



Healthy active workplaces  
**Policy statement**  
Making **healthy choices** easier



Department of  
Sport and Recreation

**be active wa**  
Physical Activity Taskforce

**UNIONSWA**



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
AND INDUSTRY  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



# Foreword

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The ongoing ability of Western Australia to provide the high quality services that government and the community expect is dependent on attracting, retaining and developing a capable workforce.

The state government, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA (CCI) and UnionsWA, is working towards creating a healthy, active and vibrant state in which to work.

The health of working-age people has consequences far beyond themselves – reaching their families, children, workplaces and wider communities. Creating a workplace culture that supports and enhances the health and wellbeing of Western Australians takes priority on the WA state government agenda.

The priority actions outlined in this paper form the basis for progressing this initiative. Re-prioritisation within government; awareness and advocacy; capacity building; and consolidating and building on existing research will form the cornerstone of this initiative.

**Through appropriate policy and planning, the state government, CCI and UnionsWA are committed to:**

- endorsing and supporting the implementation of best practice workplace health and wellbeing programs;
- making guidelines available to public, private and not-for-profit organisations on how to implement a best practice program;
- implementing supportive policy to strengthen action across all sectors; and
- offering a centralised base that supplies support to all agencies to develop their existing or new health and wellbeing programs.

This commitment signifies the partnership across government and industry to work together to create healthy, active workplaces and ultimately give Western Australians more opportunity to live healthy, active lifestyles.



Hon Terry Waldron  
*Minister for Sport  
and Recreation*  
Government of  
Western Australia



James Pearson  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Chamber of Commerce  
and Industry



Simone McGurk  
*Secretary*  
UnionsWA

## The vision

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There have been significant increases in the prevalence of obesity, physical inactivity and lifestyle disease within Australia and worldwide. Over the past 50 years, the nature of work and the work-life balance have changed. Today's working environment contributes to inactive lifestyles and high levels of stress which not only impacts on employees' health but also adds a significant burden to the business sector through loss of productivity and absenteeism.

The workplace is a key setting to promote and enhance the health and wellbeing of Western Australian adults. Improving the health and wellbeing of Western Australian workers is a vital social priority and an urgent economic priority.

A coordinated approach to healthy active workplaces will see government and industry work together to meet the health and wellbeing needs of all working Western Australians.

The state government, CCI and UnionsWA are working towards:

- supporting working Western Australians and their families to live healthy, active lifestyles;
- providing employers and employees with information and support to enable them to implement health and wellbeing initiatives in the workplace; and
- encouraging employers to provide workplace environments that support and enhance employee health and wellbeing.



## The cost of ill health

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According to the World Health Organization (WHO), workplace health programs can reduce sick leave by up to 30 per cent and increase productivity by up to 52 per cent.<sup>1</sup> A one per cent increase in employee involvement in workplace programs in WA, would result in an estimated saving of \$4.5 million.

A 2005 survey of Australian workers showed:<sup>2</sup>

- 62 per cent of workers were overweight (with 28 per cent obese);
- half of the workers surveyed felt overwhelmed with stress and pressure a significant proportion of the time;
- obesity was associated with more than 4 million days lost in the workplace in 2001 due to sickness absenteeism;
- stress-related claims cost Australian business more than \$200 million annually;
- sickness absenteeism is costing Australian businesses \$7 billion annually, or roughly \$1000 per employed person per year;
- employees with poor health behaviours have up to nine times the annual sickness absence of healthy individuals (18 days compared to two days per year); and
- when effective working hours were calculated, healthy employees were nearly three times more effective than the least healthy (143 effective working hours per month compared with 49).

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<sup>1</sup>. Preventing Non communicable Diseases in the Workplace through Diet and Physical Activity. WHO/World Economic Forum Report of a Joint Event, 2008

<sup>2</sup>. The Health of Australia's Workforce. Medibank Private survey, 2005



# Priority actions

Healthy Active Workplaces is supported across both the public, private and not-for-profit sectors with representation on a reference group from a number of key stakeholders. The initiative is aimed at a broad range of stakeholders across every layer of influence – including government bodies, employers, unions and business intermediaries, local government and other non-government organisations.

Healthy Active Workplaces is a key initiative of the Physical Activity Taskforce which is being delivered in partnership with the Department of Sport and Recreation. Over the next three years, the following priority actions will be progressed as part of the Healthy Active Workplaces initiative.

Focussing on...	Resulting in...
<p>Creating formal structures and support to enable employers to implement best practice workplace health programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of policy and implementation guidelines.</li> <li>• A best practice awards system.</li> <li>• Investigating barriers such as liability.</li> </ul>
<p>Establishing forums for ongoing consultation and sharing of best practice in workplace health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops and seminars for workplace wellness coordinators.</li> <li>• Network groups to enable sharing of best practice.</li> <li>• Establishment of a stakeholder network group.</li> </ul>
<p>Establishment of tools to assist workplaces in the implementation and evaluation of workplace health programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of an online health and wellbeing survey for all WA organisations to access.</li> <li>• Establishment of easily accessible resources including simple 'how to' guides and program guides.</li> </ul>
<p>Improving service delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of professional development opportunities for service providers.</li> <li>• Easy to locate service providers.</li> </ul>
<p>Supporting organisations to implement programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training and development.</li> <li>• Development of a mentor scheme for workplaces to sign up to.</li> <li>• Advocating for workplace health programs in government and industry.</li> </ul>
<p>Implementing a regional strategy to encourage greater take-up of programs in regional WA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of regional workshops and training.</li> <li>• Investigation into feasibility of regional pilot projects.</li> </ul>



## The way forward

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Healthy Active Workplaces is a means of achieving a positive change in the health and wellbeing of working Western Australians. The support of the state government, Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA and UnionsWA is crucial to the success of this initiative.

This joint statement signifies a partnership whereby the state government and industry will work towards supporting and encouraging Western Australian employers to adopt policies and practices that enhance the health and wellbeing of employees. In turn, Healthy Active Workplaces will contribute to delivering the best opportunities for current and future generations of Western Australians to live healthier and more active lifestyles.



*Sport and recreation builds stronger,  
healthier, happier and safer communities.*

## **For more information**

### **Healthy Active Workplace Program**

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