

COMMUNIQUE

Meeting of Workplace Relations and Work Health and Safety Ministers

24 August 2026

1. Commonwealth, State and Territory Workplace Relations (WR) and Work Health and Safety (WHS) Ministers met today to consider a range of WR and WHS matters.
2. The meeting was chaired by the Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, Commonwealth Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations.

Safe Work Australia best practice review

3. Ministers noted a presentation by Marie Boland, Chief Executive Officer of Safe Work Australia, on the findings and recommendations of the Best Practice Review of the model Work Health and Safety laws, commissioned by WHS ministers in September 2024 to strengthen and maintain a harmonised approach to WHS regulation.
4. Ministers noted Safe Work Australia has provided its final review report and will consider its findings. Ministers thanked Safe Work Australia for its work in conducting the review, including the extensive consultation with stakeholders.
5. No decisions have been made by Ministers regarding the review recommendations at this time. Ministers noted that Safe Work Australia Members will consider an updated work plan to inform progression of agreed work arising from the review. Ministers will be asked to consider review recommendations as they progress through the Safe Work Australia member processes.

AI in the workplace

6. Ministers noted the ongoing work across the Australian Government to support safe and effective adoption of AI and promote the values of fairness and opportunity to make sure AI works for Australians. This includes implementation of the National AI Plan and the establishment of the AI Employment and Workplaces Forum (AIEWF), alongside initiatives to strengthen workforce skills and capability for an AI-enabled economy. The government will also be introducing a set of mandatory Australian Standards for AI to protect Australians from harms and ensure it works in Australia's interests.
7. Ministers noted the release of the Office of the Chief Economist's recent labour market monitoring report: AI and employment in Australia: Monitoring framework and evidence to date (July 2026) and presentation from Matt Cowgill, Chief Economist, Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.
8. Ministers noted that the AIEWF is currently undertaking work to produce best practice guidance to support businesses and employees adopt and use AI in the workplace.
9. Ministers agreed that officials will continue to engage on matters relating to AI workplace adoption and use, including sharing best practice approaches, informing the development of best practice guidance, and acknowledging the work of jurisdictions on emerging policy issues such as workplace surveillance.

Commonwealth Places Working Group update

10. Ministers noted the Commonwealth Places Working Group has progressed work on a nationally consistent Mirror Taxes pathway to support portable long service leave coverage for work performed on Commonwealth places.
11. Ministers noted that jurisdictions will continue working with the Commonwealth to identify and progress the legislative, technical and administrative steps required to support implementation.

Labour hire–national model law principles

12. Ministers noted the report by the Labour Hire Senior Officials’ Working Group, which provides a pathway towards a consistent approach to labour hire regulation across state and territory schemes, consistent with Workplace Relations Ministers’ tasking on 31 October 2025.
13. Ministers from participating jurisdictions (the Commonwealth, Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory) endorsed the national model law principles for labour hire regulation, recommended by the Working Group.
14. The national model law principles provide a framework for working towards consistency across state and territory licensing schemes. This aligns with the core objectives of Ministers from participating jurisdictions to protect workers from exploitation regardless of where they work, enable a level playing field for businesses and reduce regulatory burden where possible.
15. Ministers from participating jurisdictions agreed to publish the national model law principles and the Working Group’s report on the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations’ website.

Asbestos

16. WHS ministers agreed that asbestos remains an important issue, requiring ongoing awareness and coordinated action by all governments.
17. Ministers noted the progress being made by jurisdictions to implement the *Asbestos National Strategic Plan 2024-2030* as outlined in *First Progress Report – 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2025*.

Commonwealth and jurisdictional updates

18. The following issues were raised by the Commonwealth and noted by ministers:
 - Fuel security
 - The Closing Loopholes Review
 - Progress of the work of the National Construction Industry Forum
19. Jurisdictional ministers provided updates on the following items:
 - Sham contracting in the transport sector in regional New South Wales
 - South Australia’s newly introduced *Workplace Protection (Personal Violence) Act 2025*.