

SAFE AND WELL IN EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

STRENGTHENING OUR SAFETY CULTURE
THROUGH STRONG SUPPORT AND
CLEAR RESPONSIBILITY



Education
and Training

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SAFE AND WELL IN EDUCATION FRAMEWORK AND STRATEGY

The Department of Education and Training is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees, and that of students, visitors and contractors.

The *Safe and Well in Education Framework* (the Framework) is intended to assist everyone at the Department understand their health, safety and wellbeing accountabilities and responsibilities, and the supports available to acquit those, to ultimately improve the performance of Victorian Government schools.

The best safety culture is based on a fair allocation of responsibility¹. The Victorian Government's education system provides its schools with the highest level of autonomy. Along with this increased autonomy is a corresponding increase in responsibility. Research shows that increasing the level of school autonomy leads to greater improvement in student outcomes, but this needs to be balanced with a school's ability to fulfil required accountabilities². The Gonski 2.0 report, "Through Growth to Achievement", highlights that autonomy is important in the areas of learning, teaching and resourcing, but not in all school management responsibilities³. The Framework helps to clarify health, safety and wellbeing responsibilities and assists schools and our leaders to understand their accountabilities and acquit their obligations.

The *Safe and Well in Education Strategy 2019-2024* (the Strategy) describes an overarching vision of putting the health, safety and wellbeing of the Department's employees at the centre.

Together, the Strategy and the Framework provide an opportunity to improve employee wellbeing outcomes and build the desired safety culture with smarter systems and stronger structures of support that reduce administrative burden.

The Framework and the Strategy is informed by contemporary health, safety and wellbeing research and practice. The Framework enables the Department to ensure that the requirements of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act Victoria 2004* (Vic) (OHS Act), the *Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013* (Vic) (the WIRC Act) and the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017* (Vic) are complied with across all Department locations and workforces.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the Framework is to provide the Department and all staff with a guide on how to contribute to an improved safety culture and to acquit their legal obligations for health, safety and wellbeing. The Framework establishes:

- the requirements to strengthen our safety culture to embed accountability and responsibility across all levels of the organisation
- the levels of accountability across the Department, describing the responsibilities of different cohorts of employees and available supports, and enables compliance.

The Framework will be supported by an implementation plan for embedding the approach across the Department, and a responsibilities matrix that will describe how the accountabilities can be acquitted at each level.

¹ Reason J. (1997) *Managing the risks of organizational accidents*. Ashgate.

² Caldwell B, (2015) *An evidence base on the effect of school autonomy on student achievement: Australian studies*. Paper presented at Annual Conference of the World Educational Research Association, Budapest.

³ Gonski, D., Arcus, T., Boston, K., Gould, V., Johnson, W., O'Brien, L., Perry, L & Roberts, M. (2018) *Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

1.3 LINKING TO THE SAFE AND WELL IN EDUCATION STRATEGY

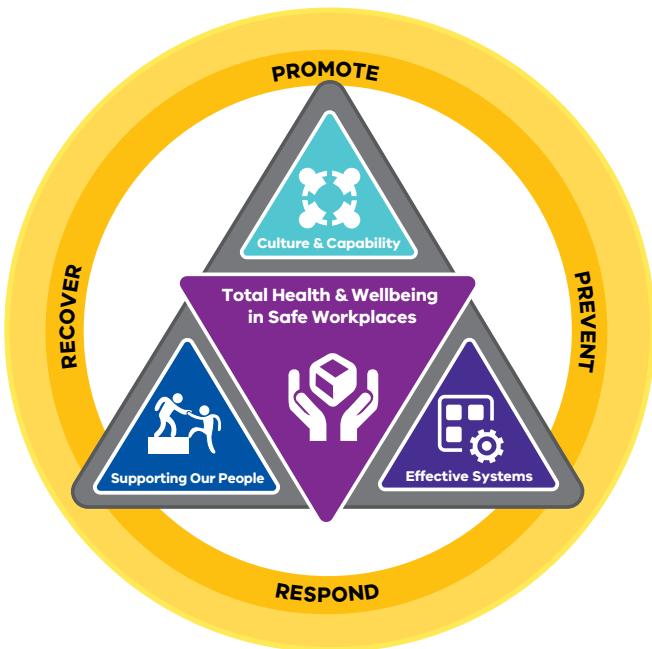
To realise our strategic goal of total health and wellbeing in safe workplaces, we require a complementary focus on three enablers - effective systems, supporting our people, and supporting culture and capability.

Effective Systems – Improving health, safety and wellbeing across a large system requires effective management systems that are simple, smart and intuitive to use. An effective management system provides clear expectations across different levels, empowering leaders and staff to play active roles in creating safe and healthy workplaces.

Supporting Our People – It is imperative that we offer timely and targeted health, safety and wellbeing expert support and advice to our schools and workplaces. We are committed to building on the range of supports currently offered, allowing more flexibility and tailored responses.

Building Culture and Capability – Transforming how we approach health, safety and wellbeing offers a new opportunity to build our wellbeing culture. Creating sustainable and positive improvement requires building the capability, skill and confidence of our staff to be effective wellbeing leaders.

Figure 1: Strategic Framework for Action



IMPLEMENTING THE SAFE AND WELL IN EDUCATION FRAMEWORK

The implementation of the Framework will build accountability across all our leaders to play an active role in creating a culture of safety. In addition, it will help to ensure that our leaders feel supported in meeting their safety obligations. It provides visibility and reassurance of the support and involvement leaders can expect from senior management and different operational functions as part of a stronger, collective commitment to safety across Department workplaces, including schools.



2. STRENGTHENING OUR SAFETY CULTURE

WHAT IS A SAFETY CULTURE?

A safety culture is an organisational culture that places a high level of importance on aligned safety beliefs, behaviours, values and attitudes, and these are shared by the people within the organisation.

This spans psychological safety and physical safety. When an injury occurs, it also includes best practice injury management and return to work.

Attitudes to employee safety and wellbeing and the value of safe work are important factors that influence organisational performance.

It is not enough to provide safe facilities, systems and procedures if our culture does not encourage healthy and safe working that fosters employee wellbeing.

Safety culture can be characterised as 'the way we do things around here' and taking responsibility for the safety of others is an essential element.

The Department's safety culture will be driven by five key cultural elements (Figure 2).

To successfully build accountability and responsibility in health, safety and wellbeing, our leaders support and drive the following elements in their area of influence (see following page).

Figure 2: Key cultural elements for a safety culture based on responsibility and accountability



2.1 CULTURAL ELEMENTS TO BUILD RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to safety is demonstrated through action, including responsiveness to safety concerns A willingness and ability to take ownership of issues, and to assist and support others to manage their health, safety and wellbeing effectively
REPORTING AND LEARNING 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong reporting culture is essential for safety responsibilities to be actioned in the Department Employees are encouraged to routinely report hazards/risks and incidents openly and honestly A strong learning culture is reflected in the changes implemented to improve systems, procedures and equipment, based on learning from past incidents Incidents are analysed to identify opportunities for organisational learning
EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees are engaged by our leaders and participate in health, safety and wellbeing Employees are involved in or consulted about decisions and actions taken to manage safety issues Management encourages the participation of the workforce in practices that promote health, safety and wellbeing
FAIRNESS AND TRUST 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The acknowledgement that honest mistakes are made and systems may fail Employees are treated justly and fairly when they report or are involved in incidents The Department welcomes complex and challenging reports and actively and consistently prioritises safety and wellbeing We create a fair and just culture so that staff feel they are treated fairly and consistently
RISK AWARENESS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowing what you are accountable and responsible for is informed by risk awareness Leaders and managers set the tone for their teams to be aware and educated about hazards and risks Leaders and managers actively discuss hazards and risks to improve Departmental safety awareness Leaders have an awareness of the safety supports and resources available in the Department and encourage access

3. LEVELS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The structure of the Framework (Figure 3) is informed through the accountabilities contained in the OHS Act, WIRC Act, and responsibilities in the Department's [Risk Management Framework](#), and the [Occupational Health and Safety Management System](#). Our approach is to make

the distinction between roles and responsibilities as they relate to the leadership of health and safety, and its culture. Table 1 (next page) outlines the required safety accountabilities and workers' compensation obligations.

Figure 3: Safe and Well in Education Framework

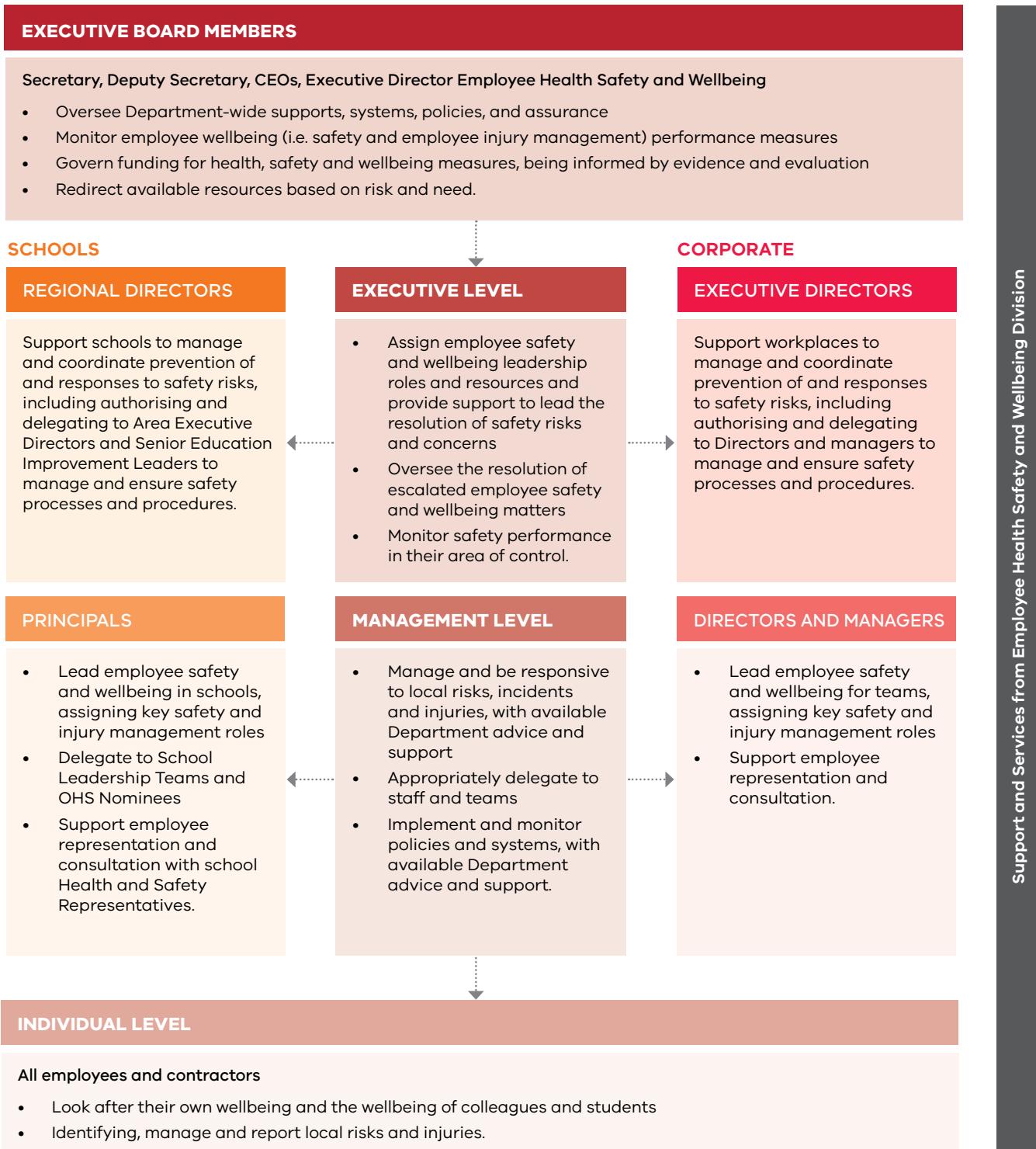


Table 1: Safety and Workers' Compensation Accountabilities

Level	EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS	EXECUTIVE
Applicable to	Secretary and Deputy Secretaries, CEOs	Regional Directors – schools and corporate Executive Directors – corporate
Health Safety and Wellbeing Accountabilities	<p>Ultimate accountability for health, safety and wellbeing resides at this governance level.</p> <p>Develop a strong understanding of the risks that they are charged with controlling in each capacity (i.e. as a member of Executive Board, within leadership portfolio).</p> <p>Are assured that Department systems and supports are effective for managing risks and injuries, and reducing administrative burden.</p> <p>Set the priorities, establish the values, and provides the resources that shape the Department.</p> <p>Take reasonable precautions and ensure that the Department is acting in a reasonably practicable manner for health, safety and wellbeing.</p> <p>Consider how significant new initiatives or changes to work practices impact on health and safety and take steps to mitigate identified risks.</p>	<p>Take action that any reasonable person would use to prevent and reduce hazards and risks to health, safety and wellbeing.</p> <p>Know their and the Department's health, safety and wellbeing obligations and how they are managed.</p> <p>Take reasonable precautions for health, safety and wellbeing, including leading the resolution of escalated employee health, safety and wellbeing matters.</p> <p>Monitor performance, and support the allocation of resources based on risk and need.</p> <p>Ensure that employees and delegates access resources and supports offered by the Department.</p> <p>Consider how new initiatives or changes to work practices impact on health, safety and wellbeing and take steps to mitigate identified risks.</p>
Workers' Compensation Obligations	<p>Act with due diligence and ensure that the Department is acting in a reasonably practicable manner to ensure a safe and sustainable return to work for our injured workers.</p> <p>Ensure the Department meets, and that policies are consistent with legislative requirements of the WIRC Act.</p>	<p>Ensure that for a minimum period of 52 weeks that injured workers are provided with suitable employment if they have capacity for work or pre-injury employment or equivalent when they no longer have an incapacity for work.</p> <p>Nominate and appoint a Return to Work Coordinator who has an appropriate level of seniority.</p> <p>Make information about return to work available to all workers.</p>

MANAGEMENT	INDIVIDUAL	EMPLOYEE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING DIVISION
<p>Principals as the Executive Officer of a School Council, and School Leadership teams – schools</p> <p>Directors, Workplace Managers – corporate</p>	All employees	<p>Executive Director, Employee Health, Safety and Wellbeing Division</p> <p>Director, Employee Health, Safety and Wellbeing Division</p>
<p>Where staff manage or supervise other staff, students, contractors or visitors, be responsible for health, safety and wellbeing of those staff, students, contractors or visitors under their control.</p> <p>Ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, students, contractors and visitors.</p> <p>Responsible for ensuring the safety of work areas directly under their control: schools, offices, laboratories, stores and off-site workplaces such as camps and manage assets as per the obligations of Victorian School Building Authority's School Asset Management Roles and Responsibilities Framework.</p> <p>Ensure that workers are provided with the work environment, tools, facilities and processes for work to be carried out safely.</p> <p>Consult with workers in relation to risks to health, safety and wellbeing, and controls in place to manage the risks.</p>	<p>Take reasonable care for their own health, safety and wellbeing in the workplace.</p> <p>Contribute to team wellbeing, and care for colleagues, students and others in the workplace.</p> <p>Cooperate with reasonable directions and comply with health, safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.</p> <p>Not intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything at the workplace that is designed to protect and support health, safety and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Support the continuous improvement in employee health, safety and wellbeing through evidence based prevention, advice, support, response, recovery and strategy functions.</p> <p>Oversee the development of effective policies, procedures and systems.</p> <p>Manage audit, reporting and response functions.</p> <p>Ensure provision of support services to prevent risks to health, safety and wellbeing (e.g. Employee Assistance Program, OHS Advisory Service).</p>
<p>Plan for a worker's return to work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain relevant information about the worker's capacity for work. • Consider reasonable workplace support, aids or modifications to assist the worker. • Propose options for returning to suitable or pre-injury employment • Monitor the worker's progress, support the return to work process including through consultation directly with the worker, with their treating health practitioner (subject to the consent of the worker) and occupational rehabilitation provider (if involved). 	<p>Participate in return to work planning.</p> <p>Keep in regular contact with their manager, the insurance agent and the occupational rehabilitation provider (if involved).</p> <p>Where suitable or pre-injury employment is provided according to their capacity, make every reasonable effort to get back to work.</p>	<p>Provide advice and support to Principals and Workplace Managers in relation to workers' compensation claims.</p> <p>Ensure insurer provides services in accordance with the WIRC Act.</p> <p>Monitor claims and ensure services, resources and supports are available to support return to work outcomes.</p>

Figure 4: Expected behaviours for Leaders and Managers



3.1 ACQUITTING OBLIGATIONS BY TAKING EVERY REASONABLE PRECAUTION

Leaders and managers acquit their health and safety obligations by taking every precaution that is reasonable in the circumstances to protect workers and others who could be put at risk.

In occupational health and safety law, regulators apply a concept of 'due diligence' as a method for leaders and managers to assess workplace hazards and establish ways to promote employee wellbeing, and prevent injuries at work. It is suggested that all leaders and managers regardless of their function exercise due diligence to ensure that staff, students and visitors are protected against harm to health, safety and wellbeing.

In applying these behaviours, managers will develop a greater understanding of what is needed to effectively manage health, safety and wellbeing risks. It is recognised that this will have a positive cultural impact. These behaviours will encourage health, safety and wellbeing to be readily integrated into broader strategies — permitting a more proactive, rather than reactive approach to be taken.

3.2 AUTHORITY TO ACT

Commensurate with accountability, the level of health and safety authority details the level of control a role has to influence health, safety and wellbeing outcomes. Every level within the Department has the authority to report hazards in the workplace and exercise their accountabilities under the Framework.

The authority to make decisions in the workplace to eliminate or reduce the risk of occupational hazards varies in the Department, according to the organisational structure.

3.3 AUTHORISATION

For practical reasons managers may authorise other managers or supervisors some of their health, safety and wellbeing responsibilities, but they remain accountable for the health, safety and wellbeing of their staff. They must ensure the authorised person has the appropriate skills and authority to carry out the duties.

3.4 WHERE RESPONSIBILITIES OR ACCOUNTABILITIES ARE SHARED

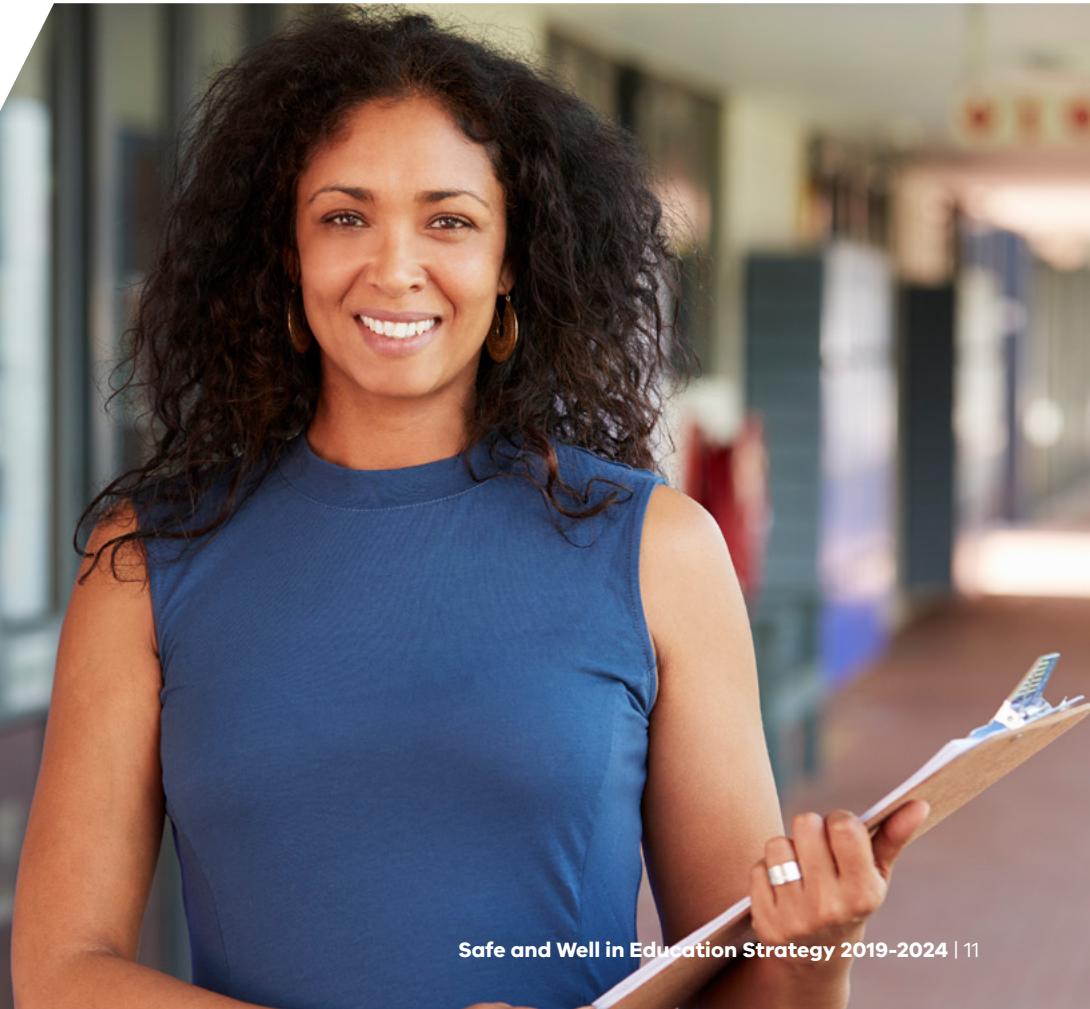
Due to the size and complexity of the Department there will often be shared responsibilities for health, safety and wellbeing. Where information or an incident flows to different management lines, it is expected that all managers continue to discharge their duties.

The Framework should be read in conjunction with the [**Schools Incident Management System**](#) for escalated employee wellbeing matters.

Essentially, if more than one person has a duty in respect of the same matter, each person with the duty must consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with all other persons who have a duty with the same matter.

Structures and tools that exist to help facilitate the implementation of shared responsibilities at the Department include:

- hazard and incident reporting processes
- reviews of health, safety and wellbeing performance indicators
- responses to health, safety and wellbeing audits
- reviews of business plans, performance development plans and performance management procedures.



4. APPLICATION

4.1 SPECIFIC HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING RESPONSIBILITIES AND PERFORMANCE

As the Framework addresses responsibilities and accountabilities at a macro level, specific individual responsibilities will be documented in a *Health Safety and Wellbeing Responsibilities Matrix*. All staff are expected to be aware of these expectations and responsibilities. These are the minimum actions employees must take in order to ensure they meet the expectations of the Department and legislation. How employees behave in the workplace and meet these responsibilities should be discussed as part of everybody's performance. Further detail on health, safety and wellbeing responsibilities can be included in position descriptions where appropriate.

4.2 SUPPORT, GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE

At all levels of the Framework, the Employee Health, Safety and Wellbeing Division will support the Department in implementing safety culture, leadership, responsibilities and accountability that supports safety. This may include:

- managing and reviewing services, supports and programs
- development of policy and procedures
- provision of advice
- complex and departmental level issue resolution.

4.3 STUDENTS

The Department has a duty of care for students. Similarly, students are owed obligations under health and safety law. When executives, managers and staff make decisions, they must consider how their actions or non-actions may impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of students. Some student injuries are also notifiable to WorkSafe Victoria.

4.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Under the OHS Act and the Framework, the responsibility for wellbeing and psychological health risks and hazards is no different in application to physical health and workplace risks.

4.5 REVIEW OF THE FRAMEWORK

To ensure that the Framework continues to be effective and applicable to the Department, this document and any supporting documents will be reviewed biennially in consultation with the Department's governance structures. However, more frequent reviews may be required according to legislative requirements; organisational change; health, safety and wellbeing performance, or at the direction of the Secretary or the Deputy Secretary, People and Executive Services.





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