

# Change to achieve a world-leading WHS culture

## NSW mining and extractives industry



The mining industry recognises that significant change is required to achieve an agreed goal of a world-leading WHS culture. As illustrated in Figure 1, organisations can function at different levels of maturity, but until health and safety is the “way we do business” in all enterprises, the industry will fall short of its goal.

Research from 2007 has identified that while 30% of enterprises in the industry operate proactively, significant improvement is required across the board if the industry as a whole is to become truly world-leading.

### What needs to change?

The industry has markedly improved hard barriers and technical means to eliminate significant WHS risks. Management systems including human resources, training, procurement, financial, due diligence and WHS management support these hard barriers.

Human interactions necessary to develop, implement, maintain and improve systems and hard barriers depend on each individual’s interpersonal and communications skills.

These skills, commonly known as Associated Non-Technical Skills, are becoming increasingly important at all levels of the industry.

Figure 1: Levels of maturity

The central issues that need to be addressed include structure; culture; systems; leadership; and the ability of all people involved to participate constructively through effective consultation using the full range of non-technical skills.

Organisational change requires that people from managers to operators are able to interact meaningfully and respectfully. All people involved need to feel they have participated in the decision-making process to ensure ownership. The relationship between the supervisor and worker is perhaps the most challenging issue.

Change needs to be managed. To manage change everyone needs to be prepared to confront new ideas, attitudes, behaviours and ways of doing things.

To achieve a world-leading WHS culture the people within the industry must:

- see the need for change
- foster leadership at all levels
- create a shared vision that can be simply expressed and communicated
- enable people at all levels to influence the process and act on the vision
- celebrate and consolidate improvement that leads to further improvement

## What are WHS culture and organisational behaviour?

The way an organisation behaves depends on its culture, which in turn is determined by the people who work in the organisation and the way they interact.

Organisational behaviour can be said to be how business processes are developed, organised and reviewed by its people. The organisation's behaviour is reflected in its management systems and can be influenced by its culture and the individuals that make up that organisation. WHS culture is reflected in how the organisation behaves day-to-day in managing its WHS hazards.

WHS culture is the shared individual values, beliefs and attitudes regarding WHS and the organisation of the business to eliminate or manage WHS risk.

Safety culture was defined by James Reason (1997) as:

*'An assembly of characteristics and attitudes in organisations and individuals which establishes safety issues as an over-riding priority.'*



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## What is required for successful change?

Change management requires good leadership and fostering Associated Non-Technical Skills that allow all involved to be aware of the perspectives of others, communicate in a meaningful and respectful manner, and constructively participate and work as a team.

People go through predictable stages in responding to change. An effective change process will take people through a successful transition and help them respond positively to change and boost their confidence in their capacity to share in the positive outcomes of change towards a world-leading WHS culture and performance.

## For change to be successful:

- Managers must be perceived as credible, be able to motivate and enable others to progress towards the vision of world-leading WHS culture, and provide the structure to direct the effective use of resources to achieve the goal.
- Workers must be able to constructively and actively participate in a meaningful consultation process.

The effective use of Associated Non-Technical Skills at all levels must be seen as a driver for the industry to manage the change process to achieve world-leading WHS culture.

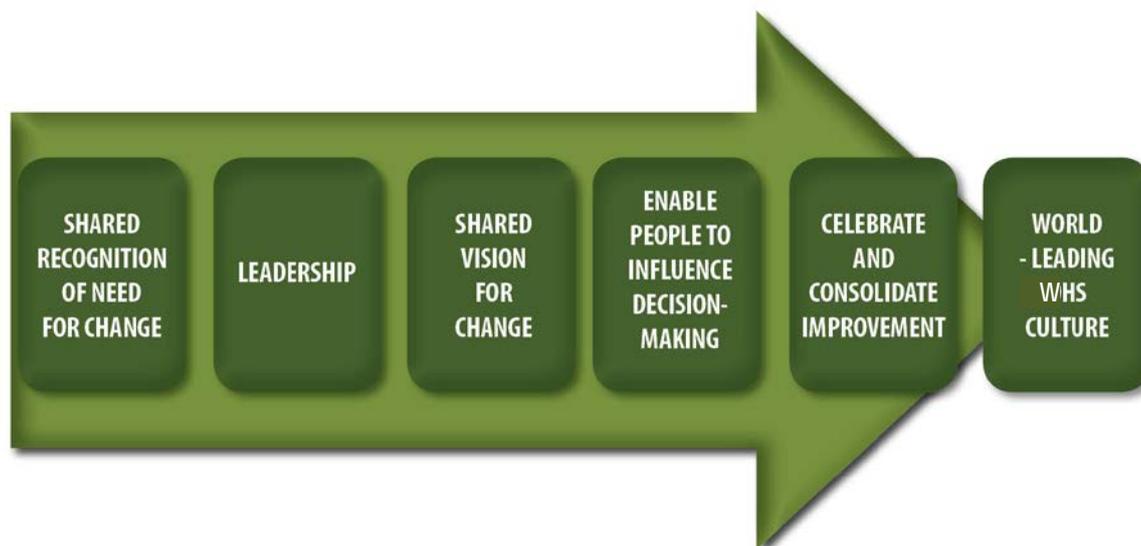


Figure 3: Moving towards a world-leading WHS culture

## The features of a world-leading WHS culture

The NSW mining and extractives industry has articulated a world-leading WHS culture vision embodied in 10 points and a set of principles agreed by industry, unions and government agencies (see opposite 10 characteristics of a world-leading WHS culture).

When the NSW mining and extractives industry achieves a world-leading WHS culture, its shared values and beliefs and the way it behaves in managing WHS will be seen as the “gold standard” when benchmarked against the mining industry of other countries (e.g. USA, Canada), states (e.g. WA, QLD) or industries (e.g. nuclear, marine transport, construction).

## 10 characteristics of a world-leading WHS culture

1. Zero harm.
2. Demonstrated commitment at all levels to WHS that is genuine and innate. Everyone can lead the way.
3. All people are competent and have the authority and resources to complete the job safely.
4. Genuine consultation that is meaningful and effective at all levels.
5. Good WHS leads to good productivity.
6. WHS implementation at regulatory, industry, site and individual levels is achievable, fair and just.
7. An effective enforcement policy that is applied in a consistent, fair and proportionate manner.
8. Accountabilities and responsibilities of all persons in the workplace are clear and within their control.
9. A problem for one stakeholder is a problem for the whole industry that can be resolved through collaboration.
10. There is no disconnect between systems and practice.

### Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of NSW Trade & Investment or the user's independent adviser.



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