

NT WorkSafe Strategic Plan

2021–2026



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Table of Contents

Message from the Regulator	5
About NT WorkSafe	7
Our vision.....	9
Our mission	9
Our values.....	11
Our stakeholders.....	12
Our Territory.....	14
Priority industries and risks.....	16
Construction overview	19
Health and community services overview.....	21
Government administration and defence overview.....	23
Agriculture, forestry and fishing overview	25
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants overview.....	27
Strategic objectives	29
Reduce harm	29
Build capability	30
Secure compliance.....	31
Effective regulatory frameworks	32
Evidence-based practice	33
Continuous improvement	35
Industry call to action.....	37
Strategic goals.....	39
Reporting.....	43



Message from the Regulator

As the Northern Territory Work Health Authority, I am pleased to present the NT WorkSafe Strategic Plan 2021–2026. This plan will guide our activities over the next five years, ensuring we keep our primary objectives of securing the health and safety of workers and workplaces, and influencing return to work outcomes for injured workers.

The plan was developed in consultation with NT WorkSafe's capable and committed teams of inspectors, advisors and officers; informed by the Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012–2022, the National Return to Work Strategy 2020–2030, and taking the unique Northern Territory context into consideration.

Working with finite resources, and with a vast geographical area to cover, we need to prioritise our activities so that efforts are concentrated in areas with the greatest need for intervention. In analysing our workers' compensation data, we identified five priority industry sectors that account for nearly sixty per cent of serious injury claims in the Territory. These industry sectors will be the subject of targeted strategies, aimed at preventing workplace fatalities, injuries and diseases.

The plan is a commitment by government to improve the work health and safety outcomes, not only for the identified industries, but all Territorians. It is also a call to action to businesses, workers and other duty holders in the identified priority industries to make a commitment to improve safety.

Our analysis identified four mechanisms of injury that were overrepresented in serious injury and fatality data across the Territory. These four key risk areas will become the focus of our education and compliance campaigns. We will prioritise early intervention activities, designed to eliminate or minimise these risks, and take action to secure compliance wherever necessary. By increasing our proactive and targeted activities, we will aim to reduce the number of workplace fatalities and serious injuries in the Northern Territory.

We are committed to ongoing improvement and will evaluate our performance by reviewing and analysing our data regularly; we will continue to make evidence-based decisions on priority areas, refocusing our efforts as new priorities are identified; and will publish annual statistics to openly communicate key trends and areas of developing concern.

I am confident that the coordinated and strategic approach outlined in this plan will support NT WorkSafe to work with stakeholders to achieve progressively higher standards of work health and safety in the Territory, while remaining agile enough to respond to emerging risks.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Bill Esteves'.

Bill Esteves
Executive Director, NT WorkSafe



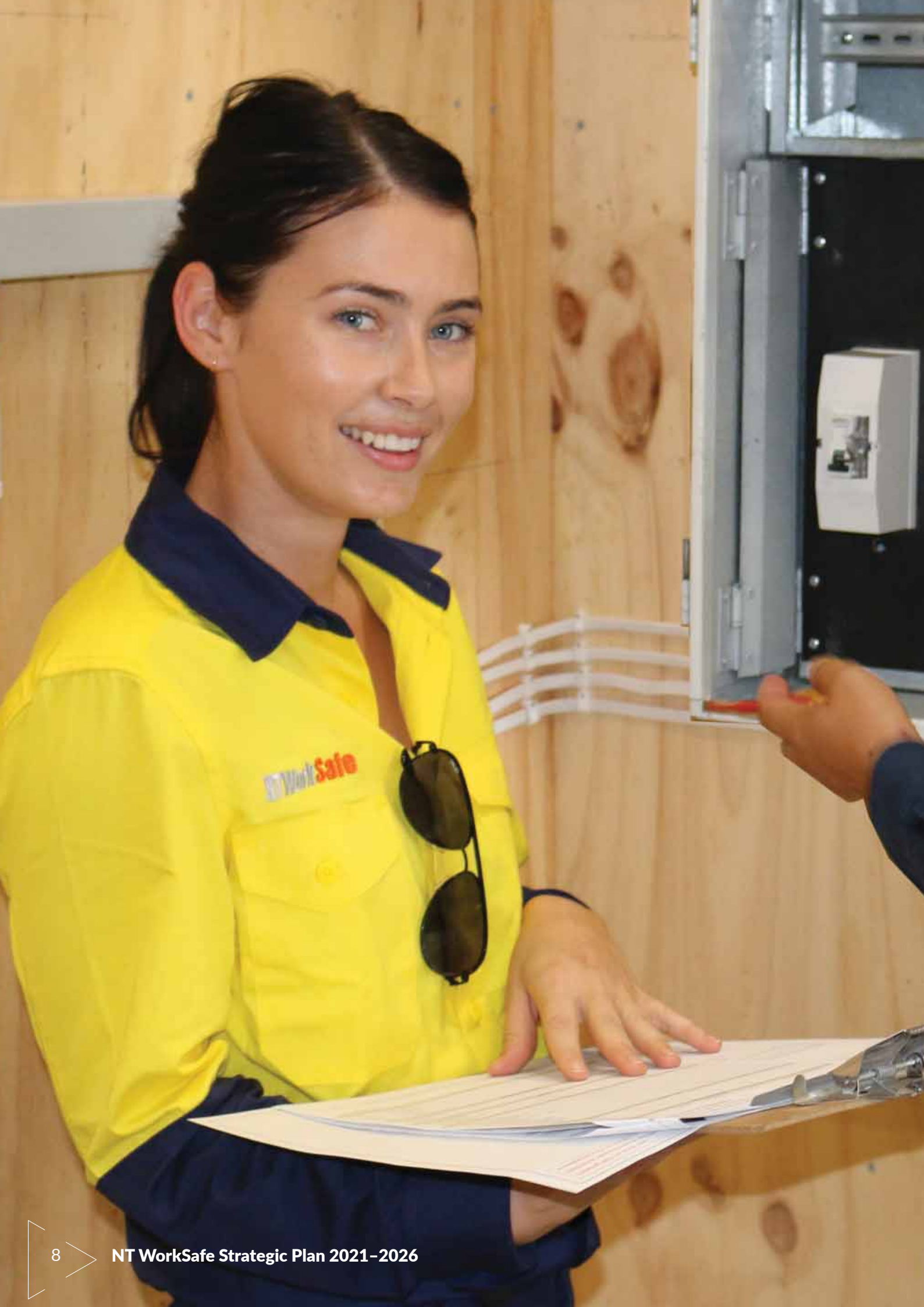
About NT WorkSafe

NT WorkSafe is a division of the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice, responsible for the Territory-wide provision of advice, information and regulation of work health and safety, dangerous goods, electrical safety, and rehabilitation and workers' compensation.

NT WorkSafe is responsible for administering the following Acts and associated Regulations:

- *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011*
- *Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road and Rail (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2010*
- *Dangerous Goods Act 1998*
- *Return to Work Act 1986*
- *Electricity Reform Act 2000 (provisions about safety regulation)*
- *Radioactive Ores and Concentrates (Packaging and Transport) Act 1980*

In the financial year 2019–2020, NT WorkSafe employed 62 full-time equivalent staff in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs.





Our **vision**

Healthy, safe and productive working lives for Territory workers.

Our **mission**

Working together to influence and achieve the highest possible outcomes in work health and safety, and for injured workers returning to work.



Our values

As Northern Territory Public Sector (NTPS) employees, the NTPS values of commitment to service, ethical practice, respect, accountability, impartiality and diversity are the principles that underpin our work and guide our actions every day.

When performing our regulatory functions, NT WorkSafe is committed to demonstrate:

Consistency

Ensuring that we address similar circumstances in similar ways, providing clear expectations to workplaces and industries.

Constructiveness

Providing support, advice and guidance to build capability and assist duty holders to comply with their obligations.

Transparency

Acting impartially, making decisions based on the best available evidence, and holding ourselves to high standards of integrity.

Accountability

Explaining our decisions and clearly communicating options to appeal a decision or make a complaint.

Proportionality

Aligning our level of response to the seriousness of the conduct.

Responsiveness

Considering the particular circumstances of the duty holder or workplace when selecting compliance and enforcement tools.

A targeted approach

Focusing our activities on the areas assessed as highest risk or our identified strategic enforcement priorities.

Our stakeholders



Workers



Employers



Industry



NT community



Courts and legal
professionals



Insurers



Unions



Other regulators



Industry associations



Medical and rehabilitation providers



Safe Work Australia

Our Territory

NT population

as at September 2020

246 500

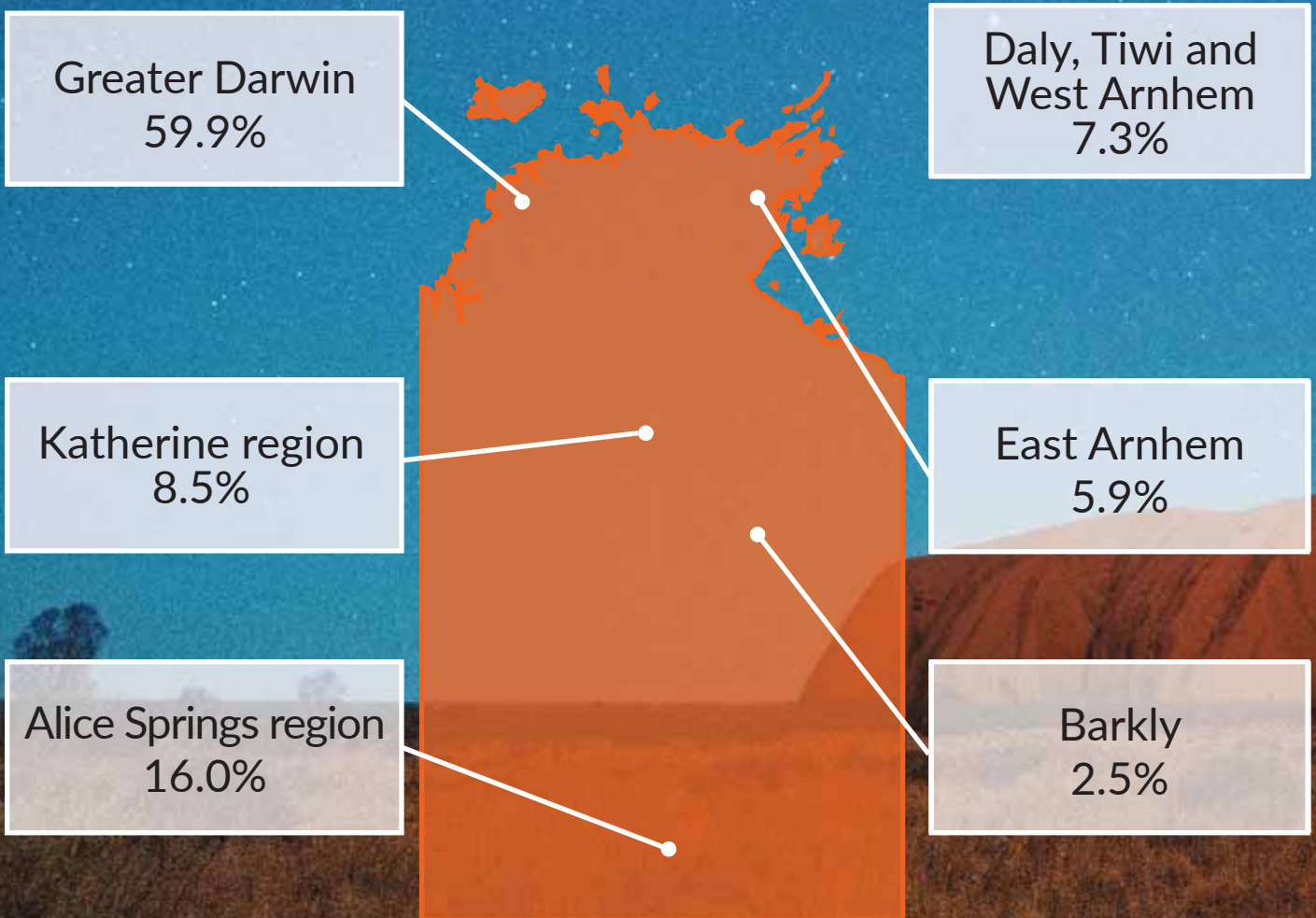


NT Labour force

as at February 2021

131 051*

Population Distribution



* The workforce figures from the ABS does not include FIFO workers and defence force members. The latest data available shows the Territory had 8700 FIFO workers (June 2016 Census) and 4 393 permanent defence force members (June 2020 ADF data). ComCare is the regulator for the Australian Defence Force.

Number of businesses

as at June 2020

15 072



Large 0.2%

200+ employees.

Medium 3.6%

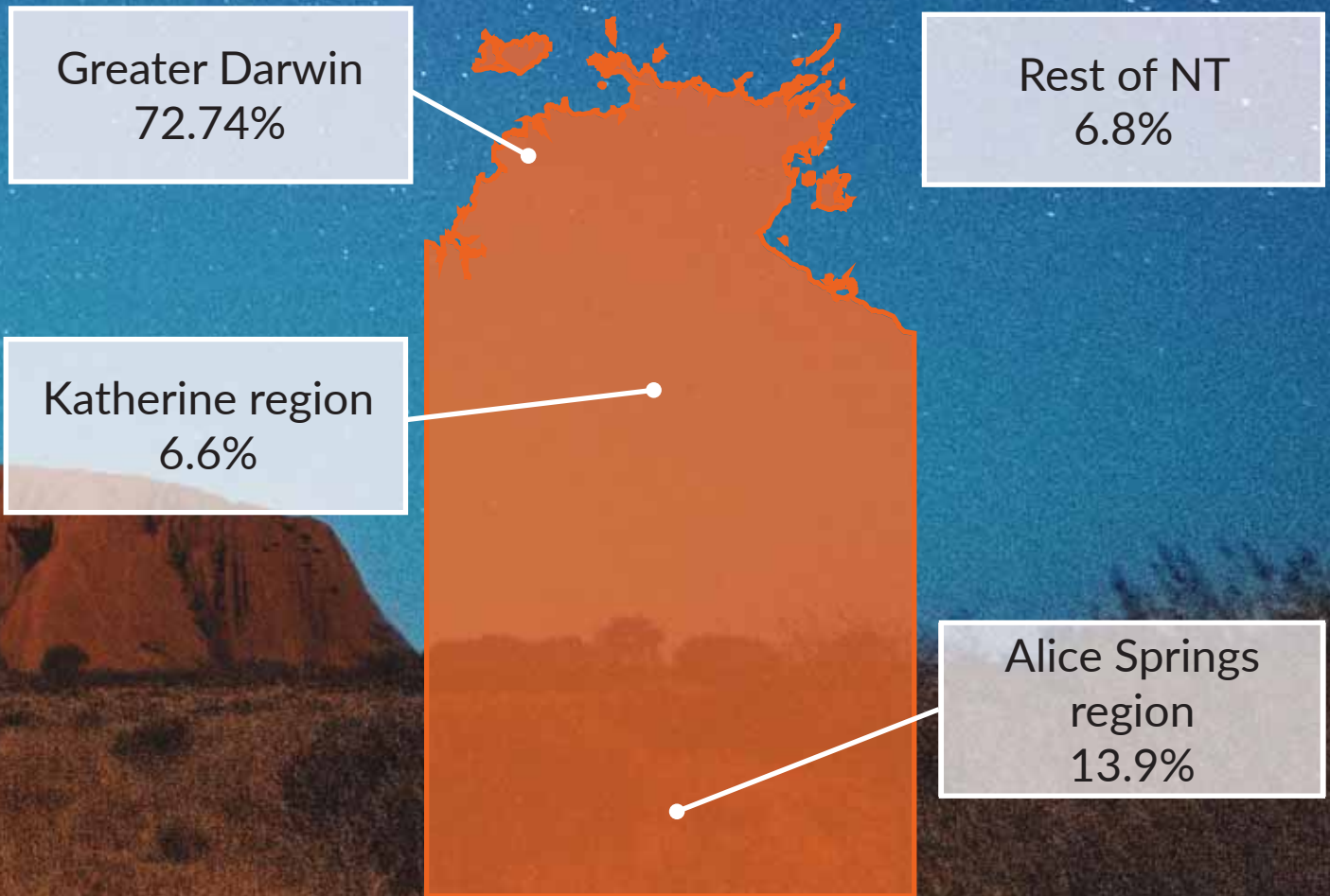
20-199 employees.

Small 96.2%

1-19 employees.

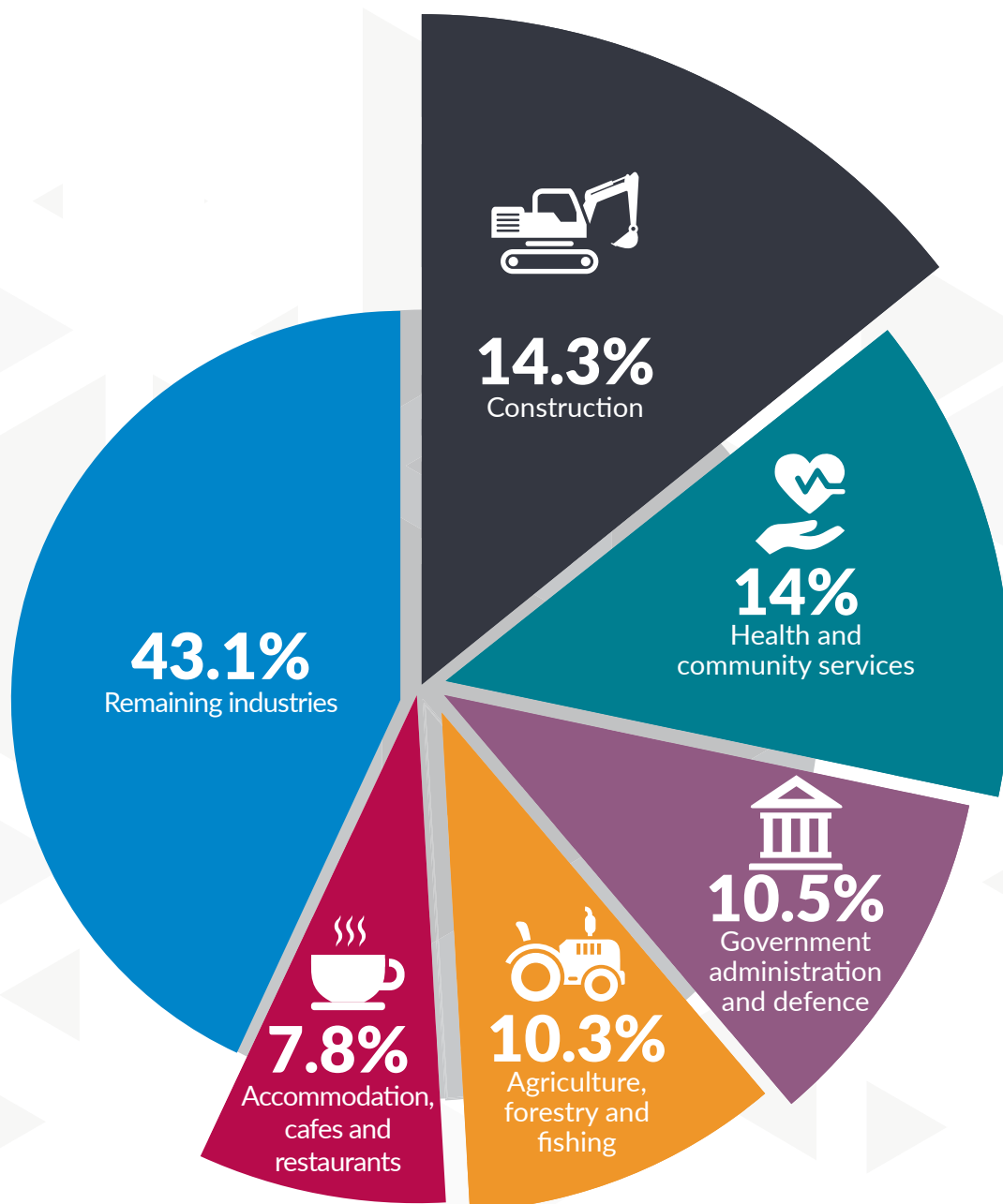
63.2% of small business non-employing.

Business Location



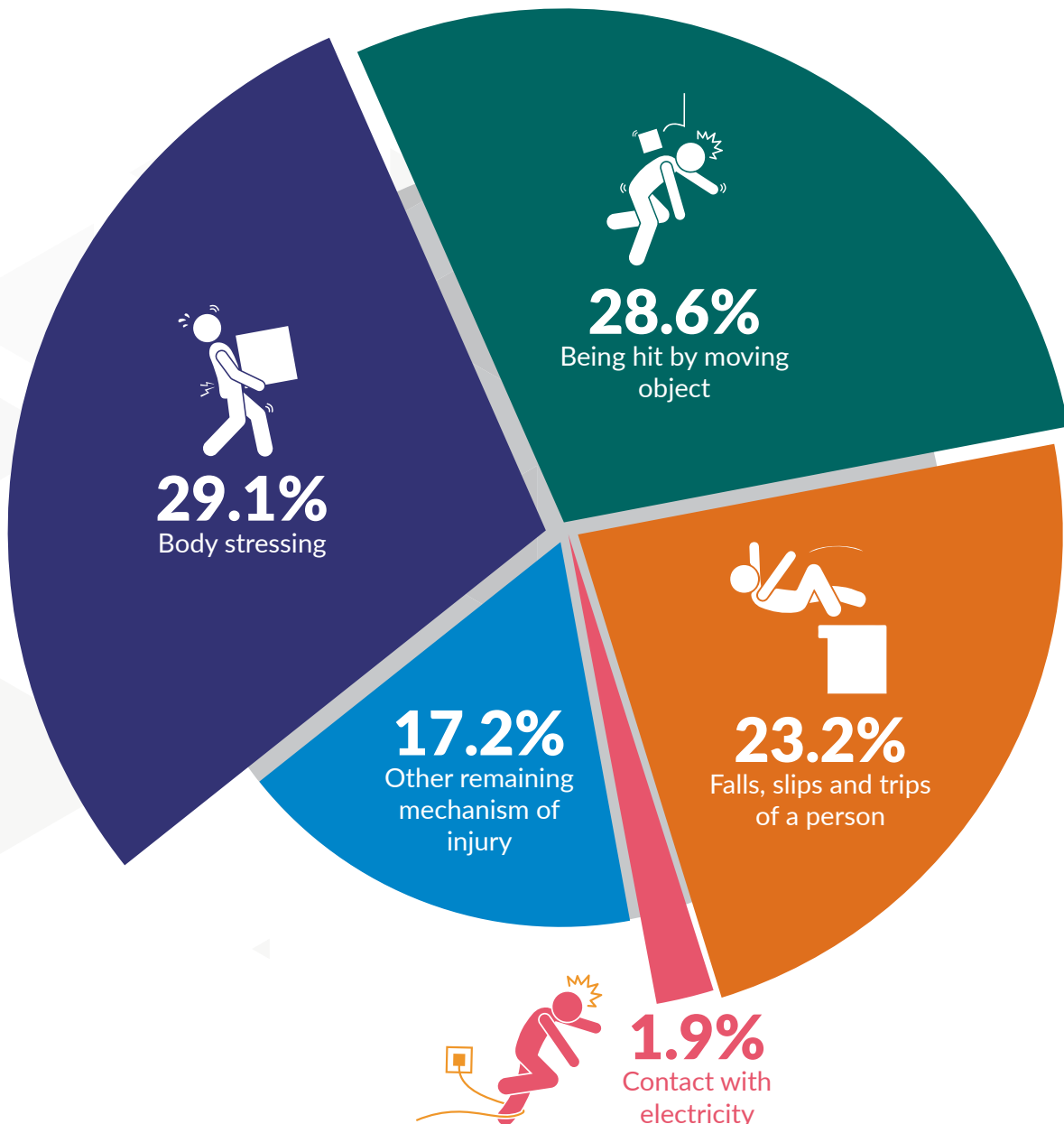
Priority industries and risks

Total serious injury claims by industry



In 2021–2026, NT WorkSafe will focus on improving safety standards in the five priority industry sectors that account for nearly sixty per cent of serious injury claims in the Territory.

Total serious injury claims by mechanism of injury



Our work will focus on four key risk areas for our education and compliance campaigns.





Construction

This industry employs:



10 806

or



8.2%

of all working
Territorians¹

The main areas of employment are:

- Site preparation
- Concreting
- Bricklaying
- Carpentry
- Roofing
- Plumbing
- Electrical
- Plastering
- Painting and decorating
- Landscaping

In 2019–20, workers compensation payments totalled



\$6.899²

through

286 claims,

and resulted in



1027 weeks³

of lost work.

The main mechanism of injury for serious injury claims



Being hit by moving object



Body stressing



Falls, slips and trips
of a person



Since 2016

7 people

have died in work-related incidents:

- 4 falls from height
- 2 contact with electricity
- 1 being hit by moving objects

¹ Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Quarterly, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.003

² Benefit costs reflected are a snap shot at time of publishing

³ Maximum weekly hours of work in accordance with Fair Work - 38 hours per week.



Health and community services

This industry employs:



The main areas of employment are:

- Aged care
- General practice medical
- Specialist medical
- Pathology
- Optometry
- Ambulance
- Community health
- Physiotherapy
- Chiropractic
- Residential care
- Non-residential care

In 2019-20, workers compensation payments totalled



The main mechanism of injury for serious injury claims



- 1 vehicle incident

¹ Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Quarterly, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.003

² Benefit costs reflected are a snap shot at time of publishing

³ Maximum weekly hours of work in accordance with Fair Work - 38 hours per week.



Government administration and defence

This industry employs:



20 964 or



16.7%
of all working
Territorians¹

The main areas of employment are:

- State (Territory) government administration
- Local government administration
- Defence (Regulated by Comcare)

In 2019–20, workers compensation payments totalled



\$3.993m²

through

220 claims,

and resulted in



860 weeks³

of lost work.



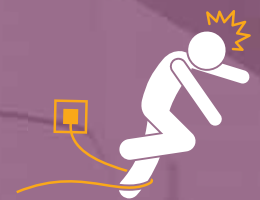
The main mechanism of injury for serious injury claims



Being hit by moving object



Body stressing



Falls, slips and trips
of a person



Since 2016

2 people⁴

have died in work-related incidents:

- 1 being hit by a person accidentally
- 1 vehicle incident

¹ Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Quarterly, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.003

² Benefit costs reflected are a snap shot at time of publishing

³ Maximum weekly hours of work in accordance with Fair Work - 38 hours per week.

⁴ Both fatalities occurred in Defence.



Agriculture, forestry and fishing

This industry employs:



2259

or



1.8%
of all working
Territorians¹

The main areas of employment are:

- Plant nurseries
- Fruit and vegetable growing
- Cattle and livestock farming
- Cotton growing and ginning
- Aerial agriculture services
- Marine fishing
- Aquaculture

In 2019–20, workers compensation payments totalled



\$3.520m²



through

197 claims,

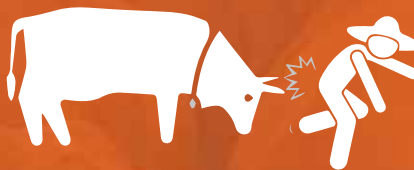
and resulted in



1029 weeks³

of lost work.

The main mechanism of injury for serious injury claims



Being hit by moving object



Hitting objects with
part of the body



Falls, slips and trips
of a person



Since 2016

10 people

have died in work-related incidents:

- 4 vehicle incidents
- 2 falls from a height
- 1 strike from a moving object
- 1 animal bite
- 1 hit from a falling object
- 1 trap by moving machinery or equipment

¹ Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Quarterly, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.003

² Benefit costs reflected are a snap shot at time of publishing

³ Maximum weekly hours of work in accordance with Fair Work - 38 hours per week.



Accommodation, cafes and restaurants

This industry employs:



The main areas of employment are:

- Accommodation
- Pubs, taverns and bars
- Cafe and restaurants
- Clubs

In 2019–20, workers compensation payments totalled



The main mechanism of injury for serious injury claims



Since 2016
0 people
have died in work-related incidents:

¹ Source: ABS, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Quarterly, Cat. No. 6291.0.55.003
² Benefit costs reflected are a snap shot at time of publishing
³ Maximum weekly hours of work in accordance with Fair Work - 38 hours per week.



Strategic objectives

Reduce harm

The *Safe Work Australia Traumatic Injury Fatalities Report 2019* identifies the Northern Territory as the jurisdiction with the highest rate of worker fatalities in Australia, with a rate of 4.6 fatalities (per 100 000 workers) in 2019, and a 5 year average rate of 3.3 fatalities (per 100 000 workers).

Preliminary Northern Territory workers' compensation data for 2019–20 shows that 36% per cent of claims during the year were for serious injuries where the worker needed greater than one week off work; a total of 7541 working weeks were lost; and a total of \$40 710 100 in workers' compensation entitlements were paid.

The wider impacts of workplace injuries and fatalities are harder to quantify, but include indirect costs such as lost productivity, loss of current and future earnings, lost potential output and the cost of providing social welfare programs for injured or incapacitated workers, as well as the significant ongoing impacts on friends, family, the workplace and wider community.

We have an obligation to make sure that, once discovered, risks of harm are eliminated or minimised, providing the highest level of protection against harm as reasonably practicable; and to ensure the actions we take to administer our legislation do not themselves cause harm.

We will work with workers, duty holders and stakeholders to identify and address risks to reduce the number of work-related injuries and fatalities in the Northern Territory, with a particular focus on identified priority industries and risks.

Our activities :



Eliminate and minimise hazards and risks

- Regulator resources targeted to priority industries and risks.
- Increase the effective use of compliance and enforcement tools to respond to health and safety risks.



Return to Work

- Influence timely return to work and ensure legislated timeframes are met.
- Mediation processes facilitated with a client-centric approach to assist in resolving disputes and reduce matters going to court.



Advice

- Develop tools and advice for priority industries and mechanisms of injury.
- Provide advice to all stakeholders to ensure the impact of work-related injuries and illnesses are minimal on Territory workers, and that workers have a timely, safe and durable return to work.
- Actively engage with Health and Safety Representative in workplaces.

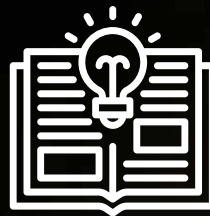
Build capability

To meet their obligations and comply with legislation, duty holders first need to understand what their duties are and what they need to do to comply with them. In a workplace, everyone has a duty: from the primary duty of care held by persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs), officers' duties to exercise due diligence, to the duty for workers and other persons in the workplace to take reasonable care for their own health and safety.

We will deliver education and awareness-raising campaigns that focus on our identified priority industries and risks and provide quality advice and information to duty holders, to demonstrate what compliance looks like. We will publish information, statistics and safety alerts to highlight risks and incidents, including information about measures to take to manage the risk and avoid a similar incident from occurring.

In addition to building capability in priority industries, we will focus on building capability within NT WorkSafe to ensure we have the appropriate skills, knowledge, and ability to engage effectively with our stakeholders, perform our regulatory functions, and achieve improved work health and safety outcomes in the Northern Territory.

Our activities :



Education campaigns

- Conduct education campaigns in priority industries with relevance to targeting priority mechanisms of injury.



Information and resources

- Provide information, tools, and resources in support of our education campaigns.
- Maintain and extend web-based information and resources, addressing common and emerging work health and safety and workers' compensation matters.
- Provide timely information on workplace fatalities and reoccurring serious workplace incidents.
- Provide industry associations with relevant work health and safety statistics and trends.



Internal Training

- Campaign focused training provided to ensure consistent approach from staff.
- Regulatory focused training provided to staff conducting regulatory activities.
- Provide continual professional development opportunities for staff.

Secure compliance

NT WorkSafe has a range of tools available to help secure compliance with the legislation we administer. While in many cases, the provision of information and guidance is enough to achieve voluntary compliance, we use stronger enforcement measures to ensure identified contraventions are remedied and take punitive actions where appropriate.

Certain offences are classified as infringeable offences under the *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2011*, and infringement notices (on-the-spot fines) can be issued for these breaches. They are an on the spot penalty for breaches, sending a clear and timely message that there are consequences for non-compliance.

Inspectors issue improvement notices, to require corrective action to be taken to address non-compliance within a specified timeframe, such as an unsafe work practice, a particular hazard, or potential risk to health and safety. Non-compliance with an improvement notice is an infringeable offence and may result in the issue of an infringement notice, application to the Work Health Court for an injunction or a prosecution.

In circumstances where Inspectors identify a serious risk to the health or safety of a person from an immediate or imminent exposure to a hazard, they will issue a prohibition notice to stop a work activity, or the way the activity is being carried out, until the risk is controlled. Non-compliance with a prohibition notice may result in application for an injunction or a prosecution.

Our activities :



Compliance campaigns

- Conduct compliance campaigns in priority industries with relevance to targeting priority mechanisms of injury.
- Regular compliance checks for relevant permits and licenses approved by NT WorkSafe.
- Use improvement and prohibition and where required, infringement notices.



Auditing

- Auditing processes for high risk work assessors reviewed and updated.
- Expand audits of employers holding current workers' compensation insurance policies.



Investigation and prosecution

- Investigations prioritised using the risk-based approach outlined in the *National Compliance and Enforcement Policy*.
- Prosecution action taken in accordance with the Director of Public Prosecution guidelines.

Effective regulatory frameworks

Our regulatory frameworks involve more than just the legislation we administer, they also encompass our Codes of Practice, forms, internal processes and the guidance materials we publish and maintain.

To ensure they are effective, we need to consider whether our frameworks continue to operate as intended and if they need to adapt to capture new technologies and the changing nature of work.

In 2021–2026, our focus will be towards implementation of agreed recommendations from the national Review of the Model Work Health and Safety Laws (the Boland Review) and the local Electrical Safety Review.

Our activities :



Review and modernise legislation

- Implement agreed recommendations from the national Review of the Model Work Health and Safety Laws in the NT.
- Implement accepted recommendations from the Electrical Safety and Licencing Reference Group Review.
- Ensure all NT WorkSafe policies and administered legislation are responsive, effective and regularly reviewed.

Evidence-based practice

As a public sector organisation, we have an obligation to use our resources wisely, ensuring we perform our duties effectively and efficiently. We will make our decisions based on assessment against established criteria to ensure consistency.

We have to prioritise our activities so that our efforts are concentrated in areas with the greatest need for intervention. To do that, we have analysed our workers' compensation data to identify priority industry sectors and mechanisms of injury which will be our focus over the next 12 months.

We will continue to collect, validate and analyse local and national data to identify any developing trends and help us to set our priorities each year. By increasing our proactive and targeted activities in our priority areas, we aim to help employers to reduce the number of workplace fatalities and serious injuries in the Northern Territory.

Our activities :



Data collection and validation

- Data captured accurately, in line with established standards, to meet reporting deadlines.



Data analysis

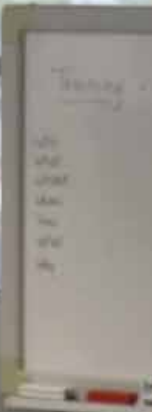
- Used to identify priority industries, risks and developing trends each year.



Decisions

- Decisions are based on assessment against established criteria and documented.





Continuous improvement

The 2019 Best Practice Review of Work Health and Safety in the Northern Territory (the Lyons Review) identified a range of opportunities to improve NT WorkSafe's effectiveness in communicating, administering, and enforcing the compliance functions of the *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011*.

Throughout 2021–26, we will continue to implement the accepted recommendations from the Lyons Review.

We are committed to ongoing assessment of our performance across our areas of responsibility, identifying opportunities for improvement and taking action to address any weaknesses.

Our activities :



Increase effectiveness

- Implement accepted recommendations from the Lyons Review.
- Regularly review organisational systems, processes and procedures.
- Implement procedures to keep injured workers and next of kin informed of the progress of investigations.



Quality assurance

- Review and monitor decision-making processes and exercise of powers.



Training

- Review and update training framework.
- Work with other work health and safety regulators to identify best practice training.
- Ensure Inspectors have the necessary capabilities they require.



Industry **call to action**

Territory businesses and workers are both responsible for keeping the workplace safe.

We are calling on all industries, in particular the priority industries to improve on these four focus areas.

Focus area

Required outcome

Safe systems of work

- Your workers are provided with safe systems of work.
- Hazards identified in your work systems, processes and procedures are eliminated or minimised.
- Your safe systems of work are developed in consultation with workers that will be conducting the work.

Training and capability

- Your workers are provided and kept up to date with training to keep them safe.
- Your workers have the required health and safety capabilities for their job.

Supervision

- Your workers, especially vulnerable workers, are appropriately supervised to keep them safe.

Health and safety design

- Your workplace, plant, and equipment are free of risk to health and safety.



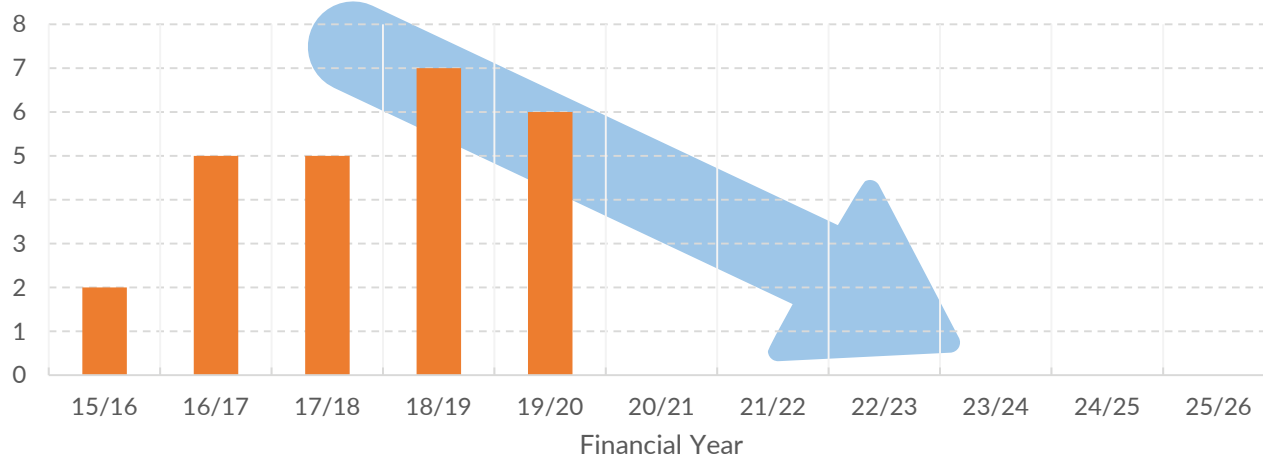
Strategic goals

In meeting our strategic objectives, we aim to increase the level of work health and safety compliance by workers, managers, businesses and other duty holders, and in turn influence the levels of serious injuries, fatalities and return to work timeframes in the Northern Territory.

The strategic goals of this plan are to see changes in the following work health and safety metrics.

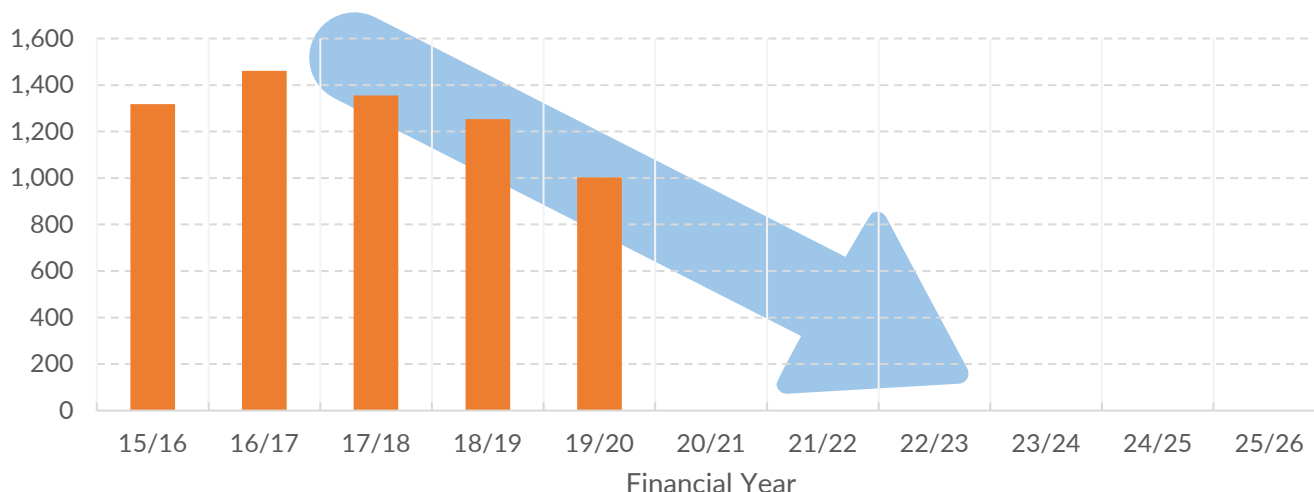
Reduce the lives lost in workplace incidents

Lives lost in workplace incidents



Reduce the number of serious work related injuries

Serious workplace injuries





IN USE MEETINGS ROOM 2

The maximum capacity of people in this office is
6

worksafe.nt.gov.au

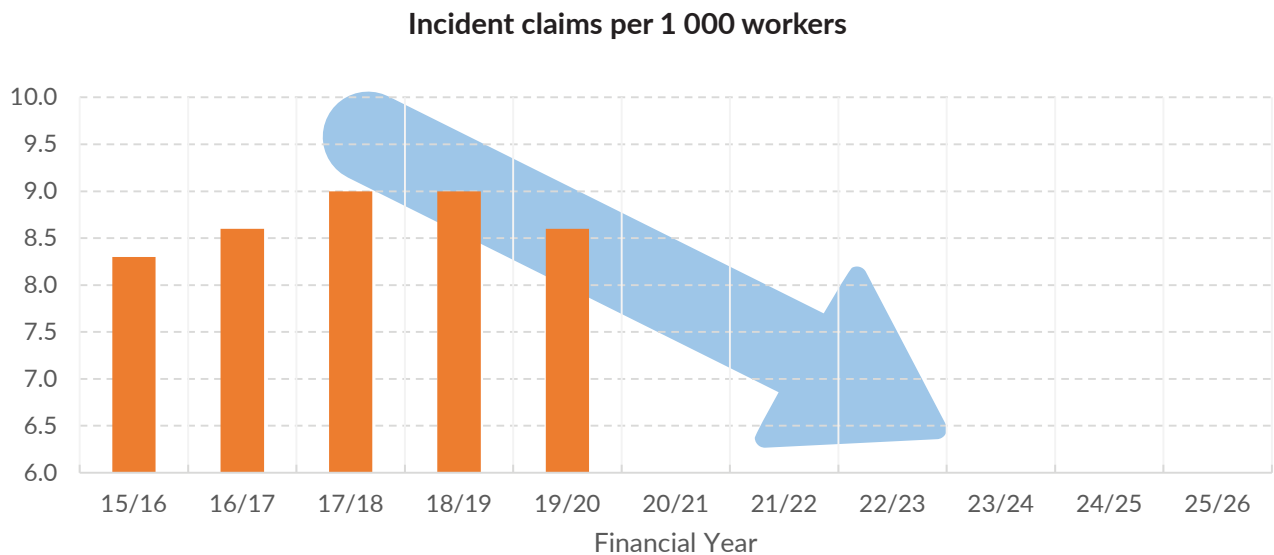
WORKSAFE

- 1. Working safely - do it right!
- 2. Working smart - do it better!
- 3. Working together - do it as a team!
- 4. Working well - do it with care!

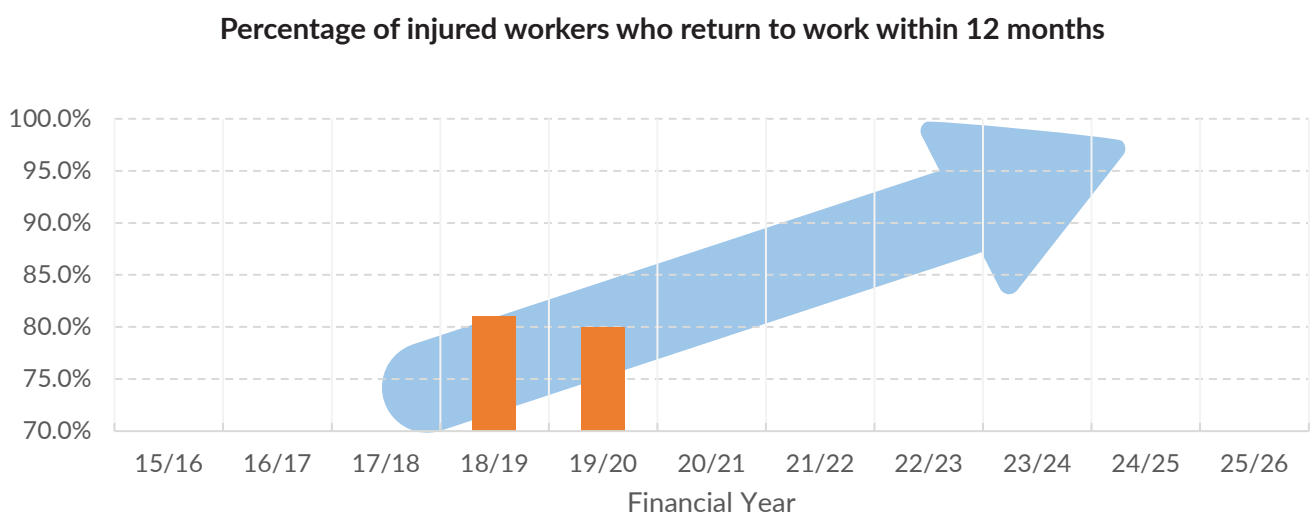
WORKSAFE

- 1. Working safely - do it right!
- 2. Working smart - do it better!
- 3. Working together - do it as a team!
- 4. Working well - do it with care!

Reduce the number of incident claims per 1 000 workers



Increase the percentage of injured workers who return to work within 12 months





Reporting

We will report on the outcomes of our strategic plan in the Work Health Authority Annual Report, which is tabled in parliament and published on the NT WorkSafe website at worksafe.nt.gov.au

