

Designing better work



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Chief Executive

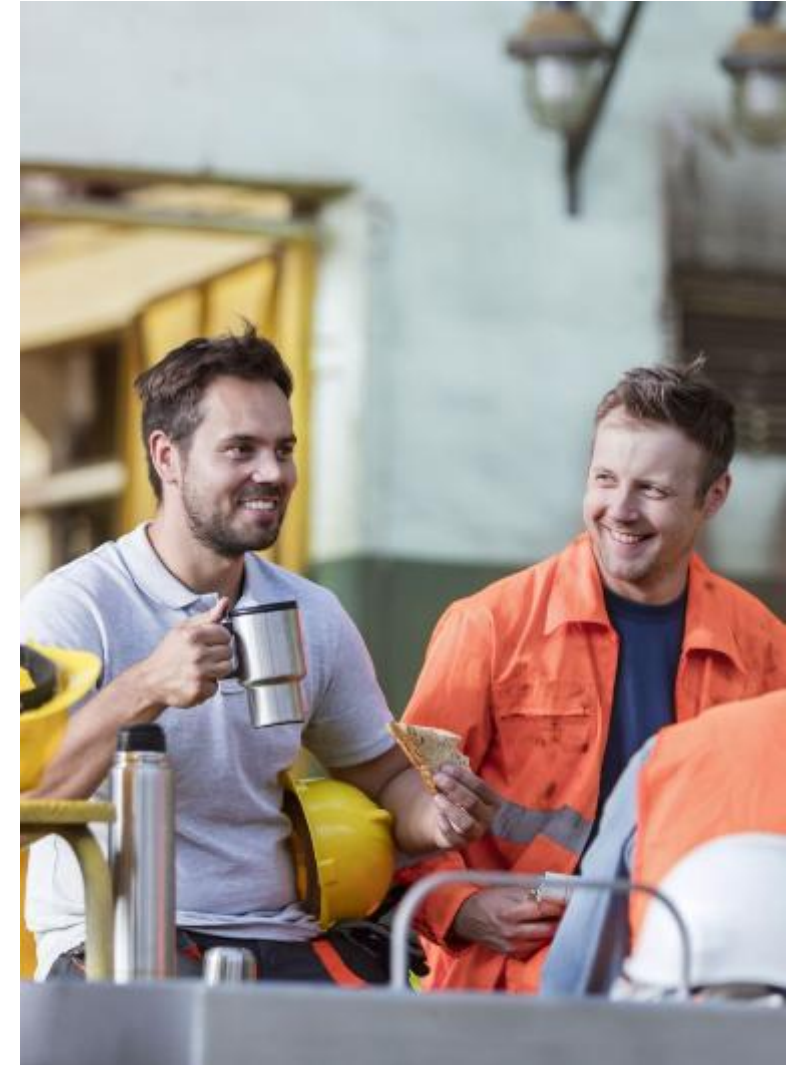
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WORKSAFE

Mahi Haumarū Aotearoa

Your role matters more than you might think

- You are one of the most strategically important people in your organisation.
- You sit at the intersection of leadership and the workforce.
- You hear things managers never hear.
- You see things policy documents miss.
- You have real power to act on what you find.



WorkSafe's role

The reality

We are one participant - not the entire system.
You are part of this system too.

Our role

WorkSafe's role is clear and focused:

- We influence businesses and workers to carry out their responsibilities to ensure work is healthy and safe.
- We hold to account when those responsibilities are not met.

The responsibility for workplace safety sits with those who create and control the work environment.

The work of harm reduction – by the numbers

50-60

deaths at work per year

400-500

hospitalised with serious injuries
annually

750-900

die from work-related illness
each year

↓ **50%**

work fatality rate over 20 years

↓ **30%**

serious injury rates over 20 years

Where WorkSafe is heading: a deliberate reset

- 2025 was our most significant year of structural change.
- New structure aligned to strategy - not legacy habits.
- 200+ warranted inspectors, with more in training.
- Recruiting from priority sectors: agriculture, construction, manufacturing, forestry.

73% of businesses improved safety after a WorkSafe inspector visit.

95% made improvements after receiving an improvement notice.

Five workstreams driving real change

1. Inspector capability

Better trained, more consistent wherever they are deployed.

2. Industry-led guidance

Built with industry - not for it.

3. Proportionate enforcement

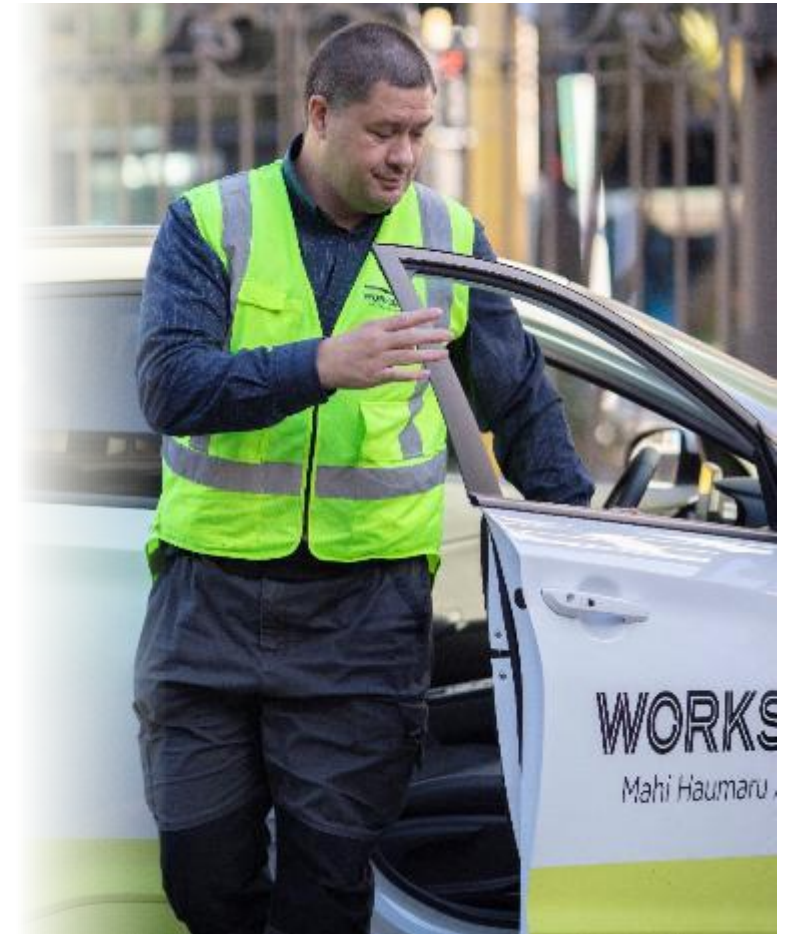
Formal warnings and pre-charge enforceable undertakings.

4. Better feedback loops

Insight must not get lost in silos.

5. Clearing the permitting backlog

Addressing delays that hold up safe work.





Legislative reform

What it means for you

The Government has introduced the Health and Safety at Work Amendment Bill.



Critical risks defined

Those most likely to cause death, serious injury, illness, or occupational disease.



Small PCBUs

Fewer than 20 workers: required to manage critical risks only.

The question it puts to every organisation:

“Are your systems designed around the risks most likely to cause harm?”

The HSR is one of the best mechanisms your organisation has to answer that honestly.

What you can do under the Health and Safety at Work Act

Your formal powers:

- Investigate complaints
- Request information
- Inspect workplaces
- Issue a Provisional Improvement Notice (if trained)
- Direct unsafe work to stop

But your most significant power?

Get into the room where work is being designed and make sure worker voice shapes what comes out.

**Before decisions are made.
Before risks are baked in.**

Work design shapes risk

It decides:

- who does the work
- how it is done
- the tools, pace, and support involved

Change reshapes work all the time

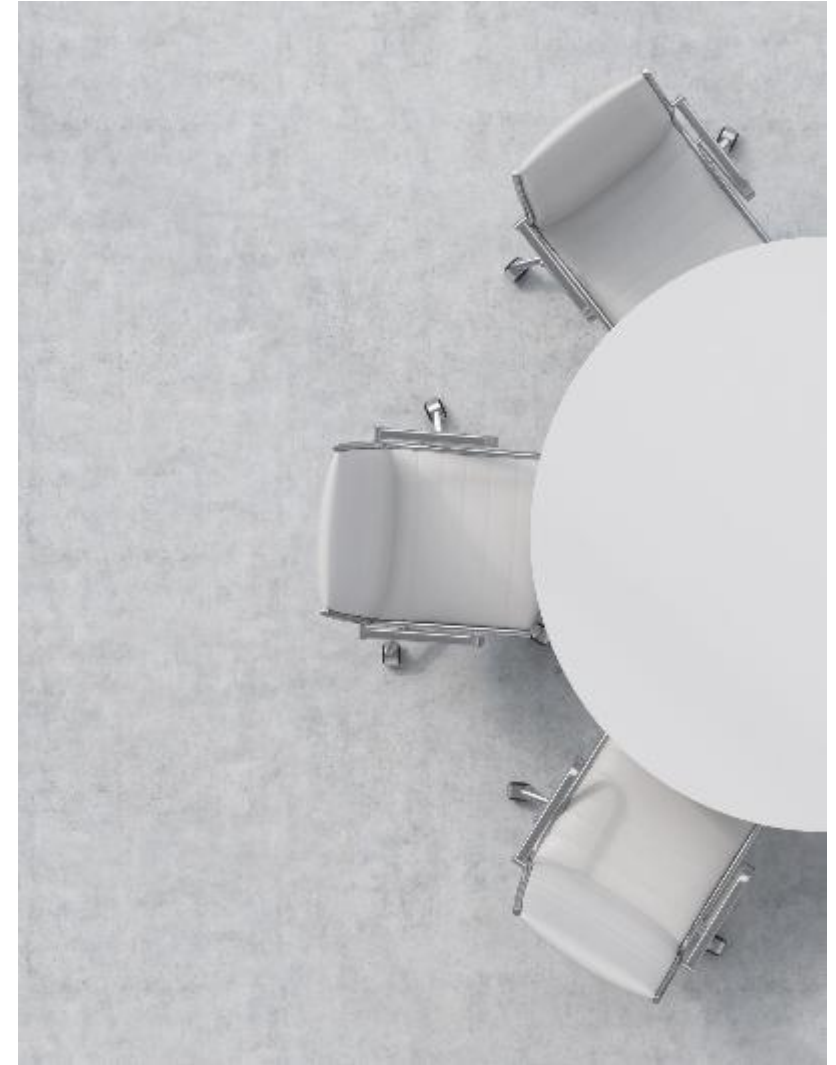
- New technology
- Restructures
- Policy shifts
- Increased workload

Your role as an HSR? To bring a health and safety lens early.
Not to slow things down, but to make the design better.



Know where decisions are made in your organisation

- The duty to consult applies when work or working arrangements are being designed or changed.
- These governance spaces are where that duty is triggered:
 - Project governance boards
 - Leadership team agendas
 - People and culture committees
 - Risk and audit functions
 - All-of-organisation planning cycles
- Find out how your change management process works. Who initiates it? At what point does the project board form?
- That is the moment you want to be present. If you do not know the answers, that is a conversation to have with your people and culture team this week.



Use your engagement system as an intelligence source

Surveys preface the precursors to harm



**These are not soft issues
They are indicators**

What to do next?

- Ask for the engagement results for your work group.
- Look for patterns. Where is overload consistently flagged?
- Where is the gap between what leadership perception and what workers experience?
- That gap is where the next incident lives.
- Then use that data to build a case for change.



**Get into the design process,
not just the review process**

Most HSRs are consulted at the end

By then, your influence is minimal

- The new system has been designed, the process has been drafted, the restructure announced - then someone thinks to ask about health and safety.

The goal: be part of the design process

- Join project working groups for significant change initiatives.
- Request a standing H&S risk assessment item on project governance agendas.
- Make worker health and safety a design criterion - not an afterthought.

Connect the health and safety committee to organisational governance

An example from inside WorkSafe



Ask yourself honestly

- Does your HSC have a direct reporting line to the leadership team or the board?
- Do its recommendations land in the risk register?
- Do its findings inform the people committee's work programme?

- If the answer to any of those is no - that is the gap to close.

- A committee that reports into a vacuum has limited influence on how work is designed.

- A committee whose findings reach the Chief Executive - and whose recommendations appear in the organisation's risk appetite discussion - has genuine design influence.

When work is being redesigned: five questions to ask



Has a genuine H&S risk assessment been completed for the proposed changes?

Not a tick-box. A real assessment of how risk changes.



Have affected workers been consulted while there is still room to change the design?

Consulted - not informed after the fact.



Does the new design introduce workload, pace, or cognitive demands not present before?

Technology changes often increase mental load during transition.



Are those managing the change adequately resourced and supported?

Change managers under pressure are themselves a significant H&S risk.



Is there a mechanism to monitor and respond to H&S impacts after go-live?

Design does not end at implementation.

What WorkSafe sees in the field

What good looks like

- Health and safety is a leadership value - not a compliance function.
- HSRs are resourced, supported, and genuinely listened to.
- The gap between what a policy says and what workers experience is small - because workers helped design the policy.

What poor looks like

- Policies not followed.
- Hazards known - but not communicated.
- Risks identified - but not managed.

A period of genuine reform - and what it means for you

The direction is clear:

- **Proportionate** - regulation that fits the risk.
- **Practical** - guidance built for real workplaces.
- **Consistent** - predictable behaviour from WorkSafe.
- **Engagement-led** - support before enforcement.

- Reform creates space for HSRs to do more, not less.

- WorkSafe is committed to our part: practical guidance, proportionate enforcement, consistent behaviour, and genuine partnership.
- But we are not the entire system. You are part of it too.

Ngā mihi nui

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