

Optimisation of work health and safety in small and micro-business in NSW

Rapid Evidence Assessment



This Rapid Evidence Assessment has been produced in partnership with Verian and the Centre for Work Health and Safety.



**Centre for Work
Health and Safety**



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Executive summary

Background

Small and micro businesses are important contributors to Australia's economy and make up the majority of businesses in Australia. However, when it comes to work health and safety (WHS), small and micro businesses are being left behind. Despite experiencing higher rates of WHS incidents, small and micro businesses have rarely been the focus of research, policy, and legislation, and their unique needs are often not considered in attempts to optimise WHS outcomes.

Small businesses, by definition, are characterised by fewer employees and limited resources, often with a more informal/egalitarian workplace meaning their WHS needs differ from larger entities. Specifically, responsibility for WHS is more heavily placed on individuals – and the business owners and key decision makers – than groups of individuals. These businesses also face unique barriers to WHS, including financial and resource limitations, a lack of knowledge or expertise in WHS, informal approaches to WHS, and difficulty gaining access to sufficient or quality WHS training. As such, small and micro business owners often require additional support to identify and translate regulations into the context of their businesses, as well as help to implement these in a low-cost and time efficient manner. It is imperative, therefore, to

look at the precise needs of small and micro businesses in isolation when it comes to optimising WHS outcomes.

To better understand how to effectively intervene to improve WHS outcomes in small and micro businesses in a way that maximises efficiency and return on investment, we must first identify key gaps in the existing literature. The objective of this REA was to review the relevant academic and grey literature to validate the hypothesised barriers to implementation and enhancement of WHS processes in small and micro businesses and identify interventions that have been used to address these barriers. This REA was structured to answer three broad questions, as follows:

1. What is the current context for work health and safety in small and micro businesses in NSW and Australia?
2. What are the drivers and barriers to the adoption and implementation of work health and safety practices in small and micro businesses?
3. What interventions have been implemented to improve work health and safety outcomes in small and micro businesses?

Methodology

A rapid review of the literature was undertaken using a clearly defined search strategy, agreed with the Centre for Work Health and Safety (Centre). Various databases and search engines were consulted including Google Scholar, federal and state government websites, open web searches, and the reference lists of identified sources. Search terms included “work health and safety”, “occupational health and safety”, “small business”, “micro business”, “intervention”, and “training”. Records were identified and assessed for relevance against key inclusion criteria. A total of 64 records have been referenced throughout the rapid evidence assessment, including peer reviewed journal articles, policy documents, grey literature reports, websites, and other documents.

It should be noted that this is a rapid review of the literature, aimed at eliciting the key insights only; it is not intended to be a systematic, detailed, review.

What is the current context for work health and safety in small and micro businesses in NSW and Australia?

To effectively intervene to improve WHS practices across small and micro businesses in NSW, we first examined the current policy and regulatory landscape within NSW and Australia. Doing so allowed us to identify the gaps in the application of existing policies and regulations within small and micro businesses that will, in turn, guide the direction of what more needs to be done.

The key findings were that Australia's existing WHS legislation does not directly address the WHS challenges faced by small and micro businesses, which has created a regulatory gap between small entities and larger businesses. While, at a policy level, Safe Work Australia's WHS Strategy 2023-2033 recognises that small and micro businesses need additional support, including tailored guidance and instruction to offset the fewer resources they have, little has been done to address this. Further research is needed to inform the development of a robust framework for WHS in small and micro businesses in NSW.

What are the drivers and barriers to the adoption and implementation of work health and safety practices in small and micro businesses?

In this section, we explored the drivers and barriers to small and micro businesses optimising to WHS as identified by the literature. The drivers and barriers that were identified related to both proactive optimisation activities, as well as those that are more reactive.

Research on WHS for small and micro businesses highlighted several barriers to optimising WHS outcomes. While there was additional nuance to these, broadly these related to:

- **Policy and regulation:** the lack of tailored policy and regulations means there is no tailored framework for small and micro businesses to operate within, despite the expectation that all businesses, regardless of size, must operate in accordance with the model WHS regulation.
- **Resource scarcity (i.e., financial, knowledge, personnel):** the multifaceted lack of resources within small and micro businesses means that the capacity for WHS is often low.
- **Social and spatial proximity:** small and micro businesses are often characterised by proximity, which can result in higher psychosocial safety, but often poses risks to WHS due to a "status quo" approach and difficulty in suggesting improvements.
- **Informal approaches:** WHS in small and micro businesses is often driven by an informal and common-sense approach, as opposed to more formal processes.
- **Owner/manager driven:** WHS is often driven by the owners or key decision makers and is rarely a core or sole task, which means it is often deprioritised.
- **Underrepresented workers' voice:** the voice of workers is rarely represented through formal arrangements, and the informal representations are often unsystematic and are often not autonomous.

There was limited literature that discussed the drivers of WHS in small businesses; however, three key drivers of improved WHS were identified, including:

- **WHS climate:** employee perceptions of how committed their employer is to WHS, which in turn impacts WHS outcomes, in that when employers are perceived to have a strong focus on WHS, employees are more likely to autonomously behave in ways that align with their businesses WHS requirements.
- **Business owner or manager values:** the sense of responsibility that drives business owners and managers to implement WHS in the absence of targeted regulation or guidelines.
- **Manager agility:** the ability of managers to adapt and respond dynamically to WHS issues and adopt existing practices (or lack thereof) to negate negative impact and / or improve future outcomes.

An important question for the Centre was how WHS requirements differed for CALD small and micro business owners, and workers. This review found that the research was lacking in this respect. Although little explored how cultural and linguistic diversity may act as a barrier to optimal WHS, there was some evidence that suggested language may act as a further barrier to achieving good WHS outcomes for CALD workers.

What interventions have been implemented to improve work health and safety outcomes in small and micro businesses?

In this section, we outlined WHS interventions that have been identified in the literature and where possible, focussed on those that have been evaluated for efficacy. This REA considers any, and all, small and micro businesses from higher physical risk to lower physical risk environments, and WHS from a physical, mental, and emotional perspective. Critically, the published evidence regarding WHS interventions within small and micro businesses was very limited and often did not differentiate by businesses size or industry, making it difficult to determine the efficacy of a particular intervention within these categories. That said, several successful WHS interventions were identified in published literature, including:

- training, education, and coaching,
- stretching and exercise programs,
- interventions to strengthen WHS culture, and
- online interventions.

In addition to WHS interventions that have been recognised and evaluated within the published international literature, there is also a broad range of WHS interventions available to small and micro businesses within Australia. These include:

- financial incentives/rebates,

- toolkits,
- checklists and self-assessment tools,
- information and guides,
- training course,
- coaching and advisory services, and
- events

The literature also highlighted several factors that are believed to contribute to the success of interventions, including leadership style, multicomponent interventions, support from third parties with implementation, and confidence in interventions.

Several general principles for WHS interventions were also identified, including:

- a focus on the organisational level rather than the individual level,
- cost-effectiveness, and
- the use of multicomponent programs that aim to address a range of WHS issues rather than single component programs that only address one.

This section highlighted the need for further research exploring the efficacy of WHS interventions in small businesses, as well as a clearer understand of the needs of small businesses to inform the development of future interventions.

Conclusion and implications

Implications for future research (gaps in understanding)

This REA has been a useful exercise for identifying the gaps in understanding regarding the drivers and barriers for enhancing WHS in small and micro businesses, as well as for identifying existing interventions which attempt to overcome these barriers. Crucially, much of the literature only briefly addressed small and micro businesses or only included them as a study group, meaning they have rarely been the focus of research. As such, the voices and needs of small business owners are unlikely to have been accurately or entirely reflected in the literature to date. Primary research will therefore be undertaken in phase three of this project to better understand how we can effectively intervene in small and micro businesses to enhance WHS practices, in a way that meets the needs of business owners. The goals for this research are to:

- Provide a clearer picture of the current state of WHS knowledge and practices among small and micro business owners and key decisions makers and explore the effectiveness of WHS laws and regulation for smaller businesses.

- Develop a better understanding of enablers and motivators of WHS in small and micro businesses.
- Validate the guiding principles for WHS interventions in the setting of small and micro businesses.
- Identify how we can support CALD business owners and key decision makers to mitigate increased WHS risks and support them to implement effective WHS practices in their businesses.

In addition, future research (beyond the scope of this project) could explore the effectiveness and efficacy of WHS interventions in small and micro businesses, specifically to give a more detailed understanding of the landscape.

Implications for developing interventions to enhance WHS in small and micro businesses

The disproportionately high rate of WHS incidents in small and micro businesses suggests that existing interventions are likely not very effective which one might hypothesise is because they are not tailored to businesses of this size and their unique circumstances. This REA has not only identified gaps in understanding of WHS in small and micro businesses that ideally must be addressed via primary research, but it also pointed to important considerations for the development of an intervention in phase 4 of this project. These include consideration of the cost burden for businesses with limited financial resources, the psychosocial characteristics of small workplaces, unfamiliarity with WHS, effective communication, and the increased responsibility and influence of owners and managers when there are few employees. With these in mind, we make several recommendations and highlight practical considerations for the development and implementation of WHS interventions in small and micro businesses. Specifically, that future interventions should:

- Focus on building WHS climate and culture.
- Involve WHS leadership training among owners and key decision makers.
- Provide practical examples of how the regulations apply within small and micro businesses.
- Include options for tailored resources and support for CALD business owners.

The findings also highlighted several practical considerations for designing interventions for small and micro businesses. Future interventions must:

- Be low cost and place little burden on resourcing of the business.
- Involve an active learning or reflective component.
- Target the organisation level, as opposed to the individual.

- Be multi-component, rather than single focus.
- Involve partnerships between small businesses and trade unions or chambers of commerce in the design of interventions to support implementation.
- Explore a web-based approach to implementation.

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Introduction

Over the past decade, Australia has made significant progress in improving work health and safety (WHS) outcomes including a reduction in workplace injuries and fatalities and enhancing the model regulatory framework (SafeWork Australia, 2023). However, there are still several persistent challenges facing WHS in Australia. This includes the additional support needs of small and micro businesses, due to their limited resourcing for WHS, which have not yet been well investigated or addressed.

Small and micro businesses¹ are important contributors to Australia's economy, employing 4.7 million people and making up 97% of all businesses within Australia (SafeWork Australia, 2023). However, these organisations experience a disproportionate rate of WHS incidents (e.g., injuries, accidents) compared to larger businesses (SafeWork Australia, 2022).

Internationally, for example, nonfatal injuries were up to 50% more likely and fatal accidents were almost eight times more likely to occur in small businesses than in large organisations (Nowrouzi-Kia et al., 2019). Although this increased incident rate is likely also experienced among small businesses in NSW and Australia, the rates of workplace incidents by business size are not readily available. Poor WHS outcomes of this kind not only come at a great cost in terms of mortality but also incur large costs to finances and productivity – costs that are more challenging to bear in small and micro businesses than larger organisations (McKeown & Mazzarol, 2018). As the number of small and micro businesses in Australia continues to grow (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022), the need to turn our attention to these smaller entities and improve WHS outcomes has become more urgent.

Despite higher rates of WHS incidents and a growing market, small and micro businesses have rarely been the focus of past research, policy, and legislation (Bluff, 2019). While the Australian WHS Strategy 2023-2033 recognises that small businesses have additional needs, the WHS Act and Regulations do not specifically address small and micro businesses, meaning these business owners often lack knowledge of their regulatory requirements (Bluff, 2019). Similarly, the literature that has explored approaches to optimising WHS outcomes, to date, has primarily focused on larger organisations, particularly because they often operate in high-risk industries such as construction and healthcare (Hagqvist et al., 2020). From a strategic, regulatory, and research perspective, small and micro enterprises have been neglected.

¹ Small businesses are those that employ between four and 19 employees and micro businesses are those that employ fewer than four employees (ABS, 2008).

This is an important oversight that must be addressed. Small businesses by definition are characterised by fewer employees and limited resources, often together with a more informal/egalitarian workplace meaning that their WHS needs differ from larger entities. Specifically, responsibility for WHS is more heavily placed on individuals – and the business owners and key decision makers – than groups of individuals (Landstad et al., 2022). These organisations also often have difficulty getting access to sufficient or quality WHS training, due to financial limitations (Bluff, 2019). As such, small and micro business owners often require additional support to identify and translate regulations into the context of their businesses, as well as help to implement these in a low-cost and time efficient manner (McKeown & Mazzarol, 2018). It is imperative therefore, to look at small and micro businesses in isolation and highlight their precise needs when it comes to optimising WHS outcomes.

While evidence exists as to what the barriers to optimised WHS outcomes are – specifically, the barriers to implementation of WHS processes to safeguard against incidents, it is also unclear if – and to what extent – these barriers contribute to the occurrence of WHS incidences. Put simply, there is a hypothesis that there is a causal linear relationship between the extent to which small and micro businesses are challenged to implement WHS process and the rate of incidents. From this, the assumption would be that interventions should target the ability of small and micro businesses to implement WHS processes; but it is plausible that interventions that do not rely on the business could also be effective. This rapid evidence assessment (REA) has therefore sought to first explore the current context for work health and safety in small and micro businesses in NSW. Second, this review has explored the literature that identifies the barriers to implementation of WHS processes. Finally, as part of this review, we identified the evidence for what types of interventions are most effective when it comes to enabling small and microbusinesses to better implement the required processes – and if there are interventions that do not wholly rely on the business itself.

A clear overview of the evidence for the barriers and enablers of WHS in small and micro businesses, as well as existing WHS interventions addressing such barriers, will provide a robust knowledge base on this topic. This REA highlighted gaps in knowledge of WHS for small and micro businesses which, in turn, enabled us to identify opportunities for future research. There will also be practical implications for the future development of tailored interventions for small and micro businesses.

Objectives for this rapid evidence assessment

To better understand how to effectively intervene to improve WHS outcomes in small and micro businesses in a way that maximises efficiency and return on investment, we must first identify key gaps in the existing literature. The objective of this REA was thus to review the relevant academic and grey literature to validate the hypothesised barriers to implementation and enhancement of WHS processes in small and micro businesses and identify interventions that have been used to address these barriers. This REA was structured to answer three broad questions, as follows:

1. What is the current context for work health and safety in small and micro businesses in NSW and Australia?
 - a. What are the current WHS policies and regulations within Australia, and specifically in NSW?
 - b. How do the existing policies and regulations apply to small and micro businesses in NSW?
2. What are the drivers and barriers to the adoption and implementation of work health and safety practices in small and micro businesses?
 - a. What are the barriers to WHS in small and micro businesses?
 - b. What are the drivers of WHS in small and micro businesses?
 - c. Are these barriers to WHS more relevant or amplified for certain industries or business owner demographics (e.g., CALD)?
3. What interventions have been implemented to improve work health and safety outcomes in small and micro businesses?
 - a. What are WHS interventions?
 - b. What WHS interventions currently exist to improve work health and safety outcomes?
 - i. How effective have these interventions been? What influences their efficacy?
 - c. What are key design principles for developing interventions for small and micro businesses?
 - d. What WHS practices have been implemented by small and micro businesses (outside of the regulatory context)?

Thus, this paper first provides an overview of key WHS policies and regulations within Australia and NSW, including the WHS Act and the Australian WHS Strategy 2023-2033. The application of these policies within small and micro businesses was explored and challenges faced by business owners are discussed, highlighting the unique support needs of small and micro businesses.

Second, the literature regarding the drivers and barriers to WHS within small and micro businesses is discussed. We also outline how these barriers are more relevant or amplified for certain industries or business owner demographics.

Thirdly, we outline existing interventions that address the barriers preventing the enhancement of workplace health and safety within small and micro businesses. The effectiveness, efficacy, and strengths and weaknesses of the various approaches is presented.

Finally, we discuss gaps in the existing literature to provide direction on opportunities for future research and key considerations in developing interventions.

This REA formed part of a broader ongoing project conducted by the Centre to optimise WHS interventions in small and microbusinesses in NSW. As such, the intention was to scan the existing literature and use the most relevant studies to build an evidence base for what interventions have previously been used and what gaps in the literature exist. As outlined in the next section, this review was not a systematic review. Rather, it was intended as a rapid review of only the most relevant evidence sources addressing the issue.

Definitions for this rapid evidence assessment

This REA has used the following definitions, outlined below:

- **Work health and safety:** policies and practices for managing risks to the health and safety of everyone within a workplace, including workers, customers, suppliers, and visitors.
- **Intervention:** any action deliberately taken to promote safety and health of people within a workplace and decrease the frequency or severity of injuries and illness (physical and psychological), fatalities, and accidents at work (including, but not exclusive to, checklists, training, workshops, pamphlets).
- **Outcomes:** changes in WHS behaviours and attitudes, compliance with regulations, and/or work designs, as a result of an intervention (including, but not exclusive to, reduction in rates of injury, illness, or fatalities, greater use of safety leadership skills).

Methodology

The purpose of this REA was to identify interventions that have been used to address the barriers preventing small and micro businesses from enhancing WHS practices and understand their efficacy. From this, knowledge gaps to be addressed by primary research with small and micro business owners and key decision makers were identified.

The decision to conduct a REA, as opposed to a full systematic literature review, was informed by the nature of the research objectives. REAs are a useful tool to understand behaviours or policy environments and identify relevant interventions and/or policies because these generate insight on the existing literature more quickly than a systematic review. Simply put, the methodology is designed to deliver a focused and pragmatic review, based on the most relevant evidence sources. The scope of this REA allowed for approximately 20-30 papers, spanning academic and grey literature, to be included; this will now inform the development of primary research to address gaps in our understanding.

Evidence collection

Searches were conducted using various databases and search engines with content in a wide range of relevant areas, including:

- Google Scholar (open access articles)
- Federal and state government websites, including WHS peak bodies (e.g., SafeWork Australia, SafeWork NSW, Centre for Work Health and Safety)
- Open web searches, to access published, non-academic research (i.e., grey literature, including landscape and evidence reviews, governmental and non-government strategies, reports, guidelines)
- Reference lists of identified sources.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Table 1 outlines the inclusion and exclusion criteria that were used to identify a long list of relevant articles for this REA.

Table 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for REA.

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Inclusion</i>	<i>Exclusion</i>
<i>Literatures</i>	academic (open-access systematic reviews and bibliographic references)	
	grey (governmental and non-government strategies, reports, guidelines, websites etc)	
<i>Date range</i>	2018-2023	
<i>Topics</i>	workplace health and safety (WHS)	
	occupational health and safety (OHS)	
	occupational safety and health (OSH)	
<i>Entities</i>	small businesses (4-19 employees)	medium businesses (20-109 employees)
	micro businesses (<4 employees)	large businesses (200+ employees)
<i>Locations</i>	New South Wales	
	Australia-wide	
	United Kingdom	
<i>Interventions</i>	checklists	resource intensive interventions (e.g., Face-to-face workshops/trainings)
	communication	
	campaign	
	practice	
	implementation	
	legislation	
	regulatory change	
	regulations	
	marketing	
	organisational capacity building	
	policy	
	support	
	strategy	
tools		
framework		
<i>Other</i>	motivation	
	volition	
	agency	

efficacy
barriers
enablers
human-centred design
attitude
awareness
enhance
CALD / culturally and linguistically
diverse

Key words

Searches involved the use of key words and search terms related to WHS interventions in small and micro businesses. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, keywords were identified, and the following Boolean search string was developed:

- “systematic review” OR “bibliography” OR “bibliographic reference” OR “strategy” OR “report” OR “guidelines” OR “best practice” AND “New South Wales” OR “Australia” OR “United Kingdom” AND “work health and safety” OR “WHS” OR “occupational health and safety” OR “OHS” OR “occupational safety and health” OR “OSH” AND “SME” OR “small and medium enterprise” OR “small business” OR “small enterprise” OR “micro business” OR “micro enterprise” OR “microenterprise” OR “micro-enterprise” AND “intervention” OR “training” OR “awareness” OR “design” OR “implementation” OR “communication” OR “campaign” OR “practice” OR “regulatory change” OR “regulations” OR “marketing” OR “organisational capacity building” OR “policy” OR “support” OR “strategy” OR “tools” OR “framework” OR “human-centred design” OR “motivation” OR “volition” “efficacy” OR “barrier” OR “attitude” OR “checklist” OR “enablers” OR “agency” OR “enhance” OR “CALD” OR “culturally and linguistically diverse” NOT “large business” OR “large enterprise” OR “workshop”

Prioritisation

Although the number of records returned from the search was extensive, only a limited number of articles met the core inclusion criteria. Each record was initially assessed for relevance to the research questions using titles and abstracts or executive summaries before being read in detail. They were then assessed on the extent to which they would help to answer the research questions. The following (yes/no) criteria was used to prioritise the articles for inclusion:

1. Does the record include small and/or microbusinesses? (criteria = yes)
2. Does the record focus on interventions to address barriers preventing WHS practices? (criteria = yes)
3. Does the record address the effectiveness of interventions? (criteria = yes)
4. Are the interventions discussed resource intensive? (criteria = no)

For inclusion, records needed to meet at least one of the above inclusion criteria. Those records meeting multiple criteria were prioritised for detailed examination. All records that were assessed for relevance were included. A total of 64 records have been referenced in this REA, including peer reviewed journal articles, policy documents, grey literature reports, websites, and other documents (e.g., ABS and other key business statistics). Forty-five of these were examined in detail (rather than being included to provide contextual statistics) for their relevance to the research requirement. Seven of these focused on WHS interventions, either through systematic reviews of existing literature or as individual studies (Aburumman et al., 2019; Dyreborg et al., 2022; Pieper et al., 2019; Teufer et al., 2019), including three that focused on small and/or micro businesses (Micheli et al., 2018; Schwatka, Goldenhar, et al., 2020; Tejamaya et al., 2021). A further nine studies did not focus on interventions but were included because they focused on drivers and barriers of WHS in small and/or micro businesses (Bluff, 2019; De Merich et al., 2020; Engels et al., 2022; Hagqvist et al., 2020; Hasle, Refslund, Antonsson, Ramioul, et al., 2017; Landstad et al., 2022; Nowrouzi-Kia et al., 2019; Walters et al., 2018). A further 28 records (i.e., website, reports) were included as they focused on Australian WHS interventions in small and micro businesses, either providing details of the interventions or information regarding their effectiveness.

It is important to note that there was a lack of systematic reviews or experimental studies into WHS interventions in small and micro businesses. Instead, much of the literature focused on the healthcare and construction industries, in which WHS risks are high, on large businesses and on developing countries where WHS regulation and policy is not highly developed. While we prioritised articles that related to Australia, given the paucity of literature related to small and microbusinesses in general, we included several articles from overseas jurisdictions and published prior to 2017 that met the other inclusion criteria.

What is the current context for work health and safety in small and micro businesses in NSW and Australia?

Key findings:

- Australia's WHS legislation does not directly address the WHS challenges faced by small and micro businesses, creating a regulatory gap.
- At a policy level, Safe Work Australia's WHS Strategy 2023-2033 recognises that small and micro businesses need additional support, including tailored guidance and instruction, because they lack resources to understand and implement WHS requirements.
- More research is needed to develop a robust framework targeted to WHS in small and micro businesses in NSW.

To effectively intervene to improve WHS practices across small and micro business, we must first understand the current policy and regulatory landscape within NSW and Australia. This is important because policy and regulation has a top-down influence in shaping interventions because ultimately the aim for all interventions is that businesses meet or even exceed WHS regulatory requirements, thereby improving outcomes. Doing so will also identify the gaps in the application of existing policies and regulations within small and micro businesses and so guide direction of what more needs to be done. In this section, we present the current WHS policy and regulatory landscape relating to small and micro businesses in Australia, including the Model WHS Act and the national WHS Strategy and discuss the implications of these for this project.

What are the current WHS policies and regulations within Australia, and specifically in NSW?

In Australia, WHS is managed at both a national and state level. SafeWork Australia is the national policy body that works with the Commonwealth, state, and territory governments to improve WHS (but it is not a regulator of WHS). Accordingly, SafeWork Australia has laid out the overarching direction for WHS through the Australian WHS Strategy 2023-2033 (the Strategy; SafeWork Australia, 2023) and the Model WHS Act (the Act; Australian Government, 2018).

The Strategy outlines the national vision for WHS – *safe and healthy work for all* – and has set the foundation for key WHS improvements, including reducing work-related fatalities and severe injuries or illness, and increasing preventative action in key areas (e.g., hazard management; SafeWork Australia, 2023). The Act offers a balanced and nationally consistent

framework for enabling the protection of workers. It aims to assist businesses and workers to achieve a safer and healthier working environment (Australian Government, 2018).

The Act forms the foundation of the individual state and territory WHS Acts that have been implemented across Australia, but the Commonwealth, states, and territories have responsibility for regulating and enforcing work health and safety laws in their own jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction also has WHS regulations, which set out requirements to support the duties outlined in the Act, such as management of incidents and emergencies in the workplace. For instance, SafeWork NSW is the state regulator for WHS in NSW.

Consistent with the overall WHS landscape and what is known about activities that are designed to improve outcomes, these various policies and legislation do not specify regulations for small and micro businesses (SafeWork Australia, 2023; Bluff, 2019; McKeown and Mazzarol, 2018). As such, they do not (necessarily) accommodate the specific challenges that small and micro businesses face when it comes to WHS; the next section will explore this in more detail.

How do the existing policies and regulations apply to small and micro businesses?

As noted earlier in this REA, small and micro businesses account for 97% of all businesses in Australia, with over half operating in industries that have higher rates of workplace injury (SafeWork Australia, 2023). However, both governments and researchers recognise there is a regulatory gap in Australia regarding WHS for small and micro businesses (SafeWork Australia, 2023; Bluff, 2019; McKeown and Mazzarol, 2018) because there is limited legislation specifically targeted at WHS for small and micro businesses in Australia.

While the Act does not specifically address small and micro businesses in terms of targeted regulations, like with all enterprises, employers are covered by the legislation as a 'person conducting a business or operating' (PCBU; SafeWork Australia, 2019). Under the legislation, PCBUs are required to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of employees (SafeWork Australia, 2019). Therefore, WHS interventions for small and micro businesses will likely be different to those in medium and large enterprises, as their smaller scale changes what is 'reasonably practicable'.

At the policy level in Australia, however, the WHS Strategy 2023-2033 addresses small businesses (SafeWork Australia, 2023) by outlining the key requirements for these organisations to improve WHS outcomes. So, although regulation is not tailored to the needs of these smaller organisations, positively, the existing strategy provides a blueprint for future activity. Specifically, it notes that small businesses need additional support around WHS

because they often lack resources for understanding and implementing WHS requirements (SafeWork Australia, 2023). It also suggests that delivering tailored guidance and education to better promote the benefits of investing in WHS will encourage compliance among small businesses (SafeWork Australia, 2023). In addition to this national strategy, some state governments have developed their own strategy that accounts for their jurisdictional needs. In NSW specifically, the State Insurance Regulatory Authority (2017) published a WHS and Workers Compensation Small Business Strategy 2017-2019, which aimed to deliver improvements for WHS in small businesses over a three-year period. Under these, state governments have implemented education-based interventions like guidance and other resources (e.g., the SafeWork WHS Toolkit) as well as incentivisation. For example, SafeWork NSW (2018) provides a \$1000 AUD rebate to small businesses for WHS items.

Australia reflects a global trend in WHS policy and regulatory frameworks of prioritising large businesses over small and micro enterprises (McKeown & Mazzarol, 2018). In Australia there is not only limited research into WHS in small enterprises in general, but particularly regarding how they respond to the regulatory environment (Bluff, 2019). It is not enough to say, then, that the solution is that the NSW government should develop and implement a regulatory framework that directly targets small and micro businesses – rather, we must take a needs-based approach. In sum, to better regulate WHS in NSW we must identify what regulation is required to inform a robust framework for businesses to adhere to; and then, build our understanding of what will prevent or impede regulatory outcomes and what will facilitate these.

Summary

Although the WHS landscape has matured, with clear policy directions, strategic and regulatory frameworks, there remains a need to develop a stronger understanding of what is required for small and micro businesses in Australia. Importantly, although this gap in understanding is recognised, little has been done to address it. The primary research that will be undertaken by this project will go some way to unpacking this to help formulate effective interventions for improved outcomes.

What are the drivers and barriers to the adoption and implementation of work health and safety practices in small and micro businesses?

Key findings:

- A lack of tailored policy and regulation, resource scarcity, social and spatial proximity, informal approaches, owner-manager driven, and underrepresented workers voices were identified as key barriers to WHS in small and micro businesses.
- WHS climate, business owner or manager values, and manager agility were identified as key drivers of WHS in small and micro businesses.
- Language may act as a further barrier to WHS for CALD workers.

In this section, we explore the drivers and barriers to small and micro businesses optimising to WHS as identified by the literature. These drivers and barriers relate to both proactive optimisation activities as well as those that are more reactive. Proactive efforts to optimise WHS practices and improve outcomes are those where the business owner, manager, or key decision maker chooses to implement processes, while those that are reactive include interventions in their environment like regulation or influences that are outside of the owner's direct and immediate control (i.e., employee perceptions) or context (i.e., financial restrictions). It is important to delineate between the two when we consider what interventions might be suitable to implement from a NSW government perspective and what the likely scope of impact would be.

First, the barriers to WHS and their implications for small and micro businesses will be discussed. Following, we provide commentary as to how these barriers were amplified for certain business owner demographics and what this means for the design and targeting of interventions. Finally, the drivers of WHS and their implications for small and micro businesses will be discussed.

What are the barriers to optimising work health and safety outcomes in small and micro businesses?

Research on WHS for small and micro businesses highlighted several barriers to optimising WHS outcomes. While there was additional nuance to these, broadly these related to:

- **Policy and regulation:** the lack of tailored policy and regulations means there is no tailored framework for small and micro businesses to operate within, despite the expectation that all businesses, regardless of size, must operate in accordance with the model WHS regulation.

- **Resource scarcity (i.e., financial, knowledge, personnel):** the multifaceted lack of resources within small and micro businesses means that the capacity for WHS is often low.
- **Social and spatial proximity:** small and micro businesses are often characterised by proximity, which can result in higher psychosocial safety, but often poses risks to WHS due to a “status quo” approach and difficulties in suggesting improvements.
- **Informal approaches:** WHS in small and micro businesses is often driven by an informal and common-sense approach, as opposed to more formal processes.
- **Owner/manager driven:** WHS is often driven by the owners or key decision makers and is rarely a core or sole task, which means it is often deprioritised.
- **Underrepresented workers’ voice:** the voice of workers is rarely represented through formal arrangements, and the informal representations are often unsystematic and are often not autonomous.

These barriers emerge because of the specific circumstances of small and micro businesses, and are often connected to one another, posing challenges to WHS processes and outcomes. Specifically (as reiterated throughout this REA) these organisations cannot simply be treated as scaled down versions of large businesses (McKeown and Mazzarol, 2018). Rather, these are barriers to improving WHS that are unique to small and micro businesses and thus they require tailored solutions.

Policy and regulation

An important contextual barrier that prevents – or at a minimum, impedes – small and micro businesses from optimising WHS practices and outcomes is the lack of targeted WHS policy and regulation (Hagqvist et al., 2020; Landstad et al., 2022; De Merich et al., 2020). In simple terms what this means is that there is no tailored framework for these businesses to operate within. Regardless of size, all businesses must operate in accordance with the model WHS regulation.

A lack of policy also means a lack of tailored guidance from regulators to assist small and micro businesses with the implementation of WHS laws (Bluff, 2019; Landstad et al., 2022). For example, Bluff (2019) theoretically links the ad hoc use of WHS information, instruction, training, and supervision in small and medium Australian businesses to a lack of regulatory guidance. Schulte et al. (2018) also suggested there is a lack of clear information from regulatory bodies detailing how small businesses should implement existing WHS requirements that were not designed for them specifically, prompting a need for more research to develop better communication strategies.

Furthermore, some research has suggested that small and micro businesses may experience lower institutional pressures. Although regulations and legislation are applicable and expected of all PBCU, the lack of visibility of small and micro businesses to regulatory bodies and media organisations, may mean they feel less pressure to comply (Walters et al., 2018).

Resource scarcity

Small and micro businesses experience a multifaceted lack of resources, such as financial limitations, a lack of WHS knowledge and understanding of what is causing WHS incidents, and a lack of specialised personnel. The resource scarcity of small and micro businesses in terms of knowledge, financial, and personnel deficits presents one of the largest barriers to effective WHS, given the way in which each of these factors interact with one another (Walters et al., 2018). This often means that the businesses' capacity for WHS is low.

Lack of WHS knowledge

The level of WHS knowledge within small and micro businesses is often overestimated (Bluff, 2019; Landstad et al., 2022; Walters et al., 2018). Research has shown that owners or key decision makers of small and micro businesses often do not have managerial education, which results in lower levels of managerial knowledge, including WHS knowledge. In the three-year European study (i.e., Walters et al., 2018), many of the owners and key decision makers overestimated their WHS knowledge and underestimated their need for specific WHS knowledge and management. This lack of knowledge means that owners, managers, and workers often do not recognise the need to assess and address risks within the workplace.

Another key barrier to optimising WHS performance in small and micro businesses is understanding the causes of their disproportionately high rate of WHS incidents in comparison to medium and large businesses, so that they can be effectively addressed. A systematic review by Nowrouzi-Kia et al. (2019) of global risk factors relating to injuries in small and medium sized workplaces identified several precursors, including being a new employee, stress, lifting, pulling or pushing activities, and placing WHS responsibility on employees. No single factor was deemed to be a greater cause of WHS incidents (Nowrouzi-Kia et al., 2019). An important limitation to note here, however, is that it is unclear from existing evidence if (and why) these factors are the greatest risks for injury in small and medium businesses, or whether they are simply of greater risk in enterprises of this size than in large ones. In other words, it is not known whether the same risk factors exist for both but are amplified in small and micro businesses.

Financial limitations

Cost and finances are also a significant barrier to optimising WHS in small and micro businesses. There was recognition in the literature that even in developed countries, smaller

businesses often cannot bear the cost of implementing and maintaining WHS systems, which place a significant financial burden on them (Hagqvist et al., 2020; Nowrouzi-Kia et al., 2019; Walters et al., 2018). Small and micro businesses often have limited technological resources due to financial limitations (Walters et al., 2018). Furthermore, owners of small and micro businesses discussed that they often operate within competitive markets and need to take cost-cutting measures like forcing staff to work faster rather than employing additional personnel, which theoretically may in fact increase the risk of WHS events occurring (Landstad et al., 2022). It was unclear from the literature however if this was also the case for small and micro businesses within Australia and NSW. Moreover, at a regulatory level, while the cost of WHS non-compliance may be negligible for medium and large businesses, it is theorised that fines or other monetary penalties place significant financial strain on small and micro businesses (Hagqvist et al., 2020). In response to these challenges, Hasle (2019) suggested small businesses in Europe could work together through bodies like chambers of commerce to collectively address WHS in their respective business, making WHS compliance easier by reducing the cost burden this places on them.

Lack of specialised WHS personnel

According to McKeown and Mazzarol (2018), small and micro businesses in Australia often lack specialist WHS personnel. The lack of specialised personnel and managerial resource limitations, means that owners and key decision makers take care of all functions, including sales, marketing, planning, finances, HR, and WHS. This means that WHS is rarely a core or sole responsibility within small and micro businesses, and it is often deprioritised.

Responsibility of WHS falls to owners and key decision makers who often lack the knowledge and time to manage this effectively (Walters et al., 2018).

Furthermore, small and micro businesses also face difficulties in accessing and engaging external support and training in the absence of internal specialised WHS personnel (Bluff, 2019). That is, due to financial limitations of small and micro businesses, it is challenging for small and micro businesses to engage external training or support for WHS. This results in WHS training being delivered to workers by business owners-key decision makers who likely lack formal training and education, and who are already time poor.

Social and spatial proximity

Small and micro businesses are characterised by proximity and informality of the labour processes and working conditions (Landstad et al., 2022; Walters et al., 2018). Owner-key decision makers and workers are in regular contact and can often work side by side. This proximity requires both parties to find ways of working together in a manner that makes the daily work endurable. This can result in close and friendly relationship between owner-key

decision makers and workers (Walters et al., 2018). While this spatial and social proximity can result in better psychosocial work environment and higher job satisfaction, it can pose risks to WHS. For example, workers are more likely to become socialised into the business perspective, and in turn accept personal responsibility for their health and safety, rather than attributing it to their employer. This high level of social and spatial proximity appears to reinforce a “status quo” approach to WHS in that it becomes challenging for anyone to ask for or suggest improvements, given that there is a shared understanding that the working conditions are acceptable, and risks have been addressed (Walters et al., 2018). Case studies of small and micro businesses across Europe showed that owners-key decision makers and workers shared the same assessments of risks and mitigation measures, which resulted in the neglect of less obvious risks and psychosocial hazards (Walters et al., 2018).

Informal approaches

WHS in small and micro businesses is often driven by an informal and common-sense approach, as opposed to more formal processes that may exist in larger entities (Landstad et al., 2022; Suter et al., 2022). While informality and flexibility may be a preferred managerial approach within small and micro businesses, it can present risks to WHS. The informal approaches to WHS are likely driven by resource scarcity as well as the social and spatial proximity of the businesses. Research suggests there may be apprehension among small and micro businesses to implement formalised WHS processes due to the disruption it may cause to social relationships and day-to-day interactions (Walters et al., 2018). Even where there is a perceived need for more formal processes, such as in industries like manufacturing and pharmaceutical companies, this need for formality is limited to specific external obligations and other process such as HR are preferred to be informal (Walters et al., 2018).

Owner/manager driven

WHS is often driven by the owners or key decision makers within small and micro businesses, unlike in larger organisations (Landstad et al., 2022). Due to the nature of small and micro businesses, owners and key decision makers are responsible for an array of day-to-day managerial tasks, including WHS, and these processes may be driven by their own identity and values (Walters et al., 2018). Context of these businesses often encourages an identity among owners as a decent person who take care of their employees yet the awareness of what this looks like in practice is low and their experience of accidents may be limited. Furthermore, the belief of small business owners and key decision makers around the importance of WHS and the responsibility of WHS can be conflicting. For example, owners and key decision makers argue the importance of maintaining high safety standards yet will suppress the need for personal action and attribute responsibility of these actions to their workers. This seems to be

driven by attitudes that as an owner they can't look out for all their workers at all times (Walters et al., 2018).

Underrepresented workers' voice

The voice of workers is rarely represented through formal arrangements, and the informal representations are often unsystematic and infrequently autonomous. Given the social proximity of small businesses, formal processes are often seen as inappropriate. Instead, there is a preference for informal representation, with owners-managers commonly arguing that workers can directly raise concerns with them (Walters et al., 2018). In several case studies, workers as well as owners-managers suggested that they found it challenging to engage workers in WHS at the workplace level. Simultaneously, the workers tended to accept responsibility for WHS, but also expressed concerns that drawing attention to WHS problems should not challenge social relations and productivity (Walters et al., 2018). While formal arrangements may not be deemed necessary or appropriate, the lack of formal representation of workers when it comes to WHS means that their autonomous voices are underrepresented, and their concerns may not always be heard or addressed, which may impede on businesses' ability to address WHS risks.

Are these barriers to work health and safety more relevant or amplified for certain industries or business owner demographics (e.g., CALD)?

Although cultural and linguistic diversity is acknowledged to affect a worker's vulnerability to WHS risks (SafeWork Australia, 2023; SafeWork NSW, 2019), there is a limited body of research that demonstrates how cultural and linguistic diversity may act as a barrier to optimal WHS. For example, migrant workers in the United States from a Latin background suffer disproportionately from WHS incidents (Flynn, 2014). Furthermore, for linguistically diverse workers, understanding WHS knowledge may be restricted by their understanding of English and cultural beliefs which differ from prevailing norms (O'Keefe, 2016). O'Keefe (2016) found that in an aged care setting in Australia, for example, culturally and linguistically diverse workers participated less in WHS because of a range of factors including miscommunications with colleagues and the acceptance of racial abuse from elderly patients. To overcome language barriers in the context of nursing in the United States, Jesus-Rivas et al. (2016) recommend the use of pictograms and demonstrations for communicating WHS material with non-English speaking workers.

What are the drivers for improving work health and safety outcomes in small and micro businesses in NSW?

Although the literature tended to focus on barriers to achieving better WHS outcomes, a range of drivers of WHS in small and micro businesses were identified (Bluff, 2019; Landstad et al., 2022; Schwatka et al., 2020; Suter et al., 2022). Due to the nature of small and micro businesses, owners-key decision makers have greater influence on WHS than they might have in larger organisations. While this can create barriers to optimising WHS, as discussed above, there are also certain factors that may act as drivers to WHS. These included:

- **WHS climate:** employee perceptions of how committed their employer is to WHS, which in turn impacts WHS outcomes, in that when employers are perceived to have a strong focus on WHS, employees are more likely to autonomously behave in ways that align with their businesses WHS requirements.
- **Business owner or manager values:** the sense of responsibility that drives business owners and managers to implement WHS in the absence of targeted regulation or guidelines.
- **Manager agility:** the ability of managers to adapt and respond dynamically to WHS issues and adopt existing practices (or lack thereof) to negate negative impact and / or improve future outcomes.

These enablers support optimisation of WHS processes in medium and large businesses but are amplified in small and micro businesses. Suter et al. (2022), for example, stated that because small and micro businesses have fewer workers, closer ties, stronger interpersonal relationships, and less formal or developed WHS management systems there is a greater influence of managers on employees specifically in terms of responding to mental health in the workplace when compared to larger organisations.

WHS climate: employee perception of commitment of employer to WHS

WHS climate refers to employee perceptions of how committed their employer is to WHS outcomes. Using data from a survey of 1052 employees from 36 organisations in the United States, Schwatka et al. (2020) identified that the WHS climate in the workplace is an intrinsic motivator of autonomous employee participation in positive WHS behaviours. The authors found that when small business employees perceived their employers to have a strong focus on WHS, they were more likely to autonomously behave in ways that align with their businesses WHS requirements like increased reporting of safety-related conditions among construction crews (Schwatka, Sinclair, et al., 2020). This is particularly important because small businesses often lack the ability to implement the kinds of sophisticated WHS systems

that larger businesses usually have (Bluff, 2019), hence there is inevitably a reliance on employees taking ownership for improved WHS outcomes, at least to some extent.

Business owner values: employer's sense of responsibility for WHS

Another driver of WHS in small and micro businesses are the values of owners or managers such as perceived responsibility and accountability for WHS outcomes. As explored in the barriers section above, in the absence of formal systems, WHS is often driven by owners-key decision makers. Through a study involving interviews of nine small and micro businesses owners within the cleaning industry in Sweden, Landstad et al. (2022) reported that owners lack formal WHS knowledge which would typically be gained through training and education. Instead, WHS within these businesses tended to be driven by values like perceived responsibility among owners for management processes that promoted positive psycho-social working conditions by building and maintaining strong relationships with their employees (Landstad et al., 2022). These findings suggest that in the absence of formal WHS systems the onus is placed on owners to drive WHS through informal mechanisms (Landstad et al., 2022) and as such, interventions may need to be values-based and drive behaviour change (rather than systematic interventions like frameworks).

Manager agility: ability to respond dynamically to WHS issues

Agility, or the ability to respond dynamically, among managers in small and micro businesses was also identified as a driver of positive WHS outcomes. In a study of small and micro businesses across a range of industries in the United Kingdom, including healthcare, legal services, and manufacturing, Suter et al. (2022) conducted interviews with 21 managers from different organisations to determine how they responded to known mental health issues among employees. The managers interviewed in this study held the view that this is particularly challenging because of the strong ties between the small number of employees, which generates a close-knit workplace environment (i.e., spatial and social proximity) in which managers must balance the provision of support for unwell employees with the impact this has on workplace morale and performance (Suter et al., 2022). In this setting, managers tended to take an informal, dynamic approach that involved constant negotiation around the needs of unwell employees to maintain relationships between staff and workplace psycho-social climate (Suter et al., 2022). A key theme that emerged from the interviews was that agility among managers to adapt and respond is a strong driver of successful workplace mental health in small and micro businesses (Suter et al., 2022).

There was limited evidence addressing the factors that drive WHS within small and micro businesses, and many of these appeared to be “people-driven” and rely on management values and abilities. This gap presents an opportunity for future research to focus on

developing a better understanding of enablers of WHS within small and micro businesses, which can then in turn assist us to understand the most effective ways to intervene to promote strong WHS.

Summary

The literature showed that there is a clear gap dividing small and micro businesses from larger organisations in effective WHS practices and policies, likely owing to the barriers faced by small and micro businesses. These include lack of regulatory guidance, resource scarcity (e.g., knowledge, financial, and personnel), spatial and social proximity, informality, owner-manager driven approach, and underrepresented workers' voice (Bluff, 2019; Landstad et al., 2022; Walters et al., 2018). However, the literature also highlights three key drivers of WHS in small businesses, including strong WHS climate, business owner or manager values, and managers agility. Yet, the literature that explores the enablers of WHS in small and micro businesses is sparse, and further research is required to better understand what promotes improved WHS outcomes in these smaller entities.

What interventions have been implemented to improve work health and safety outcomes in small and micro businesses?

Key findings:

- Several successful WHS interventions were identified, including stretching and exercise programs, training, education and coaching, and toolkits.
- Several general principles for WHS interventions were identified, including a focus on the organisational level rather than the individual level, cost-effectiveness, and the use of multicomponent programs that aim to address a range of WHS issues rather than single component programs that only address one.

In this section, we outline WHS interventions that have been identified in the literature and where possible, focus on those that have been evaluated for efficacy. Critically, while there are numerous interventions addressing WHS in small and micro businesses, the evidence regarding their effectiveness is limited. Moreover, most systematic reviews of WHS interventions did not differentiate by businesses size or industry, making it difficult to determine the efficacy of a particular intervention within these categories. This limitation suggests more targeted research is required to better understand and build a stronger evidence base around the efficacy of targeted WHS interventions for small and micro businesses.

What are WHS interventions?

Definitions of WHS interventions are provided throughout the literature. For the purposes of this REA, in short, an intervention is any initiative that is intended to change the operating context for small and micro businesses and improve WHS outcomes in any way. For example, safety interventions can be defined as “any attempt deliberately applied to promote safety and decrease the frequency or severity of accidents at work” (Dyreborg et al., 2022, p. 6).

More precisely, the defining feature of an intervention is that it is planned (Pieper et al., 2019). Interventions are designed and implemented with the explicit intention of achieving one of three things:

- Improving workplace safety through tools like management systems.
- Targeting one or more specific type of accident, either by trying to prevent them or reduce their rate of occurrence or seriousness.
- Treating the effects of workplace injury, such as using ergonomic technologies to reduce chronic pain caused by musculoskeletal injury (Teufer et al., 2019).

It is important to note that while the literature has traditionally focused on interventions that address physical health and safety in the workplace, researchers have suggested there is also a need to focus on workplace-related psychological injuries and disorder (Suter et al., 2022).

In summary, for the purpose of this REA, an intervention is defined as any action deliberately taken to promote safety and health of people within a workplace and decrease the frequency or severity of injuries and illness (physical and psychological), fatalities, and accidents at work (including, but not exclusive to, checklists, training, workshops, pamphlets). The outcomes of interest include changes in WHS behaviours and attitudes, compliance with regulations, and/or work designs, resulting from intervention (including, but not exclusive to, reduction in rates of injury, illness, or fatalities, greater use of safety leadership skills).

WHS interventions to address the barriers preventing small and micro-businesses from enhancing workplace health and safety and their efficacy

In this section, we discuss current WHS interventions and their relevance to, and implications for, small and micro businesses. Table 2 outlines seven studies that directly assessed different WHS interventions, describing the kind of study, the population and setting, the intervention, study design, outcomes, strengths and limitations, and opportunities and learnings. Following this, we outline several Australian WHS interventions that are currently available to assist small and micro businesses to enhance WHS and discuss their efficacy where appropriate. It is important to note that other papers included in this review were not included in this table because although they discussed interventions in some manner, they did not directly address them as a key component of their research. Based on this, we expand to consider the broader range of insights into WHS interventions from this larger body of literature. The following interventions were identified and discussed:

- Stretching and exercise programs
- Training and education
- Coaching and advisory
- Interventions to strengthen WHS culture
- Checklists and self-assessment tools
- Toolkits
- Rebates and incentives
- Information or guides
- Events

Overview of existing international WHS interventions and outcomes

Table 2 outlines the seven published studies identified in this review that directly address WHS interventions and assess their effectiveness. Regarding study type, most of the papers included in the table were systematic reviews of existing literature or reviews of existing systematic reviews, with only two single studies included. Most of the papers did not differentiate between location, industry, and business size but three focused on small or micro businesses.

Most of the papers also did not focus on specific intervention types. Although those that did, focused on interventions that address:

- Musculoskeletal disease
- Mental disorders
- Strengthening of older employees
- WHS management systems

The studies aimed to determine which interventions worked best, and which did not, either by analysing their efficacy through the synthesis and comparison of existing data, including from post-intervention tests and controls, or by determining the factors that correlate with successful and unsuccessful interventions. Outcomes varied greatly because of the heterogeneity of the focus and design of the studies. The reviews mostly provided general factors that contribute to the success of interventions, including leadership style, multicomponent interventions, support from third parties with implementation, and confidence in interventions. However, some specific interventions were determined to be most effective, including:

- Engineering controls
- Ergonomic interventions
- Training

While the general standard of these studies is high, the main identified weakness was that the systematic reviews cannot be certain of the standard of the data used because this came from existing studies. Other factors like the lack of categorisation by industry and business size also limited the relevance of these studies. For example, even when business size is included, studies often focus on SMEs rather than small and micro businesses (i.e., Micheli et al., 2018 and Tejamaya et al., 2021).

Table 2: Summary of papers addressing WHS interventions.

<i>Author/s, date</i>	<i>Source type</i>	<i>Population and setting</i>	<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Study design</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Strengths and limitations</i>	<i>Opportunities/learnings</i>
Aburumman, M., Newnam, S., Fildes, B., 2019	Systematic review	Global, all industries, all business sizes	Included studies involving single or multiple interventions of any kind	Comparison across studies of post-intervention impact on safety culture or climate	23 studies were included. The most effective intervention types focused on leadership style, importance of safety, external pressure, incident/accident analysis, and behavioural monitoring	Some papers included were of poor methodological quality	Interventions that improve safety climate – the perception by employees of employer commitment to WHS – will improve WHS outcomes, suggesting WHS climate is an important enabler
Pieper, C., Schröder, S., Eilerts, A.-L., 2019	Systematic review of reviews	Global, all industries, all business sizes	Included reviews of interventions for the prevention of musculoskeletal diseases, the prevention of mental disorders, strengthening of older employees, and the economic impact of the interventions	Comparison of the results of reviews	74 reviews were included. There was not enough evidence to recommend specific interventions. However, multicomponent interventions were more effective than single-component interventions	The review focused on an overly heterogeneous set of interventions, limiting the ability to determine and compare their efficacy	Single-focus interventions are a barrier because they are not effective and therefore a poor use of WHS funds, particularly when WHS spending is limited in small and micro businesses. Interventions should focus on addressing multiple WHS issues through a holistic and

<i>Author/s, date</i>	<i>Source type</i>	<i>Population and setting</i>	<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Study design</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Strengths and limitations</i>	<i>Opportunities/learnings</i>
Tejamaya, M., Puspoproj o, W., Susetyo, H., Modjo, R., 2021	Systematic review	Global, all industries, micro, small, and medium businesses	Included studies of the implementation of occupational health and safety management systems (OHS-MS)	Extraction and synthesis of results from included studies to identify the most important downstream, middle stream, and upstream variables	37 studies were included. Downstream factors included OHS training, commitment, quality of OHS-MS, resources, risk assessment and management, and communication. Middle stream factors included support from, consulting and sharing with third parties (associations, trade unions, consultants). The upstream factor was government	No obvious weaknesses	integrated approach. The barrier of a lack of support for implementing WHS management in small and micro business could be overcome through support from trade unions, chambers of commerce or other local groups
Dyreborg, J., Lipscomb, H.J., Nielsen, K., Törner, M., Rasmussen	Systematic review	Global, all industries, all business sizes	Included studies using experimental, quasi-experimental, and observational	Comparison of findings from studies using risk ratios (RRs) or odds ratios (ORs) for dichotomous data (injury or no	100 studies covering 120 interventions were included. The most effective interventions for	No weakness, highest standard of systematic review	Interventions that target the organisational level are an enabler of positive WHS outcomes. This

<i>Author/s, date</i>	<i>Source type</i>	<i>Population and setting</i>	<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Study design</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Strengths and limitations</i>	<i>Opportunities/learnings</i>
, K., Frydendall, K.B., Bay, H., Gensby, U., Bengtsen, E., Guldenmund, F., Kines, P., 2022			designs to test interventions	injury) and mean difference (MD) or standardized mean difference (SMD) for continuous data	reducing the rate of injury were those directed at the group or organisational level, engineering controls, multi-component interventions, and interventions based on epidemiologic evidence of causality		evidence supports the theory that interventions targeting individuals are problematic because they focus on blaming employees for WHS incidents, while those that target the group or organisational level focus on the strength of employee engagement with WHS systems
Teufer, B., Ebenberger, A., Affengruber, L., Kien, C., Klerings, I., Szelag, M., Grillich, L., Griebler, U., 2019	Systematic review of reviews	OECD, all industries, all business sizes	Included studies testing any intervention type using any control trial type	Extraction and synthesis of results from included studies to determine the effects of interventions on working conditions, exposure to disease-causing factors, the behaviour of employees, accidents, and	25 reviews were included. Strengthening exercises and ergonomic interventions were the most effective for musculoskeletal diseases. Legislation, regulation, and inspections were the most effective for the	Potential for errors because of a reliance on the systematic reviews included to have accurately extracted and analysed the data from the studies they covered	This review is very general. While it provides strong evidence for certain interventions, it does not explain why these interventions work, therefore making it difficult to consider their potential relationship to WHS barriers and

<i>Author/s, date</i>	<i>Source type</i>	<i>Population and setting</i>	<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Study design</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Strengths and limitations</i>	<i>Opportunities/learnings</i>
				the development of occupational diseases	prevention of accidents		enablers in small and micro businesses
Micheli, G.J.L., Cagno, E., Calabrese, A., 2018	Single study	Italy, manufacturing, SMEs	58 interventions of two types were covered, organisational interventions focused on WHS co-ordination and technical interventions (engineering solutions)	Data from questionnaires completed in interviews with employers were used to determine what contextual factors drove expected (positive) and unexpected (negative) outcomes for organisational and technical interventions	The findings suggested that anticipation, confidence in the intervention, motivation, perception of the importance of the intervention, and trust in management are the primary contextual factors that drive interventions when they result in expected outcomes	The research is limited by the restriction of the participants to businesses in the manufacturing industry in one region of Italy	The contextual factors relating to successful interventions identified in this study mostly related to WHS culture and climate, such as motivation, confidence, perception of importance and trust. The evidence therefore supports the theory that interventions only work when there is strong WHS climate
Schwatka, Goldenhar, et al., 2020	Single study	United States, Construction industry, small businesses	Foundations for Safety Leadership (FSL) training program, designed to provide frontline leaders with	Linear mixed modelling to analyse pre-intervention and post-intervention survey data across small,	Participants reported greater use of safety leadership skills post-intervention than pre-intervention. The greatest	No control group	The findings show that WHS leadership training is effective. This is important given other research suggests

<i>Author/s, date</i>	<i>Source type</i>	<i>Population and setting</i>	<i>Intervention</i>	<i>Study design</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Strengths and limitations</i>	<i>Opportunities/ learnings</i>
			safety leadership skills	medium, and large businesses	improvement was in small and medium businesses		management commitment to WHS drives WHS climate and culture, particularly in small and micro businesses.

Overview of existing Australian WHS interventions and outcomes

In addition to WHS interventions that have been recognised and evaluated within the published international literature, there is also a broad range of WHS interventions available to small and micro businesses within Australia. These include:

- Financial incentives/rebates
- Toolkits
- Checklists and self-assessment tools
- Information and guides
- Training courses
- Coaching and advisory services
- Events

The majority of interventions identified were developed and maintained by Government organisations across the different Australian jurisdictions (e.g., SafeWork NSW, WorkSafe VIC) and not-for-profit organisations (e.g., Black Dog Institute, Beyond Blue). The most common intervention types that were identified were checklist and self-assessment tools and toolkits. These interventions often shared similarities across the states and territories, and in some cases had been adapted from existing resources. For examples, the Safety Fundamentals Toolkits from WorkSafe QLD had been adapted from the SafeWork NSW Easy to do WHS toolkit. We hypothesise that the high frequency of these interventions might be due to their resource and cost efficiency, and scalability.

Beyond intervention type, there were notable trends in terms of intervention content. In recent years, there has been an emergence of mental health and psychosocial targeted interventions. This is likely attributed to the increased focus on mentally healthy workplaces in recent years, such as the Mentally Healthy Workplace Strategy 2018-2022 (NSW Government, 2021) and the introduction of the Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work (SafeWork NSW, 2021). More recently we have seen the introduction of new federal legislation that has mandated that employers manage psychosocial hazards under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS Act). Given the increased responsibility of business owners and managers to address psychosocial risks at work, it is necessary that they are educated and equipped to address these issues in the workplace.

Below we outline each of the intervention types identified within Australian jurisdictions, providing examples, and where available have included findings regarding their effectiveness. In the absence of formal evaluation, we have drawn upon other related research and

hypothesised the implications of the interventions on WHS optimisation in small and micro businesses. We also explore how these interventions might mitigate the barriers to WHS experienced by small and micro businesses. For a more extensive list of interventions identified, see Appendix.

Financial incentives/rebates

The government can play an important role in supporting the development and implementation of interventions. These can include economic support that incentivises businesses to improve WHS. For example, SafeWork NSW's \$1000 Small Business Rebate (SafeWork NSW, 2018). Small business owners in NSW are eligible for a \$1000 rebate to help purchase safety items to improve work health and safety. As part of the program, business owners must also complete an eligible SafeWork NSW education activity in the 12 months prior to applying (e.g., webinar, inspector visit, or eligible event).

An evaluation of the Small Business Rebate yielded positive results (SafeWork NSW, 2016). Interactions with SafeWork NSW (e.g., workshops, visits, webinars) throughout the program helped businesses to identify and adopt good safety solutions. Furthermore, after receiving the rebate, over 35% of businesses went on to make further improvements to their business. This rebate program also had further positive impacts in that it served to increase businesses' positive perceptions of SafeWork NSW (SafeWork NSW, 2016). Although the results were largely positive, there is an opportunity for the program to be better publicised, including details on the process and benefits of the program.

Financial incentives/rebates can be an effective intervention for improving WHS in small and micro businesses by directly funding actual implementation of WHS improvements. This may be done by assisting businesses to purchase equipment, like the SafeWork NSW rebate, or businesses could be compensated for work hours lost due to improving WHS, as per an example from Denmark (Hasle, Refslund, Antonsson, & Walters, 2017). Financial incentives and rebate programs help mitigate barriers such as resource scarcity (i.e., financial) in optimising WHS outcomes among small and micro businesses. These rebates can enable small businesses to make improvements to WHS within their businesses, which may have otherwise not been feasible.

For these interventions to be successful they must be easy to apply for, the information must be easily accessible and communicated through a legitimate source (e.g., sector organisations, social partners, labour inspectors), rebates should be directed towards most important WHS improvements, and they should be open to continuous improvement beyond the initial investment (Hasle, Refslund, Antonsson, & Walters, 2017). The simple application and reporting process is especially important given that in many cases small and micro

businesses struggle with administration and financial reporting processes, likely due to a lack of resources.

Toolkits

Toolkits were one of the most common WHS interventions identified, with most state and territory regulatory bodies having one. The toolkits are mostly delivered online and include information, practical ideas, tools, and templates, and span a range of topics. For example, the SafeWork NSW Easy to do WHS Toolkit is split into seven modules (i.e., commitment, consultation, managing risks, reporting, worker capability, safe working environment, and workers compensation and recovery) to help business owners to create a healthier, safer workplace (SafeWork NSW, n.d.). Each module includes a quiz to understand how the business currently rates and identifies actions that could be taken, tools and templates, and further information about modules. Many of the existing toolkits provide information and tools addressing WHS more broadly, however some toolkits, such as the WorkWell Toolkit (WorkSafe Victoria, 2023b) and the Work and Mental Health Hub (Beyond Blue, 2022c), target mental injuries and wellbeing.

Evaluations were identified for three of the toolkits. Each of these have elicited positive outcomes. The Easy to do Toolkit was found to be useful and easy to read, and resources were viewed as relevant across a range of industries (Centre for Work Health and Safety, 2020). Those who received the Toolkit were significantly more likely to feel that WHS information is easy to find, and the overall ratings on business' WHS performance were slightly higher at the final follow-up survey among those who received the Toolkit, versus those who did not. Furthermore, the toolkits targeted at workplace mental health showed strong outcomes for increased knowledge and confidence in identifying psychosocial risks and of actions that can be taken to support mentally healthy workplaces (Beyond Blue, 2019; Dart et al., 2022). These were found to be successful when targeting both leaders (i.e., WorkWell Toolkit) and employees (i.e., Work and Mental Health Hub).

Toolkits can overcome several barriers experienced by small and micro business owners. First, they are available at no cost, addressing the financial limitations of small and micro businesses. Many of these toolkits also assists business owners to understand their WHS obligations and responsibilities in a way that is easy to understand and has created a central place they can return to for information (Centre for Work Health and Safety, 2020). This also helps to address the lack of tailored regulation and policy as well as the lack of WHS knowledge among business owners and key decision makers by providing WHS information and advice which is relevant to small and micro businesses. Some of these toolkits also

included translated resources, which may assist CALD business owners and workers to understand WHS by overcoming language barriers (SafeWork NSW, n.d.).

To encourage engagement with these interventions, they should be promoted through newsletters, social media, events, and industry specific channels as a way of increasing awareness. It is also important that the value of the toolkit is promoted to encourage engagement from business owners-key decision makers (Centre for Work Health and Safety, 2020). To maximise positive outcomes, toolkits should be continually iterated and expanded on to continue to meet the needs of small and micro businesses. For example, findings of the Easy to do Toolkit evaluation suggested the inclusion of additional resources such as videos, factsheets, and induction modules (Centre for Work Health and Safety, 2020). Finally, the mode of delivering the toolkits might be reconsidered for usability and continued engagement. For example, there is an opportunity to create an online version of the toolkits and to integrate functions like notifications and reminders.

Checklists and self-assessment tools

Checklists and self-assessment tools are common WHS interventions to supporting risk identification and good practice for businesses. The checklists are often downloadable documents that business owners can complete independently to support WHS in their businesses, while the self-audit tool from SafeWork SA is an interactive tool designed to help PCBU to assess their current health and safety practices and to identify areas for improvement (SafeWork SA, n.d.-b).

Although formal evaluations for the checklist and self-assessment tools available in Australia were not identified, there are several similar interventions available across Europe, which have been deemed “good examples”². For example, in Sweden there is a checklist that supports risk identification, selection of control measures, and making an action plan (Hasle, Refslund, Antonsson, & Walters, 2017). Like Australia, where these checklists address common risks, they may include information about controlling risks; however, some simply focus on the risk assessment process rather than on good practice in controlling risks. This means that checklist interventions may assist business owners-key decision makers in identifying risks, but they are not informed on how to control or mitigate risks. Some Australian WHS checklists are focused on risk assessment or hazard identification (e.g., induction checklist, hazard identification checklist; WorkSafe QLD, 2012, 2016), while only a few (e.g., Safety leadership in small business factsheet, Simple Steps to Safety online audit tool; SafeWork SA, n.d.;

² “Good examples” were considered to be directed at, or tailored to, small and micro businesses, they are sustainable, they are complementary to other strategies/interventions, and they use innovative and novel methods (Hasle, Refslund, Antonsson, Ramioul, et al., 2017).

WorkSafe QLD, 2015) included suggestions of actions they can take to improve WHS in their businesses. For example, the Simple Steps to Safety online audit tool will assist with creating and implementing an action plan and provides information on where to go and who to contact for help with work health and safety. While there is a lack of outcomes data for WHS checklists, arguably those that provide tailored advice in minimising and addressing risks would be most effective.

Checklist and self-assessments are useful tools for identifying risks to WHS in small and micro businesses, while overcoming barriers to WHS such as resource scarcity and lack of tailored policy and regulations. These checklist and assessment tools are freely available and are designed to build knowledge and capability to identify risks. Furthermore, the small business obligations checklist helps PBCU and businesses to become aware of their rights and to comply with their obligations under the Australian Consumer Law (Australian Consumer Law, n.d.), which helps to mitigate the barriers presented by the lack of tailored regulation and policy.

To encourage the use of these interventions among small and micro-business owners they should be freely accessible, simple to use, and should be adaptable to specific business needs. The benefits should be made clear to business owners, for example being recommended by authorities as a way of complying with regulations and should support reactive strategy common to small and micro businesses. Finally, the most successful tools provide advice on best practice for control measures and include solutions to WHS risks (Hasle, Refslund, Antonsson, & Walters, 2017).

Information and guides

Information and guides were another intervention type identified for small and micro businesses. These are often focused on specific topics. For example, the Covid-19 Guide for Small Business (Australian Institute of Health and Safety, 2020) and Small Business Guide to Mentally Healthy Workplaces (National Mental Health Commission, 2023). These guides are free and provide information to businesses about managing risks and promoting positive WHS practices.

Formal evaluations for these guides were not identified in the literature. However, research has shown that while small and medium size businesses generally employ WHS information, instruction, and training methods that involve low levels of engagement and participation, such as pamphlets, these interventions are less effective than approaches which require employees to take a more active role in learning (Bluff, 2019). It is therefore unlikely that guides are an effective way of optimising WHS in small and micro businesses, especially if

they are the sole intervention. Rather, it is recommended that multiple participatory activities are used to optimize WHS knowledge transfer (Eerd, 2019).

These guides are however free to businesses meaning they do not present financial barriers, and the tailored guides may help to build WHS knowledge among small and micro business owners. However, given that responsibility of WHS often falls to business owners and key decision makers and is not a core responsibility (Walters et al., 2018), it is unlikely that lengthy documents is the most effective way of communicating WHS information to them when they are already time poor.

Training course

The training courses identified were largely targeted at improving mental health and wellbeing in the workplace, except for the online interactive training modules delivered by Tap into Safety (2019). This is a series of training courses to help employers and employees address critical life threatening and injury risk. Most training courses were delivered online (e.g., Business Wellbeing Online Training, Free e-learning: Support yourself and small businesses; Ahead for Business, 2023; Beyond Blue, 2022a), however the Black Dog Institute mental health training also has the option to be delivered in person (Black Dog Institute, 2023).

Three of the mental health training programs have been evaluated for feasibility and outcomes. Training was found to be a feasible and acceptable method of sharing mental health and wellbeing information with small business owners (Everymind, 2023) and received positive overall rating on its effectiveness and engagement (NSW Government, 2023a). The training programs also had positive impacts on overall knowledge, understanding, and confidence of mental health and wellbeing (Deakin Business School, 2023a, 2023b; Everymind, 2023).

Most of the training courses are offered to small businesses free of charge; however, those courses that do incur cost may present financial barriers due to the resource scarcity of these small and micro businesses. The flexible delivery options and low time commitment of training courses will act as an enabler for the uptake of training among small and micro business owners.

For WHS training courses to be successful the stakeholder delivering the training must be perceived to be legitimate, such as an inspectorate or expert, and the support provided needs to be adapted to the needs of the target group. The training must be low/no cost, easy to participate in, and readily available, either locally or online. The learnings must be relevant and easy to implement, and training courses should include applying the WHS knowledge in the workplace (Hasle, Refslund, Antonsson, & Walters, 2017).

Coaching and advisory services

Numerous coaching and advisory services were identified as interventions for optimising WHS in small and micro businesses. These services are delivered by predominately Government or not-for-profit organisations. Some coaching programs (e.g., NewAccess for Small Business Owners and One-on-one Business coaching; Beyond Blue, 2022a; NSW Government, 2023) are focused on building mentally healthy workplaces and managing stress, while others (e.g., OHS essentials program for small business and SafeWork SA advisory service; SafeWork SA, n.d.-a; WorkSafe Victoria, 2023a) involve consultation with WHS experts to help business owners understand their WHS responsibilities as well as provide practical support.

The evaluations of these services were very positive, including reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression (Beyond Blue, 2022a), feeling better equipped to address mental health in the workplace (NSW Government, 2023b), and high levels of satisfaction reported among participants (Merritt, 2022; WorkSafe Victoria, 2020). However, an independent evaluation of SafeWork SA has questioned the scalability of programs such as advisory services, with the growing rate of psychological risks and WHS responsibilities (Merritt, 2022)

Coaching and advisory services address multiple barriers to optimising WHS in small and micro businesses. Due to the one-on-one nature of these services, they offer tailored and relevant guidance to the business owners, helping to increase WHS knowledge and overcome the barrier of the lack of tailored policy and regulations. The majority of the coaching services are offered to small businesses free of charge; however, those that do incur cost may present financial barriers due to the resource scarcity of these small and micro businesses.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of a once-off free consultation may be limited, as follow-up is often required; however, these follow-up consultations may not be accessible if they incur cost.

Personalised support, such as that offered by coaching and advisory services, is preferred by small and micro businesses, given that advisor can tailor the information and suggestions to the specific enterprise (Hasle, Refslund, Antonsson, & Walters, 2017). Both within Australia and internationally, advisors inform and guide small and micro businesses about WHS and their requirements, with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements (Hasle, Refslund, Antonsson, & Walters, 2017). For these services to be most effective it is likely that follow-up and continued consultation would be required; however, due to the resource intensiveness of these interventions, they may not always be scalable or feasible.

Events

Finally, Government bodies such as SafeWork NSW deliver a range of free online and face-to-face events throughout the year to help educate businesses and workers about WHS

(SafeWork NSW, 2023). These events address a range of different topics and are designed to help participants develop skills; however, are not always specific to small and micro businesses.

Although many of these events are free and delivered online increasing accessibility, the set time may present challenges to some business owners due to competing priorities or schedules (Walters et al., 2018). In the absence of formal evaluations of WHS events, from other research it could be hypothesised that for these events to be successful in improving WHS outcomes they must be low/no cost, easy to participate in, and readily available, either locally or online. The learnings from these events must be relevant and easy to implement, and training courses should include instruction on applying the WHS knowledge in the workplace (Hasle, Refslund, Antonsson, & Walters, 2017). Events may also be an opportune place to inform business owners of other existing interventions, given that barriers to uptake are often due to a lack of awareness.

Summary of Australian WHS interventions for small and micro businesses

Several types of interventions were identified for optimising WHS in small and micro businesses across Australia, including rebates, toolkits, checklists and self-assessment tools, training courses, guides, coaching and advisory services, and events. Formal evaluations were identified for less than half of these interventions. The interventions that have been evaluated have generally demonstrated positive impacts, which often included positive user experience, improved WHS performance, increased knowledge and ability to identify risks, and improved attitude and awareness. Training courses and coaching and advisory services delivered strong and consistent outcomes; however, these often require more investment from suppliers and business owners and may present barriers to engagement and scalability. Toolkits have also shown positive outcomes and mitigate barriers, such as resource scarcity, that face small and micro businesses. They are also scalable and cost-efficient for those implementing them. There may be an opportunity to optimise these toolkits to create a more reflective and interactive experience for the users to encourage continued engagement and ultimately improve WHS outcomes.

Other approaches and considerations for improving WHS

In addition to the studies included in Table 2 and the Australian interventions identified above, several other papers were identified that discussed WHS interventions without developing or testing specific interventions. These are relevant because they highlight intervention ideas that have potential and will expand our consideration set during the design of WHS interventions. In this section, we discuss other approaches to improving WHS, including

strengthening WHS culture, reducing physical injuries, knowledge transfer and training, as well as the emergence of online interventions for WHS.

As mentioned in previous section, a strong WHS climate is a driver for increased WHS practices and other associated favourable outcomes in small and micro businesses. There were some examples in the existing literature that have focused on developing and strengthening WHS culture within an organisation. For example, interventions such as training for managers to increase their commitment to WHS were found to be highly effective (Aburumman et al., 2019). This could be even more true of small and micro businesses, for which organisational culture is disproportionately driven by owners and managers (Cunningham et al., 2021). In the Australian context, Claxton et al. (2022) recommend interventions that develop a 'no-blame' WHS culture, in which employees feel able to report WHS issues and incidents without fear of judgement from management. Despite indications in the literature of the success of these types of interventions, in a systematic review, Dyreborg et al. (2022) found that the evidence base needs to be increased to better understand the efficacy of interventions focused on WHS culture, climate, and norms. Although further research is required to provide validation to the efficacy of this approach, there may be an opportunity for interventions to focus on building strong WHS climates and connection with practices among employees as a way to improve outcomes.

There was also existing research addressing the mode of intervention delivery (e.g., in-person or online) and how this might impact the effectiveness of interventions. Many WHS interventions focus on training, education, and coaching, and several factors were identified which impact the success of these kinds of interventions, for example, that in-person meetings for conducting WHS training are more effective for the transfer of knowledge (Eerd, 2019). Similarly, Tejamaya et al. (2021) determined that face-to-face WHS training is better than online modules. This literature suggests that interventions that require active participation and those delivered face to face are more effective than passive interventions and those delivered online.

In contrast, there is emerging research that supports the efficacy of online interventions to improve WHS in small businesses. These online tools are useful for WHS management in small businesses because they are relatively uncostly and simple to use, meaning they do not place an excessive financial or implementation burden on organisations (De Merich et al., 2020).

Web-based platforms have been used to target differing WHS challenges. For example, De Merich et al. (2020) developed a prototype for a low-cost, cloud-based platform that integrates hazard assessment and hazard management for small and medium enterprises in

Italy. The goal of the platform was to support small and medium businesses to develop a simplified risk assessment report and organise a WHS management system (De Merich et al., 2020). Although seemingly a good concept anecdotally, evaluation of the tool is still required. In a similar vein, Engels et al. (2022) developed a web-based platform for employee stress reduction in small and micro businesses in Germany. This platform included two adapted interventions for stress prevention:

- 1) a web-based tool for psychosocial risk assessment
- 2) web-based stress management training.

This risk assessment enabled employees to report on their experiences of psychosocial risks at work and helped business owners understand areas requiring actions. The stress management training was designed to enhance problem solving and emotional regulation (Engels et al., 2022). Both studies demonstrated how online platforms can be used for the delivery of WHS interventions in small and micro businesses and also provide strong methodological frameworks for the development of online interventions. Although the interventions require evaluation, the papers have provided recommendations for methods for assessing the efficacy of interventions once they are implemented in workplaces.

In summary, although there appears to be some contention as to effective modes of delivery for WHS interventions in small and micro businesses, it is likely that it is not as simple as online versus in-person. Rather, it will be important to explore the interaction between the type of intervention and mode of delivery and the resulting effectiveness to better understand which types of interventions are suitable for web-based delivery platforms.

Throughout the literature some specific health interventions addressing musculoskeletal disorders also emerged. Musculoskeletal disorders have been identified as one of the leading workplace injuries and systematic reviews point to possible WHS interventions to help prevent these. For example, by assessing the outcomes of several studies, Pieper et al. (2019) found that stretching exercise programs and vibration feedback technologies at desks were most successful for reducing pain caused by musculoskeletal disorders. Teufer et al. (2019) also reported strong evidence to support the efficacy of ergonomic interventions and those focusing on the manual handling of loads through an assessment of existing reviews on the topic.

What are key design principles for developing interventions for small and micro businesses?

Across the literature we covered, general principles to effective WHS interventions were identified. These included:

1. WHS interventions should focus on the organisational level rather than the individual level because they emphasise the importance of wide-reaching WHS systems rather than individual responsibility (Aburumman et al., 2019).
2. WHS interventions should be cost-effective to encourage their uptake from a financial perspective (Pieper et al., 2019). This is particularly important in small and medium sized businesses, where WHS interventions place a higher financial burden on enterprises (Tejamaya et al., 2021).
3. Single-focus WHS interventions that only address one WHS issue have limited efficacy in comparison to multicomponent programs that aim to address a range of WHS issues (Pieper et al., 2019). Multicomponent programs such as total worker health (TWH) are superior because they take a holistic and integrated approach, focusing on prevention as well as treatment of physical and psychological issues (Cunningham et al., 2021).

It is unclear to what extent these principles are also applicable to small and micro businesses. However, Micheli et al. (2018) found that successful WHS interventions in small and medium enterprises require employees to have confidence in them and recognise their importance for them to be effective. This suggests a need to focus on developing employee understanding of a WHS intervention prior to its implementation.

Summary

In this section, we identified and outlined WHS interventions from the literature and where possible, discussed those that have been evaluated for efficacy. It is important to note that while we have identified a broad range of interventions for small and micro businesses, the evidence regarding effectiveness of WHS interventions within Australia is somewhat limited. However, the key interventions identified included rebates, toolkits, checklists and self-assessment tools, training courses, guides, coaching and advisory services, events, stretching and exercise programs, and interventions to strengthen WHS culture. While many international reviews did not specify the focus of the intervention, those that did focused on interventions that addressed musculoskeletal disease, mental disorders, strengthening of older employees, and WHS management systems. Australian interventions often focused on risk identification and mitigations, WHS obligations, building safe and healthy workplaces, and mental health and wellbeing.

The literature also highlighted several factors that are believed to contribute to the success of interventions, including leadership style, multicomponent interventions, support from third parties with implementation, and confidence in interventions. While much of the literature did

not compare the effectiveness of specific interventions, some specific interventions were determined to be most effective, such as engineering controls, ergonomic interventions, training, coaching and advisory, and toolkits.

Finally, in addition to existing interventions, the literature highlighted key design principles for successful interventions, including focus on the organisational level (as opposed to the individual), cost-effective (due to the limited resources of small businesses), and multicomponent (as opposed to single-focus interventions) – yet these are not specific to small or micro businesses. This section highlights the need for further research exploring the efficacy of WHS interventions in small and micro businesses, as well as a clearer understand of the needs of small and micro businesses to inform the development of future interventions.

Conclusion and Implications

The overarching objective of this REA was to identify interventions that have been used to address the barriers preventing small and micro businesses from enhancing WHS practices. In doing so, we also aimed to understand gaps in existing policy, regulations, and research when it comes to WHS in small and micro businesses. In this section, we summarise the outcomes of the REA and outline gaps in our understanding that require further investigation. Based on this, we make recommendations for future research and considerations for the design of WHS interventions in small and micro businesses.

Summary of key findings

In summary, there was limited literature that focused on WHS for small and micro businesses in Australia and abroad. Although small and micro businesses account for a large majority of businesses in Australia, much of the existing work in this space including policies and regulations, is focused on larger organisations, meaning the unique needs of small and micro businesses are often overlooked. While small and micro businesses are acknowledged in the WHS Strategy for 2023-2033, there is limited regulatory information and advice specific to small and micro businesses. The lack of tailored information and support, coupled with key barriers to effective WHS practices, is likely to explain the inequitable experience of WHS incidents in these smaller enterprises. However, it also offers an opportunity to develop further understanding of the unique needs of small and micro businesses and develop interventions which are tailored to their needs.

Throughout the literature, several important drivers and barriers to WHS in small and micro businesses were recognised. These drivers included WHS climate, management values, and management agility. For small businesses, the drivers appeared to be “people-driven” as opposed to regulation or process driven. Key barriers to WHS in small and micro business were also acknowledged, including a lack of tailored policy and regulation, resource scarcity, social and spatial proximity, informal approaches, owner-manager driven, and underrepresented workers voices. We highlight these drivers and barriers because although they may also be applicable to medium and large businesses, they are likely exacerbated in smaller entities given the unique circumstances of such workplaces. For example, the increased influence of owners and managers, stronger interpersonal relationships, and close-knit ties between employees, limited capacity to invest in WHS, and limited guidance on the implementation of WHS.

Although there was strong acknowledgment throughout the literature of the barriers facing small and micro businesses when it comes to enhancing WHS practices, there has been limited focus on the efficacy of WHS interventions for small and micro businesses in Australia,

and abroad, over the past five years. However, we did identify several existing WHS interventions that have been implemented in small and micro businesses, including stretching and exercise programs, training, education, and coaching, toolkits, checklists and self-assessment tools, leadership training, health programs, and web-based interventions addressing workplace stress. The literature also highlighted several recognised principles for the design of WHS interventions, including a focus on the organisational rather than the individual level, cost effectiveness, and multicomponent programs that address a range of WHS concerns.

Implications for future research (gaps in understanding)

This REA has been a useful exercise for identifying the gaps in understanding regarding the drivers and barriers for enhancing WHS in small and micro businesses as well as existing interventions which attempt to overcome these barriers. Much of the literature briefly addressed small and micro businesses or may include them as a study group, yet they have rarely been the focus of research. Consequently, the voices and needs of small business owners are unlikely to have been accurately or entirely reflected in the literature to date. Primary research will be undertaken in the next phase (phase three) of this project to address these gaps in knowledge to better understand how we can effectively intervene in small and micro businesses to enhance WHS practices, in a way that meets the needs of business owners (while also limiting burden on finances and resource). The goals for this research are to:

- Provide a clearer picture of the current state of WHS knowledge and practices among small and micro business owners and key decisions makers and explore the effectiveness of WHS laws and regulation for smaller businesses.
 - o This REA highlighted gaps in the understanding and implementation of WHS in small and micro businesses that need addressing. While Australia has strong regulation of WHS through the WHS Act and Regulations, there appeared to be a lack of understanding of policies, and little direction for small and micro businesses on implementation. SafeWork Australia's (2023: 8) WHS Strategy 2023-2033 states the need for "succinct and easy to understand information and advice" through "tailored education and guidance" for small businesses. As noted in this REA, this need is supported by the academic and grey literatures (Bluff, 2019; McKeown and Mazzarol, 2018). To meet these needs effectively, future research should aim to examine the support needs of small and micro businesses to facilitate effective communication of WHS policies and materials

in a way which will increase knowledge and likelihood of implementation among business owners.

- Develop a better understanding of enablers and motivators of WHS in small and micro businesses.
 - o Given that knowledge sharing alone is unlikely to result in behavioural shift, further research is also required to identify how to enable and motivate small and micro business owners and key decision makers to enhance WHS practices within their workplaces. Few enablers were identified within the existing literature given the larger focus on *barriers* to WHS. By understanding what factors enable and motivate small and micro business owners, we are better able to tailor interventions that will affect change (and in turn overcome some of these barriers).
- Validate the guiding principles for WHS interventions in the setting of small and micro businesses.
 - o Several guiding principles for effective WHS intervention design, such as organisational (versus individual) focused, cost-effective, and multicomponent (versus single focus) programs were identified. However, the applicability of these principles to small and micro businesses is unclear. Future research should test and refine these principles within small and micro businesses to understand their applicability and suitability, and how to optimise these. Longer term, this can support the development of best practice guidelines for developing and implementing WHS interventions in small and micro businesses to help them meet their regulatory requirements.
- Identify how we can support CALD business owners and key decision makers to mitigate increased WHS risks and support them to implement effective WHS practices in their businesses.
 - o There is some acknowledgement throughout the literature that certain demographic groups, such as CALD workers, may face increased vulnerability when it comes to WHS incidents. However, there is an opportunity to understand how we might support CALD business owners and key decision makers or employers of CALD workers to mitigate the risks and support them to implement effective WHS practices in their businesses.
- In addition, future research (beyond the scope of this project) could explore the effectiveness and efficacy of WHS interventions in small and micro businesses.

- Small and micro businesses have been included in some of the existing evaluations but have rarely been the focus. Given what we know about the unique characteristics of small and micro businesses and the impact of this on WHS practices, it seems imperative to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions in isolation.

Implications for developing interventions to enhance WHS in small and micro businesses

The disproportionately high rate of WHS incidents in small and micro businesses suggests that existing interventions are likely not very effective because they are not tailored to businesses of this size and their unique circumstances, or they are not being accessed. This REA has not only identified gaps in our understanding of WHS in small and micro businesses that ideally needs to be addressed via primary research, but also points to important considerations for the development of an intervention in phase 4 of this project. These include consideration of the cost burden for businesses with limited financial resources, the psychosocial characteristics of small workplaces, unfamiliarity with WHS, effective communication, and the increased influence of owners and managers when there are few employees. With these in mind, we make several recommendations and highlight practical considerations for the development and implementation of a WHS interventions in small and micro businesses below.

Recommendations for the focus of an intervention for small and micro businesses:

The findings highlighted several considerations for the focus of interventions for small and micro businesses. Future intervention should:

- Focus on building WHS climate and culture.
 - Strong WHS climate was found to be an enabler of WHS practices within small and micro businesses. Given the unique dynamics of small and micro businesses where WHS can often be driven by manager values and organisational culture, there is opportunity for interventions to build strong WHS climates and connection with practices among employees.
- Involve WHS leadership training among owners and key decision makers.
 - The findings show that WHS leadership training is effective. This is important given other research suggests manager's commitment to WHS drives WHS climate and culture, particularly in small and micro businesses.
- Provide practical examples of how the regulations apply within small and micro businesses.

- Evidence suggests that there is limited knowledge of WHS policies among small and micro business owners, which is likely due to a lack of tailoring of existing policies and regulations. Providing practical and relevant examples of how WHS regulation apply within small and micro businesses will increase knowledge among employers, enabling the implementation of WHS practices to optimise outcomes.
- Include options for tailored resources and support for CALD business owners.
 - CALD workers experience increased vulnerability to WHS incidents and steps should be taken to mitigate this risk. For example, WHS interventions and resources need to be tailored to CALD workers both to support implementation (e.g., by using in-language resources) and their overall efficacy (e.g., by ensuring they are culturally safe and appropriate, and acceptable), and this should be informed by primary research with the population group to better understand their needs.

Practical considerations for designing interventions for small and micro businesses:

The findings also highlighted several practical considerations for designing interventions for small and micro businesses. Future interventions must:

- Be low cost and place little burden on resourcing of the business.
 - Small and micro businesses often have financial limitations and resource restrictions meaning that expensive or resource intensive interventions are unlikely to be implemented and maintained. As such, cost effective solutions and financial support from regulators with implementation are required.
- Involve an active learning or reflective component.
 - Currently, small and micro businesses employ WHS information, instruction, and training methods that involve low levels of engagement and participation (e.g., pamphlets, videos, slide shows, and lectures); however, this is often found to be ineffective. Instead, small and micro businesses should use interventions that are more active and engaging, which are more likely to be effective, compared to those which are passive.
- Target the organisation level, as opposed to the individual.
 - The evidence supports the theory that interventions targeting individuals are problematic because they focus on blaming employees for WHS incidents, while those that target the group or organisational level focus on the strength

of employee engagement with WHS systems. Small and micro businesses should be encouraged and supported to implement robust organisational level WHS systems, which will result in better WHS outcomes.

- Be multi-component, rather than single focus.
 - o Single-focus interventions can act as a barrier as they have been found to be ineffective and therefore a poor use of WHS funds, particularly when WHS spending is limited in small and micro businesses. Interventions should thus focus on addressing multiple WHS issues through a holistic and integrated approach.
- Involve partnership between small businesses and with trade unions or chambers of commerce in the design of interventions to support implementation.
 - o The barrier of a lack of support for implementing WHS management in small and micro business may be overcome through support from other small businesses, trade unions, chambers of commerce, or other local groups. Regulators should assist in developing networks between these parties.
- Explore a web-based approach to implementation.
 - o Although face to face interventions have been found to be more effective, this is likely to place burden on the resources of small and micro businesses. As such, it would be worthwhile exploring a web-based approach to implementation, which are showing promise internationally.

Limitations of this REA

The primary limitation of this review is the paucity of available published research on WHS interventions within small and micro businesses and the scarcity of information regarding their effectiveness; this is particularly true for Australia and NSW. This means that conclusions and recommendations presented within this REA are based on limited information, or research that has occurred outside of Australia, and therefore may not be entirely applicable. When small and micro businesses have been addressed within the WHS intervention literature, it is often the case that they have been included within the sample but have rarely been the focus. This might suggest that the voices and needs of small business owners may not always be accurately or entirely reflected in the literature, and therefore this REA.

Conclusion

Ultimately, small and micro businesses have been neglected within the WHS domain, despite experiencing a disproportionate rate of incidents. Small and micro businesses are important

contributors to Australia's economy and are equally entitled to healthy and safe workplaces as their larger counterparts. Although there is some understanding of the barriers and challenges facing smaller businesses, there is an opportunity to improve our understanding of their needs and in turn strengthen our ability to intervene to enhance WHS practices in an effective and tailored manner.

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Appendix. Examples of Australian WHS interventions for small and micro businesses

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
Financial incentive/ rebate			
Small Business Rebate	Government, SafeWork NSW	Small business owners in NSW are eligible for a \$1,000 rebate to help purchase safety items to improve work health and safety.	<p>An impact evaluation (SafeWork NSW, 2016) has shown positive outcomes from the rebate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After receiving the rebate, over 35% of businesses made further improvements to WHS in their workplace. - SafeWork interactions aimed at building knowledge and skills (workshops, visits, webinars, etc.) helped businesses identify and adopt good safety solutions. - The positive word of mouth impact from the rebate program served to increase business' positive perceptions of SafeWork NSW. <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Program needs to be better publicised. - Information on how it works, the benefits, and process needs to be clearer. - Strengthen and tailor education materials. - Improve follow up with engaged businesses. - Better leverage the strengths of the application process for discovery.
Toolkits			
Easy to do WHS Toolkit	Government, SafeWork NSW	The toolkit is split into seven modules to help business owners to create a healthier safer workplace. The modules include topics such as: commitment, consultation, managing risks, reporting, worker	<p>An evaluation of the toolkit was undertaken by the (Centre for Work Health and Safety, 2020) to understand the impact of the toolkit. Findings showed the toolkit was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Useful and easy to read, and resources were viewed as relevant across a range of industries. - Some indication that the toolkit made it easier for small businesses to do WHS.

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
		<p>capability, safe working environment, and workers compensation and recovery. Each module has three options: a quiz to understand how the business currently rates and identifies actions that could be taken; tools and templates; and further information about modules.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those who received the Toolkit were significantly more likely to feel WHS information is easy to find than those without the Toolkit. - Average overall ratings on business' WHS performance were a little higher at the final follow-up survey among those who received the Toolkit, versus those who did not. <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotion of toolkit through newsletters, social media, events, and industry specific channel. - Create an online interactive version of toolkit, with active hyperlinks to different sections, and allow for notifications/reminders. - Promote the value of the toolkit, as both an information source and internal audit tool. - Additional resources that could make up the toolkit include induction modules, factsheets, and videos. - Provide feedback mechanism for continuous improvement and evolution of the toolkit.
<u>Safety Fundamentals Toolkit</u>	Government, WorkSafe QLD	This safety fundamentals toolkit has been adapted from the SafeWork NSW Easy to do WHS toolkit, see above.	See above for evaluation of SafeWork NSW Easy to do WHS toolkit
<u>WorkWell Toolkit</u>	Government, WorkSafe VIC	<p>Practical ideas, tips, tools, and good practice suggestions to help prevent mental injuries in your workplace.</p> <p>The WorkWell Toolkit provides step-by-step guide</p>	<p>An evaluation (WorkSafe Victoria, 2023b) of the WorkWell program has shown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High levels of reach and engagement with the program. - Through using the WorkWell toolkit leaders were more knowledgeable and able to identify work-related mental health risk factors.

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
		to building mentally health workplace – communicate in text and via videos.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It has assisted in identifying risks earlier. - Leaders understand what mentally healthy workplaces are and the benefits of investment in this work. - Positive improvement in employers’ knowledge, attitude, and awareness such as confidence and capacity to identify mental health risks. <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Include vulnerable groups, such as CALD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and low socioeconomic status. - Continue with prevention-focused approach. - Tailor WorkWell program to other relevant factors, such as location/remoteness.
<u>Toolbox and essential information – small business</u>	Government, WorkSafe WA	A resource hub for small businesses to assist them to manage safety and health in the workplace. This toolbox includes workplace safety forms, notifying WorkSafe, safety publications, and directories.	No formal evaluations have been identified
<u>Safety management small business toolkit</u>	Government, WorkSafe NT	The Safety Management Toolkit is aimed at employers and owners in small business. The toolkit includes information about laws, policies, responsibilities, managing WHS as well as checklists, templates, and tools.	No formal evaluations have been identified

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
Small business discussion tool, WorkSafe QLD	Government, WorkSafe QLD	A discussion tool to guide conversations with workers to understand WHS risks and areas for improvement.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Queensland Small Business Skills Hub, WorkSafe QLD	Government, WorkSafe QLD	An online hub which includes information and events supporting Queensland's small businesses.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Mental health toolkit	Non-for-profit, Black Dog Institute	A practical guide to break down the stigma of mental health issues and build a work environment that promotes wellbeing. This toolkit is a downloadable interactive pdf, which includes information, advice, tips, and links to supports and tools.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Work and Mental Health Hub	Non-for-profit, Beyond Blue	The Heads-Up website is the initiative's centrepiece. It is a central online portal through which employees and employers can access free, evidence-informed resources and simple, practical tools to promote their own mental wellbeing,	Earlier iteration of the Work and Mental Health Hub (i.e., Heads Up) was evaluated in 2019 as part of a larger evaluation of the Heads Up initiative (Beyond Blue, 2019). Findings showed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Significant increase in the number of extremely mentally healthy workplaces, as reported by managers (but not reported by employees). - Increase in employees' perceptions of workplace perception and actions in supporting mentally healthy workplaces (e.g., encouraging conversations; processes, plans, and reviews of

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
		that of others and that of their organisation.	<p>supports and plans for mental health; and managing mental health).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anecdotally, the resources have led to an increase in managers focus on mental health in the workplace, but these resources are also often used in conjunction with resources from other organisations (e.g., BlackDog, Lifeline etc), making it difficult to determine causality. - Accessibility of the website required improvement.
COVID-19 Information for small business	Government, SafeWork Australia	Safe Work Australia developed a small business hub with tailored guidance for small businesses to help them understand their work health and safety duties and manage risks arising from COVID-19. The hub includes information, tools, and resources.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Small business resource kit	Government, Department of Customer Service, SafeWork NSW	An online resource kit including information, tips, and tools for small business owners-key decision makers to help in creating a mentally healthy workplace.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Checklists/ self-assessment tools			
Induction checklist	Government, WorkSafe QLD	A downloadable document, which includes a checklist of tasks that should be completed during induction into a new business.	No formal evaluations have been identified

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
Hazard identification checklist	Government, WorkSafe QLD	This checklist provides general guidance to the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) about possible workplace health and safety hazards and issues. It is not exhaustive, nor will every item relate to every workplace.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Health and safety self-assessment checklist for small businesses	Government, WorkSafe VIC	This self-assessment checklist is for small businesses to identify and control health and safety risks in the workplace.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Small business obligations checklist	Government, Australian consumer law	This checklist is designed to help PBCU and businesses to become aware of their rights and comply with their obligations under the Australian Consumer Law (ACL).	No formal evaluations have been identified
Safety leadership in small business factsheet	Government, WorkSafe QLD	This document provides a range of simple and immediate leadership practices PBCUs can put in place to build a positive safety culture in their business.	No formal evaluations have been identified

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
<u>Simple steps to safety audit tool and guide</u>	Government, SafeWork SA	The Simple Steps to Safety audit tool and guide, includes templates and checklists, to help small businesses to include WHS as part of their business planning. The self-audit tool is designed to help PCBU to assess their current health and safety practices and to identify any areas which they can improve	No formal evaluations have been identified
<u>Quick safety quiz for small business</u>	Government, WorkSafe WA	Part of the small business safety toolkit, Government WA - The quiz allows business owners to check whether you have done enough to protect themselves and those within their duty of care. The quiz covers: general workplace duties; consultation; training and information; and monitoring and review.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Information or guides			
<u>Covid-19 Guide for small businesses</u>	Government, Australian Institute of Health and Safety	The AIHS developed a free guide of information for small businesses on how to manage COVID-19 and its compliance pressures in	No formal evaluations have been identified

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
		regard to Fair Work and Safety legislation.	
Articles (e.g., Keeping your small business safe)	Private, Tap into Safety	Provide information regarding safety leadership in small businesses to support positive WHS practices.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Small business guide to mentally healthy workplace	Government, Mental Health Commission	The guides provide information about key topics, clear examples, helpful tips and links to further support and guidance. The three guides are built around the three core pillars of the Blueprint for Mentally Healthy Workplaces for creating environments that protect, respond, and promote to support mental health.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Psychological health for small businesses guide	Government, SafeWork SA	The guide provides information on psychosocial hazards, including identifying risks, assessing risks, controlling risks, and reviewing control measures.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Training course			

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
Free training for NSW businesses	Non-for-profit, Black Dog Institute	Black Dog offers free mental health training, funded by NSW Government. There are three free training opportunities targeted at different audiences: Leading a Mentally Healthy Workplace, Managing for Team Wellbeing; and Your Mental Health at Work. Online or face-to-face Interactive and/or self-guided	The final evaluation (NSW Government, 2023a) of the NSW Mentally Healthy Workplaces Strategy 2018-2022 showed that this training was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most utilised project in mentally healthy workplace strategy (SafeWork NSW). - The training had positive impacts on managers' overall knowledge, understanding, and confidence of mental health wellbeing, and a positive overall rating on its effectiveness, engagement, ease of online navigation, and quality of information.
Online interactive training modules, Tap into Safety	Private, Tap into Safety	Training courses to help employers/employees address critical life threatening and injury risk	No formal evaluations have been identified.
Counting on U (CoU)	University, Deakin Business School	A training program that equips business finance professionals with skills to build long-term, trusting relationships, navigate difficult client or customer conversations, and look after themselves whilst supporting their clients and colleagues.	Current findings from ongoing program evaluation (Deakin Business School, 2023a) has shown that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 89% improved understanding of, and ability to recognise signs and symptoms of common mental health conditions - 88% were moderately-to-extremely confident in delivering mental health first aid – including listening non-judgementally, providing information on local services or referrals to websites, and encouraging use of self-help resources or seeking professional help

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 62% reported improvements in the quality of their relationship with clients within 1 month of training - Participants also reported reduction in stigmatising attitudes towards mental health conditions, in their own psychological distress and in their feelings of discomfort when delivering MHFA
Business Wellbeing Online Training	Government, Ahead for Business	The Business Wellbeing training aims to assist small business owners and their employees to develop their knowledge, skills, and practices around mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.	<p>A feasibility and acceptability trial (Everymind, 2023) of the training program showed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100% found the training easy to understand and said they would recommend to other small business owners. - Increase in mental health literacy and self-efficacy following the completion of training. - The training was found to be feasible and acceptable method of sharing mental health and wellbeing information with small business owners.
Free e-learning: support yourself and small businesses	Non-for-profit, Beyond Blue	Beyond Blue designed a free self-guided training course for business advisers. It gives business owners the confidence and tools to help support the mental health of small business owners; free four-part course.	No formal evaluations have been identified.
Coaching / Advisory Services			
NewAccess for Small Business Owners, BeyondBlue	Non-for-profit, Beyond Blue	Beyond Blue's NewAccess for Small Business Owners (NASBO) is a guided self-help mental health coaching program.	<p>Ongoing review (Beyond Blue, 2022a) of client progress with coaches has shown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 70% of people who participate in NewAccess report a significant reduction in symptoms of anxiety and depression

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
		<p>Over 6 sessions, your mental health coach will work with you to manage stress and overwhelm using straightforward problem-solving approaches.</p> <p>All mental health coaches are specially trained and have a small business background, so they understand your unique challenges.</p>	
<u>One-on-one business coaching</u>	Government partnership, NSW Government and Transitioning Well	Free one-on-one mental health coaching programs. The service focuses on providing small business owners hands-on guidance to help your business create a mentally healthy workplace	<p>Ongoing evaluation (NSW Government, 2023b) has shown positive impacts of the business coaching intervention, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 90% of businesses feel better equipped to address mental health. - 89% say the resources and/or referrals provided were relevant and useful. - 80% have seen positive outcomes because of participation in our coaching. - 92% of participants agree that the recommendations made by their coach are achievable and the coaching has met their needs.
<u>OHS essentials program for small business</u>	Government, WorkSafe VIC	A free workplace safety consultation service, delivered by independent occupational health and safety experts	<p>The WorkSafe VIC Annual report (WorkSafe Victoria, 2020) showed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An employer satisfaction survey found 96% of employers would recommend the OHS essentials program. - Audits of safety action plans prepared by consultants showed 82% of businesses met their requirements
<u>Advisory service</u>	Government, SafeWork SA	In SA, businesses can request a visit from the advisors. The advisors will visit your workplace to help	While the Advisory service has positive testimonials from those businesses who have benefited from the service, an independent evaluation of SafeWork SA has suggested it is very optimistic to think that current resourcing (ten staff) will be scalable to all businesses in SA,

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
		you understand your work health and safety responsibilities as well as provide practical support to improve your systems, practices and general approach to safety.	with the growing rate of psychological risks and responsibilities (Merritt, 2022).
Free WHS consultation	Private, Big Yellow Safety	A free 30min consultation during which Big Yellow Safety find out more about the business and provide information on your general WHS risks for small business, identify potential solutions, and how to avoid the safety regulator.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Small business support	Government partnership, Partners in Wellbeing – Neami National, EACH, and the ACSO across Victoria	Partners in Wellbeing offer free, confidential, one on one support to improve financial, business, and emotional wellbeing, across Victoria.	No formal evaluations have been identified
Events			
SafeWork NSW Events	Government, SafeWork NSW	SafeWork NSW delivers a range of online and face-to-face events throughout the year to help educate	No formal evaluations have been identified

<i>Intervention example</i>	<i>Jurisdiction, governing body</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Evaluation findings</i>
		businesses and workers about work health and safety.	
WorkSafe VIC Events	Government, WorkSafe VIC	WorkSafe VIC delivers a range of online and face-to-face events throughout the year to help educate the public, businesses, and workers about work health and safety.	No formal evaluations have been identified