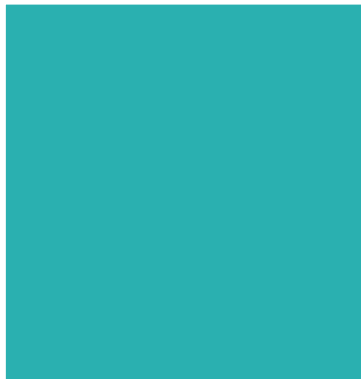
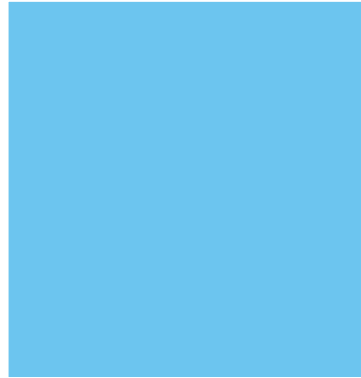


# Healthy

WORKPLACES

MESSAGE  
GUIDE





## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
Research approach .....	5
Research methodology .....	5
Research findings .....	6
<b>Messaging Approach</b> .....	8
Step 1: Message .....	8
Step 2: Information and Support .....	8
<b>Messaging Tips</b> .....	10
Tip #1: Centre the message on care values .....	10
Tip #2: Focus on workplaces, not individuals .....	12
Tip #3: Create something good .....	13
Tip #4: Be inclusive .....	13
Tip #5: The messenger matters .....	14
Tip #6: A picture paints a thousand words .....	15
<b>Message Structure</b> .....	16
An effective message structure .....	16
Vision statements .....	17
Barrier statements .....	17
Action statements .....	18
Vision – Barrier – Action messages in practice .....	19
<b>Tailoring Messages</b> .....	22
Tailoring by size .....	22
Tailoring by sector .....	22
Tailoring by maturity .....	22
<b>Language Matters</b> .....	24
Use plain English .....	24
Words to replace and embrace .....	24
<b>Glossary</b> .....	26

Acknowledgment – We would like to acknowledge and thank Dr Eleanor Glenn, Co-Director, Common Cause Australia for conducting the research and preparing this guide.

## This **Healthy Workplaces Message Guide** contains evidence-based recommendations for messages that motivate workplace leaders to create healthy workplaces.

The guide is based on extensive research undertaken by Common Cause Australia on behalf of Wellbeing SA, NSW Health, and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. It incorporates input from a range of workplaces, government agencies and service providers who participated in interviews, a survey and workshops.

The messages presented here are intended to be used by government advocates, service providers and industry-based workplace health and wellbeing advocates (the messengers) to encourage workplace leaders (the audience) to create healthy workplaces. The **purpose** of the messages is to provide the initial spark of interest and enthusiasm for leaders to feel that it is important to find out more and do more to create a healthier workplace.

The target audience of workplace leaders was chosen because they play a critical role in driving workplace health and wellbeing. Workplace leaders can include business owners, human resource roles, office managers and workplace health and safety roles, managers and supervisors.

While there are legal responsibilities to consult around work health and safety matters, when leaders engage and work together with their employees, this can assist to embed workplace health and wellbeing into organisational systems and daily work practices, allocate funding and resources where needed, shape workplace culture through their leadership, and act as role models.

We emphasise that there are multiple ways to apply the recommendations presented here. You will need to choose the message elements that best fit the purpose and medium of your communication, including considering the need for universal or tailored examples.

The remainder of the guide outlines our research approach including the methodology and findings. This is followed by the overarching messaging approach and tips that will help you tell a compelling story about the need for workplace health and wellbeing, and the positive outcomes that result. We then suggest an effective message structure with examples. The guide concludes with advice on common words and phrases that motivate workplace leaders to create healthy workplaces, and those that do not.

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This content is intended to support better communication around workplace health and wellbeing, extending beyond compliance and the responsibility of duty holders required under work health and safety legislation. While participant quotes have been used to help illustrate the research findings these quotes may not reflect legal requirements or the authors views.

## Research approach

The research and recommendations outlined in this guide are based on the Common Cause ([commoncause.com.au](http://commoncause.com.au)) approach to communications and engagement. This approach is based on decades of research from the fields of social psychology, cognitive linguistics and behavioural sciences.

A key finding of this research is that people primarily make decisions based on **values, emotions and identity**, and then rationalise or 'back up' their decision with facts that fit. Secondly, most people think about issues from multiple and often conflicting perspectives or **frames**.

In order to motivate support for healthy workplaces, we first needed to identify **helpful frames** that make leaders feel that workplace health and wellbeing is both valuable and necessary. We also needed to understand which frames were **unhelpful** because they move leaders into an oppositional mindset, in which workplace health and wellbeing feels counterproductive. Identifying these persuasive oppositional frames is important because it tells us which ideas to avoid using in messages.

It is also important to consider the **values** being expressed in messages. A growing body of research from around the world demonstrates the importance of values in shaping people's attitudes and behaviours.<sup>1</sup> Values of **caring for others** are associated with taking more action for the benefit of other people.

Conversely, values such as wealth and preserving one's public image are associated with taking less action for others. Importantly, values are not static but can be activated or 'switched on' by different message frames.

## Research methodology

The research was undertaken in three stages:

- We began by conducting a **frames analysis** to identify helpful and unhelpful frames. This involved stakeholder interviews with workplace leaders, government advocates and service providers, as well as a public discourse analysis in which we reviewed dozens of websites, news articles, research articles and user guides on healthy workplaces.
- From these findings, we developed and tested a set of messages in an online quantitative **survey** of 457 workplace leaders. This included a 'dial test' in which participants listened to five 30-second audio-recorded messages while moving an online dial up and down to indicate their level of agreement. This allowed us to identify words and phrases that most resonated with leaders.
- We then tested the most promising messages in **workshops** with workplace leaders, government advocates and service providers. The messages presented in this guide reflect their valuable feedback.

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Crompton, T. 2010, Common Cause: The Case for Working with our Cultural Values, WWF UK.



## Research findings

The messages and tips in this guide are informed by key findings from the frames analysis, message testing survey and user testing workshops.

The frames analysis revealed three main motivations for creating healthy workplaces: **care, performance and compliance**. It identified two oppositional frames used by opponents to argue against workplace health and wellbeing: employee responsibility (workplaces should not interfere in people's private lives – it is up to individuals to look after their own health) and government interference (government should not tell us how to run our business).

Overall, workplace leaders expressed very strong support for the need for and value of workplace health and wellbeing. Just one of the 457 survey respondents consistently opposed workplace health and wellbeing measures. In accordance with the values research, most leaders' motivation for workplace health and wellbeing stems from their **care for others** more so than workplace performance or financial benefit.<sup>2</sup>

Research participants agreed on a set of ideas and actions that are important for workplace health and wellbeing. In Figure 1, these concepts are shown in the small circles. In the centre, statements are positive ways of expressing workplace health and wellbeing that resonated with workplace leaders.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, two out of three survey respondents chose "positive outcomes for our people" over "positive financial outcomes for our workplace" as their motivation for creating a healthy workplace. In the workshops, workplace leaders expressed their dislike of "transactional" messages focussed on workplace performance or financial benefit.



Figure 1: Terms that strongly resonated with survey and workshop participants

# Messaging Approach

## STEP 1: MESSAGE

### Structure

Research participants responded well to messages that followed a vision-barrier-action structure (see page 17 for more detail). They also liked hearing from other workplaces in case studies or short quotes.

### Strategy

As for any issue, there is a need for general messages for a broad audience, for example on website landing pages, as well as opportunities to tailor messages to particular target audiences, for example, in sector-specific webpages or events.

### Content

Where general messages for a broad audience are required, it is most effective to begin with **universal** statements that apply to all workplaces. These statements convey important concepts such as designing work, shaping culture and others shown in the center of Figure 1.

Then, effective messages illustrate these concepts with **specific examples**. As one participant put it, "if only one example is used, that example has to do the heavy lifting to illustrate many issues. We've used several case studies side-by-side to cover a wide variety of issues and activities." In this way, we recommend using **multiple** examples together to cover a range of options available. A good example of this in practice is the set of three examples in the Blueprint for Mentally Healthy Workplaces, outlining what mentally healthy workplaces look like for sole traders, small business and medium to large organisations.<sup>3</sup>

**When tailoring messages to target audiences:** use specific examples that are most relevant to them. (See Tailoring Messages on page 23 for more detail).

## STEP 2: INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

### A two-step process

The messages presented in this guide are designed to ignite an initial 'spark' of interest in workplace leaders and willingness to find out more. They represent **motivation, not information**. As a workshop participant suggested: "It's good to get people interested and excited, and then talk about next steps". The messages spark the initial interest and excitement. The next steps are where more detailed information, education and support come in, to facilitate workplace action.

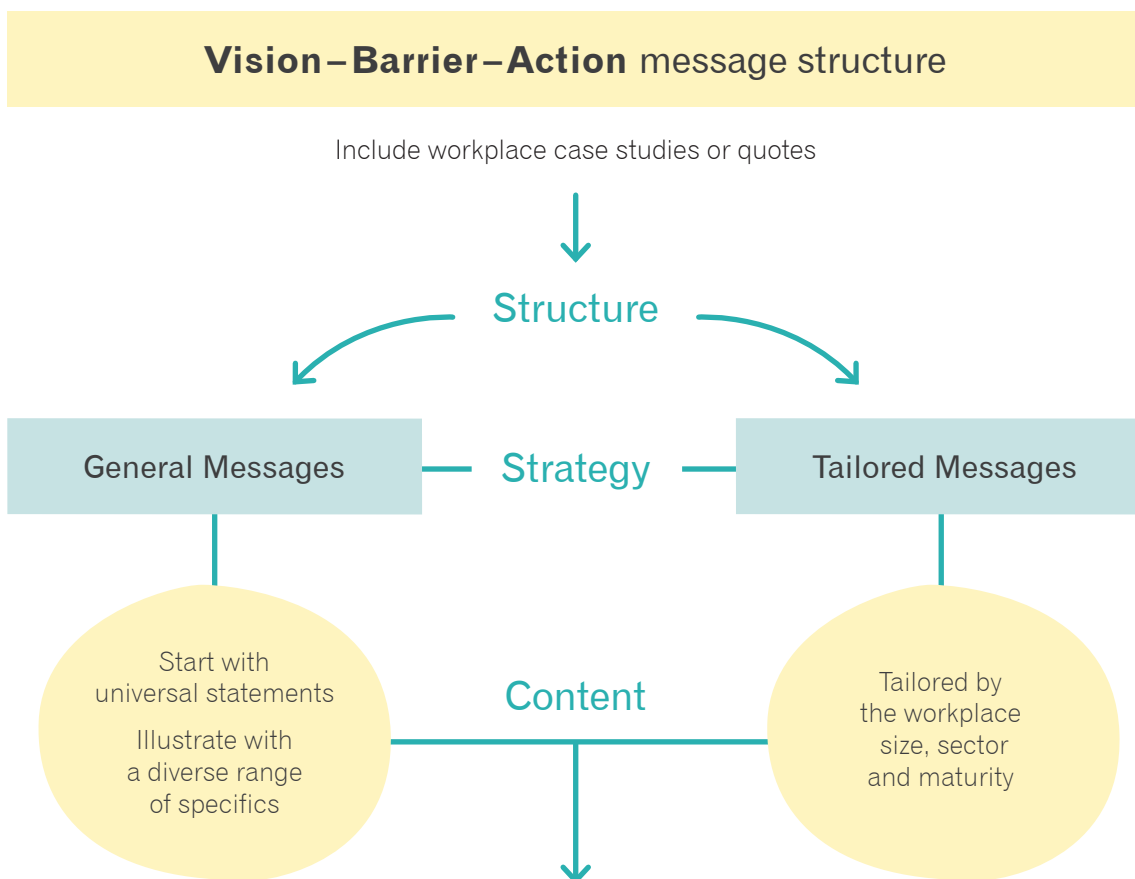
### This entails a two step process, as shown in Figure 2

- **Step 1: Messaging** sparks workplace leaders' interest and willingness to find out more;
- **Step 2: Workplace** leaders and their colleagues access further **information, education and support**. This could provide two key things workplaces are seeking, based on the consultations and other recent research:
  - An understanding of their legal obligations and government expectations, and
  - Practical support on how to implement workplace health and wellbeing.

<sup>3</sup> National Mental Health Commission (2021) Blueprint for Mentally Healthy Workplaces. Release 1, September 2021. Commonwealth of Australia.



## STEP 1: MESSAGE



## STEP 2: INFORMATION AND SUPPORT



Figure 2: Recommended messaging approach, using general and tailored messages. A two-step process, where messaging leads to workplace leaders accessing detailed information and support.

# Messaging Tips

## TIP #1: CENTRE THE MESSAGE ON CARE VALUES

Based on the evidence around values, frames and behavioural sciences, as well as the survey and workshop findings, we recommend centring **care values**, rather than performance or compliance for workplace health and wellbeing.

Workplace leaders clearly expressed their care values in the interviews, survey and workshops. Messages can remind leaders of the importance of health in our lives, the big impact (positive or negative) that work can have on people's health and wellbeing, and therefore the importance of supporting health and wellbeing at work.

Fundamentally, workplace health and wellbeing is about **people**. Messages should always include people, either explicitly by using the words "people" or "everyone", or implicitly, for example in "our lives".

### Avoid centring performance for healthy workplaces

Although statistics show that healthy workplaces are more productive and deliver financial benefits, our research indicates that workplace performance is not a helpful frame to motivate leaders.

Firstly, if we frame the motivation for workplace health and wellbeing in terms of financial costs and benefits, we are essentially competing with other initiatives that deliver a financial return – which may or may not lead workplaces to prioritise health and wellbeing.

Secondly, this financial framing is likely to suppress or 'crowd out' care motivations (known as the values see-saw effect, where strengthening one set of values and frames suppresses the other). Workshop participants expressed their dislike for "transactional" or "manipulative" messages perceived to prioritise organisational benefits over people's health and wellbeing – a sense that "we only care about you so that you'll work harder". They especially disliked "go the extra mile" in the 'FROM' message, which was read as meaning "overwork".

### MESSAGE SHIFT

**FROM:** "When the workplace supports their health and wellbeing, workers are more productive and absent less often."



**TO:** "When the workplace supports their health and wellbeing, people can be their best and reach their full potential."

### MESSAGE SHIFT

**FROM:** "When people feel that their employer cares about them, they go the extra mile." "Healthy workplaces help us attract and retain our people."



**TO:** "When people are supported in healthy workplaces, they thrive."

Even when motivated by care values, workplace leaders still need to fund and justify workplace health and wellbeing initiatives. There is therefore a place for the business case in the detailed information and supports that help workplaces to develop and implement their plans (step 2 on page 9). However, in terms of the initial 'why' or motivation for workplace health and wellbeing, we are on much more fertile ground when we engage leaders' care values.

## Go beyond compliance

When framing messages to engage workplace leaders, use messages that connect with leaders' care values and desire to create a healthy and safe workplace.

Compliance is very specific, and everybody has a responsibility to ensure workers' health, safety and wellbeing is considered as part of different legislative frameworks including, but not limited to, flexible working arrangements, assessing and managing multiple health and chronic disease risk factors (including mental health and wellbeing), embracing equity and diversity and managing compensable and non-compensable injuries and illness.

The research revealed framing workplace health and wellbeing messages as a compliance requirement to workplace leaders, is complex due to the way it is often misinterpreted or misunderstood within the legal context of legislation. A theme that emerged throughout the research indicated it is more useful to frame our messages to connect with care values.

One message tested in the workshops was:

**"Employers have a responsibility to care for their employees' health and wellbeing"**. In response, participants expressed a range of views:

- Some liked the strength of the word "responsibility" and suggested it provides a compelling reason to act.
- Others suggested that the employer is responsible for "managing risks" and "preventing harm" to health, but not responsible for employees' health and wellbeing.

### MESSAGE SHIFT

**FROM:** "Employers have a responsibility to care for their employees' health and wellbeing."



**TO:** "Everyone deserves to work in a place where their health and wellbeing matter."

- Several suggested that the word "responsibility" had a strong regulatory tone in the messaging which may not be conducive to influencing the benefits of a healthy workplace.
- Some suggested using "joint" or "shared" responsibility, however, others had conflicting views on the employer vs. employee responsibility regarding workplace health and wellbeing.

Rather than use the word "responsibility", the participants indicated it may be more effective to focus on 'the care' offered by the workplace and/or its leaders, and what they can do to facilitate and promote workplace health and wellbeing.

**Therefore, in our initial motivational messaging for workplace health and wellbeing the 'TO' messages outlined below speak more to a "duty of care", which is strongly aligned with responsibility.**

In summary:

- Rather than focusing too much on strong compliance language, use messages that connect with leaders' care values and a desire to create healthy workplaces. As a workplace participant said: "We want health and wellbeing to be normalised and part of the culture, not driven by compliance." (See also tip #2 on how to normalise healthy workplaces.)
- Leave discussion of "responsibility" until step 2 (outlined on page 8) which is to provide the detailed information that follows the initial messaging. Workshop feedback suggests that workplaces could benefit from more clarity and support around their health and wellbeing responsibilities.

**FROM:** "Everyone in the workplace has a responsibility to care for others' health, safety and wellbeing."



**TO:** "We are creating a workplace culture where everyone cares for each other's health, safety and wellbeing ."

# Messaging Tips

## TIP #2: FOCUS ON WORKPLACES, NOT INDIVIDUALS

The most effective and sustained workplace health and wellbeing efforts focus on the workplace in a systemic and holistic way, rather than on individual employees. The focus is on how workplaces can provide the conditions for people to be well at work, rather than on the behaviours of individuals.

To move workplace leaders to this way of thinking, our messages need to emphasise the workplace focus.

### MESSAGE SHIFT

**FROM:** "Workplace health and wellbeing is a joint responsibility"



**TO:** "Everyone deserves to work in a place where their health and wellbeing matter"

**FROM:** "Everyone in the workplace has a responsibility to care for others' health, safety and wellbeing."



**TO:** "We are creating a workplace culture where everyone cares for each other's health, safety and wellbeing."

## Normalising healthy workplaces

We can help normalise healthy workplaces by overtly stating that **workplace health and wellbeing is what workplaces do. It's just a normal part of work.**

Another way to socially normalise healthy workplaces is to use case studies and quotes from a range of workplace leaders (see tip #5).

Finally, linking to **physical safety** can help to make clear that workplace health and wellbeing is also very important. Effective messages focus on the importance of looking after people's health and wellbeing and go beyond compliance (tip #1). As stated by a workshop participant: *"Health and wellbeing can get dragged down into the transactional and legislative side of safety, rather than a holistic and staff-based assessment of what they need."*

### MESSAGE SHIFT

**FROM:** "Just as for physical safety, workplace health and wellbeing requires managing risks and preventing harm to workers."\*



**TO:** "Just as for physical safety, it's essential to look after everyone's health and wellbeing in the workplace."\*

\*\* This message shift reflects motivational messaging that was found to be effective for workplace leaders. It does not intend to present the duties required to be met in the relevant Work Health and Safety legislative frameworks.

## TIP #3: CREATE SOMETHING GOOD

Effective messages focus on **creating positive outcomes** more than avoiding negatives.

Across all messages tested in the survey and workshops, workplace leaders strongly preferred positive statements around creating health and wellbeing benefits, over statements about avoiding or reducing problems, risks and illness.

Ideas and phrases that resonated with research participants included:

- “To advance employee health and wellbeing...”
- “Improve”, “better”, “best”
- “Create”, “design”, “shape” (culture) – agency to make the workplace the best it can be
- “Proactively”
- “Build”, “build together”, “support”
- “Journey”, “take the next step”, “take workplace health and wellbeing to the next level”.

If there is a specific need to mention injury or illness, we can focus on the positives of “helping to protect” people from injury, rather than “reducing” injury.

## TIP #4: BE INCLUSIVE

Effective messages start with universal statements that are inclusive of all workplaces. They avoid mentioning actions that are not possible in some workplaces. For example, “people should work reasonable hours with plenty of time away from work each day” is not always possible for emergency services and others with unavoidable shift extensions.

To be inclusive, we recommend using the term “workplace” rather than “business” or “organisation” as our default, generic term. (See the Language Matters glossary for more details).

In the ‘FROM’ example below, workshop participants disliked Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) and Human Resources (HR) being singled out, which implied that they carry more responsibility, or typically do not work well together. Also, the statement is not relevant to the many small businesses without dedicated WHS or HR roles or departments.

### MESSAGE SHIFT

**FROM:** “Healthy workplaces reduce injury and illness.”



**TO:** “Healthy workplaces help keep people well and support us to be our best.”

**FROM:** “Healthy workplaces reduce injury and illness.”



**TO:** “Healthy workplaces help protect people from injury.”

### MESSAGE SHIFT

**FROM:** “To advance employee health and wellbeing, all parts of an organisation need to work together, including Workplace Health and Safety and Human Resources.”



**TO:** “To advance employee health and wellbeing, all parts of an organisation need to work together.”

# Messaging Tips

## TIP #5: THE MESSENGER MATTERS

Case studies and quotes from workplace leaders are powerful messaging tools.

Our audience of workplace leaders are often curious about what their peers are doing, and so are likely to take interest in case studies. Quotes and case studies also have the great advantage of replacing a government or service provider messenger with 'someone like me': another workplace leader who is helpfully sharing their experiences and lessons learnt. This positions the message differently and the message is less "heavy handed" or directive.

Case studies also help make abstract concepts more tangible, as in the following examples that illustrate working together, communication, feedback and trust:



Our staff have voted in trusted wellbeing champions as the main channel for two-way communication with the management team. Our staff tell us they feel supported and comfortable opening up to the champions.

In turn, we make an effort to respond to feedback, sharing with staff how we plan to put their ideas into practice – or having an honest conversation about why we've decided not to.

We've built a lot of trust and enthusiasm for health and wellbeing initiatives because they come directly from our staff."



Our team meetings now include a 'wellbeing' agenda item where we talk about issues, solutions, and activities that we can do together to improve our health and wellbeing. Our last conversation was about work-life integration, and we reviewed the flexible work policy at the same time.

This ongoing agenda item helps us hear about how things are going, and keeps us accountable for making things better, together."

We recommend prefacing case studies with: "these are just some examples of things you could do in your workplace". This will help avoid our audience thinking that the examples form a definitive list to be actioned – or that there are no other high priority actions they might need to take. Presenting several quotes or case studies together can further help to illustrate a range of experiences and actions.

### MESSAGE SHIFT

**FROM:** "Workplaces should do X. It can lead to the following good outcomes."  
(stated by government or a service provider)



**TO:** "We are doing X. It is working well for us and has led to the following good outcomes." (stated by a workplace)

## TIP #6: A PICTURE PAINTS A THOUSAND WORDS

As the saying goes, “a picture paints a thousand words”. Our brains process images many times faster than words – meaning that our audience will likely make sense of the message based on images, before they read the words.

Bringing together the messaging tips, we recommend:

- Humanising messages by showing healthy people in workplaces. It is best to use real rather than stock photos, to convey credibility and help bring to life the people depicted;

- In line with tip #2, focus on workplace processes. This might be depicted by several people meeting and talking over a document, rather than an individual walking or eating an apple;
- As per tip #3, create something good: show the positives we want to create, much more so than problems we want to avoid;
- As per tip #4, be inclusive: in general communications, show a diversity of people from a range of workplaces. In targeted communications, show people from the same sector;
- Tip #5: use photos or videos of workplace leaders who feature in case studies.

### MESSAGE SHIFT

**FROM:** Webpages that feature text only, or use of images such as these:



**TO:** “Candid photos taken on location, in real workplaces.”



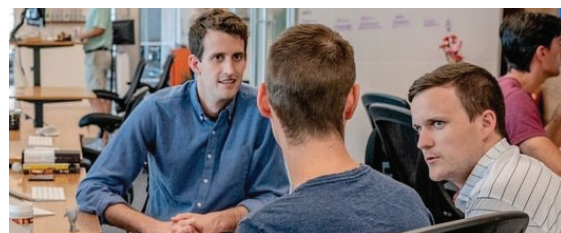
A staged stock photo of models – not a real workplace



This image shows a poorly designed workspace and suggests that healthy workplaces are about people eating fruit. Instead, images should focus on workplace processes and practices.

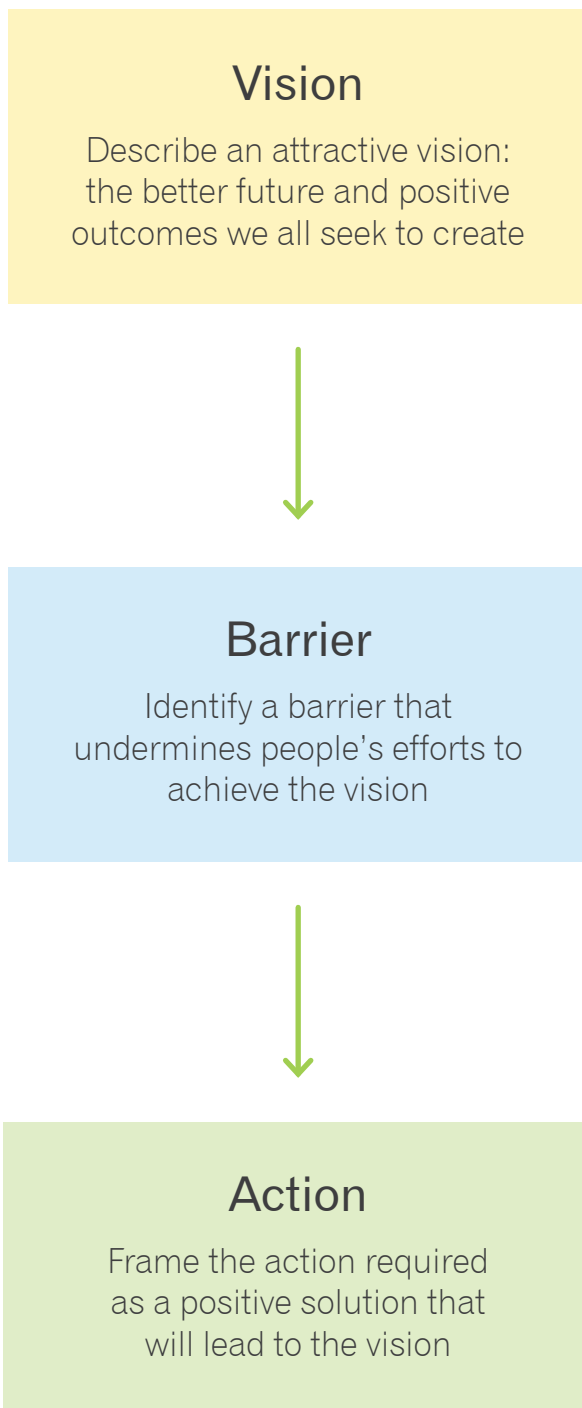


This person appears to be working late in a dimly lit, poorly designed workspace. Images should show work environments and practices that facilitate, rather than impede, health and wellbeing.



These images show a diverse range of people across age, gender and cultural background, in a range of workplaces. They illustrate other workplace practices such as communication, consultation and planning, as well as good WHS practices.

# Message Structure



## An effective message structure

In message testing across this issue and many others, we have found the following message structure to be appealing and compelling to our audiences.

The **vision** sets a positive tone for our communications and connects with the audience's values.

In order for vision-focused messages to motivate concern and action, we also need to point to a **barrier** that stands in the way of our vision. The barrier reminds our audience of the consequences of not taking action. It establishes the problem and sets the stage for why action is necessary.

The **action** tells our audience that achieving the desired positive outcomes is in their hands. It may point to general and/or specific solutions.

Longer messages may then circle back to the **vision** to remind our audience of the positive outcomes achieved by taking action. Alternatively, messages may end with an offer of support, for example: "We can help you do this – contact us to find out how", or "find out more at X website".



## Vision statements

### Examples of persuasive visions:

- “Everyone deserves to work in a place where their health and wellbeing matter.”
- “Health is everything in our lives. We don't leave our lives at the workplace door, so a healthy workplace is really important.”
- “As leaders, we all want to create workplaces where people can thrive”.
- “In healthy workplaces, we are supported to be our best, do meaningful work, and build relationships.”
- “Whether in an office, a factory, out on the road or a worksite, it's important for

people to work in an environment that promotes their physical and mental health.”

- “No matter where people work, it's important for the work environment and culture to promote their physical and mental health.”

**Statements to avoid:** Research participants disliked the statements “we spend a lot of our time at work” or “we spend most of our lives at work”, which are often used to justify why healthy workplaces are important. These statements do not apply to casual or part-time workers (see tip #4: be inclusive). Also, they subtly promote and normalise the idea that we should spend a lot of time at work.

## Barrier statements

### Examples of persuasive barriers:

- “When we expect people to soldier on through health and wellbeing hazards, we deprive our workplace and people of the great future they could have”
- “When work isn't well designed and people have to work very long hours, their health and wellbeing can suffer.”

- “An unhealthy culture or poorly designed work with excessive workloads puts people's health and wellbeing at risk.”
- “We all want to make our workplace healthier, but it's hard to know where to start and what to do.”

## Action statements

### Examples of persuasive actions:

- “Organisations should treat workplace health and wellbeing as essential, just like physical safety.”
- “We listen to our people and co-design work to support everyone’s mental and physical health. It’s an ongoing process of listening, learning and improving.”
- “Including all staff in honest conversations about workplace health and wellbeing actions can build participation and trust.”
- “As workplace leaders, we can walk the talk by demonstrating and communicating the actions we’re taking for health and wellbeing.”

### Ensuring a workplace (not individual) focus, and including proactive and protective action:

- “Workplace health and wellbeing is best done as a normal part of what workplaces do everyday, rather than a separate program. This means everyone working together to embed health and wellbeing in all systems and work practices.”
- “We are embedding workplace health and wellbeing into our work practices such as staff inductions and training, health and safety and return to work systems, and performance reviews.”
- “Workplace leaders can improve workplace health and wellbeing as part of improving how the organisation operates.”
- “Just as workplace leaders choose the products and services we offer, we can also shape our work environment and culture.”
- “As workplace leaders, we can create safe and healthy environments that help keep everyone well at work.”
- “We are creating a workplace culture where everyone cares for each other’s health, safety and wellbeing.”

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### Statements to avoid:

Research participants were lukewarm towards the idea that: “Workplaces are a good place to help people get healthier, through things like promoting a better diet, more exercise and support to quit smoking.” They identified exercise, healthy eating and smoking cessation as belonging to an outdated individualised approach that falls back on simple options like fruit boxes, rather than a holistic approach.

## Vision – Barrier – Action messages in practice

Following are three of many ways that vision, barrier and action statements can be woven together into coherent messages.

### EXAMPLE 1:

Focusing on the importance of health in our lives, and setting out workplace hazards as the barrier. Note that “all types of workplaces” and “whether large or small” are ways to normalise workplace health and wellbeing (see tip #2).

Key message elements	Example message
<b>Vision</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Everyone's health matters</li><li>• Workplace opportunity to support health and wellbeing</li></ul>	Everyone deserves to work in a place where their health and wellbeing matter.  Health is everything in our lives, so it's really important that workplaces help support our health...
<b>Barrier</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workplaces can risk or harm health and wellbeing</li></ul>	...instead of harming it.  All types of workplaces are now aware that hazards go beyond obvious ones such as trips and spills. Hazards may also include poorly designed tasks and workspaces, excessive workloads, and an unsupportive culture.
<b>Action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workplaces can support health and wellbeing by doing X</li></ul>	Whether large or small, workplaces are realising the opportunities to create much healthier workplaces, where everyone is heard and can play their part in designing work and creating a supportive workplace environment and culture.
<b>[Return to vision]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• So that people are healthy and thrive</li></ul>	Then both people and workplaces can thrive.

# Message Structure

## Vision – Barrier – Action messages in practice

### EXAMPLE 2:

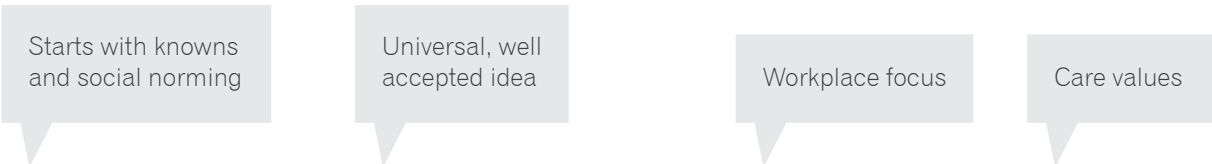
Supporting people to live healthier lives, without mentioning specifics like diet, exercise and smoking which research participants suggested were too individualised or had already been addressed. Note that the barrier can be as simple as flipping the vision (people are supported to be well) to show the opposite situation (people get ill).

Key message elements	Example message
<b>Vision</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Everyone's health matters</li><li>• Workplace opportunity to support health and wellbeing</li></ul>	Good health allows us to do so much in life. We don't leave our lives at the workplace door, so a healthy workplace is really important.
<b>Barrier</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workplaces can risk or harm health and wellbeing</li></ul>	But in unhealthy workplaces, people can get mentally and physically ill.
<b>Action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workplaces can support health and wellbeing by doing X</li></ul>	Workplace leaders can do many things to look after the people who work for them, like having open and honest conversations and working together to improve everyone's work tasks, environment and culture.
<b>[Return to vision]</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• So that people are healthy and thrive</li></ul>	Supporting the health and wellbeing of people at work is a great opportunity to help everyone live healthier lives.

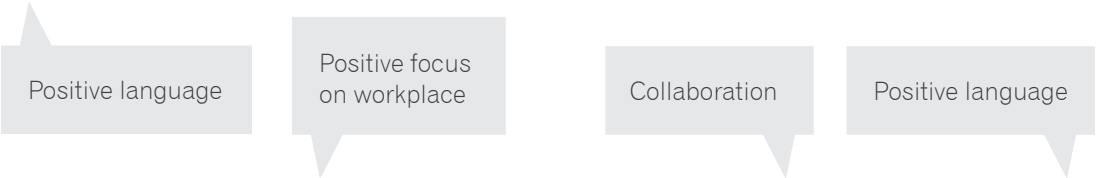
# Vision – Barrier – Action messages in practice

## EXAMPLE 3:

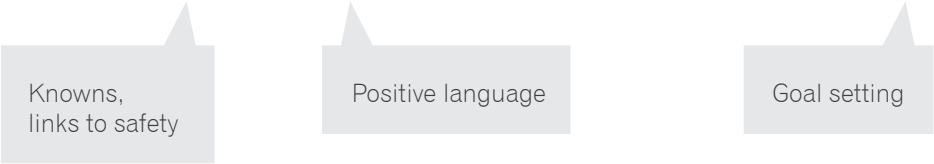
A shorter example built around the well-known saying “prevention is better than cure”. Note that the barrier can be very brief and written positively in terms of helping to protect people from harm or illness. The callout boxes show helpful messaging elements from the tips.



We all know that prevention is better than cure. Healthy workplaces keep people well and help protect them from getting mentally and physically ill...



...An important part of creating a healthy workplace is working together to proactively design out health hazards and design in a healthy environment and culture.



# Tailoring Messages

The research highlighted the importance of not taking a ‘one size fits all’ approach to encourage workplace leaders (the audience) to create healthy workplaces. Messages that are tailored to workplace size, sector and level of maturity are important to consider. Examples of how messages can be tailored in these ways are provided below.

## Tailoring by size

All businesses, no matter what size, are required to comply with their health and safety obligations. However the way workplace leaders address workplace health and wellbeing in small businesses’ structures and arrangements will differ from medium businesses, which differ to large ones. Therefore businesses will respond to messages differently based on their size, structures and needs.

For example:

- A small business may not respond to messaging that is targeted to WHS or HR departments, when there is likely to be no such department in the business.
- A common strategy used in larger workplaces is to utilise an internal wellbeing champion’s network or working groups to engage with employees and support healthy workplace programs. However, the establishment of a working group may not be practical for smaller organisations.
- For medium and large organisations with fairly predictable work, relevant statements include: “we actively plan and manage staffing” to ensure “reasonable workloads and flexible hours when needed”.

## Tailoring by sector

Some messages are relevant only to certain sectors. Examples include:

- “Workspaces and environments can encourage people to get active throughout the day” is most relevant to office-based organisations. Messages could also mention specific examples such as walking meetings.<sup>4</sup>
- “At the workplace door” works for many sectors, but not to outdoor or mobile roles or people who work from home.

## Tailoring by maturity

Messages that convey simple and easy starting points for workplace health and wellbeing may resonate with workplaces at an early stage of their health and wellbeing journey. These include:

- Easy-to-implement actions such as discussing health and wellbeing in team meetings;
- Links with physical safety, to bridge from a known (physical safety), to an unknown (workplace health and wellbeing);
- A barrier statement: “We all want to make our workplace healthier, but it’s hard to know where to start and what to do”, to reassure workplaces that it is fine to seek help.

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<sup>4</sup> Although not standing meetings, as this excludes people unable to stand. Previous messaging research on walking and bike riding revealed that people who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices tend to read ‘walking’ as including them.

Messages for workplaces at a later stage of their health and wellbeing journey encourage them to take the next step.

- For some workplace stakeholders, the tested messages were un motivating because they were “old hat”: actions they had already taken. To be further motivated, these audiences could be prompted to go deeper in their implementation, with more detailed messaging around embedding workplace health and wellbeing into all work systems and case studies of this in practice.
- Messages around leadership and accountability, such as “walking the talk” and “demonstrating and communicating the actions we’ve taken” also apply to workplaces in the middle or later stages of their health and wellbeing journey once they have started to implement changes.



# Language Matters

## Use plain English

Messages written in plain English help to connect with our audiences' values and emotions, and to make abstractions more tangible.

Using plain English means translating technical concepts such as “work design” into more tangible actions and examples. It also means using shorter, more simple statements over longer, more convoluted ones. When introducing new ideas, it often helps to move from 'known to new': from well-known and accepted ideas, such as the non-negotiable nature of workplace physical safety, to new related ideas, e.g. workplace health and wellbeing is also fundamental.

## Words to replace and embrace

Below is a ready reference list of words and phrases that do not motivate workplace leaders (replace these) and those that do motivate leaders to create healthy workplaces in a holistic way (embrace these).

Words to replace	Words to embrace
A program	A process; an ongoing process. Holistic; embedded in work practices; a normal part of what workplaces do every day
Quick wins; simple	Embedded; holistic A journey; an ongoing process; we can help you
Lifestyle choices; behaviours; resilience (individual focus)	Environment; culture; work design (workplace focus)
Healthy choices	Healthy options
Work/life balance	Work/life integration; Healthy work, healthy life
Workers, staff, workforce, management (dehumanising)	People, people who work here / for us, our people, everyone, workplace leaders, workplace decision makers Employers, employees (use sparingly, when required in a legal context)
Businesses (referring to non- businesses such as government departments and NGOs)	Workplaces; organisations





Words to replace	Words to embrace
Responsibility*, e.g. "Employers have a responsibility to care for employees' health and wellbeing" Shared responsibility; joint responsibility	Duty of care A culture where everyone cares for each other's health, safety and wellbeing. Everyone deserves to work in a place where their health and wellbeing matter.
Should; need to (directives: use sparingly)	Can; it's important to; it's important that; X matters / is critical / is essential
Invest in workplace health and wellbeing; the bottom line; the business case (financial, transactional)	Care for people; better health; better lives Create a great place to work
A moral and social obligation	Care for people
Policies and procedures	Our work practices
Happy and healthy ('happy' perceived to be too colloquial and unrealistic) Unhappy	Healthy; well; mentally and physically well Ill; unwell
Toxic culture	Unhealthy culture
We spend so much of our time (or lives) at work	Workplaces can do so much to support our health; a great opportunity to support our health

\* Where these words link to a specific legislative duty, they must be followed as presented in the relevant legislation.

# Glossary

In general, our messages do not need to define workplace health and wellbeing. Remember that their primary purpose is to spark workplace leaders' interest and enthusiasm in the topic. In that context, there is value in terms being "strategically ambiguous" – broad enough for leaders to imagine what the message might mean for their workplace, and willing to find out more.

For the internal purpose of helping to bring government and service providers onto the same page, below we outline our understanding of key terms.

A **healthy workplace** is one in which workers and managers collaborate to use a continual improvement process to protect and promote the health, safety and well-being of all workers and the sustainability of the workplace (World Health Organisation, 2010).<sup>5</sup>

**Worker wellbeing:** The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines worker wellbeing as quality of life with respect to an individual's health and work-related environmental, organisational, and psychosocial factors. Wellbeing is the experience of positive perceptions and the presence of constructive conditions at work and beyond, which enables people to thrive and achieve their full potential.<sup>6</sup>

**Workplace wellbeing** relates to all aspects of working life, from the quality and safety of the physical environment, to how workers feel about their work, their working environment, the climate at work and work organization. The aim of measures for workplace wellbeing is to complement WHS measures to make sure workers are safe, healthy, satisfied and engaged at work.<sup>7</sup>

## Use of "healthy workplaces" and "workplace health and wellbeing"

"**Healthy workplaces**" is the **vision**, the positive outcome. "**Workplace health and wellbeing**" is the **action**: the set of things we do to create the vision of healthy workplaces. Both have their place as they mean different things. Use "healthy workplaces" when talking about positive outcomes, and "workplace health and wellbeing" when talking about actions required.

Note that some workshop participants liked the integration of "workplace health, safety and wellbeing", while others thought it inappropriate to include "safety" and "wellbeing" in the same set of requirements and actions. In this guide, we use "workplace health and wellbeing".

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization (2010). Healthy workplaces: a model for action. [www.who.int/occupational\\_health/publications/healthy\\_workplaces\\_model\\_action.pdf](http://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/healthy_workplaces_model_action.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Chari R, Chang CC, Sauter SL, et al. (2018) Expanding the Paradigm of Occupational Safety and Health: A New Framework for Worker Well-Being. *J Occup Environ Med*.60(7):589-593.

<sup>7</sup> International Labour Organization (undated). Workplace well-being. [www.ilo.org/safework/areasofwork/workplace-health-promotion-and-well-being/WCMS\\_118396/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/safework/areasofwork/workplace-health-promotion-and-well-being/WCMS_118396/lang-en/index.htm)

## Use of “workplace”, “organisation” and “business”

As a default or generic term, we recommend using the universal term “**workplace**”.

“Business” means a private, profit-making enterprise. We recommend against referring to all workplaces as “businesses” as it may (a) lead non-businesses to think you are not referring to them, only to actual businesses, or (b) alienate them if their mission and purpose are philosophically very different to those of a business (e.g. NGOs.)

“Workplace” is preferable to “organisation” as some small businesses do not refer to themselves as an organisation. However, we recommend using “**organisation**” in three instances:

1. To make clear we mean the whole organisation (company or NGO or government department), not a potentially much smaller regional office or branch. For example, one of our survey questions was: “How many employees are there in your organisation?”
2. When emphasising the people who make up an organisation. For example:
  - “An organisation is its people” – whereas many people may think of workplaces as including chairs and desks or other objects used in work

Sometimes “organisation” is synonymous with “workplace leaders”, because both refer to people doing things:

- “Workplace leaders can improve workplace health and wellbeing as part of improving how the organisation operates.” Here we wanted to emphasise that leaders have the most agency to influence and improve how the whole organisation operates.
3. To avoid a clunky sentence with repetition of the word “workplace”.



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