to result in even greater impact.

**Strategy achievements to date driven largely by commitment**

The Strategy's progress to date has largely been driven by the commitment of certain Ministers and senior SafeWork NSW staff responsible for managing the projects. As an organisation, SafeWork NSW led the way by being an early proponent of supporting mental health in the workplace. Strong Ministerial support for the Strategy particularly during its development, combined with a comprehensive design process and a committed and consistent team within SafeWork NSW have had a positive influence on the outcomes achieved thus far. In addition, partnering with credible mental health education experts to deliver projects has been key.

**Key challenges in operating environment have affected delivery**

In the two years since the Strategy's inception, SafeWork NSW has experienced three Ministerial changes and a major departmental restructure. More recently, the Department had to meet the major challenges relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. The operating environment has therefore not been conducive to implementing the Strategy as planned. Furthermore, certain difficulties relating to complex cross-Departmental decision-making processes governing communications activities have negatively impacted implementation of the projects which were designed to increase awareness of the Strategy. Together, these environmental factors and the absence of an integrated activity timetable, have delayed implementation of some projects, which in turn has limited awareness of the Strategy amongst employers and employees.

**Some design features warrant further consideration**

In seeking to provide a state-wide response to workplace mental health needs, the Strategy is arguably very ambitious and multifaceted, targeting both employees and employers. In the main, a generalist approach has been adopted to support workplace mental health development across diverse industries, occupations and workplace sizes and types. In our view, this broad-brush approach has the potential to diminish the success of the Strategy. A more targeted approach may be beneficial whereby certain types of workplaces are prioritised and practical and relevant policies and practices developed, implemented, documented and shared across workplaces.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Increase focus on target industries and occupations, and deliver tailored projects to the specific needs of each** to increase Strategy impact.
2. **Adopt a layered approach to awareness-raising activities** to deepen reach.
3. **Review existing Strategy work plan and identify opportunities for cross-stream and cross-project integration** to compound impact across streams and projects.
4. **Develop a more detailed schedule of work and milestones for remaining Strategy delivery period, and implement milestone reporting** to provide ongoing rationale and evidence for the progress of the Strategy.
5. **Apply an active learning approach using existing Strategy activities** to optimise available resources, contribute to the evidence base, and inform delivery improvements.
6. **Continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 and adapt the Strategy as needed** to ensure ongoing flexibility and responsiveness to this changing situation.
7. **Seek and embed lived experience into the Strategy's activities** to increase relevance and impact of Strategy activities.
8. **Expedite delivery of the Strategy's Peer Program and share its impact** to gain benefits shown in the evidence base for peer-led programs.
9. **Build workplace understanding of total workplace health, and seek their feedback on potential Strategy focus areas** to commence early positioning for any future strategies beyond 2022.



# INTRODUCTION

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. BACKGROUND

Mental health is a significant challenge faced by workers and workplaces across Australia. The 2020 Productivity Commission inquiry found that the direct economic costs of mental ill-health and suicide in Australia are estimated to be up to \$70 billion per year, comprising \$15.5 billion in mental healthcare and related services expenditure, \$15.3 billion in informal care provided by family and friends and \$12 to \$39 billion in lower economic participation and lost productivity.<sup>1</sup>

Workplace mental health can be impacted by individual psychosocial risks (e.g. job demands, control and insecurity, conflict and trauma, effort reward imbalance, hours worked etc.) and macro psychosocial risks (e.g. psychosocial safety climate, organisational culture, climate or justice).<sup>2</sup> Non-workplace risk factors such as bereavement, relationship difficulties, parenting difficulties and other life events can interact with workplace risks and exacerbate or lead to mental illness.<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, employment can be a source of autonomy and improved self-esteem for individuals, and lead to reductions in reported levels of common mental health issues; mentally healthy workplaces can be beneficial to the mental well-being of employees.<sup>4</sup>

Both in Australia and internationally, there is a move away from addressing psychosocial risks solely at the individual level and increasingly looking to the creation of mentally healthy workplaces with a stronger focus on prevention and early intervention rather than treatment.

## 1.2. STRATEGY OVERVIEW

SafeWork NSW (SafeWork) is the state workplace health and safety regulator for New South Wales (NSW). The primary aims of SafeWork are to protect against harm, reduce unnecessary compliance costs and secure safety standards.

SafeWork is leading the government response to tackle workplace mental health challenges and has developed the Strategy as a Ministerial/Secretarial Priority. The Strategy is the NSW Government's first comprehensive approach for workplace mental health. It was launched in June 2018 and sets out the NSW Government's long-term vision to create mentally healthy workplaces across NSW. The key objectives of the strategy are to<sup>5</sup>:

- reduce the impact of mental illness in working age people;
- improve health and social outcomes for the people of NSW; and
- improve capability and reduce productivity costs to employers.

Through implementation and evaluation of the Strategy, SafeWork aims to ensure that more than 90,000 NSW businesses take effective action to create mentally healthy workplaces by 2022, contributing to the Premier's Priority to reduce death by suicide through supporting workplace environments and improved healthy, safe and productive workplaces (building a stronger economy).<sup>6</sup>

The Strategy supports and aligns with state and national mental health reforms including:

- the Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform 2012-2022;
- the National Workplace Mental Health Framework; and

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Government Productivity Commission. (2020). Mental Health Productivity Commission Report – Overview and Recommendations. Retrieved from <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/mental-health/report/mental-health-volume1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> SafeWork NSW. (2017). Mentally Healthy Workplaces in NSW – Discussion Paper. Retrieved from [https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/320232/Mentally-healthy-workplaces-in-NSW-discussion-paper-September-2017-SW08615.pdf](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/320232/Mentally-healthy-workplaces-in-NSW-discussion-paper-September-2017-SW08615.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Harvey SB, Joyce S, Tan L, et al. (2014). Developing a mentally healthy workplace: A review of the literature. Retrieved from <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/default-source/research/creating-mentally-healthy-workplaces.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

<sup>4</sup> Modini, M., Joyce, S., Mykletun, A., Christensen, H., Bryant, R. A., Mitchell, P. B., & Harvey, S. B. (2016). The mental health benefits of employment: Results of a systematic meta-review. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 24(4), 331-336.

<sup>5</sup> NSW Government. (2017). NSW Mentally Healthy Workplaces Strategy 2018-22. Retrieved from [https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/362274/NSW\\_mentallyhealthyworkplacesstrategy\\_2018\\_22.pdf](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/362274/NSW_mentallyhealthyworkplacesstrategy_2018_22.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Department of Customer Service. (2020). RFQ Conditions & Statement of Requirements – Part A.

- the NSW Mental Health Commission's Living Well: A Strategic Plan for Mental Health in NSW 2014-2024, and the NSW Mental Health Taskforce.

The Strategy also aligns to SafeWork's Work Health and Safety Roadmap for NSW 2022. The Roadmap is the blueprint for driving state-wide activities in improvement in work health and safety aimed at regulators, peak bodies, associations, community leaders, and each employer and worker.

The Strategy will aim to deliver projects across four core streams<sup>7</sup>:

- **Awareness Raising** – A campaign to raise awareness, motivate action and provide practical support to enable employers to create mentally healthy workplaces.
- **Evidence-Informed Interventions** – Mental health interventions are chosen for their demonstrated effectiveness in improving mental health outcomes in the workplace, and their positive return on investment.
- **Research** – Projects, interventions and decisions informed by evidence to improve workplace mental health.
- **Building Employer Capability** – Expert guidance, collaboration, recognition and leading by example, to encourage and enable employers to build capability and take effective action.

The Strategy identifies the following industries for focused support, as they are at high risk of mental health issues in the workplace:

- professional, scientific and technical services
- information media/telecommunications
- transport, postal and warehousing
- manufacturing.

The Strategy was also designed to focus on supporting small and micro-businesses in NSW to improve their workplace mental health, in view of the specific stressors and factors these businesses experience. These include the business impact arising from workers needing to take sick leave for mental ill health, financial constraints, and limited time and resources available in small businesses to address mental health issues systematically.

The Strategy is a whole of government project with<sup>8</sup>:

- funding partners – icare and the State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA); and
- strategic partners – the NSW Ministry of Health, the Mental Health Commission of NSW, and BEING – Mental Health Consumers

In addition to the overarching target of 90,000 NSW businesses, some individual projects have specific reach and activity targets (these are reflected in Section 4.2).

SafeWork has responsibility for delivering the majority of the projects within the Strategy. Strategy partners icare and SIRA are responsible for delivering a smaller number of the projects, and one project is being delivered by the Centre for Work Health and Safety.

SafeWork also has collaborative partnerships with a range of workplace mental health experts and advocates, key influencers and industry leaders including Beyond Blue, the Black Dog Institute, the University of Sydney and WayAhead Workplaces.

Strategy governance has been established as follows: a Strategy Governance Program Board comprising Directors of SafeWork, SIRA and icare reports to the Strategy Steering Committee which has senior representation from SafeWork, SIRA and icare, as well as the NSW Ministry of Health, the NSW Mental Health Commission, Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisory Group and BEING.

<sup>7</sup> NSW Government. (2017). NSW Mentally Healthy Workplaces Strategy 2018-22. Retrieved from

[https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/362274/NSW\\_mentallyhealthyworkplacesstrategy\\_2018\\_22.pdf](https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/362274/NSW_mentallyhealthyworkplacesstrategy_2018_22.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> SafeWork NSW. (2020). A team effort. Retrieved from <https://www.SafeWork.nsw.gov.au/safety-starts-here/mental-health-at-work-the-basics/mental-health-@-work/our-commitment/a-team-effort>

## 2. EVALUATION OVERVIEW

In January 2020, Urbis was commissioned by SafeWork (a division of the NSW Department of Customer Service (DCS)) to deliver an Interim Evaluation Report, a Mid-Point Evaluation Report and a Final Evaluation Report of the NSW Mentally Healthy Workplaces (MHW) Strategy 2018-22 (the Strategy).

### 2.1. EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

#### 2.1.1. Evaluation purpose and approach

The purpose of the evaluation is to review the delivery and impacts of the Strategy during its funding period of 2018 to 2022. The approach incorporates a process, outcomes and economic evaluation and is underpinned by a continuous quality improvement framework. This Mid-Point Evaluation Report is focussed on delivering findings regarding the Strategy's implementation and progress to date, as well as insights and recommendations to help guide the delivery of the remaining delivery of the Strategy until June 2022.

#### 2.1.2. Evaluation scope

The evaluation is being undertaken of the Strategy as a whole and does not entail an evaluation of its individual components. However, key results from evaluations of individual projects being undertaken by SafeWork, icare and SIRA will be incorporated into the Strategy evaluation at a high level, as relevant to the Strategy activities and outcomes documented in the Program Logic (found in Appendix A).

The evaluation includes the following key activities:

- analysis of the process and outcomes for all Strategy projects and activities delivered by SafeWork against the Strategy activities and outcomes specified in the Program Logic
- high-level review of the process and outcomes for all Strategy projects and activities delivered by icare and SIRA against the Strategy activities and outcomes specified in the Program Logic, drawing on summary data and evaluation findings provided by icare and SIRA
- economic analysis using a Social Return on Investment methodology for all Strategy projects and activities delivered by SafeWork, icare and SIRA (pending data availability and quality)
- three reporting periods, the Interim and Mid-Point Evaluation in 2020 and the Final Evaluation in 2022. Each reporting period concludes with a formal report and presentation to SafeWork and the Strategy partners.

#### 2.1.3. Target audience

The target audiences for the evaluation include SafeWork, NSW Treasury, the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, and public and private sector employers and employees. The evaluation results will be used to inform continuous development of the Strategy, and also the development and delivery of future workplace mental health strategies and projects undertaken by SafeWork or other key stakeholders.

#### 2.1.4. Key evaluation questions

The evaluation will provide evidence as to the implementation, reach and outcomes of the Strategy by answering the following key evaluation questions. These are based on the Strategy Program Logic which was determined in consultation with SafeWork during the development of the Evaluation Framework between 2018 and 2019. The Program Logic and Performance Matrix detailing all key evaluation questions, indicators and data sources can be found in Appendix A.

All key evaluation questions are set out in Appendix B, with priority questions specified below.

Table 1 – Priority evaluation questions

Domain	Key evaluation questions
Implementation	To what extent were the activity streams and projects implemented as intended?
	Were projects selected based on the best available evidence?

Domain	Key evaluation questions
	What barriers and enablers influenced implementation of the activity streams and projects, and how effectively were these addressed?
Reach	How effective were the activity streams in reaching their target audiences?
Short term outcomes	Has the MHW Strategy resulted in an increase in workplace mental health awareness and understanding for NSW employers, employees and the community?
Medium term outcomes	Are NSW employers utilising workplace mental health products, resources, training and services?
	Have NSW employers planned and implemented new projects to improve workplace mental health?
Long term outcomes	Have employers demonstrated a capability uplift in creating mentally healthy workplaces?
	What has been the social return on investment for the MHW Strategy?

## 2.2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

SafeWork previously commissioned Urbis in 2017 to develop the MHW Strategy Evaluation Framework (the Framework) in parallel with the development of the Strategy. The evaluation of the MHW Strategy from its inception in 2018 to 2022 is guided by this Framework (which underwent a number of revisions in early 2019 to align with the finalised MHW Strategy).

In January 2020, Urbis was commissioned by SafeWork to deliver the Mid-Point Evaluation and the Final Evaluation of the Strategy. An Evaluation Plan was developed in consultation with SafeWork and the Mentally Healthy Workplaces Steering Committee, comprising SIRA and icare. The Evaluation Plan sets out the parameters for the evaluation activity, including the purpose, scope and focus of evaluation, practical aspects of evaluation implementation, a detailed description of the methodology, a stakeholder engagement plan, and a risk management plan.

In June 2020, SafeWork requested Urbis to undertake an additional Interim Evaluation Phase, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Interim Phase Evaluation was conducted over four weeks in July 2020 and involved an analysis of all available data on SafeWork-led projects, an online survey of 189 businesses, and in-depth interviews with five employers. The Interim Evaluation Phase Report presented findings in relation to three key questions:

- What is the current state of the delivery of the Strategy?
- What is the impact of COVID-19 on workplace mental health?
- What are the implications of these impacts for the Strategy?

High-level findings on implementation progress of SIRA and icare-led projects were also included.

### This evaluation (Mid-Point Evaluation)

Ethics approval was required for the evaluation given the need to engage with people with lived experience of mental health. An ethics application was submitted to Bellberry HREC on 11 March 2020 which was approved on 22 May 2020.

#### Primary data collection

In September and October 2020, Urbis conducted in-depth interviews, focus groups and workshops with NSW employees, employers, mental health peak and advocacy groups, and members of the Strategy team and leadership at SafeWork. We engaged with a total of 24 stakeholders via teleconference and telephone during this phase, including:

- SafeWork stakeholders (n=5)
- NSW employers and employees (n=14)
- mental health peak and advocacy stakeholders (n=5).

Key stakeholders for the evaluation were recruited with the assistance of SafeWork and Urbis' own networks in the mental health sector. The recruitment was guided by the stakeholder communications strategy outlined in the Evaluation Plan, to ensure that all key stakeholder groups experienced an inclusive process and have the opportunity to engage safely with the evaluation.

### **Secondary data collection**

A review of SafeWork project documentation and data, including SIRA and icare project data was also undertaken in October 2020 for the July 2018 to September 2020 period. Data sources that were used in this evaluation includes:

- SafeWork records e.g. implementation reports, risk management reports, records of events held by SafeWork to help build awareness of the Strategy
- data on individual SafeWork projects e.g. progress reports, evaluation data, testimonials, etc.
- analytics from the SafeWork NSW website e.g. traffic and engagement data
- summaries of progress and outcomes of the icare and SIRA-managed projects
- Workers' Compensation Claims data for workplace mental health injuries from 2014 to 2020, provided by SIRA
- Benchmarking Tool summary data as of November 2020.

### **Data analysis and reporting**

All data collected across stakeholder engagements and project documentation and data were synthesised. This process included a review of individual analysis undertaken, and then triangulation of all data through an internal workshop involving all members of the Evaluation Team. Key findings from the data synthesis informed this Mid-Point Evaluation Report.

All findings were then documented in this report. This report will be finalised following receipt of feedback from SafeWork NSW Leadership and the Mentally Healthy Workplaces Strategy Steering Committee.

## **2.3. LIMITATIONS**

The following limitations should be noted when considering this report:

1. stakeholders consulted were not representative, so views expressed in this report are indicative only
2. project documentation and data which were provided for analysis were variable across projects – some projects had more data and therefore were able to provide more insights into the outcomes and impacts of the project
3. the evaluation was conducted amidst the global COVID-19 pandemic, influencing the limited amount of outcomes data we could collect, associated with the primary intent of the Strategy. For example, some workplaces cannot distinguish from the impact of the pandemic on workers' mental health (positive or negative) and the impact of the Strategy. Furthermore, due to the impacts of the pandemic on many businesses, the operations of businesses took priority over the implementation of mental health projects and therefore have limited input on the impact of the Strategy.

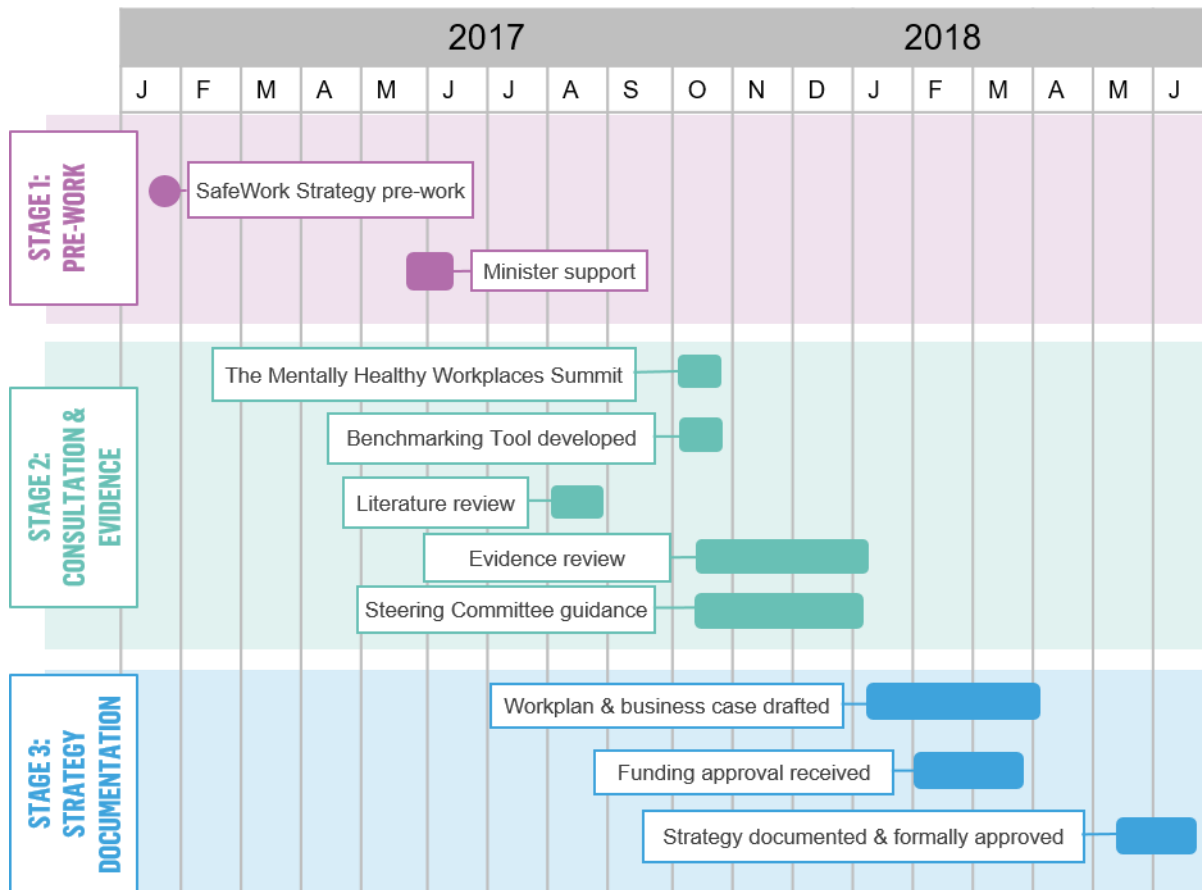
# KEY FINDINGS

### 3. DESIGN PROCESS

The Strategy design process commenced in early 2017, when SafeWork began work on a relatively small-scale workplace mental health support project. In mid-2017, the then Minister for Better Regulation expressed a significant interest in the issue and, with his support, SafeWork began to expand the original plan to develop a comprehensive Strategy.

The Strategy design process took place between October 2017 and June 2018. The sequence of events during this period are outlined in Figure 1, with further details on key activities outlined below.

Figure 1 – Design process



Throughout the design process SafeWork had a key focus firstly, on sector consultation and, secondly, on drawing on the latest evidence regarding best practice to develop the Strategy. Examples of this approach include:

- **The Mentally Health Workplaces Summit.** This Summit brought together 110 stakeholders relevant to the workplace mental health sector, including academics (national, international, NSW); mental health advocates; industry, employer and worker representatives from various business sizes and industries; workers with lived experience of mental illness; insurers; regulators (state and national); clinicians (GPs, rehabilitation clinicians, psychologists), and business leaders e.g. CEOs. The Summit enabled SafeWork to consult with stakeholders to understand their needs, and to garner and embed guidance from subject matter experts into the design of the Strategy.
- **Steering Committee.** A design-focussed Steering Committee was also established to enable ongoing sector guidance and consultation regarding the Strategy. The committee included academics from the University of Sydney and University of New South Wales, as well as industry stakeholders, to provide guidance on the Strategy development.
- **Literature review.** With the support of the Sydney Brain Mind Institute, SafeWork undertook a comprehensive review of available evidence on workplace mental health interventions to further inform the Strategy design. This process included a literature review that assessed the successes and challenges of workplace mental health interventions. Evidence was also drawn from existing research



undertaken by the University of Sydney and other academics. An Issues Paper was also developed for an expert panel discussion (including: academics, mental health advocates, and small business representatives), as well as a Return-on-Investment paper which quantified the benefits of implementing four evidence-based workplace mental health interventions.

- **The Mentally Healthy Workplaces in NSW Benchmarking Tool.** To identify existing workplace mental health needs across NSW, and to establish a firm baseline for the Strategy, SafeWork developed a Benchmarking Tool. The Benchmarking Tool was developed in collaboration with experts and advocates to measure the workplace capability to create a mentally healthy workplace. The Tool includes a five-segment scale, a matrix which describes and defines the segments for the themes which are needed for a mentally healthy workplace, and a series of surveys targeted at small business leaders and workers, and at medium/large business leaders and workers. The first Benchmarking Surveys were conducted in 2017 involving 2,000 workplaces representative of NSW by industry, region and firm size. The survey was then re-administered in late 2020, this time with some 4,000 workplaces. Data collected from progressive Benchmarking Surveys will be used to inform SafeWork's ongoing response to workplace mental health needs.

This consultation process brought together a wide range of stakeholders and included ongoing consultation with workplace representatives throughout the design phase. SafeWork stakeholders also report that people with lived experience of mental health issues attended the Summit (with one person per table identifying as a lived experience representative), although it is noted that the design process did not include a targeted or specific consultation approach with people with lived experience of workplace mental health issues.

As the Strategy was being developed and finalised, SafeWork also prepared an implementation roadmap and a business case to support the endorsement of the Strategy. Although these accompanying documents were not formally approved by the Minister, the workplan was approved and the SafeWork stakeholders report that the business case was approved by the Minister when it was submitted to Treasury for funding. The Strategy itself was formally approved by the Minister for Better Regulation in June 2018.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION AND ACTIVITIES**

### **4.1. IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW**

Since June 2018, SafeWork has progressed individual projects in each of the four streams of the Strategy (see Table 2 overleaf). There are 20 projects across four streams, most of which are managed by SafeWork. Six projects are delivered by organisations other than SafeWork, and are not within the scope of this evaluation for detailed analysis. An overview of their progress is however documented below.

To date some projects have demonstrated more progress than others, however the majority have been implemented. Only three projects remain in the planning stage as of September 2020. An overview of each individual project, its progress and its key achievements to date are reported on separately (overleaf).

Table 2 – Summary of streams and projects

Stream	Purpose	Project	Responsibility	Project status (as of 30 September 2020)
<b>Awareness Raising</b> <i>(NSW-wide)</i>	Raise awareness of workplace mental health and direct employers and workers to new resources to help create mentally healthy workplaces	Media campaign	SafeWork	In progress
		Website	SafeWork	In progress
		Prevention-focussed regulatory services	SafeWork	In progress
		<i>Events</i>	<i>icare</i>	<i>Not in evaluation scope</i>
<b>Evidence-Informed Interventions</b> <i>(High-risk industries and small/micro-businesses)</i>	Implement interventions for high-risk industries and small/micro-businesses that have demonstrated improved mental health outcomes and a positive return on investment	Managing for Team Wellbeing (previously Manager Training, and within SafeWork this program often referred to in conjunction with the Group/Digital Mental Health Skills Program using the term 'free programs')	SafeWork	In progress
		Group/Digital Mental Health Skills Program (previously Mental health skills training, and within SafeWork this program is often referred to in conjunction with the Managing for Team Wellbeing using the term 'free programs')	SafeWork	In progress
		Peer support	SafeWork	In planning
		<i>Recovery at Work</i>	<i>SIRA</i>	<i>Not in evaluation scope</i>
		<b>Research</b>	Data driven	SafeWork

Stream	Purpose	Project	Responsibility	Project status (as of 30 September 2020)
<i>(NSW-wide)</i>	Improve the knowledge base and build workplace capability to use evidence to inform decisions	<i>Applied research</i>	<i>icare</i>	<i>Not in evaluation scope</i>
		<i>Action research</i>	<i>icare</i>	<i>Not in evaluation scope</i>
		<i>Research investment</i>	<i>Centre for Work Health and Safety</i>	<i>Not in evaluation scope</i>
<b>Building Employer Capability</b> <i>(NSW-wide)</i>	Encourage and enable employers to build capability and take effective action through expert guidance, collaboration, recognition and leading by example	Government sector best practice	SafeWork	In progress
		Workplace Assessment	SafeWork	In progress
		Public commitment (includes the Mentally Healthy Workplaces Ambassadors)	SafeWork	In progress
		Collaboration and mentoring (includes Case Studies)	SafeWork	In progress
		Recognition	SafeWork	In planning
		Self-assessment tool	SafeWork	In progress
		Benchmarking tool	SafeWork	In progress
		<i>Social connection</i>	<i>icare</i>	<i>Not in evaluation scope</i>




## 4.2. PROJECT OVERVIEWS

### 4.2.1. SafeWork project profiles

This section provides a summary of the 14 SafeWork projects. It includes an overview of each project and its objectives, key achievements within the evaluation timeframe, and the current progress of the project as of 30 September 2020, unless otherwise stated.




#### MEDIA CAMPAIGN

##### Awareness Raising

	<p><b>Overview/objectives</b></p> <p>The media campaign aims to increase awareness of the role of the workplace in mental health.</p>
	<p><b>Key achievements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Two large-scale campaigns have been developed and put forward for Departmental approval. Due to a range of contributing factors, neither campaign was able to be launched (please see section 7.2 for further details).</li> <li>▪ A smaller-scale social media campaign promoting the workplace training programs was delivered.</li> <li>▪ The COVID-19 campaign was launched (ending on 22 July 2020) and resulted in 1,104 registrations post-campaign (April - July 2020), across the free programs, and the Workplace Assessment program.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Project status</b></p> <p><span style="color: #00A68F;">■</span> In progress</p>




#### PREVENTION-FOCUSSED REGULATORY SERVICES

##### Awareness Raising

	<p><b>Overview/objectives</b></p> <p>The prevention-focussed regulatory services provide inspector training and collaborates with others to design and deliver workplace mental health programs, services, and resources.</p>
	<p><b>Key achievements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 28 new inspectors have been trained.</li> <li>▪ The SafeWork Understanding Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing for Managers training reached Better Regulation Division employees, with 51 managers completing the training.</li> <li>▪ There is evidence that managers have greater understanding of mental health awareness due to participation in training.</li> <li>▪ Information sessions about the training programs have been delivered across the SafeWork NSW Directorates and Customer Service Contact Service. A Black Dog Institute telemarketing campaign and warm-lead resourcing, direct email campaigns (Electronic Direct Mail, or eDms) to the Australian Taxation Office and Mentally Healthy Workplaces databases have also been delivered, as well as several SafeWork newsletter articles in the SafeWork WRAP.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Project Status</b></p> <p><span style="color: #00A68F;">■</span> In progress</p>




## WEBSITE

### Awareness Raising

	<p><b>Overview/objectives</b></p> <p>The website provides access to prevention-focussed, practical guidance, and evidence-informed tools and resources to help create mentally healthy workplaces.</p>
	<p><b>Key achievements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website successfully developed and launched in rapid timeframe between June and October 2018.</li> <li>The website is successfully reaching many users with 238,007 unique page views and 95,491 new users from January 2019 till September 2020.</li> <li>A user experience review has been conducted of the website by Boomworks in 2020. The review found that the website users were happy with the content, but experienced some difficulties in navigating the website to find information. The visual elements of the website including its layouts and colours were well received. There was also feedback that a strong brand identity that was separate to other government institutions was important for website users, and that this should continue to be a focus for the Mentally Health at Work website.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Project status</b></p> <p><span style="color: #00A69F;">■</span> In progress</p>

## MANAGING FOR TEAM WELLBEING

### Evidence-Informed Interventions

	<p><b>Overview/objectives</b></p> <p>Formally known as Manager Training, this project aims to improve mental health literacy, increase confidence to support workers with mental illness and increase capability to design and manage work to minimise harm. It includes a sub-project focussed on the transport industry, as well as support targeting the broader workforces.</p>
	<p><b>Key achievements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project successfully developed and launched in partnership with the Black Dog Institute.</li> <li>The project is tracking well with more than half the targets met:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60 per cent of workshops have been scheduled or delivered (302 out of 505),</li> <li>70 per cent of managers trained (3,897 out of 5,555).</li> </ul> </li> <li>The success of a telemarketing campaign resulted in a sustained increase in the number of newly eligible businesses that have registered for the training.</li> <li>The training had positive impacts on managers' overall knowledge, understanding, and confidence of mental health wellbeing, and a very positive overall rating on its effectiveness, engagement, ease of online navigation, and quality of information. The Black Dog Institute evaluation of the training found that immediately following the workshop or online training there were positive changes in mental health literacy, help-seeking attitudes, and intention to adopt wellbeing strategies into daily life. Outcomes at three-to-six month follow up demonstrated that gains in knowledge, confidence to manage workplace mental health and wellbeing, and intention to adopt wellbeing strategies into everyday life persisted. A majority of respondents also indicated that they had implemented some of learnings from the training.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Project status</b></p> <p><span style="color: #00A69F;">■</span> In progress – the project is on track to meet its targets by the end of the contract.</p>

## GROUP/DIGITAL MENTAL HEALTH SKILLS PROGRAM

### Evidence-Informed Interventions

?	<b>Overview/objectives</b>
<p>This program has been marketed as Mental Health Skills Training, and more recently as Your Mental Health at Work. The project aims to help workers build strategies and capability to proactively manage their mental health. The project is currently scheduled to run until April 2021.</p>	
🏆	<b>Key achievements</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Project successfully developed and launched in partnership with the Black Dog Institute.</li> <li>▪ As of 30 June 2020, the project is tracking well with more than half the targets met:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 73 per cent of workshops have been scheduled or delivered (184 out of 252),</li> <li>– 70 per cent of employees trained (2,652 out of 3,780).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><i>Note: No new data available after 30 June 2020 as no further workshops were scheduled due to COVID-19. The workshops will be resumed as an interactive online (Zoom) workshop from mid-September 2020.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The training has received positive feedback from the participants through testimonials.</li> </ul>	
🚦	<b>Status</b>
<p><span style="color: #00A68F;">■</span> In progress – the project is on track to meet its targets by the end of the contract.</p>	

## PEER SUPPORT

### Evidence-Informed Interventions

?	<b>Overview/objectives</b>
<p>The peer support project intends to increase support for at-risk workers, reduce barriers to help-seeking, and reduce sickness absence through a peer-based intervention.</p>	
🏆	<b>Key achievements</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The SafeWork Workplace Health team has scoped the pilot and is in discussions for an external provider to deliver the project.</li> <li>▪ SafeWork is also preparing to engage with external stakeholders about the design and delivery of the pilot, including representatives from industry, unions and at-risk workers.</li> <li>▪ Upcoming changes are planned for the projects will be piloted in the government sector as well as in a high-risk industry.</li> </ul>	
🚦	<b>Status</b>
<p><span style="color: #FFD700;">■</span> In planning</p>	

## DATA DRIVEN

### Research

?	<b>Overview/objectives</b>
The data driven project intends to help workplaces use data effectively to create mentally healthy workplaces.	
🏆	<b>Key achievements</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The development of data guidelines is in its early stages. The guidelines will show how to effectively use key data and metrics to inform and manage workplace mental health, with a particular focus on small to medium business.</li> <li>▪ Procurement process are currently underway for an external consultant to develop the guidelines.</li> </ul>	
🚧	<b>Status</b>
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #FFD700; margin-right: 5px;"></span> In planning	

NB the Research Stream has also conducted a research study regarding clinical improvements as a result of using SMS e-mental health services. This study was delivered by the Centre for Work Health and Safety between 2018 and 2020, and was delivered in partnership with a virtual psychology service, as well as the MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development.

## COLLABORATION AND MENTORING

### Building Employer Capability

?	<b>Overview/objectives</b>
The collaboration and mentoring project aims to encourage and facilitate collaboration and mentoring between employers and across industries to build capability and implement mental health projects through online case studies.	
🏆	<b>Key achievements</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Five HTML case studies were prepared, as well as five case study videos and photography. These were used for the MHW website and campaign, including social media content to promote the mental health programs.</li> <li>▪ From late August 2020 to early October 2020 there were:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 792 views of the case study videos on YouTube.</li> <li>– 147 pageviews and 58 unique pageviews on the website.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ The SafeWork team has attended a number of events including the WayAhead Workplaces Annual General Meeting and the icare Mental Health Forum.</li> <li>▪ The team has provided input into other organisations' initiatives in this area, such as the Mental Health Commission of NSW's Lived Experience Framework.</li> <li>▪ The team has also presented at the SafeWork Mentor Program launch and provided resources to the program. The team had previously been working to collaborate on a refreshed model of the Mentor Program although this work is currently on hold.</li> </ul>	
🚧	<b>Status</b>
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 15px; background-color: #4DB6AC; margin-right: 5px;"></span> In progress	



## GOVERNMENT SECTOR BEST PRACTICE

### Building Employer Capability

?	<b>Overview/objectives</b>	<p>The Government Sector Best Practice project aims to include mental health in an integrated WHS framework. The project aims for SafeWork to lead by example and to provide guidance and resources for workplaces to consider the impact on mental health in the design of future policies and processes, and improve mental health outcomes.</p>
🏆	<b>Key achievements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Two events have been delivered (DCS Awareness Raising Event and presentation to the Government Sector WHS managers) to promote the project.</li> <li>▪ Internal implementation activities are in progress, including the development of a budget, project schedule, communications plan and collection of evaluation data.</li> <li>▪ Internal consultation has also taken place to understand current government practices and needs. This consultation included a Human Resources and Workplace Health and Safety practitioners survey conducted in 2020 with 222 respondents from the Department, as well as other NSW Government agencies as of November 2020.</li> <li>▪ Resources are currently being prepared for the NSW Government Sector and channels to promote the Secretary as an Ambassador are being identified.</li> <li>▪ A presentation has been developed that the Secretary will provide to NSW agencies.</li> </ul>
🚧	<b>Status</b>	<span style="color: #00A69F;">■</span> In progress





## WORKPLACE ASSESSMENT

### Building Employer Capability

?	<b>Overview/objectives</b>	<p>The Workplace Assessment project aims to provide individual organisations with expert assessments and advice to build capability in assessing and managing mental health risk.</p>
🏆	<b>Key achievements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Program developed and launched in partnership with Assure.</li> <li>▪ In 2019, an independent review was conducted of the program and the recommendations resulted in program adaptations and procuring a new provider.</li> <li>▪ As of September 2020, 359 organisations are currently actively engaged in the program and 298 development interviews have been conducted with participating organisations to build capability in assessing and managing mental health risk.</li> <li>▪ As of September 2020, more than a quarter (31%) of the targets have been met (154 out of 500 organisations have completed the program).</li> </ul>
🚧	<b>Status</b>	<span style="color: #00A69F;">■</span> In progress





## RECOGNITION

### Building Employer Capability

	<b>Overview/objectives</b> The Recognition project intends to contribute to awards, rewarding best practice including endorsing and promoting employers based on their capability to provide mentally healthy workplaces.
	<b>Key achievements</b> <i>Project still in the planning phase, no data available at this stage.</i>
	<b>Status</b>  In planning





## PUBLIC COMMITMENT

### Building Employer Capability

	<b>Overview/objectives</b> The Public Commitment project aims to enable and encourage employers, workers and the community to publicly commit to act to improve mental health in NSW workplaces.
	<b>Key achievements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Project launched on 1 October 2020, and a number of ambassadors have been engaged. Three ambassadors have engaged in the free programs as part of their onboarding.</li><li>One event and three case studies/videos have been hosted with Ambassadors.</li></ul>
	<b>Status</b>  In progress





## SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

### Building Employer Capability

	<b>Overview/objectives</b> The Self-Assessment Tool is an interactive online tool for workplaces to identify gaps or areas for improvement and take informed action.
	<b>Key achievements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Mental Health Capability Check has successfully been launched and is available on the Mental Health at Work website.</li><li>A more detailed self-assessment tool for businesses is in planning ahead of a scheduled launch in May 2021. This tool will operate as a digitised version of the Benchmarking Tool surveys.</li></ul>
	<b>Status</b>  In progress

## BENCHMARKING TOOL

### Building Employer Capability

	<b>Overview/objectives</b> The Benchmarking Tool project aims to validate and enhance the Benchmarking Tool, and re-execute in 2020 and 2022.
	<b>Key achievements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The tool was successfully developed during the Design phase, and a Baseline Measurement was taken with participation from approximately 2,000 NSW workplaces.</li><li>The tool has since been validated in 2020, and re-administered by Instinct and Reason.</li><li>The 2020 re-administration was completed by more than 4,000 workplaces and more than 8,000 workers. A high-level summary of results from the tool are included in Section 6.</li></ul>
	<b>Status</b>  In progress

## 4.3. ICARE-LED PROJECTS PROGRESS OVERVIEW

icare has made strong contributions to all streams of the Strategy, with several projects implemented as part of these streams. Consultation with icare highlighted that the projects implemented as part of the Strategy have been informed by a strong evidence-base. Key achievements are as follows.

- **Evidence-informed interventions piloted.** icare has piloted evidence-informed interventions targeted at stress, aggression and mental health issues in the workplace. These pilots have mostly demonstrated success, with icare considering future sustainability and scalability.
  - The Respect and Resilience program was informed by research examining the causes of customer aggression in the retail sector. Recognising the impact customer aggression can have on employee wellbeing, the program trains retail staff to de-escalate customer aggression and engage in self-care. This pilot has demonstrated reduced incidence of customer aggression and increased capability of employees to deescalate challenging customer behaviour.
  - The Sustaining Resilience at Work (StRAW) program is a project that trains peers to promote and provide social supports to prevent burnout in the workplace. Piloted in the NSW Correctional Services, participants reported increased knowledge of workplace mental health and increased confidence to seek support for mental health issues. icare is considering increasing promotion to generate greater awareness about the project.
  - The HealthStyle Way projects involve a number of activities (such as health and fitness checks and personal coaching) to improve wellbeing in the workplace.
- **Research commissioned.** icare has commissioned the Black Dog Institute and the University of New South Wales (UNSW) to complete a range of research projects to expand the evidence-base for workplace mental health, including research on the mental health of high-risk workforces (i.e. first responders, health professionals and apprentices). This research has informed several projects, including the development of an app to support doctors and health workers, resilience training for high risk workforces, and guidance on workplace mental health screening and psychoeducation programs.
- **Projects focussed on increasing social connectivity progressed.** icare's Social Connections project comprises four initiatives: the Social Connections Toolkit, a Safety Culture Survey, a Social Support Inventory and Vulnerability Mapping. These projects collectively aim to reduce mental health issues in the workplace by identifying poor work culture and addressing this by increasing social connection in the workplace. icare reported the Social Connections projects have been mostly effective in collecting evidence to better understand social isolation of injured workers and educating the workforce about social isolation and connection.

## 4.4. SIRA-LED PROJECTS PROGRESS OVERVIEW

SIRA has been active in implementing various recovery at work projects as part of the Evidence-Informed Interventions stream of the Strategy. SIRA noted in consultation that the projects they have implemented are informed by stakeholder feedback, academic evidence, and people with lived experience of mental health issues. Key achievements are as follows.

- **Grants provided to pilot programs.** SIRA implemented Recovery Boost, a program that provides grant funding to programs to assist with mental health recovery at work, with a focus on building the evidence base. A variety of projects have been selected to receive funding in the first round such as Mind Blank (online interactive workshops about workplace mental health), Therapy Dog (implementation of a therapy dog within the workplace) and NSW Police Force project (trauma-focussed yoga sessions). SIRA have also received several quality applications for the second round of projects to be funded and have funded an additional 11 projects. They noted their increase in promotion of Recovery Boost, a grant application capability building program, supported them to receive more quality applicants than the initial grant round.
- **Toolkit of resources developed.** To guide workplaces to respond to mental health issues in the workplace, and in response to stakeholder feedback, a toolkit of evidence informed resources from Beyond Blue and R U OK? was compiled. The Toolkit translates the findings of the 2019 Monash University report into recovery at work tools. It provides employees with information on topics such as how to have conversations with managers about workplace adjustments, connecting with friends and family and maintaining a work routine. SIRA are also in the process of working with the Brain and

Mind Centre at the University of Sydney to support the implementation phase of the READY? Disclosure tool to form part of the Toolkit. This is an evidence-based tool that assist employees to make a decision to disclose their mental health issues to someone. In a survey of Toolkit users, SIRA found there is interest and support for the Toolkit. Users noted they were accessing the Toolkit for a variety of reasons such as to share resources with their managers, looking for support for their own mental health issues and wanting support for psychological injury claims.

- **Lived experience projects developed to inform future projects.** SIRA have developed a Lived Experience Engagement Framework and a reference group involving people with lived experience to ensure the voice of people with lived experience is designed into future mental health projects. The Lived Experience Engagement Framework outlines a model for engaging people with lived experience of mental health issues. The reference group involves 10 people, including five people who identify as a person with a lived experience of mental health issues. Members of the reference group share their experiences of mental health issues in the workplace to help influence the development of new mental health projects. The group has also contributed to the development of the Lived Experience Engagement Framework.
- **Research commissioned.** SIRA have commissioned Monash University and Newcastle University to undertake a range of workplace mental health research pieces. Monash University are identifying opportunities to prevent and manage psychological injury claims and support the recovery and return to work from psychological injury. Newcastle University are conducting research into the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health issues in small and micro-businesses. SIRA are also considering a partnership with an academic partner to assign a post doctorate research fellow to focus on recovery at work.

## 5. REACH

Similar to the implementation progress, the reach of the Strategy to date has been mixed. The projects which have demonstrated the strongest reach to date are the free workplace mental health training programs which are being delivered in partnership with the Black Dog Institute. Most of the workplaces interviewed as part of the evaluation indicated they found out about the training after actively seeking out programs for their workforce – this suggests these projects are targeting an audience already aware of and motivated to improve workplace mental health. However, the fact the training was free and credible (due to the partnership with the Black Dog Institute) appears to have further motivated workplaces to engage with the training. These workplaces were mainly medium-sized businesses from a range of sectors such as Healthcare and Social Assistance, Education and Training, Construction and Information Media and Telecommunications.

Projects which have demonstrated lower levels of reach are those which are focussed less on direct worker skills training, and more on building workplace capability and working towards broader sector change. Arguably, however, it is at this systemic level that there is potential for a bigger return on investment for the Strategy.

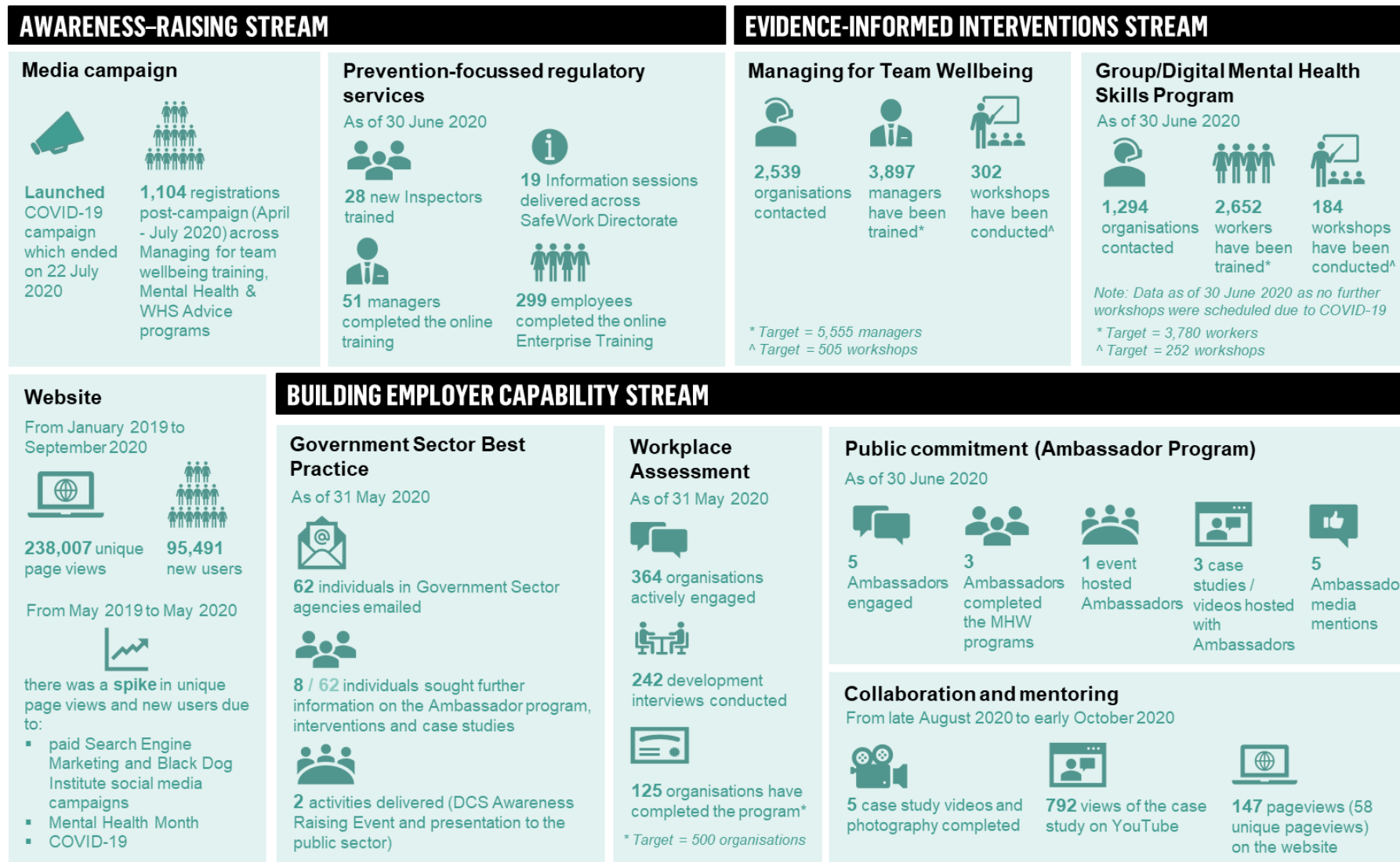
In-depth interviews with workplaces and industry stakeholders indicate there is limited general industry awareness of the Strategy projects and resources. Most workplaces and key workplace mental health industry stakeholders said they knew the Strategy existed, but they had little understanding of the projects available to them under the Strategy. They commented significantly more promotional activities are needed to increase awareness of the various Strategy projects.

Importantly, these stakeholders also noted there are now many organisations in existence that are developing and promoting mental health resources and projects to employers, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. This has created a lot of 'noise' in the mental health sector and some stakeholders reported now being overwhelmed with choice when it came to workplace mental health projects and resources. This suggests the Strategy needs to stand out from this 'noise' and differentiate itself in some way, whether it be the quality of what is on offer, or projects it is uniquely placed to run, or the combination of complementary projects and resources that are available.

A few workplaces we spoke to had engaged directly in one or two of the Strategy projects, but these had in some cases only come to their attention when they were searching the internet for workplace mental health resources.

An overview of the reach achieved by the Strategy is set out in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 – Reach of implemented SafeWork-led projects as of 30 September 2020 (unless stated otherwise)



Note, projects not included in this infographic have either not been implemented as of yet (in planning stages) or are being delivered by Centre for Work Health and Safety, SIRA or icare.

## 6. OUTCOMES

### 6.1. OUTCOMES REPORTED BY WORKPLACES

Outcomes delivered by the Strategy were identified through reviewing available project data, conducting in-depth interviews with workplaces which had participated in one or more projects of the Strategy, and analysing the results of a recent pulse survey of n=189 NSW businesses regarding the Strategy's reach and impact. Through reviewing these data sources, there is evidence that the Strategy has delivered the following outcomes for workplaces.

#### **Improved confidence to act and increased legitimacy to take actions.**

Individuals who have participated in the free programs report greater confidence to implement workplace mental health supports for their workforce. They also reported that for workplaces which did not previously prioritise workplace mental health supports, these programs have provided Human Resource managers with increased legitimacy to implement workplace mental health strategies and supports.

*"The training was really helpful and being able to complete the training online and at our own pace made it easier for our busy staff to join. I learnt valuable skills and plan on implementing a new policy on mental health to support our team's wellbeing."* – Workplace representative

*"Made it easier and rewarding. A main component of HR is looking after wellbeing etc. Seeing team leaders take a heads on approach has made it a lot easier for us."* – Workplace representative

*"Management take [workplace mental health] more seriously. They don't roll their eyes when I talk in management meetings. When I said workplace wellbeing strategy, there was interest in it. Buy in... Is that the strategy alone, no? But it helped get momentum."* – Workplace representative

*"I've felt a change in me. Before it felt like I was working in isolation. Now I feel like I've got a legitimacy, maybe I have more faith in my authority or capacity to talk about [workplace mental health]."* – Workplace representative

#### **Improved confidence in addressing workplace mental health.**

The in-depth interviews and survey data both reveal that the Strategy has helped to improve people's confidence to have conversations about workplace mental health. In particular, stakeholders reflected that historically managers have not felt sufficiently confident to have these conversations as the industrial relations implications for how their workplace may need to respond were unclear. Workplaces provided anecdotal evidence of how the Strategy projects, such as the free mental health training programs, have helped them to overcome this perceived barrier, and have open conversations with workers about their mental health.

*"My perception of mental health hasn't really changed, however, my perception of how our organisation is handling it has changed. It's super encouraging to see our organisation actively having discussions on the matter. This to me encourages a more transparent dialogue about mental health. For instance, I'd feel more comfortable calling in sick with a mental health day, if I needed it."* – Workplace representative

*"Since we started this program, we are more aware of the importance of doing it. Always had a culture of making sure to check on everyone – about 15 of us, like a family sometimes – always been part of the culture to do that but we are a lot more aware and proactive now."* – Workplace representative

*"Other problem is when we were debriefing with employees, they said a lot of the times you ask someone if they're ok and you're too scared to hear what the other person has to say. But knowing you have support and you don't need to deal with the whole thing on your own – helped encourage people to do it."* – Workplace representative

*"...impressed the most is holding reinduction training. Initial one brought up mental health as a main focus going forward – younger group, in front of peers, gave situations where they've used EAP or talked about mental health issue and how they deal with it. Older guys understand it is part of life. Older guys tend to talk like they're bullet proof – a couple opened up, more come and talk to me. Been good."* – Workplace representative

### **Increased social connection.**

Participants in the workplace training programs have indicated that they are now more likely to speak with their colleagues about their own and each others' mental health. This suggests the Strategy is supporting workers to feel more comfortable in having conversations about mental health with their colleagues, which may increase social connectivity amongst workers.

*“Given the current situation with COVID and our team being located remotely, I wanted to provide our leadership team with the tools and confidence to have the conversations with their teams about mental health. Mental health training is so important at this time because people are feeling disconnected - not regularly seeing family, friends and colleagues. It's important to know the signs and have some tools readily available to start a conversation with someone who is struggling... The team were grateful to have the time to talk about mental health in the workplace and the tools were valuable and easy. We have already started to implement the learnings in our workplace by utilising the conversation tips.” – Your Mental Health at Work participant*

### **The Strategy is supporting employers and workers to increase their mental health knowledge.**

Through the free programs, participants are reporting improvements in mental health knowledge and literacy, and greater awareness of where to find help. These were reported in Black Dog Institute's monthly reports. In addition, one in five employers report having made significant progress towards at least one of their goals through the Workplace Assessment project. This was indicated in SafeWork's monthly snapshot report.

### **Most of the Strategy projects have continued relevance through COVID-19.**

Of those NSW businesses surveyed as part of the Interim Report in July 2020 who had participated in Strategy projects (n=75), 50 per cent or more rated each project as either moderately or very effective in supporting workplace mental health during COVID-19. An exception was the Mental Health Capability Check which 39% rated as either moderately or very effective. Businesses reported an increase or no change in the relevance of most Strategy projects since COVID-19, although a minimal amount of mixed feedback was received regarding Mental Health Training for Managers and the Mental Health Capability Check.

### **Some Strategy activities have already been adapted in response to COVID-19, and some have experienced increased levels of engagement with workplaces seeking support.**

There has been increased engagement with the Mental Health at Work Website since COVID-19, and specific engagement with the COVID-19 page, suggesting an appetite to understand workplace mental health challenges during COVID-19.

The free programs both moved from partly online to fully online because of COVID-19. Stakeholders noted the training has remained relevant and useful through COVID-19.

The Recovery@Work Toolkit has shifted its focus to helping workplaces adjust to working from home and related workplace mental health issues.

icare has developed a Toolkit to help employers facilitate social connection in a working from home setting, and has pivoted their Respect and Resilience project to focus on essential workers in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **6.2. CHANGES NOTED IN EXTERNAL DATA SOURCES**

In identifying outcomes achieved, two additional data sources have also been reviewed: the SIRA-owned Workers' Compensation Claims data for Mental Health Injuries from 2014 to 2020, and the Benchmarking Tool Baseline and Mid-Point results. Both data sources demonstrated some degree of change in workplace mental health since the Strategy's launch in June 2018.

However, the limited nature of qualitative data regarding project outcomes available at this stage of the Strategy's delivery does not enable any changes in the Workers Compensation or Benchmarking Tool data to be meaningfully verified or triangulated as part of the mid-point evaluation findings.

As a result, the changes in these data sources cannot be attributed to the Strategy at this stage of the evaluation. However, it is anticipated that by the final evaluation report it may be possible to identify the contribution of the Strategy to any changes reflected in the Benchmarking Tool data, and hopefully in Workers' Compensation data.

High-level summary of the changes identified in both sources are as follows. This information is included here for reference only and not for interpretation in relation to the progress and outcomes of the Strategy.



### **SIRA claims change pre-and-post Strategy launch in June 2018<sup>9</sup>**

- From Financial Year 2012 until Financial Year 2017, the average number of, cost and days off work for mental health related workers' compensation claims in NSW steadily increased.
- Since 2018, each of these indicators have declined (except for a sharp increase in cost in 2019), and the 2020 average is lower than the 2012 average. The sharp increase in 2019 can be partially explained by one large \$16.6m claim cost.

### **Benchmarking Tool change pre-and-post Strategy launch in June 2018<sup>10</sup>**

- Statistically significant improvement in the average NSW employer score on the Benchmarking Tool from 2.59 out of maximum score of 5 from baseline measurement in 2017 to 2.68 on measurement in 2020 ( $p = 0.05$ ). (Please note, data captured is not longitudinal as different organisations were included in the 2017 and 2020 samples).
- Increase from 67,542 to 75,598 businesses taking effective action to create mentally healthy workplaces from 2017 to 2020
- An additional 12.5 per cent of NSW businesses are in the effective action or integrated and sustained category since 2017.

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<sup>9</sup> NSW Workers' Compensation Claims data extract for Financial Years 2012 to 2020, provided to Urbis by SIRA.

<sup>10</sup> Instinct and Reason (2020), Mentally Health Workplaces in NSW, re-execution of benchmarking tool survey among the NSW workforce (managers, supervisors, workers), p12.

## 7. ENABLERS AND BARRIERS

There are a number of key enablers and barriers which provide important context for the progress and outcomes of the Strategy to date. These are as follows.

### 7.1. KEY ENABLERS OF THE STRATEGY'S PERFORMANCE

#### Early thinking to be commended

Feedback from stakeholders indicates SafeWork anticipated the need for a workplace mental health strategy and acted promptly on this need in 2017. Since that time, workplace mental health has continued to be a focus area for workplaces, and there has been a growth in the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services industry, and the industry is projected to continue growing strongly over the next five years.<sup>11</sup> While in the present day's context where workplace mental health is broadly accepted as a key feature of a high functioning workplace, at the time of developing the Strategy, SafeWork was an early proponent of the issue and their timely response to growing sector needs should be commended.

#### Strong design process

- As outlined above, the Strategy underwent a strong design process based on consultation and evidence. Through broad and meaningful sector consultation and application of available evidence, the Strategy was built on strong foundations to deliver change. SafeWork stakeholders reflected positively on this process and how it has influenced the design and outcomes of the Strategy.
- It is noted that at the time of development there was some concern from a small number of external stakeholders regarding appropriateness of the evidence used to inform the design process. In addition, the process could have been strengthened by including additional targeted consultation with people with lived experience of mental health.
- Overall however, the design process was strengthened by broad, well-resourced consultation and the collection and review of reliable evidence.

#### Effective partnerships

A critical enabler of the Strategy's progress to date has been SafeWork's partnerships aimed at ensuring the credibility of the Strategy, and emphasising its desire to deliver quality projects and to minimise any duplication with what was already operating in the sector. Stakeholders praised SafeWork for securing partnerships with established players and not trying to 'reinvent the wheel'.

For example, partnering with the Brain and Mind Centre of Sydney University to assess the available evidence base in the design phase was reported by stakeholders to be highly effective in rapidly identifying the evidence and meaningfully applying it to the Strategy development. Meanwhile, the partnership with the Black Dog Institute allowed SafeWork to build on rather than replicate the organisation's existing content to deliver the Group/Digital Mental Health Skills Program. Additionally, as the Black Dog Institute is a trusted organisation in the mental health sector, partnering with them may have boosted the Strategy's credentials and profile. This is further supported by workplaces which reported they valued and trusted this training.

#### Ministerial interest

The Ministerial interest was reported by SafeWork stakeholders to have accelerated the design and launch process, making this a key enabler to the Strategy's progress to date. SafeWork stakeholders noted that the interest from the Minister in 2017 provided them with the platform to progress the Strategy at scale. They spoke of the strong Ministerial buy-in, evidenced by SafeWork regularly meeting and being in contact with the Minister. Support from the Minister also enhanced the legitimacy of the project, strengthening buy-in and support from other relevant stakeholders in DCS. The evidence suggests this significant Ministerial engagement expedited the design and launch of the Strategy.

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<sup>11</sup> IBISWorld. (2020). Employee Assistance Program Services in Australia. Retrieved from: <https://www.ibisworld.com/au/industry/employee-assistance-program-services/5439/>

## Committed team

The dedicated and reliable nature of the SafeWork team is noted to be an important enabler of the design and implementation of the Strategy. SafeWork stakeholders reported the key members of the Strategy team have remained consistent in their roles. This has allowed the team to build strong stakeholder relationships with one another, and to have an in-depth understanding of the project history and complexities. SafeWork stakeholders also described SafeWork managers and project managers as committed to implementation of the Strategy projects.

Additionally, SafeWork stakeholders commended the diverse expertise available in the Brand Digital and Communications Team of DCS. Through these internal SafeWork collaborations, as well as the connections with SIRA and icare, SafeWork stakeholders reflected that Strategy implementation has been enabled by a surrounding team of engaged experts with deep knowledge in their own disciplines.

## 7.2. KEY BARRIERS IN THE STRATEGY'S OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

### Challenges in delivering the Awareness Stream as intended

SafeWork stakeholders have reported that a core feature of the Strategy's design was that its reach was intended to be catalysed by the Awareness Raising stream. By commencing the Strategy's delivery with a state-wide major awareness campaign about the importance of workplace mental health and the Strategy's offerings, the intention was that the Awareness Raising stream would open the door for the remaining three streams to reach their target audiences.

However, as noted in Section 4.2, the Awareness Raising stream faced multiple setbacks. While a number of campaigns have been developed, these could not be delivered as planned for two key reasons, as follows.

SafeWork stakeholders reported that as the Strategy is a whole of NSW Government project, there have been various challenges in obtaining approvals from all relevant stakeholders to deliver communications activities. For example, the first campaign which was developed in 2018 was progressed substantially by SafeWork however it was ultimately not put before Cabinet for approval. This resulted in significant re-work to develop another campaign, which also did not receive peer-review support. These challenges were driven in part by the complexities in the Department's operating environment during this period (outlined below).

In addition, the audience for the Strategy is broad and less defined than what would be expected in a workplace safety campaign with a singular message, target audience and aim. As a result, the communications activities required to deliver the Strategy's awareness raising stream do not align to the communications processes and systems generally used by the Department. As one stakeholder reflected "it's trying to deliver many different messages to many different people", and this presents a level of complexity which cannot be addressed through a traditional 'single-message single-audience' campaign.

To overcome this issue going forward, some sector and workplace stakeholders have indicated the Strategy may be best promoted through reputable organisations in the sector rather than launching an overarching awareness campaign. For example, one industry stakeholder identified they only found out about the Group/Digital Mental Health Skills Program because they frequently engage with the Black Dog Institute website. They chose to undertake the training in part because of the reputable nature of the Black Dog Institute. This suggests SafeWork may be better placed to promote the Strategy projects via established players in the mental health sector. Additionally, as SafeWork already engage with and have built trust with industry bodies (i.e. industry peaks, unions and industry-specific workplace health and safety groups) they may wish to consider establishing industry partnerships to promote the Strategy projects. This could help the Strategy projects to reach workplaces who may not already be engaged in conversations regarding workplace mental health.

### Complex political and organisational environment

The implementation of the Strategy has taken place during a period of significant change for DCS, and this is noted to have impacted its delivery. Since 2017, DCS has had three different Ministers, resulting in varied levels of Ministerial support and engagement in the Strategy. SafeWork stakeholders reflected that during these changes there was fluctuating buy-in from senior leadership to support approvals and prioritisation of the Strategy from within the broader DCS and corporate services.

DCS also underwent a substantial restructure in 2019 which stakeholders report contributed to delays in implementation as time was required to centralise functions and bed down the new staffing structure. Further to the challenges outlined above in relation to the Awareness Raising stream, SafeWork stakeholders highlighted that obtaining approvals for communications activities was particularly difficult as a result of the

restructure, as the teams and functions needed to progress the campaign underwent personnel and process changes.

The impact of this complex operating environment on the progress of the Strategy needs to be carefully considered and accounted for when assessing the Strategy's performance.

### **COVID-19 impacts**

COVID-19 has impacted the delivery of the Strategy in a number of ways. Firstly, it has made measuring outcomes difficult, as some workplaces cannot distinguish from the impact of the pandemic on workers' mental health (positive or negative) from the impact of the Strategy. Further, with the shift to work-from-home for many workplaces, mental health impacts on workers are much less visible for managers and Human Resource professionals. Further, industry stakeholders report that businesses which are facing operational and/or financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic are not currently prioritising workplace mental health. This would reduce the reach and impact of the Strategy on those workplaces.

However, the pandemic has also represented an opportunity for SafeWork and the Strategy, as it has brought mental health and wellbeing to the fore of public awareness and conversation. Several workplace stakeholders and industry stakeholders on interview indicated that there has been a positive shift through COVID-19 in workplaces recognising the importance of supporting workplace mental health due to the shared nature of this crisis, where all workers may have been affected and workplaces have needed to respond to their needs. This amplified focus on workplace mental health is therefore an opportunity SafeWork should capitalise on.

## **7.3. THE IMPACT OF THE STRATEGY'S DESIGN ON ITS PERFORMANCE**

In reviewing the Strategy's performance and the feedback gathered from SafeWork, the sector and workplaces, there are a number of design features which have also influenced the performance of the Strategy to date. These are as follows.

### **The Strategy's broad focus provides some strengths and challenges in delivery**

As a multifaceted, state-wide Strategy, the design includes a wide range of interventions and supports focussed on different workplace needs, industries, and business sizes. Initially the design of the project of works included targeted interventions for specific high-risk occupations and industries so as to help tailor the wide-array of messages and features of the Strategy to key audiences (i.e. professional, scientific and technical services, information media/telecommunications, transport, postal and warehousing and manufacturing, and small and micro-businesses).

However, as the implementation has progressed, due to challenges in achieving desired reach, SafeWork determined that the workplace training programs should be available to all workplaces, rather than only to the original target industries. The Strategy has however continued to focus on the target industries, with some industry-specific activities delivered. For example, a transport-industry specific adaptation of the workplace training was developed, and a legal-industry specific summit regarding workplace mental health was held. SafeWork stakeholders reported positive feedback as a result of both of these initiatives, however the team has not been able to build on or deliver any further targeted approaches to date due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting internal operations.

This flexible approach has provided some benefits. For example, various projects were able to pivot in response to the COVID-19 pandemic such as the website and media campaign sharing content on the COVID-19 pandemic and the SIRA Recovery@Work Toolkit shifting its focus to helping workplaces adjust to working from home and related workplace mental health issues. In addition, workplaces which were not identified as priorities have now had equal opportunity to participate in the Strategy.

However, the multifaceted nature of the Strategy may also suggest it is aiming to do too many things for too many people. Some stakeholders have questioned whether the Strategy is fit for purpose for the variety of workplaces with which it is trying to engage. For example, some workplaces noted projects such as the Managing for Team Wellbeing may be more suitable for organisations of lower workplace mental health maturity with a base level of mental health knowledge. While it is acknowledged that the training programs were designed to provide introductory-level information, this feedback reflects that there may be appetite for more advanced training and support for workplaces with higher maturity.

SafeWork may need to consider refining their Strategy focus by targeting certain industries, sectors and/or business sizes, whilst still building in flexibility to Strategy design.

## **Multifaceted design could benefit from greater cross-stream integration**

It is noted that the design of the Strategy is intentionally multifaceted with separate streams each offering workplaces and the sector a different approach to improving workplace mental health. SafeWork has reported that the prioritisation of activities across the Strategy has been based on anticipated impact to workplaces, as well as availability of resources with capability and capacity to deliver each project. This is a logical approach to delivery, however there may be some opportunities to strengthen this approach over the remaining delivery period.

For example, initial work was undertaken to identify the interdependencies and opportunities for cross-over between each project, however this does not seem to have been actively applied or reviewed recently. An updated review of this scan to identify opportunities for cross-project collaboration could assist in streamlining or accelerating some of the remaining components to be delivered (for example, if multiple projects had a similar target audience, their communication activities could be combined or appropriately sequenced).

In addition, SafeWork has a high-level overarching work plan that spans across all projects, and uses a computer-based project management software (Clarity) to track all projects' progress. A further opportunity to strengthen delivery may be to provide greater detail in the specific sequencing and prioritisation of all key activities across all projects in the workplace, as this would assist in allocating resources and tracking progress of the strategy.

## **Definition and inclusion of lived experience**

Sector and SafeWork stakeholders noted the importance of having the voice of people with lived experience of mental health issues being embedded in the Strategy design, as this would help to ensure its alignment to the needs of people with mental health issues.

Stakeholders further suggested that co-designing the Strategy with people with lived experience of mental health issues would have been useful for developing the most respectful and inclusive language that represented the lived experience of people with mental health issues. For example, some industry stakeholders raised concerns about the language of 'recovery at work' used throughout some projects (SIRA and icare projects and the SafeWork website), given the use of the word 'recovery' in mental health typically relates to an individual's own journey with their mental health, which may or may not intersect with their experience at any given workplace.

However, it is noted that people with lived experience did attend the Summit as part of the design phase. In addition, SafeWork stakeholders report that all website content was reviewed by SANE Australia (a national mental health charity) to check the appropriateness of mental health language used.

In considering this feedback, it is important to reflect on and clarify how the term 'lived experience' relates to the context of the Strategy. The term is commonly used in mental health service delivery and advocacy contexts to describe individuals who identify as having experienced mental health issues or illness which occurred irrespective of their workplace.

In the context of the Strategy however, it may be appropriate for SafeWork to consider applying a variation of this definition. Given the focus of the Strategy is on workplace mental health, the experience which will be of particular relevance to informing and improving the Strategy will be of that which relates to mental health in the workplace.

This may include individuals who identify as having a lived experience of mental health issues or illness which has either been precipitated or affected by their workplace. This group may also include people who do not identify as having mental health issues, but whose wellbeing has been affected by the workplace.

With this in mind, there may be some differences in how the broader mental health sector currently conceptualises the term 'lived experience' compared to how the term can be of most use to SafeWork and the Strategy. This divergence provides an explanation for the noted concerns about the 'recovery at work' language noted above, and demonstrates that flexibility may be needed when using 'lived experience' as a general term without specifying the relevant context.

Overall, the sector feedback received regarding the inclusion of lived experience is constructive and should be applied by SafeWork to continue to build the credibility and acceptance of the Strategy. This approach can be bolstered by SafeWork specifically increasing inclusion for lived experience as it relates to workplace mental health into the ongoing delivery and improvement of the Strategy.

# **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **8. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Strong foundations and positive progress, with scope to continuing building**

The Strategy is a critical feature of the NSW mental health sector, and it has the authority and scope to provide much needed assistance and support to workplaces as they develop their mental health response and maturity.

As noted throughout this report, there have been a number of key achievements of the Strategy to date, including the implementation of the free programs and the Workplace Assessment program, the establishment of the Benchmarking Tool, the establishment of the Ambassador program, and the development of the Online Capability Check.

At this stage of the Strategy's delivery, there is limited outcomes data, but the data which is available indicates positive although not substantial change. The limited nature of outcomes data is largely reflective of the progress and reach of the Strategy to date. Where projects have progressed well and are influencing positive change for workplaces, outcomes are becoming evident. For those projects which have either not yet been fully launched, or have not delivered their planned reach, outcomes data is not yet available. This degree of progress and demonstrated outcomes is broadly appropriate for the stage of the Strategy's delivery. In addition, a large number of projects are focussed on building awareness and understanding of workplace mental health, and may not directly influence any changes in behaviour within workplaces.

As the Strategy reaches its Mid-Point, it is important to reflect on and celebrate these contributions to workplace mental health as a systemic and individual-workplace priority. It is also critical to identify how best to build on its strong foundation to continue and increase its impact through the remainder of its delivery period. There have also been several areas where progress could be furthered, and these are set out below with specific recommendations for SafeWork.

### **Multifaceted design appropriate, but more targeted interventions are needed**

Delivering a state-wide workplace mental health strategy is both ambitious and challenging. The Strategy needs to be many different things to many different workplaces by offering a diverse range of supports and interventions which meet the varying workplace mental health needs and priorities of workplaces across industries and business sizes. In its design, the Strategy delivers on this objective with its four streams, variety of projects and programs.

However, stakeholder feedback reflects that the Strategy is facing challenges in delivering on this objective. In-depth interviews with workplaces and industry stakeholders found variability in the recognition and impact of the different components of the Strategy. The feedback indicated that greater outcomes are being experienced by workplaces which have lower workplace mental health awareness and maturity of supports, than by workplaces with greater workplace mental health maturity. Furthermore, interviewees also indicated that greater impact is achieved where the Strategy's interventions are targeted and fit-for-purpose for individual workplaces, rather than utilising a broader, generalist approach.

This may go some way to explain why the reach of the workplace training programs has been higher than for the broader state-wide capability building and awareness projects, as these programs offer relatively introductory material to workplace mental health which was reported by stakeholders to be most suitable for workplaces with lower workplace mental health maturity.

## **Recommendation 1**

### **Increase focus on target industries and occupations, and deliver tailored projects to the specific needs of each**

To respond to this stakeholder feedback and some of the challenges faced in reach, it is recommended that SafeWork increase the focus on target industries and occupations for the remainder of the Strategy's delivery period.

This should involve continuing to adapt the most appropriate Strategy activities for each target industry or occupation. These adaptations should be informed by consultation with employer representatives as well as individuals with lived experience of workplace mental health issues in these industries and occupations.

## **The impact of the campaign challenges has been significant, and new approaches are needed**

As outlined throughout this report, the SafeWork team has faced numerous challenges in delivering their planned campaign activities, and this has had an ongoing impact on the reach of the Strategy. This has been a significant setback for the Strategy and should be duly acknowledged and understood as such.

While the SafeWork team report continued hope for a future state-wide campaign, it is considered that at this stage of the Strategy's delivery it would be prudent to commence alternative approaches to deepening reach.

These should include a layered approach which would include a large-scale campaign, as well as a series of appropriately scaled and industry-specific campaign approaches which utilise existing and new relationships and networks to build greater buy-in and engagement with the Strategy. SafeWork may also benefit from applying targeted communications such as case studies coupled with activities of the Ambassador program. This approach in particular will complement the recommended greater focus on the targeted delivery of the Strategy outlined in Recommendation 1 above, as industry or occupational-specific networks and trusted partnerships can be used to further reach where the Strategy is most needed.

## **Recommendation 2**

### **Adopt a layered approach to awareness-raising activities**

It is recommended SafeWork adopt a layered approach to increasing awareness of the Strategy. This would include the original large-scale campaign, as well as additional awareness raising activities which are specifically targeted for individual industries or occupations. These may include targeted industry events, thought-leadership papers or media articles, published case studies of best practice or key learnings, and greater engagement of the Ambassadors with target audiences.

These activities should be delivered in partnership with existing mental health sector voices of authority (e.g. The Black Dog Institute, Beyond Blue) to provide market 'cut-through' in a crowded market of workplace interventions. Partnerships should also be formed with trusted industry bodies (e.g. professional registration boards and peak bodies), to access industry and occupation-specific networks through which to distribute the targeted campaign materials.

## **There may be additional opportunities to compound reach and impact across projects**

The design of the Strategy is multifaceted, with four streams and 20 projects delivered by three agencies. SafeWork has an overarching work plan for the Strategy, as well as an initial mapping of where different projects align to one another. As outlined previously, by updating these tools, SafeWork may be able to identify additional cross-collaboration opportunities on projects or audiences.

In addition, the Strategy has a range of activities within it which could be used to support continuous quality improvement activities throughout its remaining delivery period, specifically within the Research stream. This would require refocussing some of the efforts of this stream, with the benefits of doing so directly impacting the Strategy itself.



### **Recommendation 3**

#### **Review existing Strategy work plan and identify opportunities for cross-stream and cross-project integration**

SafeWork, SIRA and icare should conduct a review of all Strategy activities and target audiences and map any likely areas of crossover in project activities or outputs (e.g. resources or stakeholder engagement pathways). These areas should then be connected, with project managers working together to streamline and enhance the development and delivery of related projects wherever appropriate.

### **Recommendation 4**

#### **Develop a more detailed schedule of work and milestones for remaining Strategy delivery period, and implement milestone reporting**

Using the results of this Mid-Point Evaluation, SafeWork should review the progress of each of their projects and consider where their resources and time would be best spent in the remaining two years of the Strategy in relation to continuing to deliver existing projects, launching projects currently under development, and developing any new projects.

On the basis of such a review, SafeWork should then updated the existing overarching work plan which sets out the timelines and milestones for each individual project. Project Leads should then apply the schedule when determining which of their projects to progress when, and also in providing ongoing Milestone Reports to the Strategy Leadership Team and Steering Committee.

### **Recommendation 5**

#### **Apply an active learning approach using existing Strategy activities**

SafeWork should apply existing components of the Strategy to help inform future Strategy improvements. This can include re-focussing the Research Stream to collect and analyse data on the Strategy's performance and impact, and to use this information to inform Strategy delivery. This information can also be used to contribute to the workplace mental health evidence base.

SafeWork can also collect and analyse additional data relating to the reach and impact of the Strategy specifically when conducting the Benchmarking Tool survey. At present, the survey tracks changes in workplaces but does not enable accurate attribution of these changes to the Strategy. The addition of a small number of a questions which ask respondents about the extent to which the Strategy has contributed to any changes or practices in their workplace will provide SafeWork with valuable information.

## **The impact of COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of workplace mental health and the role of the Strategy**

While the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly been a significant and highly traumatic event for many communities, workplaces and individuals, stakeholder feedback on in-depth interviews indicated that it has helped to normalise workplace conversations about mental health, and has also influenced managers and employers to prioritise workplace mental health in business planning activities.

As reflected in the August 2020 Interim Report for this Evaluation, SafeWork should continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic on workplace mental health needs, and continue to pivot Strategy activities accordingly to provide a flexible and timely response to any changing mental health needs for workplaces in NSW.

### **Recommendation 6**

#### **Continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 and adapt the Strategy as needed**

SafeWork should conduct regular 'pulse surveys' with NSW workplaces to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on workplace mental health, and how the Strategy can best continue to support and respond to this changing situation.

As with Recommendation 2, it may be beneficial for SafeWork to deliver the survey in partnership with a recognised mental health sector voice of authority to enable strong take-up, as well as to build sector buy-in and contributions to any required pivots or adaptations to Strategy activities.

## Prioritising lived experience could increase impact

Since the Strategy's development and initial implementation phase, the importance of the consumer voice and lived experience in mental and other health service design and delivery has become ever more recognised and understood. Co-design approaches, peer-led programs and roles are gaining significant traction across many health disciplines, and evidence shows that consumer-input into their own care can ultimately support improved health outcomes.<sup>12</sup> This includes positive behaviour change, better adherence to treatment and medication from improved knowledge, more cost-effective personal health budgets, and reduced rates of relapse and admissions to hospital.

To deepen its impact and support the above-mentioned tailoring of projects to specific groups, the Strategy would benefit from an increased prioritisation of hearing the consumer voice, and embedding insights and recommendations from those with lived experience of mental health issues as they relate to the workplace into the Strategy activities.

### Recommendation 7

#### Seek and embed lived experience into the Strategy's activities

SafeWork should engage with individuals who have lived experience of mental health as it relates to the workplace (although not to the exclusion of those who have experience of mental health issues and mental illnesses more broadly) to inform the future design and delivery of any Strategy projects which are either new, or which require a refresh in order to target specific audiences.

This engagement could take the shape of project-specific working groups, sector consultation, and partnerships with individuals and organisations who represent those with lived experience (i.e. consumer advocates, peak bodies).

### Recommendation 8

#### Expedite delivery of the Strategy's Peer Program and share its impact

The Strategy has already identified peer work as a critical element in its approach to workplace mental health, but the program has not yet been implemented. To build on the steps already taken to embed lived experience of workplace mental health into the Strategy's activities and to respond to the growing evidence base for the efficacy of peer-led programs, it is recommended that the implementation of this program be expedited and delivered in early 2021.

The reach and impact of the program could then form part of the targeted awareness raising activities, by activating lived-experience networks as well as providing content for best practice case studies.

## There are opportunities to commence early positioning for likely SafeWork priorities for 2023 and beyond

It is understood that within SafeWork there are early considerations of a 'total health workplace strategy' which blends physical and mental workplace health projects. As the Strategy nears its completion in 2021 and 2022, it could begin to provide the foundation for enabling workplaces to shift to this holistic view for the post-Strategy period.

This will require building workplaces' awareness of how physical and mental health in the workplace are inter-linked, and inter-dependent, as well as generating support and buy-in for a future Strategy which

<sup>12</sup> The King's Fund. (2014). People in Control of their own Health and Care. Retrieved from:

[https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field\\_publication\\_file/people-in-control-of-their-own-health-and-care-the-state-of-involvement-november-2014.pdf](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/people-in-control-of-their-own-health-and-care-the-state-of-involvement-november-2014.pdf)

integrates a workplaces' response to both areas. Workplace needs for how such a strategy could support them should also be gathered.

### **Recommendation 9**

#### **Build workplace understanding of total workplace health, and seek their feedback on potential Strategy focus areas**

It is recommended that SafeWork utilise the remaining period of the Strategy to begin to position for the anticipated subsequent strategy which will focus on total workplace health. This can be achieved through building in awareness raising and educational approaches to existing Strategy activities in order to communicate to workplaces how physical and mental health are connected.

SafeWork should also conduct industry and occupational-specific consultation to understand how total health needs present in different contexts and environments. This information can then be used to inform the development of the next strategy.

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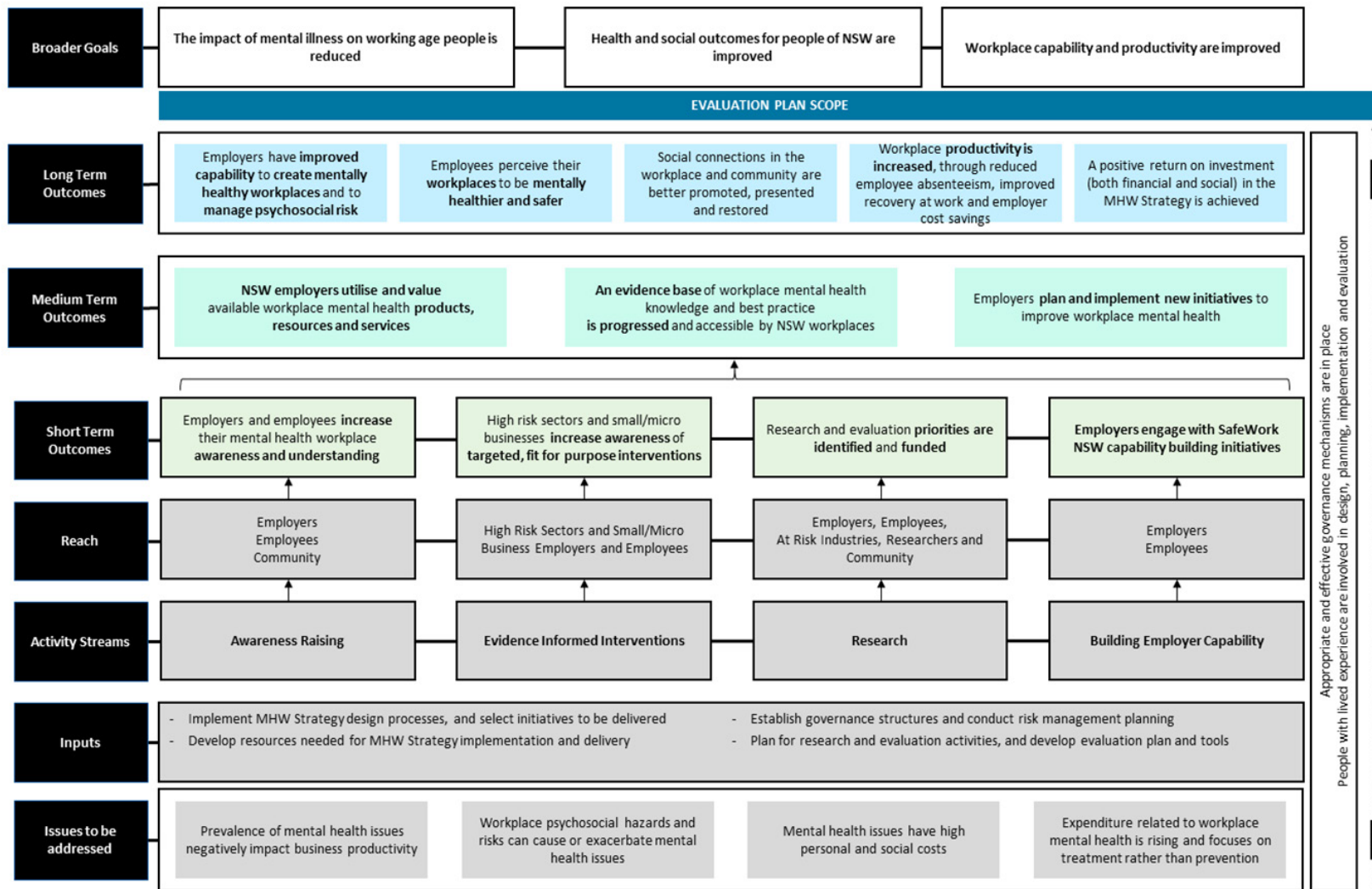
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# **APPENDIX A**

# **PROGRAM LOGIC**

Figure 3 – MHW Strategy Evaluation Program Logic



**Assumptions**

- The MHW Strategy design adequately addresses the identified issues, in order to facilitate the achievement of the identified outcomes
- The MWH Strategy will have the necessary funding and resources for all inputs and activities
- Qualitative and/or quantitative data will be available to support the measurement of reach and all outcomes
- The data available will provide adequate attribution of outcomes identified to the MHW Strategy

# **APPENDIX B**

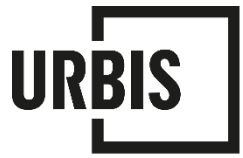
# **KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

Table 3 – Key evaluation questions

Domain	Key evaluation questions
<b>Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent were the activity streams and projects implemented as intended?</li> <li>▪ Were adequate resources allocated to research, develop and deliver the MHW Strategy?</li> <li>▪ Were projects selected based on the best available evidence?</li> <li>▪ Did input from stakeholders and people with lived experience of mental health issues shape the design of projects, and if so, in what ways?</li> <li>▪ What barriers or risks to implementation were anticipated and how effectively were these managed?</li> <li>▪ What barriers and enablers influenced implementation of the activity streams and projects, and how effectively were these addressed?</li> <li>▪ To what extent did people with lived experience of mental health issues contribute to the implementation and evaluation of MHW Strategy activity streams and projects?</li> <li>▪ How appropriate and effective were the governance arrangements in supporting MHW Strategy implementation?</li> </ul>
<b>Reach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How effective were the activity streams in reaching their target audiences?</li> <li>▪ What was the pattern of reach across all sectors, and specifically across high risk sectors?</li> </ul>
<b>Short term outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Has the MHW Strategy resulted in an increase in workplace mental health awareness and understanding for NSW employers, employees and the community?</li> <li>▪ On what basis were investment decisions made regarding workplace interventions?</li> <li>▪ Are SafeWork NSW's workplace mental health products, resources, training and services appropriate for the needs of high-risk sectors?</li> <li>▪ Does SafeWork NSW direct targeted communication to high risk sectors about available workplace mental health products and services?</li> <li>▪ Has the distributed communication reached high risk sectors?</li> <li>▪ Have research priorities been identified?</li> <li>▪ Has funding been allocated for workplace mental health research?</li> <li>▪ Have employers engaged with SafeWork NSW capability building projects?</li> <li>▪ What has impacted on engagement with these projects?</li> </ul>
<b>Medium term outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are NSW employers utilising workplace mental health products, resources, training and services?</li> <li>▪ What products, resources, training and services have the highest usage rates?</li> <li>▪ Is there any difference in usage rates across employers?</li> <li>▪ What value do NSW employers place in workplace mental health products, resources, training and services?</li> <li>▪ What products, resources, training and services are the most valued?</li> </ul>



<b>Domain</b>	<b>Key evaluation questions</b>
	▪ Is there any difference in value ratings across employers?
	▪ Have NSW employers planned and implemented new projects to improve workplace mental health?
	▪ What is the uptake/participation by employees of new workplace mental health projects implemented by NSW employers?
	▪ To what extent are new mental health projects sustained by NSW employers beyond initial implementation?
	▪ Have research projects been undertaken?
	▪ Have meaningful research and findings been made available to workplaces, particularly those in high risk sectors?
<b>Long term outcomes</b>	▪ Are employers being enabled to apply evidence in their practices through data-driven projects?
	▪ Have employers demonstrated a capability uplift in creating mentally healthy workplaces?
	▪ Are there any areas of employer capability which are further progressed than others?
	▪ What differences in capability change is evident across sectors, particularly target sectors?
	▪ Are employers who demonstrate best practice recognised and rewarded?
	▪ Do employees report positive workplace's mental health practices?
	▪ Do employees report that workplace psychosocial risks and hazards addressed/mitigated appropriately?
	▪ What differences in workplace mental health is evident across sectors, particularly target sectors according to employee feedback?
	▪ To what extent do employees and employers report that social connections are improved in their workplaces and communities?
	▪ What factors have influenced the changes experienced?
	▪ What patterns of improvements in social connections exist for different workplaces, industries and communities?
	▪ Has productivity increased through reduced workers' compensation claims related to mental health issues?
	▪ Has productivity increased through reduced absenteeism?
	▪ Has productivity increased through improved recovery at work?
▪ Has productivity increased through improved employer cost savings?	
<b>Economic</b>	▪ What has been the financial return on investment for the MHW Strategy?
	▪ What has been the social return on investment for the MHW Strategy?



#### Disclaimer

This publication may contain information about some of your obligations under work health and safety legislation. To ensure you comply with your legal obligations you must refer to the appropriate legislation.

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

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

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