

Mine Safety Advisory Council

Strategic plan to 2026

October 2023

Foreword

The NSW Government is committed to continued improvement in work health and safety performance of the state’s mining industry.

The NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council (MSAC) was established under the *Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act 2013* to provide Ministerial advice and guidance on matters relating to work health and safety in the NSW mining industry. MSAC is a tripartite committee made up of representatives from the mining industry, including employer and employee representatives, the NSW Department of Regional NSW and independent experts.

This Strategic Plan outlines the strategic direction and focus areas for MSAC until 2026. The priorities identified in the plan address pivotal issues that MSAC believes the mining industry must address to sustain efforts to improve safety outcomes into the future.

MSAC has identified the following priority focus areas to work towards its goal of world-leading work health and safety. The priority focus areas are:

- health
- fatal incidents, serious injuries, and illness; and
- emerging trends.

MSAC will play a key role in observing, implementing and facilitating the strategic action areas for continuous improvement of the industry’s work health and safety performance.

I look forward to working with MSAC, the industry and community over the coming years to achieve these outcomes.

Courtney Houssos MLC

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NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council

The NSW Mine Safety Advisory Council (MSAC) is a tripartite body constituted under the *Work Health and Safety (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act 2013* (WHS (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act). It fosters an industry with health and safety as core values and provides the Minister with advice and agreed positions on health and safety issues that are important to the NSW mining industry.

MSAC membership includes nominees from the NSW Minerals Council, Cement Concrete & Aggregates Australia, the Mining and Energy Union, the Australian Workers' Union and the Department of Regional NSW. MSAC has an independent Chairperson and two independent members with relevant expertise.

Role and function of MSAC

The functions of MSAC under the WHS (Mines and Petroleum Sites) Act 2013 are to:

- advise the Minister on any policy matter relating to work health and safety in mines
- advise the Minister on any matter, other than a policy matter, relating to work health and safety in mines that is referred to it by the Minister, and
- advise the Minister on any other matter, other than a policy matter, relating to work health and safety in mines that it considers relevant.

MSAC is a collaborative partnership that integrates the views of all stakeholders while working towards common goals to:

- strengthen relationships and build trust
- agree on priority work health and safety issues and promote actions to address them
- gather, analyse, evaluate, and communicate information on work health and safety.

More information about MSAC

To find out more about the MSAC visit:

www.resourcesregulator.nsw.gov.au/our-role/other-functions/mine-safety-advisory-council

Strategic plan to 2026

MSAC has a vision for the mining industry in NSW to be recognised as achieving world-leading work health and safety.

In working towards achieving this vision, MSAC regularly considers the perspectives of the stakeholder groups and examines evidence gathered through research. MSAC reviews good practice demonstrated in other Australian states and overseas, as well as in other industries, that might be relevant to the mining industry in NSW.

MSAC has reviewed and considered the key health and safety issues for the mining industry and has identified the following priority areas as its focus for the next three years. The priority focus areas in this plan are consistent with the issues identified in MSAC's previous three-year strategic plan.

MSAC believes the priority focus areas defined in this plan will contribute to a safer, healthier and more sustainable industry, and to the benefits that mining delivers for the NSW community.

MSAC priority focus areas

MSAC has identified the following issues as its priority focus during the term of this strategic plan:

1. Focus on health

- overseeing implementation of recommendations from the independent review of the NSW health surveillance scheme for coal mine workers
- workplace exposure standards for airborne contaminants
- psychosocial hazards

2. Focus on fatal incidents, serious injuries, and illness

- identification of emerging trends indicating areas for improvement in current risk control settings

3. Focus on emerging trends

- vehicle interactions and collision awareness
- reporting culture survey
- remote-controlled mining operations
- isolation of energy
- fatigue
- sedentary work
- use of progressive technology in safety control systems.

MSAC will play a key role in researching and providing advice on the action areas to promote initiatives to assist in facilitating continuous improvement of the industry's work health and safety performance.

Focus on health

The health of workers in the NSW mining industry continues to be a major focus for the MSAC.

In recent years there has been a re-emergence of coal worker pneumoconiosis and silicosis in the Queensland and NSW mining industries. NSW has had a robust and multi-faceted framework in place for managing the risks associated with occupational dust lung disease in the coal mining sector for many years. This includes a comprehensive regulatory scheme in place under the Resources Regulator and Coal Services, with specific mining health and safety legislation.

The 2016 Review of the respiratory component of the Queensland Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme made a series of medical recommendations for improving the detection and management of occupational lung diseases. The Queensland Coal Mine Dust Lung Disease Collaborative Group has since made recommendations to the Queensland Government regarding the ongoing implementation of these medical recommendations.

Taking a similar strategic approach to Queensland, MSAC commissioned an independent quality assurance review of the coal industry health surveillance scheme in NSW. The aim of the review was to ensure that the system is providing robust and effective health surveillance for coal workers. The review also aimed to provide assurance to industry that the health surveillance system in NSW is effective in the early identification of health conditions or potential health conditions that may affect workers.

MSAC provides advice on proposed Workplace Exposure Standards for Airborne Contaminants such as diesel particulate matter, respirable coal dust and respirable crystalline silica dust. MSAC will monitor developments nationally and internationally and work collaboratively with the Resources Regulator to address the harmful effects of airborne contaminants and the implementation of new exposure standards.

MSAC is also dedicated to ensuring that operators and workers can apply the principles of good health and wellbeing. Through its collaborative approach, MSAC will consider and provide advice to the Minister, mine operators and workers on actions to foster continuous improvement in the management and control of the priority psychosocial hazards.

Strategies

In focusing on this priority area MSAC will monitor health issues affecting mine workers including:

- overseeing recommendations from the independent review of the NSW health surveillance scheme for coal mine workers. This review was undertaken by the University of Illinois to determine whether the health assessment performed under the Coal Services health surveillance scheme for coal workers is adequately designed and implemented to detect health conditions most effectively among NSW coal workers, with a particular focus on occupational dust disease.
- workplace exposure standards for airborne contaminants. MSAC will monitor the implementation of the exposure standards for diesel exhaust emissions, respirable crystalline silica and coal dust, and the supporting reporting requirements including:
 - monitoring progress of the National Dust Diseases Task Force and actions being taken across Australia and in NSW to address the risks of exposure to silica and to prevent cases of silicosis among workers
 - considering advice from the Resources Regulator on the effectiveness of the regulatory framework for managing airborne contaminants
 - reviewing airborne contaminants data and information from the Resources Regulator and the Coal Services Standing Dust Committee
 - reporting from Coal Services on health surveillance in the coal sector
 - health surveillance in the metalliferous mines and extractives mine sector

- sharing industry feedback and discuss positions on relevant health issues.
- review and provide advice on further SafeWork Australia proposals on revised exposure standards.
- psychosocial hazards. MSAC will monitor and provide advice on the psychosocial hazards framework under the work health and safety laws. MSAC will be informed by:
 - relevant initiatives in other jurisdictions including the Commonwealth
 - any relevant outcomes or identified needs arising from the reporting culture project.

Focus on fatal incidents, serious injuries, and illness

Fatalities and serious injuries and illnesses are key measures which are the focus of health and safety performance in the NSW mining industry. While they are lag indicators, fatality and serious injury and illness data indicate the effectiveness of the implementation of critical risk controls.

Strategies

In focusing on this priority area MSAC will monitor relevant major incidents, incident statistics and inquiries including:

- observing and considering significant incidents and exposures that occur in the NSW mining industry
- reviewing findings from relevant inquiries and reports from other states, the Commonwealth and internationally and providing advice to the Minister
- reviewing the relationship between the reporting culture in the sector and incidents
- considering advice from the Resources Regulator on:
 - incident and injury notifications and any identified trends
 - the effectiveness of the regulatory framework for incident prevention and risk controls
- proactively sharing information, resources and learnings about incidents and injuries.

MSAC will consider analytical reports provided by the Resources Regulator and provide advice on possible future WHS improvement initiatives and regulatory compliance priorities.

Focus on emerging trends

MSAC will monitor and consider relevant information to anticipate emerging (or re-emerging) issues and provide the opportunity for key stakeholders to discuss solutions or research going forward.

Strategies

In focusing on this priority area MSAC will:

- partner with the Resources Regulator and the NSW Minerals Council to undertake a staged project to promote strategies and technologies on vehicle interactions and collision awareness. The purpose of the project is to engage the NSW mining industry to advance the knowledge of collision avoidance systems, and collaboratively develop a strategic approach to implementation of recommended approaches. MSAC will consider the outcomes from forums and feedback from a public discussion paper and provide advice on addressing areas for WHS improvement.
- undertake a new culture of reporting survey. This is a follow-up to the 2022 survey. The overall aim is for mine workers to feel empowered to report on safety concerns in their workplaces. The project will:
 - provide a baseline of reporting culture which can be monitored and measured over time

- provide intelligence for other MSAC focus areas such as serious injury and illness, and psychosocial issues.
- consider and provide advice on the impacts and concerns of the following five areas:
 - remote-controlled mining operations
 - isolation of energy
 - fatigue
 - sedentary work
 - use of progressive technology in safety control systems.

Deliverables

The following table outlines the deliverables and outcomes from the implementation of the strategic plan.

| Focus area | Outcomes |
|--|--|
| Focus on health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the recommendations of the independent review of the NSW health surveillance scheme for coal mine workers are implemented • advice to the Minister and regulator on the review of the framework for airborne contaminant workplace exposure standards and Safe Work Australia proposals for reform • advice to the Minister and regulator on identified areas for WHS improvement from the outcomes of the reporting culture survey in terms of psychosocial issues |
| Focus on fatal incidents, serious injury and illness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice to the Minister and regulator on identified trends and areas of concern relating to fatal incidents, serious injury and illness |
| Focus on emerging trends | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice to the Minister and regulator on the recommendations of the vehicle interaction and collision awareness project to improve WHS performance • delivery of a follow-up reporting culture survey to provide a baseline to inform other future MSAC and regulatory initiatives • advice to the Minister and regulator on identified areas for WHS improvement after considering key issues of remote-controlled mining operations; isolation of energy; fatigue; sedentary work; and the use of progressive technology in safety control systems. |

Conclusion

MSAC’s Strategic Plan to 2026 outlines three priority focus areas for improving WHS for the NSW mining industry. Stakeholders should recognise the need for WHS improvement in priority areas and commit to active participation in improvement strategies.

MSAC will oversee the implementation of the actions and will provide the Minister and the mining industry with regular updates on its progress.