



Australian Government  
Comcare



# TAKE THE LEAD TO PROTECT OUR WORKERS HEALTH AND SAFETY

The new work health and safety (WHS) laws are expected to commence on 1 January 2012. The changes affect the commonwealth, particularly the duties and obligations on persons conducting a business or undertaking and the new duty on Officers under the Work Health and Safety Act.

## WHAT'S CHANGING?

Harmonised occupational health and safety laws have long been recognised as a critical area of regulatory reform. In July 2008 the Council of Australian Governments signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement that established the commitment of the Commonwealth, States and Territories to adopt uniform work health and safety (WHS) laws by the end of 2011. The new WHS laws will be complemented by nationally consistent approaches to compliance and enforcement.

## HOW DOES THIS AFFECT THE COMMONWEALTH JURISDICTION?

Protecting and improving the health and safety of workers and workplaces remains. If you comply with the current laws then you are well on your way to meeting the requirements of the new WHS laws. There are a number of expected changes in the legislation. Many will be familiar as they are similar to the current Commonwealth Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) laws. The new WHS laws are broader and clearly define safety responsibilities.

## WHAT SHOULD WE BE DOING TO PREPARE?

Any change to legislation has a ripple effect to the way an organisation does business. It may affect those of us who need to lead an organisation, administer the changes, those of us who manage teams by integrating safety into everyday business, and all workers who live a culture of health and safety.

Consider the implementation of the new WHS Act as a change program. While we are all focusing on the legislation changes we should take this as an opportunity to reinvigorate our culture of safety.

To achieve a seamless transition to the new WHS laws requires a commitment to improve health and safety at all levels. This starts with effective and committed leadership and cascades to every worker taking responsibility for their own health and safety outcomes. Gaining a clear understanding of the new WHS laws is a shared responsibility.

This change provides the platform to spotlight effective and valued work health and safety practices. To review and strengthen your organisation's health and safety systems, symbols and behaviours through leadership, communication and consultation.

Further information about the types of changes and resources to assist your organisation in the transition is available through Comcare's website.

- > Due diligence guidance
- > Comparison tables
- > Duty holder fact sheets
- > Frequently asked questions
- > Manager team talks