

Insight aims to provide useful information, links and tips in the areas of Risk Management, Work Health and Safety, Business Continuity Management, and other areas relating to management systems and corporate governance.

Engaging Future Generations in WHS in Australia

Over the next decade, Australia's younger generations are poised to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Work Health and Safety (WHS). As digital technology embracers, they are well positioned to bring a fresh perspective and innovation to the management of workplace safety, as well as an increased empathy for workers' mental health & wellbeing.

So, what can we expect to see?

Digital Integration and Technological Advancements

Young workers are increasingly adept at leveraging technology, which will be instrumental in the evolution of WHS practices. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools for real-time hazard detection and predictive risk assessments is expected to become commonplace. Additionally, we will most likely see a marked uptake in the use of robotics and drone technology to enhance emergency response capabilities, providing safer and more efficient ways to address workplace hazards.

Educational Initiatives and Youth Engagement

To effectively engage young workers, educational programs are being tailored to resonate with their learning preferences. Interactive training modules and digital platforms are being utilised more and more often, to impart WHS knowledge. These initiatives aim to build the capabilities of young workers and encourage them to be proactive about their safety and wellbeing.

Emphasis on Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health awareness is a significant concern for younger generations. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that mental health conditions and substance use disorders contribute substantially to the burden of disease among individuals aged 15–24. It is expected that the next generation of WHS professionals will advocate for workplaces to prioritise psychological safety, leading to the normalisation of mental health initiatives being incorporated within WHS.



Advocacy and Cultural Shifts

Younger generations are not only participants but also advocates for cultural change and challenging traditional norms. This also extends into challenging traditional safety norms and promoting a culture that values inclusivity and mental health. Their active involvement will continue to drive a shift towards more comprehensive and compassionate safety practices in the workplace.

As Australia moves towards 2035, the active participation of younger generations in WHS is essential. Their embrace of technology, focus on mental health, and advocacy for inclusive safety practices will transform the WHS landscape. Now is the time to begin planning for these changes and to engage with younger workers about the "what" and the "how" for their WHS needs and requirements.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

Confidence in Compliance

When Managers tour a workplace, do they really see what is usually going on in the workplace? Maybe not.

Psychologists refer to this as the 'Hawthorne Effect' where people's behaviour changes (subtly or even quite overtly) because they know that they are being monitored.

So how can Managers gain confidence that the workers are operating in compliance with the procedures and process?



While there is a solution, it is not a 'one size fits all' answer, and thus there is a need to emphasise the following factors more or less, to suit your organisational context:

Set clear expectations – Workplaces should clearly define and communicate what is expected in terms of procedures and process, including why specific policies are in place, how they will be measured, and consequences for non-compliance.

Give them an Education – with comprehensive training in relation to the procedures and processes to be implemented and reinforced on a semi-regular basis.

Engage with them – in the development and management of the procedures, testing their understanding of policies, providing opportunities for feedback, listening to their concerns, and empowering them to address issues.

Once these are in place, then develop a layered approach for monitoring compliance – using all personnel and management system processes at your disposal, and explain the importance of each process to whomever is leading that process:

- Have Supervisors informally 'walk the shopfloor' to casually monitor for procedural compliance (raising any issues as they identify them).
- Incorporate a job task observation within the HSR's workplace inspection process.
- Encourage peer accountability and 'looking after your mates', and make it normal and accepted behaviour for a worker to tap a colleague on the shoulder and ask them why they aren't wearing PPE.
- Prescribe the need for formal safety interactions by Managers when touring the workplace, talking to the workforce, questioning any identified non-compliances, and praising positive behaviour.
- Conduct unannounced spot checks to verify compliance.
- Develop a plan to regularly audit high-risk procedures to ensure compliance.
- Check the safety records and operational paperwork after the fact for signs of shortcuts or deviations from process.

Also, it is important to have a performance management framework at your disposal, linking back to the expectations and the consequences for non-compliance.

By considering all the input information from the above layered approach, Managers should be in a position to have more comfort and confidence that the workers are operating safely and as per the organisation's documented safe work systems and processes.

Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.